** Book Reviews **


A current realization emerging within the field of professional psychology and psychotherapy is that many individuals seeking guidance are not only interested in understanding or altering their cognitive patterns and/or behaviors but they are also in search of meaning. This yearning to find meaning within the cognitive patterns, behaviors and events that take place in their lives often leads individuals to deepen, revisit, or establish a relationship with spirit. Mijares’ book *Modern Psychology and Ancient Wisdom: Psychological Healing Practices from the World’s Religious Traditions*, attempts to demonstrate the integration of psychology and psychotherapy with several religious traditions.

Mijares explains the importance of this integration by positing that individuals, families, and society at large are in discord because they are disconnected from “the deeper meaning within life: the spiritual.” She argues that through the integration of modern psychotherapeutic practices and ancient wisdom traditions we can begin to reconnect with this deeper meaning. Aimed at practitioners of psychotherapy, especially those of humanistic and transpersonal orientation, religious counselors, and students of religious studies, this anthology of psychotherapeutic approaches augmented with religious practices and ideals provides a broad but brief overview, which is easy to read and contains minimal typing errors.
The anthology begins with an introductory chapter by Mijares. Here she argues that “there is a great need for [a] new paradigm of psychospirituality” and that the current mainstream perspective in psychotherapy, which too often considers any and all religious and/or spiritual content to be a sign of pathology has had a largely detrimental impact on us, individually and collectively. The following eight chapters are dedicated to eight specific religious traditions (Buddhism, Christianity, Goddess Spirituality, Judaism, Native American Psychospirituality, Sufism, Taoism, and Yoga and Hinduism).

These eight chapters make up the bulk of the anthology. Each chapter highlights a different religious tradition and attempts (in most cases) to illustrate how that religion can be interwoven into psychotherapeutic practice. Preceding each chapter Mijares discusses pertinent ideas within that chapter’s religious tradition and provides a succinct statement regarding the author and the contents of her/his chapter. The majority of the chapters begin with a brief introduction to the religious tradition, followed by several aspects or principles found in that tradition that can be imbued into therapy practice. This is then followed by a case example and ends with a small conclusion, which sums up key points of the chapter. Those chapters that follow this structure are mostly well written and provide a clear picture of clinical application.

There are a few chapters (including Mijares’ chapter), however, that fail to indicate any therapeutic intervention aside from story telling. This handful of chapters instead focus more on describing research and theory pertaining to the religious tradition, often lacking appropriate citations. Though it is not overtly stated in the text, these chapters present their corresponding religious traditions as more of an adjunctive practice to therapy as opposed to having clear clinical applications. In Mijares’ chapter on Goddess Spirituality there is an especially fuzzy presentation of the therapeutic function of this tradition. It appears that Mijares’ has overly dedicated this chapter to discussing the “rewording of ancient texts” so that they negate women; when in their original form, these texts praise and worship women. This point, certainly important and worthy of discussion, consumes most of the chapter, leaving it seemingly void of any indication of how this tradition can be practically applied. Generally speaking, this chapter (and a few others) lacks the pragmatic point of view that the other chapters so well take advantage of.

Despite those chapters that fall short of providing comprehensible clinical applicability, the majority of the chapters fully succeed at explaining the integration of psychotherapy and religious traditions that Mijares’ intends to accomplish. For that reason I would recommend this book to any interested reader. This anthology does an excellent job of pointing out the often overlooked relationship between modern psychological practices and world religious and spiritual traditions. In her concluding chapter, Mijares states, “The time is ripe for psychology and religion to blend the best of each tradition. ... This integration will have a positive effect upon physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being: the core principles of integrative health.” I am in agreement with Mijares’ statement and feel that her anthology
presents a useful collection of chapters that demonstrate how this integrative metamorphosis can be implemented.

The Author

Sharon Mijares received her Ph.D. from the Union Institute in 1995. She is a core adjunct faculty member of National University’s psychology department and Chapman University’s counseling department. Mijares has authored several articles on spiritual emergence and the mind-body relationship. Along with these interests, she is also an active facilitator of women’s groups and women’s healing processes.

The Reviewer

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