TOWARDS A MATURE SPIRITUALITY

Dr Davide Bertorelli, Hong Kong - 04/10/2018
TERMS

- Spirituality: anything that enhances the sacred in human life (meaning, purpose)

- Religions: containers of spirituality
DICTIONARY OR TRICOTOMY?

What happened in Constantinople in 869 AD?

- Spirit
- Soul: Thinking, feeling, willing
- Body

Diagram: Diagram illustrating the concepts of spirit, soul, and body.
The relationship between Spirituality/Religion and Mental Health is complex and bidirectional:

1. From the frame of MH observing Spirituality/Religion and…

2. Spirituality/Religion drawing MH in their frame
HOW DO WE APPROACH SPIRITUALITY / RELIGION?

People approach Spirituality and Religion in different ways. This is in relation to several factors:

- **Environmental and cultural**: Also consider the Pathoplastic effect (Zutt, 1967) of culture on psychiatric symptoms

- **Personality**: e.g. Jungian Psychological Types

- **Psychological maturity**: Perspective taking (PT), Personal growth, Non judgemental etc.

- **Psychopathology and maladaptive spiritual/religious coping**: e.g. trauma history, insecure attachment and lack of positive relationships in childhood; obsessiveness, narcissism, etc.
MATURE SPIRITUALITY
(Polly Young - Eisendrath)

- **Integrity**: ethical commitment and integration of diverse personality states (tolerance for ambiguity)
- **Wisdom**: intersubjectivity; increasing knowledge of others which exists in tandem with knowledge of self
- **Transcendence**: expanding the limits of our ordinary consciousness in ways that connects us with a reality beyond
“Beauty will save the world”
(F. Dostoyevsky)
HEALTH-CONDUCIVE SPIRITUALITY

(Steven J. Sandage)

When it is:

- Intentionally embodied (not bypassing the body)
- Developmentally generative (facilitating Human development)
- Relationally connected (promoting relational connection)
- Justice-enhancing (equality of all persons before God)
- Narratively coherent (facilitating narrative meaning and coherence)
RELATIONAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION

for theological education and ministry training

(Steven J. Sandage)

“Capacity to love God and neighbour”

- **Differentiation of Self**: capacity to balance cognitive and emotional functioning and autonomy and connection in relationships

- **Quest**: to be open to changing religious beliefs in the future and to value doubt as part of growth (ambiguity tolerance)

- **Intercultural Competence**: involves the self-reflexive capacity to relate sensitively across cultural differences
SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE
(Richard Griffiths)

SQ
spiritual intelligence
synchronous processing
whole brain

IQ
Intellectual intelligence
serial processing
left brain

EQ
emotional intelligence
parallel processing
right brain
WHO

4) Searching for meaning
3) Soul care, Emotional Intelligence
2) Healthy Rhythms
1) Nutrition, Exercising
PERSPECTIVE - TAKING VS COGNITIVE RIGIDITY
SPLITTING

Good
- always
- perfect
- angel
- 100% true

Bad
- evil
- never
- 100% false
DEVOTION OR IMMATURE IDEALISATION?

- **Stanislav Grof**: mental illness or spiritual emergency?

- **Sigmund Freud**: religion is immature, wish fulfillment
“WOUNDED HEALERS”
Life’s too short to pretend you’re not religious

David Dark
Spirituality/Religion in general tend to promote Mental Health and are protective factors. At times they can generate psychopathology

(Prof. Harold G. Koenig).
WHY RELIGION HELPS?

- Religion provides an optimistic, positive view of the world that fosters hope and a sense of meaning.

- Provides a community of support that helps to buffer the negative effects that stress can cause.

- Religious doctrine influences life-style choices and health habits, which may influence stress level.

- Emphasizes healthy psychological processes (forgiveness, gratefulness, altruistic love), which influence mental health for the better.
and reassure our heart before him;

for whenever our heart condemns us,

GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR HEART...

1 John 3,19-20
Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment.

~ Buddha ~
“What you have is all you need”
DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOUR THERAPY AND BUDDHISM

(Marsha Linehan)

- Mindfulness (our Minds are spacious)
- Impermanence
- Interconnectedness (Everything in the Universe is connected)
- Wise Mind (True Self)
- Loving kindness (Metta)
- Walking the Middle Path (Equanimitiy)
- Dialectics
- Half-Smiling and Willing Hands
Throughout most of the 20th century, leading mental health professionals have portrayed religion as neurotic and unhealthy, a primitive and unstable crutch for the weak.
Sigmund Freud: Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices, Future of an Illusion and Moses and Monotheism, written over a period of 32 years; religion is explained as a projection, a “universal obsessive neurosis”.

Albert Ellis, eminent psychologist, in the 1980’s, continued to emphasize that, “The less religious they (people) are, the more emotionally healthy they will tend to be”
ADVERSE EFFECTS

- Religious doctrine can induce guilt, shame and fear in susceptible persons. Failure to conform to religious standards can lead to social isolation and rejection; foster rigid thinking, obsessive practices, perfectionist tendencies. Risk of spiritual abuse and value imposition. "Wounding healers"

- Religious persons may avoid psychiatric care. In extreme cases this may result in non-compliance with treatment.
UNHEALTHY APPROACHES

- Fundamentalism, dogmatic and legalistic attitudes, perfectionism, narrow and distorted view of how to please God, exaggerated work ethic

- "spiritual grandiosity"

- "spiritual bypass": the use of spirituality to avoid dealing with ourselves, our emotions, and our unfinished business
WHY RELIGION CAN INSPIRE BOTH THE MOST SAVAGE AND THE MOST NOBLE HUMAN ACTIONS?

*Dogmatic Religion and Spiritual Religion (Steve Taylor)*

- **Spiritual Religion**: is about self-development or experiencing the transcendent (compassion, altruism)

- **Dogmatic Religion**: they tend to say that they are right and everyone else is wrong. Religion is about adhering to a set of rigid beliefs and following the rules laid down by religious authorities. Psychological need for group identity and belonging, with a need for certainty and meaning. It creates an in-out group mentality. Conflict and warfare are at hand.
C.G. JUNG AND NEW AGE

(David Tacey)

In common:

- spiritual authority of individual experience
- the need for religious and cultural transformation
- unorthodox ways of achieving unity with the Creator
- "Feminine principle" compensatory to the patriarchal West
"The Gods have become diseases"
(C.G.JUNGS)

Differences:

- From suffering to Bliss (from Western sense of tragedy to an intense optimism about individual and social transformation)
- Spiritual rebirth without having to first endure spiritual death
- New Age tends to find its spiritual experiences “away” from life and “beyond” the ground of ordinary experience
- Jung discovers spirituality in and through our human pathologies, not by transcending them
- Psychotic spirituality? The Ego inflated to divine proportions
- Preconscious, undifferentiated wholeness (uroboros) vs. conscious wholeness (mandala), when the “shadow” of human nature has been maturely accepted and integrated
TOWARDS A MATURE SPIRITUALITY

- Prevalent use of mature defence mechanisms Vs. primitive (narcissism)
- Use of Mindfulness and Metacognitive skills
- Integration of the Shadow (Jung)
- Integrity, Wisdom, Transcendence

Spiritual living and personal psychological growth should go together
Many thanks!

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