The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology

Vol. 46  
No. 1, 2014

In Memoriam:  
Arthur Claude Hastings, Ph.D.  
23 May 1935—13 April 2014

As This Issue Went to Press ...  
iv

Editor’s Note  
v

Remembering Arthur Hastings (1935–2014)  
Genie Palmer  
1

Roberto Assagioli and Carl Gustav Jung  
Massimo Rosselli  
7

Transpersonal Agroecology: The Metaphysics of Alternative Agricultural Theory  
Travis E.B. Cox  
35

The Expressions of Spirituality Inventory: Evidence for the Cross Cultural Validity in a Malaysian Context  
Haslina Muhamad  
John Roodenburg  
Dennis W. Moore  
58

The Nadir Experience: Crisis, Transition, and Growth  
Russell Stagg  
72

Relational Dharma: A Modern Paradigm of Transformation—a Liberating Model of Intersubjectivity  
Jeannine A. Davies  
92

Book Reviews

Science and the afterlife experience, Chris Carter  
Stafford Betty  
122

The Great Partnership: Science, religion and the search for meaning, Jonathan Sacks  
Kyriacos C. Markides  
126

Exploring frontiers of the mind-body relationship, Alexander Moreira-Almeida & Franklin Santana Santos  
David Lakoff  
129

Brain, self, and consciousness: Explaining the conspiracy of experience, Sangeetha Menon  
Brian Les Lancaster  
132

Books Our Editors are Reading  
140
The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology is published semi-annually beginning with Volume 1, Number 1, 1969

Current year subscriptions—Volume 46, 2014
To individuals:
Per year: $35 (U.S.); $44 (Canada/Mexico); $50 (Other countries)
To libraries and institutions:
Per year: $80 (U.S.); $80 (Canada/Mexico); $95 (Other countries)
Overseas airmail: Add $20 per volume
Post Office: Please address corrections to: P.O. Box 50187, Palo Alto, CA 94303

Back Volumes:
Back volumes are available in the JTP Online Archive Collection. This Online Collection is priced at $95 for members, $225 for non-members, and $385 for libraries/institutions.
Free access to soft-copy archives of every Journal of Transpersonal Psychology article since its inception in 1969 is available online digitally (PDF) to Members of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology.

Please submit subscription orders and remittances to:
The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, P.O. Box 50187, Palo Alto, CA 94303

The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology is indexed in:
Psychological Abstracts and listed in:
Chicorel Health Sciences Indexes
International Bibliography of Periodical Literature
International Bibliography of Book Reviews
Mental Health Abstract
Psychological Reader’s Guide, and beginning in 1982,
Current Contents/Social and Behavioral Sciences
Social Science Citation Index
Contenta Religionum

Instructions to Authors
All manuscripts (10,000 words maximum including references) and an abstract of not more than 150 words can be submitted electronically to jtppsych@vt.edu. Include a separate page with manuscript title, name(s) of author(s), and contact information (postal and e-mail addresses, phone, fax). Author identification should not appear on the manuscript itself. Upon submission, manuscript should be complete with references and tables (if any), following APA style (6th edition) as closely as possible. Paper copies will also be accepted, in triplicate, double spaced, with diskette (preferably in Microsoft Word). Please mail to:

Marcie Boucouvalas, JTP Editor
Dept. of Human Development, VA Tech/ National Capital Region
7054 Haycock Road, Falls Church, VA 22043-231 USA

Books for Review
Send to Arthur Hastings, JTP Book Review Editor
Institute for Transpersonal Psychology (now Sofia University),
1069 East Meadow Circle, Palo Alto, CA 94303

The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology and the Association for Transpersonal Psychology are divisions of the Transpersonal Institute, a non-profit organization. The views and opinions presented by authors and reviewers in the Journal do not necessarily represent those of the Editors or the Transpersonal Institute.

Copyright © 2014 Transpersonal Institute
In Memoriam:
Arthur Claude Hastings, Ph.D.
23 May 1935 - 13 April 2014

As This Issue Went to Press ...

Editor’s Note

Remembering Arthur Hastings (1935–2014)
Genie Palmer

Roberto Assagioli and Carl Gustav Jung
Massimo Rosselli
Duccio Vanni

Transpersonal Agroecology: The Metaphysics of Alternative Agricultural Theory
Travis E.B. Cox

The Expressions of Spirituality Inventory: Evidence for the Cross Cultural Validity in a Malaysian Context
Haslina Muhamad
John Roodenburg
Dennis W. Moore

The Nadir Experience: Crisis, Transition, and Growth
Russell Stagg

Relational Dharma: A Modern Paradigm of Transformation—a Liberating Model of Intersubjectivity
Jeannine A. Davies

Book Reviews

Science and the afterlife experience, Chris Carter
The Great Partnership: Science, religion and the search for meaning, Jonathan Sacks
Exploring frontiers of the mind-body relationship, Alexander Moreira-Allmedia & Franklin Santana Santos
Brain, self, and consciousness: Explaining the conspiracy of experience, Sangeetha Menon

Books Our Editors are Reading
AS THIS ISSUE WENT TO PRESS …

We just learned of the sudden passing of Christina Grof.

From her husband and life partner:

“‘My Beloved Christina – my wife, lover, best friend, my teacher of love, beauty, and compassion, Muse, coworker, co-author, companion in countless adventures in consciousness, globe-trotting, and in our spiritual journey in tandem – passed away peacefully in her sleep on Sunday, June 15. She left a big vacuum in my life, but continues to reside in my heart and soul.’

Stan Grof

A tribute article honoring her life will appear in the next issue: 46(2), 2014. Do watch for it!

Thoughts & Prayers are with her, her Family, Friends, Colleagues, Loved Ones, as well as the entire Family of Humankind that she continues to so deeply touch.
EDITOR’S NOTE

With heavy hearts yet joyful remembrance we dedicate this issue to Arthur Claude Hastings, our long time Book Review Editor of the Journal, transpersonal pioneer, past president of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology, author, researcher, educator and dear colleague and friend, who passed on (he might say headed home) on April 13, 2014. Like many whose lives he deeply touched I am honored to have had the privilege to work with him. Thank you, Arthur. Read much more as Genie Palmer opens this issue with a deeply befitting and genuinely warm and whole-hearted tribute to this inspiring leader who has left us with such a legacy.

Passing also, on April 24, was Angeles Arrien, cultural anthropologist, respected author, teacher, and a key founder of the External (Global) Program at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (now Sofia University). She had also served as Vice President of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology. In deference to honoring the family’s wishes for privacy and Angeles’ wish for no public memorials we direct you to her website www.angelesarrien.com for the announcement and celebration of her life and contributions. For those who would like to offer a remembrance consider Angeles’ suggestion to light a candle and say a prayer on the 24th of every month for a year.

In addition, many in the transpersonal community are just now learning of the passing of Eugene Taylor during 2013. Taylor was a consummate scholar (particularly of William James) on whom we could always rely to offer rigorous, insightful, and fair reviews. Finally, as this issue went to press we just learned that Christina Grof passed away in her sleep on June 15. Her husband, long-time life partner, and transpersonal pioneer shared a personal message for us to publish (see “As this issue went to press”). Watch for a fuller tribute article in the next issue of the Journal (Volume 46(2), 2014). All will be dearly missed, but each left a legacy that lives on. May their memories be eternal.

While Roberto Assagioli passed away in 1974, some may remember that he was on the Editorial Board of this Journal during the early years and many will recognize his seminal contributions on Psychosynthesis. In the opening article of this issue Massimo Roselli and Duccio Vanni, both from Italy, have retrieved and studied Assagioli’s published as well as unpublished archival material (including correspondence, interviews, etc.) in the original Italian in their aim to discern the nature, depth, and breadth of the relationship between Assagioli and Carl Jung. Their correspondence with and writings about each other figure prominently and, accordingly, the authors more clearly elucidate the models and contributions of each to the history of the transpersonal movement.

Copyright © 2014 Transpersonal Institute

The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 2014, Vol. 46, No. 1
Inspired by the work of Warwick Fox on transpersonal ecology (see Volume 22(1), 1990, pp. 59–96), that revealed transpersonal similarities in thought of deep ecologists, Travis Cox embraces the voices of the founders of sustainable (alternative) agriculture in proposing a theory of “transpersonal agroecology” and offers a framework to guide a discussion. He calls upon both practitioners and academicians to dialogue about the deeper aspects of sustainable agriculture, and accompanying sense of Self, that are transpersonal in nature.

From the Asian side of the Pacific Rim, Haslina Muhamad (Malaysia) along with John Roodenberg and David Moore (Australia) have teamed up to study and determine the potential validity and applicability of the Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (ESI) (MacDonald) to the Malaysian context. Following a rigorous methodological approach that included translations, back-translation, and testing, findings revealed the cross-cultural relevance of the constructs underlying the ESI. The authors call for further research of this nature as well as comparison studies with measures such as the Islamic Spirituality Scale.

Spiritually awakening and deepening experiences come in many forms and Russell Stagg illuminates how the depth of the Nadir Experience (the experience of having hit bottom as catalyzed by profound loss, tragedy, etc. –in other words, the opposite of a peak experience) can awaken profound growth. Describing the various forms and process that a Nadir Experience might take and drawing from research from a variety of sources, including his own experience, Stagg suggests the implications and importance of such understanding to the therapeutic process.

Concluding the articles, Jeannine Davis offers another perspective on the potential of healing from trauma and growth through adversity and the importance of intersubjective relationships in this regard. Based on the Buddhist concept of “dependent co-arising” she has developed a model aimed at “higher human relatedness” (a term she coined). Her model, which she calls “Relational Dharma,” speaks to a shared internal as well as external intersubjectivity. Examples are offered to better understand the philosophical underpinnings and clinical implications.

Book Reviews, along with Books Our Editors are Reading, offer a treasure trove for continuing inquiry. In this issue all books call for broadening our lens, especially with regard to the meaning of science. Stafford Betty reviews Chris Carter’s book on Science and the Afterlife, the last of a trilogy. Kyriacos Markides then offers a review of Jonathan Sacks’ The Great Partnership: Science, religion, and the search for meaning, while David Lukoff reviews the edited volume entitled Exploring Frontiers of the Mind-Body Relationship by Alexander Moreira-Allmeida and Franklin Santana Santos, and Les Lancaster reviews Sangeetha Menon’s latest book, Brain, Self and Consciousness: Explaining the conspiracy of experience.

MB
Falls Church, VA
REMEMBERING ARTHUR HASTINGS (1935–2014)

Genie Palmer, Ph.D.
Palo Alto, CA

The field of transpersonal psychology and Sofia University lost a remarkable person this past April. It will come as no surprise to those who knew Arthur Hastings well to learn how he carefully crafted his own obituary several months before his death. In fact, he wrote several obituaries—his thoughtful way of making sure the story of his life went to the important places and valued people in his life. What follows immediately is Arthur’s obituary, as he wrote it.

* * * * * *

Dr. Arthur Claude Hastings, professor at Sofia University (formerly the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology) in Palo Alto, CA, passed away peacefully 13 April 2014 at his home. He was 79 and the cause of death was acute leukemia.

Dr. Hastings was a faculty member at Sofia from its beginning in 1975 and over the years held most of the top positions in the school. Earlier in his academic career, he held faculty appointments at Stanford University, San Jose State University, and the University of Nevada.

He was one of the founders and a leader in the field of transpersonal psychology. He specialized in transpersonal theory, altered states of consciousness, and research methodology. He was book review editor for the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology and former president of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology. At Sofia University, he directed the William James Center for Consciousness Studies and was doing research on the psychomanteum technique, an innovative approach to healing bereavement.

He was well known as a parapsychologist for his research on psychic phenomena. He consulted at SRI International on remote viewing projects and published articles on this successful research. He investigated poltergeist phenomena using his knowledge of conjuring techniques to identify several cases of deception or misinterpretation. He wrote critiques of Israeli psychic Uri Geller and of deceptive psychic practitioners.

One of his hobbies was magic, and he often entertained at school events with magic illustrating psychological concepts and stories. He was a member of three magic organizations and used his magical knowledge to investigate apparent cases of poltergeists and other parapsychological phenomena.
He was on the board of the Northern California Society for Clinical Hypnosis and used hypnosis to assist people in performance skills, personal issues, and preparation for medical treatment.

His book, *With the Tongues of Men and Angels*, is considered the standard reference on channeling. He edited *Health for the Whole Person*, one of the first books on holistic medicine. In high school and college, he coached teams to national debate championships and later co-authored a standard text in debate, *Argumentation and Advocacy*.

He was born 23 May 1935 in Neosho, MO and grew up there. He did his undergraduate work at Tulane University and received a Ph.D. from Northwestern University in public address and small group communication.

He is survived by his wife, Sandy, son and daughter-in-law, Michael and Adrianne Hastings, and grandchildren Mason, Ava, and Ethan Hastings.

* * * * *

Shining a light on a few unique aspects of Arthur’s life might serve to reveal the inner person of Arthur Hastings, and not only the outer person of great achievement and accomplishment that he surely became. The inner person Arthur is the one I spent time with during those last months and days of his illness leading up to his death. Having spent such time with him, I suspect it is the inner person that Arthur would want his friends and readers to most remember.

**The Bell.** I first met Arthur in the fall of 1992 at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (ITP) before it became known as Sofia University. As a new student on the first day of orientation, I eagerly introduced myself to faculty members, Arthur being among the group. He began his orientation presentation to the new students by gently ringing a very large Tibetan bowl, fondly referred to as the bell, that reverberated throughout the room and went deep into the very bones of my body. Thereafter, the ringing of the bell became synonymous with Arthur, especially after I had immersed myself in his Tibetan Buddhism class where he occasionally would bring a whole set of Tibetan bowls (bells), maybe eight or so of different tones and ring each one very slowly, as a sacred gesture. Sometimes, he would run the wooden mallet around the rim of the bowl causing a continuous singing sound and the overtones would resound throughout the room. It was a glorious sound! He rang the bell to begin a short meditation, prior to the start of every class, which was and continues to be typical for many of the classes at the school. The sound of the bell created a sense of peace and stillness. Arthur would also comment on the healing qualities of listening to the resonance of the bell. When Arthur became very ill, he brought out all of his bells and lined them up on a shelf top in his living room where he would often play one after the other. He would gently breathe in the sounding energy and healing vibes of the bells he loved so much and that had brought healing and stillness to so many of his students.
The Teacher. On May 19, 2008, the ITP community, celebrated Arthur’s fifty years of teaching with a special plaque and a community wide celebration in honor of this gifted teacher, researcher, and healer. Teaching was the love of his life. As a recognized pioneer and scholar in the field of transpersonal psychology, Arthur was at home teaching a class or in the William James Center doing research. A lesser known fact about Arthur was his love for magic; he was a semi-professional magician and he performed his magic at the school’s yearly commencement ceremony, and occasionally for students in his class. Also, lesser known was his long time work as a practitioner of hypnosis. He produced hypnosis tapes to support students working on their dissertations, graduates studying for exams, and dentistry and medical procedure relaxation tapes for faculty, friends, and clients. Colleagues, friends and family have described Arthur as “always the scholar, a very deep thinker, and fifty years of magic and healing.”

The Celebration. In January 2014, the Sofia Community held an event to celebrate the life of Arthur Hastings, following the news from his oncologist that his health condition was rapidly deteriorating, and he was not expected to live much longer. To make the event more palatable, we called it, “An Afternoon Tea and Biscotti with Arthur” because one of his favorite things to do after being confined to home was inviting close friends over to his house for an afternoon visit where he would graciously serve a pot of specially brewed hot tea, along with a delicious biscotti. Over a hundred of Arthur’s friends, colleagues, and current and past students arrived to celebrate and honor his life.

Because of Arthur’s low energy at the time of the celebration, his family decided beforehand that people would gather and have snacks, then we would welcome in Arthur, then the school president would honor him with a special plaque for his years of service, and allow a few people to speak to Arthur and share memories. We anticipated about forty-five minutes worth of celebration would be all he could tolerate. Three hours later, and many warm remembrances shared from numerous guests, a smiling and rejuvenated Arthur reluctantly went home with his family. He joyfully talked about this event for months. The power of love and healing energy became visible, almost tangible, as his energy level soared to new heights and his illness went into apparent, temporary remission. Arthur remarked, half jokingly, in mid-march that he hadn’t died yet as expected and hinted it might be time for another celebration.

The Research. During his years of teaching and research at ITP/Sofia, Arthur began studying the uses of the ancient Greek mirror gazing technique that Raymond Moody named the “Psychomanteum” in his classic book, Life After Life. (1975). In 2000, with a team of student researchers, Arthur studied the effects of the psychomanteum process initially for bereavement, eventually extending his studies to include unresolved feelings, creativity and self-awareness. His research has demonstrated the psychomanteum process to be an effective approach for addressing bereavement issues and can lead to transformative and spiritual experiences. Additionally, the psychomanteum
process has also been used to address other feelings of loss, to inspire creativity and insight, and to mitigate culture shock.

The Remembrance. The Sofia Community celebrated Arthur Hastings at a Memorial service, held on the school’s campus, the evening of April 23, 2014. With his family present, many community members and outside friends and relatives had the opportunity to express what knowing Arthur had meant to them and how he touched their lives. The outpouring of expressions of fond memories and of deep love for Arthur filled the crowded auditorium to overflowing.

I spent as much time as possible with Arthur and his wife, Sandy, during the last year of Arthur’s life. For the last 22 years, as teacher, mentor, guide, colleagues, and dear friend, Arthur had taught me how to live; in the last couple of years since the onset of his illness, he has shown me how to die—gracefully and courageously on both counts. One evening during his last week of his life, he turned to Sandy and said, “this [the dying process] takes courage.” And anyone who knew Arthur, knew of his quiet courage.

Highly influenced by the philosopher and psychologist, William James, Arthur had great appreciation and fascination for the subtle realm and the subtlest aspects of life. He was a lover of magic, of mystery, and of the mystical realm, thus he studied and researched in the areas paranormal, transpersonal and exceptional human experiences. With the subtle realm in mind, I noted a number of auspicious events around the time of Arthur’s passing, which would most surely have peaked his awareness and curiosity. Arthur would likely smile modestly as he usually did, but with a twinkle in his eye, at my sharing of these subtleties as way of remembering yet another facet of this extraordinary person.

- Two years ago, William Braud died, another bright star in the field of transpersonal psychology. Those of us who remember William, know that he and Arthur were best collegial friends who had very similar interests and worked very closely on developing transpersonal research and the dissertation process at ITP, in addition to their parapsychology research. William had a light box for his research project and when he moved to his home town in Texas, after leaving the residential program to join the global program, he gave the light box to Arthur. The light box became a cherished possession that sat on a filing cabinet in his Sofia office. When he became ill, he brought the light box home, and during the last weeks of his life, had the light box on continuously, right near his bed. He felt William’s presence and energy as he watched the multi-colored lights softly flash in various designs. Towards the end, Sandy and I would remind Arthur of William’s love and presence, and that William would be there waiting for him when he died. Arthur would smile with a very peaceful look on his face. Coincidentally or not, William died on a Sunday afternoon, May 13, 2012. Arthur died on a Sunday evening, April 13, 2014.
• Arthur died at 12:45 P.M. Right next to his bed hung a beautiful chiming clock that chimed the hours. Serendipitously, the next time the clock chimed, shortly after his death, it chimed one time, on the hour at 1:00 A.M. The word “one” represents wholeness and unity, possibly the unity Arthur had been seeking in those last days and hours when he quietly said “I’m ready to go home now.”

• Arthur died the day before the important Jewish holiday of Passover. His memorial was one day after the important Christian holy day of Easter. Both holy days represent freedom, liberation, and are joyous occasions. While Arthur did not belong to any religious tradition, he had great appreciation and respect for most, and those who knew him well, found him very knowledgeable and curious across most traditions. It seemed only fitting that two important holy days would surround his passing.

• Arthur had a great love for the night sky, and we’d often go outside and watch the stars or the full moon, or anything unusual happening in the sky. Arthur and I had talked about the coming full moon on Tuesday, April 16th and how fascinating that this full moon was the first of four lunar eclipses of the year; seemingly rare occurrences because after this year, we will not see such an eclipse until the year 2032. A lunar eclipse, a rare occurrence; Arthur Hastings, a rare soul passing through the night sky.

Two lines of a favorite poem by poet, Sara Williams (1936) titled, *An Old Astronomer to his Pupil* best describe Arthur’s final days and attitude toward dying:

“Though my soul may set in darkness, it will rise in perfect light; I have loved the stars too fondly to be fearful of the night” (p. 614).

One week before he died, Arthur made his usual trip to Sofia University on Friday afternoon to attend the regular psychomanteum team meeting, a meeting that he religiously attended and facilitated for years prior to his declining health. We rang the meditation bell as usual for a moment of silence and centering. This meeting was like no other. On this day, Arthur quietly announced to the group that this would be his last meeting as he knew he was about to die. We took a few more moments of silence to honor his presence with us one more time. He smiled when we assured him his research would continue on and that the psychomanteum process would continue to bring the gift of healing that he spent years creating and refining. In jest and somewhat seriously, we asked Arthur if he could consider coming back in some form to provide us with his wisdom and guidance as we moved forward. In his typical quiet and pensive manner, putting his hand to his head in a gesture to ponder the question more deeply, he replied, “Well, I don’t know if I know how to do that yet!”

Let the singing bowl sound one more time in honor of Arthur Hastings, beloved teacher, researcher, healer, colleague, and most of all, dear friend.

If you would like more information on The Arthur Hastings Psychomanteum at Sofia University or the Arthur Hastings Fellowship Fund, please contact Genie Palmer, Ph.D. at genie.palmer@sofia.edu
REFERENCES


The Author

Genie Palmer, Ph.D., is an associate professor and executive core faculty member at Sofia University where she teaches courses in transpersonal research skills and methods. She is the Director of the Writing & Research Center and the Dissertation Director for Residential and Global doctoral students. In addition, she currently supervises students with the psychomanteum research. Her main areas of research and writing include aftereffects of exceptional human experiences (EHEs), and exploration of various states of consciousness (epiphany, peak, and mystical experiences).
ABSTRACT: The relationship between Roberto Assagioli (1888–1974), the founder of psychosynthesis, and Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), the founder of analytical psychology, is examined by studying a wide range of documents, some unpublished, written by or transcribed from interviews with Assagioli. The long-term professional and friendly relationship between the two men, marked by respect and mutual interest, began in 1907 and lasted until Jung’s death in 1961. Through an historical examination of their psychological models, especially focusing on the transpersonal issues outlined by Assagioli in archival materials and elsewhere, this article discusses Jung’s and Assagioli’s places in and influence on the history of transpersonal psychology.

KEYWORDS: Assagioli, psychosynthesis, analytical psychology, Jung, psychological models.

Roberto Assagioli (1888–1974) was the first in Italy to adhere to the Freudian movement, although he soon began to pursue his own course. A near-contemporary of Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), Assagioli embraced the emerging dynamic psychology of that period and developed it into a multilevel integrative vision of the human being, which he called “psychosynthesis.” In developing both the theory and practice of psychosynthesis, Assagioli contributed to the history of psychology by showing how dynamic and analytical psychology on the one hand and humanistic and transpersonal psychology on the other might be brought into synthesis. He was, with Jung, a major pioneer and exponent of transpersonal psychology.

The aim of this article is to compare the psychological models of Jung and Assagioli in the light of their relationship, correspondence, and statements about each other. We focus on the similarities and differences in their models, paying particular attention to transpersonal issues, especially those that Assagioli himself mentioned in the published and unpublished writings included in our research. It is our hope that the comparison of Jung’s and Assagioli’s psychological models presented here may lead to a better understanding of the roles played by these two scholars in the history of transpersonal psychology.

The authors thank the Institute of Psychosynthesis in Florence for kindly granting permission to access the Assagioli Archive, housed within the Institute, for the study of documents pertinent to this work. They also thank Susan Seeley for her translation of various passages and her revision and editing of the text in English, and Janet Kells for her revision and editing. The authors also are grateful to the editors of the Journal for their help with the preparation and final editing of this manuscript for publication in English.

Email: massimo.rosselli@unifi.it

Copyright © 2014 Transpersonal Institute
THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF C.G. JUNG AND R. ASSAGIOLI TO TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

In this introductory section we highlight the ideas of Assagioli and Jung that had the greatest influence on what later became the transpersonal movement. These ideas are stated in brief to set the context for the discussion that follows. Some of the ideas mark important points of agreement or disagreement. This will become clear as we review communications between the two men and trace Assagioli’s references to and comments on Jung’s psychological model. Towards the end of the article we return to the ideas introduced here as we draw together the threads of our comparison of Jung’s and Assagioli’s models.

Jung, originally a follower of Freud, split from Freud in 1913, primarily because he believed that Freud presented a reductive view of human nature that left out transpersonal potentialities. Following the split, Jung began to formulate ideas that helped to explain transpersonal experiences and the possibility of transpersonal development. The following points summarize the most important of these ideas and highlight points of comparison with Assagioli:

1. The collective unconscious and archetypes are ancestral inheritances that have universal meaning and are in themselves beyond the personal dimension (Jung, 2012). Archetypes have both transpersonal and personal expressions, and they provide a context for understanding the historical evolution of the mind and its spiritual-transpersonal experience.

2. The archetype of the Self expresses human wholeness, being both the circle and the center, the union of opposites, most generally the union of consciousness and the unconscious. It is the most fundamental of transpersonal archetypes. Jung called the Self “God’s image,” explaining that this archetype is symbolically represented by the mandala and other symbols of totality (Jung, 1982).

3. According to Jung, the Self, like all archetypes, cannot be experienced directly; however, it can have important effects on the human psyche. The Self can attract and guide a person through the process of individuation towards transpersonal development and Self-realization. This view of the Self as attractor and guide on the path to wholeness underpins Jung’s understanding of the innate spiritual nature of human beings and their relationship to the numinous (Jung, 1982).

4. The method of analytic psychology, working through dreams, imagery, symbolism, and creativity, is based on the idea that a prospective transpersonal context facilitates the healing process (Jung, 1981).

5. Jung’s autobiographical writings and the story of his personal development provide the first sources of meaningful transpersonal documentation (Jung, 1967, 2010). He described what were clearly “transpersonal or peak experiences” in his youth. His wide ranging interests—reaching from psychiatry and psychoanalysis to German idealism and Platonic-Neo-Platonic philosophy, from occult phenomena and parapsychology to alchemical studies, from Gnosticism and
Western mysticism to Eastern philosophy and spirituality, from the study of people’s customs to ancient traditions and civilizations—provided a vast reservoir of knowledge that informed his thinking and supplied a rich source for his understanding of transpersonal symbolism (Jung, 1975). Jung also drew on the evolving field of quantum physics, showing the similarity between quantum phenomena and phenomena in our world that exhibit synchronicity (Jung, 1972b), including transpersonal experiences in relation to the Self that seem to transcend space and time.

Initially a follower of Freud and psychoanalysis, Assagioli, along with Jung, was a pioneer of what later became known as transpersonal psychology. He had already begun exploring transpersonal themes before the official creation of psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1927). In the 1960s he was one of the founders of the new field of transpersonal psychology and with Abraham Maslow played an important role both in giving the name “transpersonal” to the field and in bringing attention to important transpersonal concepts such as those of a higher or transpersonal unconscious, “peak experiences” (Maslow, 1962), and a transpersonal Self (Assagioli, 1973b). The following paragraphs summarize Assagioli’s main contributions to transpersonal psychology and highlight how these contributions agree or disagree with those of Jung:

1. Assagioli agreed with Jung on there being a collective-archetypal unconscious beyond the personal unconscious, but he developed a systematic approach to the transpersonal domain with an emphasis on the experience of its distinctive “contents.” He proposed a “height psychology” (Besmer, 1974), mapping the area for the transpersonal unconscious and the transpersonal Self.

2. Assagioli believed that expansion of consciousness occurred not only through the experience of the transpersonal unconscious but also through the direct experience of the transpersonal Self, which in his view is an experiential reality, a core point of identity, the center of the whole person (Assagioli, 1988a). Assagioli’s distinction between transpersonal unconscious and transpersonal Self is similar to Jung’s distinction between the archetypal unconscious generally and the archetype of the Self in particular. However, there is this key difference: for Jung the Self, as archetype, could not be experienced and remained unconscious, whereas for Assagioli the transpersonal Self is a reality that can be directly experienced.

3. For Assagioli the experience of the Self has many levels and is a bridge between personal and transpersonal development. The Self can be experienced both as “personal self or I” at the center of the personality and as “transpersonal Self” at higher levels of consciousness. In the practice of psychosynthesis, where the Self and the integration of the transpersonal are both the goal and the means, the key purpose of transpersonal psychology is achieved: the creation of a connection between the transpersonal and the personal. This process of psychosynthesis is very similar to the process of individuation for Jung. Both of these processes share the evolutionary perspective and the purpose of
realizing the inner potentials of our own uniqueness, guided by the Self (Assagioli, 1973b). Moreover, since “the goals are the same” [according to Assagioli] “the methods used in the process of individuation are partly the same and inclusive, but psychosynthesis uses many active techniques in which the will plays a central role” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.3, 73). Unlike Jung, whose account of the Self focused on the unconscious, Assagioli emphasized consciousness and will as main functions of the Self. This emphasis is indicative of his belief in the ability of a person to have a full, conscious experience of the Self. Both Assagioli and Jung considered various functions and developed typologies for the analysis of an individual (Assagioli, 1978; Jung, 1921). Assagioli evolved a complex classification of types that are expressed in a wide range of experiences: bodily, affective, mental, and transpersonal. Additionally, he paid particular attention to the body as always co-present and fully included in the process referred to as “biopsychosynthesis” (Assagioli, 1967a). He stressed that the body is an important ground for experiencing the transpersonal.

4. Like Jung, Assagioli had wide transcultural and spiritual interests. Assagioli’s roots extended more towards esoteric teachings, but both scholars extensively studied, and Assagioli more evidently drew on the great Eastern spiritual traditions. Assagioli looked to Eastern psychology with the aim of integrating it with Western psychology. In particular, he was influenced by the Yoga and Vedanta-Upanishad philosophies, which he believed made important contributions to the knowledge of human nature and forged important tools for exploring and transforming consciousness.

Jung’s comments on Asian philosophical and spiritual texts included the preface and a “European commentary” to a volume on Taoist alchemy, The Secret of the Golden Flower (Jung & Wilhelm, 1981), in which he expressed some thoughts on the relationship between East and West. He said: “Western consciousness is not the only one possible (.....) and is representative of only part of humanity. The expansion of consciousness (.....) must take place according to the development of the elements of our psyche, analogous to the properties of Eastern consciousness, which is extraneous to us, just as the East can’t do without our technique, science and industry” (Jung & Wilhelm, 1981 pp. 77–78). Jung then warned against the common mistake Westerners make when they take Eastern meditations literally, imitating them poorly and missing the essence. In his notes Assagioli enthusiastically agrees with Jung’s considerations about Westerners. He also said: “Jung remarked that our civilization is young and has developed its intellectual capacities rapidly, leaving the emotions and instincts in a primitive, repressed state, yet to be developed. This results in a very strong contrast in which the primitive elements burst forth. The solution lies in exploring and developing alongside spiritual development those elements of the unconscious which have remained behindhand” (Assagioli, 1976, 10. 2.2, 73). Jung made further observations on Indian spirituality drawn from his visit to India in 1938. He pointed out that the goal for Hindu spirituality is to liberate oneself from nature itself, from the weight of its contradictions and opposites, for example to search in meditation.
for a condition of emptiness and absence of images. Jung reaffirmed the importance of the contemplation of nature and of psychic images described in Eastern wisdom, images that he includes in the collective unconscious (Jung, 1967).

Both Assagioli and Jung drew on Western philosophy, spirituality, and psychology. Assagioli particularly looked at Platonic and Judeo-Christian traditions and existentialism. Both were interested in occult (Jung, 1902) and parapsychological phenomena (Assagioli, 1976, 11.1–15, 75; 76; 77). However, Assagioli’s general approach was pragmatic, practical, and synthetic and was directed towards benefits for society through transpersonal development in education and psychotherapy and through the practice of interpersonal and social psychosynthesis. As Jung drew inspiration from physicists, Assagioli drew inspiration from Eastern teachings, especially teachings on energy systems and energetic fields. He named psycho-energetics a fifth force of psychology after the fourth (transpersonal), and he explored its potential for future development (Assagioli, 1973c).

In conclusion, Assagioli’s view on spirituality differed from Jung’s by focusing on a more direct and experiential approach. Assagioli specifically proposed meditations of various types as effective ways to achieve greater awareness, integration, and grounding in the transpersonal (Assagioli, 1963a; 1963b). Similarities, however, exist with the Jungian approach to analysis, symbolic-imagery work, and creative-expressive methods. Both men emphasized the importance of the psychotherapeutic relationship as a vehicle for healing, in particular through transference-countertransference dynamics and through the living experience of the transpersonal dimension in human relationships.

**Early History, First Psychoanalytic Contacts, and Assagioli’s First Meeting with Jung**

Here we look briefly at Assagioli’s life (Rosselli, 2012), specifically at those events relevant to his relationship with Jung. Assagioli was born Roberto Marco Grego in Venice, Italy in 1888 to Jewish parents, and he died in Capolona (Arezzo), Italy in 1974. After the death of his father in 1890, his mother, Elena Kaula, married Alessandro Assagioli, a pediatrician (Berti, 1988a). In 1905 the Assagiolis moved to Florence, seat of the prestigious Istituto di Studi Superiori [Institute for Advanced Studies], and Assagioli enrolled in the degree course for medicine and surgery (Berti, 1988a). His main interests were psychology, psychiatry, and mental health. He had already attended Freudian circles during a visit to Vienna in 1905 (Giovetti, 1995), and in the following year an article of his was published revealing his emerging interest in the psychoanalytic movement (Giovetti, 1995). The article, entitled *Gli effetti del riso e le sue applicazioni pedagogiche* [The effects of laughter and its pedagogical applications], was published in the second issue of the *Rivista di Psicologia applicata alla Pedagogia e alla Psicopatologia* [Journal of Psychology Applied to Pedagogy and Psychopathology].
Around this time Assagioli joined the Geneva circle of Edouard Claparède and Théodore Flournoy (Berti, 1988a). His collaboration with them on the study of associations was the main reason for Assagioli’s first trip to Zurich (1907), where he had his first contact with Jung, at that time a Freudian psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. Jung, in a letter of August 12, 1907 addressed to Freud, almost certainly referred to Assagioli when he wrote “in just three weeks seven Americans, a Russian, an Italian, and a Hungarian were here” (McGuire, 1974, p. 76). Assagioli, in a handwritten note dated September 24, 1907, comments: “at Burghölzli, reading the Archives de Psychologie [The Archives of Psychology], I read ‘biologiste’ instead of ‘histologiste’. The mistake can be explained perfectly from the Freudian point of view with my dislike towards Histology” (Berti, 1988a, p. 65). Knowing this date, we can infer that Assagioli’s presence coincided with the foundation of the “Freud Society” in Zurich (Jones, 1974), a society in which he took part as an outside guest of Claparède (Berti, 1988a; McGuire, 1974).

**Connections between R. Assagioli and C. G. Jung from 1909 to 1915**

In this section we look at the evidence in published journals, correspondence, and notes indicating continued contact between the two men. Contacts were predominantly focused on psychoanalytical issues and methods, with the two men explaining to each other their common interests and the roots of their models. In July 1909 Assagioli returned to Burghölzli for the preparation of his dissertation. This is how Jung described him to Freud, in a letter of July 13th 1909:

> The birds of passage are returning (…). Among them is a very pleasant and perhaps valuable acquaintance, our first Italian, a Dr. Assagioli from the psychiatric clinic in Florence. Prof. Tanzi [Eugenio Tanzi, 1856–1934] assigned him our work for a dissertation. The young man is very intelligent, seems to be extremely knowledgeable and is an enthusiastic follower who is entering the new territory with the proper brio. He wants to visit you next spring. (McGuire, 1974, p. 241)

After the VI International Congress of Psychology in Geneva (August 2–7, 1909), at which he joined other Italian colleagues and founded the Italian Psychological Society, Assagioli returned to work at Burghölzli to draft his dissertation on psychoanalysis (Berti, 1988a). Although Jung left Burghölzli in 1909 to devote himself exclusively to his private practice in Küsnacht, Assagioli frequently visited him. The visits continued after he graduated, as Assagioli valued the depth of his conversations with Jung in Jung’s study, which was full of books and exotic objects (Giovetti, 1995). It is highly likely that Assagioli encountered the term “psychosynthesis” sometime during these visits, for the term appears in a letter that Jung wrote to Freud in 1909. This letter proposes, among other things: “(…) there must be some quite special complex, a universal one having to do with the prospective tendencies in man. If there is a “psychoanalysis” there must also be a “psychosynthesis” which creates future events according to the same laws (…)” (McGuire, 1974, p. 216).
It should also be noted that the communication between Jung and Assagioli at this time included not only their psychoanalytic interests, but also their mutual interest in paranormal phenomena, occultism, and Asian mysticism (Berti, 1988a).

By the beginning of 1910 Assagioli had been accepted by the Zurich Psychoanalytic Association, had served as a reviewer for the *Jahrbuch für Psychoanalytische und Psychopathologische Forschungen* [Yearbook for Psychoanalytical and Psychopathological Research], and had begun a written correspondence with Freud. Freud wrote to Jung in a letter dated January 2nd 1910: “yesterday I received a very nice letter from Assagioli, which was, besides, written in impeccable German” (McGuire, 1974 p. 304). In an interview in which Assagioli was asked, among other things, about his relationship to Freud and Jung (Keen, 1974, p. 101), Assagioli replied: “I never met Freud personally, but I corresponded with him and he wrote to Jung expressing the hope that I would further the cause of psychoanalysis in Italy. But I soon became a heretic. With Jung I had a more cordial relationship.”

In February 1910, in the Florentine literary journal *La Voce* [The Voice], Assagioli published for the first time in Italian “Le idee di Sigmund Freud sulla sessualità” [Sigmund Freud’s ideas about sexuality], an article in which he expressed an ambivalent opinion about Freud’s concepts of sexuality (Assagioli, 1910a), a view shared by Jung. From these early reservations we can see how Assagioli, in a way similar to Jung, began to detach himself from Freud.

At the end of 1913 Jung detached himself completely from Freud, withdrawing from Burghölzli and from Zurich University (Staude, 1992). As a member of the Zurich Freudian group, Assagioli attended a March 1910 meeting in Nuremberg of the important International Congress of Psychoanalysis. On that occasion he became an associate and member of the International Psychoanalytical Association (Berti, 1988a). In his account of the congress published in the *Rivista di Psicologia Applicata* [Journal of Applied Psychology], he praised Jung’s “Report on America” for the originality and ability with which he analyzed the psyche of North Americans and for his demonstration of the influence of the African American and American Indian populations on it. (Assagioli, 1910b). The completion of his dissertation, entitled “La Psicoanalisi” [Psychoanalysis] —of which sadly no copy exists— was followed by his graduation in Florence in 1910. After his graduation, Assagioli started his psychotherapeutic practice.

Assagioli took a trip to Zurich in 1910 to pursue further his interest in studying schizophrenia with Bleuler. This trip had the additional benefit of allowing him to continue cultivating his “more cordial relationship” with Jung (Keen, 1974, p. 101). Assagioli’s increasing interest in Jung (and at the same time his progressive detachment from Freud) was later made explicit in *Psiche* [Psyche]. Together with other eminent Italian colleagues, Assagioli founded this short-lived journal, of which he was editor-in-chief. Only four issues were published in the period between 1912 and 1915, one a year. In 1915 Assagioli, like many
other colleagues, was called to arms and served in the Italian army as a medical officer. His military service lasted until the end of the First World War (Giovetti, 1995), interrupting both the Journal and his work and professional career.

Assagioli’s publications in *Psiche* [Psyche] between 1912 and 1915 reveal his progressive detachment from Freud (Berti, 1988a). They also reveal how Assagioli’s thinking was developing in ways similar to Jung’s. We can see from his notes his appreciation of Jung’s technique of association, Jung’s theoretical account of emotional and relational aspects of psychic life, and Jung’s understanding of the oneiric dimension. There are many references to Jung in Assagioli’s publications in *Psiche* [Psyche], and we mention some here to give a sense of the interplay of ideas.

In the 1912 issue Assagioli edited a section Note e Commenti - Il Metodo delle Associazioni [Notes and Comments - The Method of Associations] in which he quotes Jung on the study of associations by means of the reaction-time technique (Assagioli, 1912a). Other references show Assagioli’s interest in Jung’s views on emotional relationships. In this vein Assagioli comments on Jung’s “The Psychology of the Dementia Praecox” (Jung, 1907): “This issue, besides a lot of original interpretations of the symptoms of early dementia, contains many very noteworthy considerations about emotional life in general” (Assagioli, 1912b, 146–147). Assagioli also comments on a quotation by Jung that appears in the article in the *Jahrbuch für Psychoanalytische und Psychopathologische Forschungen* [Yearbook for Psychoanalytical and Psychopathological Research]: *Die Bedeutung des Vaters für das Schicksal des Einzeinen.* [The significance of the father in the destiny of the individual] (Jung, 1909). He comments: “The author [Jung] shows, based on a lot of facts, the deep influence that the emotional relationship between father and children has on the lives of the latter” (Assagioli, 1912b, 146–147).

Overall there are seven references to Jungian contributions in *Psiche* [Psyche] (Assagioli, 1912b), six from *Diagnostische Assoziationsstudien. Beiträge zur experimentelle Psychopathologie* [Studies on Diagnostic Association: Contributions to Experimental Psychopathology] of 1906 and 1911 and one (in Italian translation) from the *Rivista di Psicologia Applicata* [Journal of Applied Psychology] (Vol. IV, 1908). The group of six from *Diagnostische Assoziationsstudien* includes contributions to the study of association and to psychoanalysis; it also includes references to associations and emotional complexes; and it mentions Jung as the editor of the collection. Comments from Assagioli include the following:

- The authors (Jung and Riklin) have accurately studied 26 healthy persons to learn the influence that reinforcement words have on associations. The level of attention and the degree of culture of the persons examined and their individual characteristics (mental types, emotional complexes) were considered (Assagioli, 1912a, pp. 136–139).
- The author (Jung) reports the results of numerous experiments which confirm the value of the error of reproduction of the reaction as a revealing sign of emotional complexes (Assagioli, 1912b, pp. 146–147).
- There is a report on a case of obsessive neurosis in which psychoanalysis confirmed all the information previously obtained by experiments on associations (Assagioli, 1912, pp. 146–147).
- There is a report on a case of hysteria in which, again, the results of the experiment on associations were fully confirmed by psychoanalysis (Assagioli, 1912b, pp. 146–147).
- The author (Jung) talks about the judicial applications of the method of associations and makes mention of results that helped find the perpetrator of a theft (Assagioli, 1912b, pp. 146–147).

In the second issue of *Psiche* [Psyche, 1913] Assagioli published an article entitled *Psicologia e Psicoterapia* [Psychology and Psychotherapy]. In this article he again underlined the importance of emotional complexes, referring to Jung twice (Assagioli 1913a, pp. 175–196). In the same issue, under the section *Psychological Bibliographies*, Jung is mentioned as editor of the *Jahrbuch* collection for the period 1909–1913. Here Assagioli’s assertion was short and to the point: “This yearbook has published the most extensive works of the psychoanalytic school” (Assagioli, 1913b, p. 204). Finally, in an article about the classification of dreams, published in the last issue of *Psiche* [Psyche], Assagioli also quoted Jung’s studies (Assagioli, 1915, pp. 317–329).

**THE TWO LETTERS OF THE FORTIES**

It was difficult to trace documents on contacts between Assagioli and Jung for the period between World War I and World War II. We do have two references where Assagioli confirms, in his comments, the similarities between himself and Jung in regard to the importance of the spiritual dimension and to the constructive benefits of psychotherapy. Regarding “psycho-spiritual diagnosis,” Assagioli claimed that “the best that has been published up to now on this subject is found, in my opinion, in C.G. Jung’s book *Psychologische Typen* [Psychological Types]” (Assagioli, 1927, p. 25; Jung, 1921). In Assagioli’s monograph *Psicoanalisi e Psicosintesi* [Psychoanalysis and Psychosynthesis] Jung is praised because, in contrast to Freud, “he recognizes the importance of the constructive phase in psychic cures and acknowledges that, between the ordinary I and the subconscious, there is a transcendent I” (Assagioli, 1931, p. 9).

We know that from the end of World War I to almost the end of World War II Assagioli’s professional and private lives were disrupted. He changed locations several times, travelled abroad, and suffered several distressing experiences. Among the happier events was the birth of his only son Ilario, in 1923. In 1927 Assagioli’s *A New Method of Healing: Psychosynthesis* appeared (Assagioli, 1927). This publication set forth the principles that constituted the basis of psychosynthesis. In the summer of 1940 the Nazis persecuted Assagioli. He was arrested by the Fascists at his house in Chianti and jailed for a month in

*Roberto Assagioli and Carl Gustav Jung*
August. He was subsequently forced to go into hiding. He mentions this in a letter of September 1944 addressed to a circle of friends including Jung. It is now preserved in the Zürich ETH-Bibliothek, Wissenschaftliche Sammlungen [The Zurich ETH Library, Scientific Collection]. Even though the war was not yet over, he expressed optimism for the present and future, both for his own family and for humanity. The letter reads:

“Dear friends,

Wishing to resume the good bonds that linked us in the past as soon as possible, I thought I’d start by sending you this first collective letter, because of the practical limitations of the moment. I am glad to be able to inform you that my family and I are alive and free. The Germans and the fascists honored me (if not pleased me) by coming to look for me personally; so I had to play hide-and-seek with them for several months in the Catenia Alps (in the Province of Arezzo) and in the upper Tiber Valley. With the help of God and various good people (local friends, peasants, a parachutist and various other Englishmen with whom I partly shared my fate), the seekers always arrived too late… Our house at La Nussa, Capolona, was ransacked and blown up with dynamite. On the floor of the cellar I found piles of my writings and notes representing over 35 years of my work, all in a mess. I have started cleaning up and putting them in order. We are temporarily housed in the part of the farm that was less damaged by the grenades. We have no news yet about Villa Serena. I am prepared for the worst because even there I had… a bad political reputation. As many of you know, I was arrested there in 1940, accused of raising and spreading prayers for peace and other internationalist crimes.

I’m not ready yet for making specific plans for the future. When I can, I will take a trip to Rome and to Florence. In the first relatively quiet months of “secret life” (Autumn 1943-Winter 1944) I worked on the revision of my writings in Italian so as to be able to gather them in two or three volumes, and on the writing of a book in English on Psychosynthesis. I also wrote an essay: Politica e Psicologia – Le vie della ricostruzione. [Politics and Psychology - The Ways of Reconstruction] (Assagioli, 1944). At the moment I have various trying practical problems that I must resolve, but I have resumed also my spiritual and cultural activities and I propose intensifying and extending them as the opportunity to do so presents itself. I feel the inner call - and adhere to it with the whole of my being - to carry out my small part in the big and joyful task of individual, national and worldwide renewal. There are wonderful possibilities which can be developed if all of us are willing and able to do our part, in harmonious cooperation with men and women and groups of good will” (Giovetti, 1995, p. 58).

With hindsight it is reasonable to assume that damage to Assagioli’s properties during the war may have destroyed a number of documents related to his previous correspondence with Jung. In January 1946 Assagioli wrote another letter, this time addressed only to Jung, hoping that Jung could help him enter Switzerland in order to accompany his son, affected by tuberculosis, to the
sanatorium in Leysin (French Switzerland). Here follows the published English translation of the entire version of the original letter, which was written in Italian:

“Capolona (Arezzo)

January 18 1946

Illustrious and dear Colleague,

Remembering your kind welcome when, in 1939, I passed through Zurich on my return from England to go back (imprudently!) to Italy, I take the liberty of writing to you to give you my news and ask a small favor.

My family and I survived the tumult of war but we underwent persecution and danger, as I mentioned in the “Letter to my friends” [original underlining] which I enclose (Giovetti, 1995, p 58). In it, however, I do not mention a great difficulty and complication we had during the war years: the serious illness of my son, affected by pulmonary tuberculosis. Nevertheless he resisted the discomforts in a surprising way and since 1944 has greatly improved.

Now he has been offered a very favorable opportunity to speed his recovery: the “European Federation of Relief to Students” will almost certainly include him in the group of twenty Italian students to whom it offers hospitality and treatment for six months in the University Sanatorium of Leysin. He would very much like me to accompany him there and I also wish to do so, in order to be able to speak to colleagues at the Sanatorium with regard to his treatment, etc. It seems hard to get an entry permit from the Swiss authorities, but the Committee of the “Federation” hopes to obtain that by appointing me, as a physician, to chaperone the whole group of students. However, the Federal Authorities might ask some important Swiss citizen for information and references about me. Therefore I took the liberty of giving your name, so if they ask you about me I hope you will say that I’m not an “undesirable” guest for a short stay in Switzerland!

Besides all this - since, as you know, I have always followed your work as a brilliant pioneer in the field of psychology with deep appreciation and admiration I would like to know what you have been engaged in during these years and if you have published new writings, so that I can obtain them during my trip to Switzerland.

Please forgive me for disturbing you and accept my best wishes and most cordial greetings.

Your devoted Roberto Assagioli.”

These two letters, especially the second, demonstrate that Assagioli’s relationship with Jung involved not only professional but also personal matters and that, despite the lack of written evidence, it lasted for a long time. It is possible that much documentary material was destroyed in the war years. Tragically, despite all efforts made, including the Swiss transfer to the sanatorium in Leysin mentioned in his letter to Jung in 1946, Assagioli’s son died prematurely of tuberculosis in 1951 at the age of 26. Assagioli’s professional esteem for Jung continued, as we can see from the 1966 Lectures.

THE 1966 LECTURES

Three lectures given by Assagioli at the Institute of Psychosynthesis in Florence in 1966 were translated from Italian into English and published in a booklet entitled Jung and Psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1967b). The booklet was edited by the New York Psychosynthesis Research Foundation. The first lecture is about the structure of the human psyche. Assagioli begins by honoring Jung both as a man and as a representative of his profession. In thus honoring Jung, he gives expression to reflecting the rapport that distinguished their relationship over the years, although their respective differences are evident. Assagioli speaks well of Jung’s commitment to a scientific perspective based “on the ground of psychological experience and the empirical method” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 2). At the same time he notes Jung’s “unwillingness to admit a substantial reality transcending the strictly psychological sphere”(Assagioli, 1967b, p. 2), and he continues: “But this limitation of his shows how unjust was the accusation of ‘mysticism’ (…). Such a charge reflects a lack of comprehension both of Jung and mysticism. […] The mystic believes firmly in the existence […] of a Universal Spirit; he is convinced of being […] in a state of union with that transcendent Reality. Jung, on the contrary, assumes an agnostic attitude towards it; he admits the subjective ‘psychological’ reality of the experience, but maintains that its essential, transcendent reality cannot be regarded as demonstrated” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 2).

Referring to the structure of the psyche, Assagioli notes the importance given by Jung to the complexity of psychic nature, noting in particular that for Jung the psyche consists of relatively autonomous parts, including a number of personae or masks, which correspond to social functions and interpersonal social roles. It is noteworthy that Jung’s account of personae is similar in some respects to the account of sub-personalities in psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1973b). The two accounts differ, however, in that psychosynthesis holds that sub-personalities are not only relational and social but also include components of the “inner personality” or anima (Latin for soul), whereas Jung spoke of the anima primarily in contrast to the persona (Latin for mask).

Assagioli also compares his own approach to psychic functions to Jung’s. The similarities in their approaches lie in the importance they both give to the concept of function in the psychic life of individuals. For Jung, there are four fundamental functions: sensation, feeling, thought, and intuition. Assagioli accepts these four and stresses in particular the importance of intuition, which
he considers underemphasized in other models. In noting these similarities, Assagioli also points out differences between Jung’s model and the psychosynthesis model. The primary difference is that psychosynthesis identifies seven functions, adding imagination, impulse-desire, and will to the four functions identified by Jung. In psychosynthesis the will occupies a special place among the functions, since it is closely related to the I and Self: “the subject, the experience of the center of consciousness” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 4).

Jung combines each of the four psychological functions (sensation, feeling, thought, and intuition) with outward (extraverted) and inward (introverted) orientations and in this way arrives at eight psychological types (Assagioli, 1967b). Assagioli takes a different approach. He extends the number of functions and makes different use of the connections between types and functions. Jung gives more importance to extravert and introvert orientations. Assagioli recognizes extravert and introvert as an important pair of orientations, but he recognizes other pairs as well, for example, passive/active and supra-version/subversion orientations. Overall he distinguishes seven fundamental human types: will, love, active-practical, creative-artistic, scientific, devotional, and organizational. Finally, it should be noted that for Assagioli the will type and the creative-artistic type and the functions of will and imagination have an independent importance that Jung does not consider.

This first lecture also looks at the concept of the unconscious. Assagioli mentions the following point of similarity with Jung: “the unconscious has no ‘personal centre’. This is in agreement with psychosynthesis, which warns against the tendency to make an ‘entity’ of the unconscious, almost a personality, more or less in accord or in contrast with consciousness” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 8). Psychosynthesis recognizes the importance of Jung’s contribution regarding the collective unconscious and Assagioli agrees with Jung in conceiving it as a vast area outside the individual sphere, containing multiple levels from the biological to the spiritual. However, for Assagioli, the archetypical collective experience should not be confused with the spiritual sphere, which he locates on a different, transpersonal level of the unconscious. At the end of this first lecture Assagioli credits Jung for having highlighted human spiritual needs and for recognizing that some psychopathological disturbances may in part be related to the absence of spirituality in one’s life. Jung was keenly aware of the psychological value of spiritual experience even though he never acknowledged the direct experience of a metaphysical spiritual reality. He considered himself agnostic to the point of declaring that God is a psychological function of the individual. Moreover in his unpublished notes (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.2, 73) refers to Jung who, when asked if he believed in God, replied: “I could not say I believe, I know! I have had the experience of being gripped by something that is stronger than myself, something that people call God.” (Jung, 1955, p. 38).

Assagioli comes back to examining the spiritual dimension in his second lecture. In this lecture, “Therapy,” Assagioli outlines his substantial agreement with Jung in opposing “pathologism.” He considers human beings to be fundamentally healthy, even if they may temporarily suffer physical or mental
harm or experience a temporary malfunction. He explains that the important thing is not to judge whether people are healthy or sick, but rather to help them integrate in a complementary way potentialities that may seem opposed to their sense of self. This point is in agreement with Jung’s statement: “I prefer to understand man in the perspective of his health” (Jung, 1953, p. 180). Additionally, in his unpublished notes (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.1, 73), referring to the therapeutic approach, he quotes Jung, who stresses “the importance of the conception of the world and the categories of value which derive from it” (Jung, 1953, p. 243). Therefore Jung and Assagioli agree with the need to adapt methods and therapeutic techniques to the specific situation of each individual patient (Assagioli, 1967b).

In psychosynthesis, as in analytical psychology, the goal of therapy is to reconstruct and integrate the personality. Assagioli emphasizes that this goal is evident in the synthetic character of Jungian therapy. “In fact this aims at producing a profound transformation of the personality and its integration by means of what Jung called the ‘process of individuation’ ” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 12). The process of individuation has therefore a “goal shared by psychosynthesis itself” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.1, 73).

Another similarity concerns the phases of the psychotherapeutic process that Jung subdivides as follows: [the numbering in this list comes from Assagioli’s original text of 1967]:

1. Clarification as awareness of the contents of the unconscious
2. Conscious assimilation of unconscious elements and tendencies
3. The discovery of the Self
4. The transformation of the personality
5. The integration and synthesis of the personality

Assagioli states how closely “Jung’s ‘therapeutic program’ is akin to that of psychosynthetic therapy” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 13). He also identifies other points of comparison between the two psychotherapeutic methods. For instance he notes that Jung’s approach to dream analysis recognizes dreams of importantly different types, including in particular “prospective” or “constructive” dreams, which point to the solution of conflicts and the way to integration. He says that Jung’s approach is in this respect “against stereotyped interpretations of the ‘dreambook’ variety” because the symbol is considered a carrier of many meanings. Assagioli recognizes the similarity of this approach to the oneiric dimension to the approach of psychosynthesis, even though in psychosynthesis a subdivision into various levels (collective, personal, transpersonal) is preferred. Another similarity is that both Jung’s theory and psychosynthesis value imaginative techniques, for example, the use of symbols and expressive techniques such as free drawing. In turn, a principal difference is that analytical psychology prefers a more spontaneous use of the imagination (active imagination), whereas psychosynthesis prefers more structured and guided techniques of imagination (e.g., guided imagery and symbolic visualization).
The concept of the Self is central in both models. Assagioli presents Jung’s concept, explaining that for Jung the Self is (a) an intermediate meeting point between consciousness and the unconscious and (b) an “archetypal figure” the idea of which is a warranted psychological assumption but not one that can be scientifically verified. In contrast, psychosynthesis “regards the Self as a reality, rather like a living Entity, direct and certain knowledge or awareness of which can be had [...] [The Self is] one of those immediate data of consciousness (to use Bergson’s expression) which have no need of demonstration but bear with them their own evidence” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 15).

Jung gives special weight to the psychotherapeutic relationship and within it highlights the importance of transference in the psychotherapeutic process. Assagioli’s view is that the Jungian concept of transference is neither clear nor unequivocal. In Die Psychologie der Übertragung [The Psychology of Transference] Jung himself states: “The problematic character of the transference is so complex and many sided that I lack the categories needed to offer a systematic exposition of it” (Jung, 1971, p. 229).

According to Assagioli, in psychosynthesis the psychotherapeutic relationship is best understood by distinguishing four principal aspects: (a) transference in the original Freudian sense, (b) the therapeutic situation, that is, the conscious, real relationship in which the therapist functions as guide, (c) a human relationship between patient and therapist that includes psychological interactions on various levels of a conscious, authentic sort and (d) the resolution of the relationship, which includes a transitional stage bringing an end to the treatment (Assagioli, 1967b, pp. 18–19).

Assagioli’s third and last lecture is entitled “Therapy and Education.” At the beginning of the lecture Assagioli addresses the psychotherapeutic process in psychosynthesis and analytical psychology. He says, “the transformation and integration of the personality often occur spontaneously as a result [...] of the creative and synthesizing action of the symbols that emerge from the unconscious. Jung does not advise the active intervention in this process either of the therapist or of the will of [...] the conscious ‘I’. Psychosynthetic therapy, while fully recognizing the importance of the spontaneous processes [...] , believes that these processes can be promoted and effectively assisted by the co-operation of the conscious personality. This action is performed by what constitutes the center, the dynamic element that is the conscious and active subject, using his will” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 20).

In psychosynthesis two main reasons support the importance of the client’s cooperation and conscious engagement in the therapeutic process. Firstly, these kinds of efforts on the part of the client help to contain and control the energies emerging from the unconscious and thereby help to facilitate a constructive reorganization of these energies. Again, these examples highlight the importance of active techniques in psychotherapy. Secondly, active collaboration has “the advantage, sometimes the necessity, of developing the psychic functions that have remained at primitive, infantile levels [...] or [that have been] inhibited by repression” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 21).
Assagioli reaffirms his agreement with Jung regarding the benefits of expressing and satisfying spiritual needs in psychotherapy.

Assagioli continues his lecture by stressing the great importance that psychosynthesis places on the use of active techniques in psychotherapy. The therapist encourages and guides the patient, helping the patient learn how to practice these techniques by himself. In this methodology, therefore, the use of the will is central and involves the patient taking responsibility in the process.

Assagioli describes the active techniques, placing them in three groups: psychophysical, psychological, and psychospiritual. He stresses the importance of the educational applications of these techniques from the perspective of psychosynthesis and notes agreement and disagreement on this point with Jung’s model. Assagioli quotes Jung who expresses disappointment at “not being able to have other educational resources available” (beyond psychoanalysis) (Jung, 1953, p. 148) and he adds that “this affirmation is an avoidance: if he wanted there were the various ‘active techniques’ that he could well have used!” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.1, 73). He refers explicitly to Jung’s lessons collected in “Analytical Psychology and Education,” a contribution to be found in the publication entitled “Contributions to Analytical Psychology” (Jung, 1928). The Jungian concepts supported by Assagioli pertain specifically to the educational method for understanding subjective experience and to the need for educators (parents, teachers, etc.) to deal consciously with personal psychological themes, without repressing or avoiding them (Assagioli, 1967b).

Assagioli also supports Jung’s approach to the educational problems of gifted children (Jung, 1943). In fact he dedicated much attention to this subject, applying psychosynthesis especially to the education both of gifted and super-gifted children (Assagioli, 1988b). Remarking on their affinities also in this area, Assagioli quotes Jung (Assagioli, 1967b) referring to gifted children who erroneously may appear to be lazy, negligent, or distracted. Jung warns against the failure to recognize the talents of such children because it incurs the risk of delaying their intellectual development and possibly leads to their talents being used in destructive and antisocial ways. On this matter Jung also gives importance to what he calls the gifts of the heart, in addition to the gifts of the head, which may be unbalanced (Jung, 1943). In agreement with Jung this perspective meets Assagioli’s call for an integral and differentiated education of particularly gifted children (Assagioli, 1988b).

In the final part of this lecture Assagioli looks at “the problems and methods of inter-individual relationship from Jung’s standpoint and that of psychosynthesis” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 26). He concurs with the Jungian idea of individuation, which “presupposes a unification with oneself and therefore with humanity, of which everyone carries a particle within him” (Jung, 1953, p. 228). For Jung this two-fold unification is seen as involving a conflict between personal life and the collective pressure exerted by modern social life. Although Assagioli admits there is “a great deal of truth in all this, […] We must recognize that the individual and the mass are included in the extensive sphere of human relations, forming a part of the normal life of man […], a
being both social and sociable” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 27). In this affirmation there is a connection with the essay “Politics and Psychology” quoted by Assagioli in his Letter to Friends (Assagioli, 1944; Giovetti, 1995, p. 58). In that essay Assagioli, still during the troubled war years, expresses his wide vision and yearning for a global and planetary perspective. He considers the analogy of the individual psychosynthesis process with the evolutionary process of larger groups, extended to nations and the whole of humanity. As with the individual he foresees the various dimensions of larger groups to be taken into account, also for pragmatic and political applications. He addresses the personal dimension together with the ancestral archetypical roots in accordance with Jung, but he refers again particularly to a transpersonal development and a global psychosynthesis of these larger contexts, toward a broader reconstructive and healing process.

Assagioli suggests a series of methods that in practice help to overcome difficulties in relationships. Without specifically enumerating them he divides them into “Preliminary Methods” and “Positive Methods.” These methods seek to bring into balance the excessive tendency “to self-assertion and over-evaluation of success in the external world” on the one hand, and the use of goodwill, a cooperative attitude, and solidarity with one’s fellows on the other (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 27). Assagioli sees in Jung’s approach a “lack of any social aspect and of an inter-individual psychosynthesis” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.1, 73). He affirms that “achieving interpersonal and group psychosynthesis (also called inter-individual and social psychosynthesis) is an important, indeed an indispensable objective of psychosynthetic therapy and education” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 28).

THE LAST INTERVIEWS

In Spring 1974 the elderly founder of psychosynthesis was interviewed for two different journals by foreign journalists, Sam Keen and Beverley Besmer. The interview by Sam Keen for Psychology Today, published in December 1974, is the one most frequently quoted and the one to which we referred in earlier sections of this paper. Among the many questions Keen put to Assagioli in that interview was one asking about his relationships with Freud and Jung. Assagioli confirmed that he had never met Freud in person, although he had corresponded with him, and that his relationship with Jung was deeper: “With Jung, I had a more cordial relationship. We met many times during the years and had delightful talks. Of all modern psychotherapists, Jung is the closest in theory and practice to psychosynthesis” (Keen, 1974, p. 101).

Keen also asked Assagioli to compare his psychological theory with Jung’s. This was Assagioli’s answer:

In the practice of therapy we both agree in rejecting ‘pathologism,’ that is, concentration upon morbid manifestations and symptoms of a supposed psychological ‘disease’. We regard man as a fundamentally healthy organism in which there may be a temporary malfunctioning [....] The task
of therapy is to aid the individual in transforming the personality and in integrating apparent contradictions. Both Jung and I have stressed the need for a person to develop the higher psychic functions, the spiritual dimension. (Keen, 1974, p. 101)

After making this point, Assagioli clarified the differences between his and Jung’s account of psychic functions:

Jung distinguishes four functions: sensation, feeling, thought and intuition. Psychosynthesis says that Jung’s four functions do not provide for a complete description of psychological life. […] We hold that imagination or fantasy is a distinct function. There is also a group of functions that impel us toward action in the outside world. This group includes instincts, tendencies, impulses, desires and aspirations. And here we come to one of the central foundations of psychosynthesis: there is a fundamental difference between drives, impulses, desires and the will. We place the will in a central position at the heart of self-consciousness or the Ego. (Keen, 1974, p. 101)

The interview conducted by Beverly Besmer in April 1974, published in the same year in *Interpersonal Development*, also contains a short reference to Jung, this one a critical reference. The context for the reference is provided by Assagioli’s detailed answer on the concept of the unconscious, which psychosynthesis divides into different levels. In this context Assagioli says that a similar division of the unconscious into levels is not found in other models, including the Jungian, although Jung is to be credited for having identified the collective unconscious. According to Assagioli, therefore, Jung’s account of the unconscious, although groundbreaking, is inadequate:

For instance his doctrine of the archetypes includes both archaic primitive concepts and higher ideal models, which bear affinity with Platonic Ideas. Thus when he speaks of ‘unconscious’, he doesn’t make clear the difference between its various levels (Besmer, 1974, p. 219).

**DISCUSSION**

Our general conclusion is that the personal relationship between Assagioli and Jung was positive and long lasting. This conclusion, we believe, is warranted despite the previously mentioned limits in the documentary material, especially for the period 1916–1943.

On the basis of the unpublished and undated notes preserved in the Assagioli Archive of the Institute of Psychosynthesis in Florence, we can now restate how Assagioli thought of his model in comparison with Jung’s. As Assagioli specified, some similarities and differences between the models can be found in areas of common interest about which Jung was ambivalent or contradictory. In his unpublished notes Assagioli mentions that one such area, this one outside psychology, is astrology. He says that both he and Jung recognize a “correspondence between the date of the positions of the stars and the
psychological characteristics of the subjects, without, however, taking a position with regard to the possibility of a cause-effect relationship.” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.2, 73). Assagioli believes that such correspondences between astrology and psychology can be understood in terms of the notion of “synchronicity,” a notion developed by Jung with the physicist Pauli.

Assagioli praised Jung for having the following admirable qualities of mind and character:

Understanding of the relativity of belief and recognition of not knowing; intellectual modesty and plasticity; openness to the new and the curiosity of an explorer; absence of authoritarianism […] and respect for the subject’s individuality; appreciation of religious and spiritual potentialities and values; and understanding of the goal of individuation. (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.1, 73)

Still in this collection of unpublished notes, in the section on Jung (Spirituality-Religion) (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.2, 73), we found excerpts from a letter that Jung wrote in 1960 and which Assagioli partly transcribed. From these excerpts we can infer the two men’s common interest in parapsychology, in particular their interest in the issue of the possible eternity of spirit. The letter postulates forms of parallel existence outside of time, stating that it is difficult to know how to distinguish them from temporal forms. In the same letter Jung affirms: “it is possible we exist simultaneously in both of those worlds and that only occasionally do we intuit that this might be true. However what exists outside of time is, in my opinion, immutable: it possesses a relative eternity” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.2, 73).

In the Archive’s collection of Assagioli’s unpublished notes we also found confirmation of the differences between Assagioli and Jung on transpersonal and spiritual issues. In these notes Assagioli criticizes Jung for failing to distinguish between “archaic (past) and original super-temporal (eternal)” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.2, 73; original underlining). According to Assagioli, the Jungian statement about the reality of the spiritual dimension appears to be in contrast with some of his other observations on this subject. In fact, according to Assagioli, the reality of the spiritual dimension is a matter of important difference in their conceptions of the “Self,” which Jung denies is a “real entity” (Assagioli, 1976, 3.5.5, 41).

Assagioli agrees with Jung about stressing the importance of spiritual needs, explicitly referring to the “Vision and vivid spiritual experience during his [Jung’s] serious illness in 1944” (Jung, 1967, pp. 194–225). Despite these experiences, according to Assagioli, Jung “did not draw a real conclusion, a strong faith” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.2, 73); he interpreted his experiences psychologically and identified the spiritual dimension with the collective unconscious. Such interpretation is also evident in Jung’s account of occult identities, which according to him are parapsychological and also belong to the collective unconscious. For Assagioli this identification of spirituality with the collective unconscious was too restrictive.
Along with the list of Jung’s admirable qualities, noted earlier, Assagioli provides the following list of Jung’s “shortcomings”:

Lack of clarity, uncertainty, confusion between the various aspects and levels of the unconscious; lack of a real spiritual experience and therefore a nebulous and defective conception of spirit; lack of any social aspect or inter-individual psychosynthesis; lack of understanding of the role of action in psychosynthesis and lack of appreciation and utilization of the will and therefore of discipline, form, and self-restraint. (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.1, 73)

In another section of his unpublished notes in the Archive, Assagioli wrote: “Jung fails to take into account also the very important specific psychic inheritance, i.e., of family [original underlining] ancestral psychic elements” (Assagioli, 1976, 3.5.5, 41).

Balancing these critical comments, Assagioli provides this more general appreciation of Jung’s contribution:

Jung never claimed to give a complete system or definitive conceptions. He has always asserted that psychoanalysis is a new science and still at an infantile stage, or at most adolescent. [...] Jung has been a courageous and genius pioneer, who has opened new ways and dimensions to the human mind. His contributions have been of great value, he has most of all liberated us from the narrow limits of objectivism, of purely [...] descriptive study. He has immensely expanded the field of psychoanalysis, demonstrating the existence and value of superior functions such as intuition and demonstrating as well the propensity and need for spirituality. [...] Thus he successfully invites one to pursue the course of individuation (original underlining), that is, to discover and develop one’s own true being, one’s own Self. Therefore, he indeed deserves our great appreciation and our deep gratitude.” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.1, 73)

CONCLUSIONS

We have sought in this article to deepen understanding of the similarities and differences between the psychological models of Jung and Assagioli. Using a wide range of sources, including original unpublished material, we have focused in particular on the transpersonal dimension. In this conclusion we summarize the main points of comparison:

The Personality, Psychic Functions and Typologies

In both models there is an agreement in viewing the personality as consisting of various psychic types and functions. Two important differences are those between subpersonalities in psychosynthesis and persona in Jung and the distinction of seven functions by Assagioli and only four by Jung. With regard to typology, Assagioli’s psychosynthesis distinguishes seven basic human types,
each based on a tendency and main quality (Assagioli, 1978), whereas Jung’s analytical psychology distinguishes eight main types, each linked to a function and to Jung’s dichotomy of introversion and extraversion (Jung, 1921). However, both agree on the utility of a typological description based on fundamental differences, thus avoiding the limitations of a typological classification that is rigid and static (Assagioli, 1973a).

Archetypes, Structure, and Levels of the Unconscious

Both Assagioli and Jung share the view that there are different levels of the unconscious. According to Assagioli, Jung does not clearly define the collective unconscious; in particular, he does not sufficiently distinguish its different elements and levels. For example, he places the more primordial and basic levels of the psyche together with archetypes of a spiritual nature, “confusing the collective and universal” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.1, 73). Assagioli proposes a distinct level for the spiritual dimension of the unconscious, which he defines as the transpersonal unconscious. The transpersonal unconscious goes beyond the activity of the mind in that its contents have an intrinsic reality that can be experienced beyond mental and symbolic modes of thought, even if, as both Jung and Assagioli agree, these modes of thought provide important vehicles for the expression of the transpersonal unconscious (Assagioli 1973b).

The Self and the ‘I’

Both Assagioli and Jung postulate the existence of the Self and the ‘I’, even though they understand these differently. For Jung the Self is the archetype of archetypes and expresses totality, the union of opposites, most generally the union of consciousness and the unconscious. The Self represents the inner guide to the process of individuation (Jung 1972a). Therefore, for Jung the Self encompasses the whole personality, whereas the ‘I’, the centre of the field of consciousness and the subject of all conscious personal actions, is subordinate to the Self. So in Jung the ‘I’ enjoys “free will in the sphere of consciousness as an expression of a subjective sense of freedom, a sense that finds a limit not only within the surrounding world but also where it conflicts with the reality of the Self” (Jung 1972a, pp. 183–187).

In contrast, for Assagioli the Self is not an archetype but is rather an ontological reality that can be experienced fully in the union of the individual with the universal (transpersonal Self). Therefore the Self cannot be identified with the whole personality (the Jungian view) but rather should be considered a more inclusive reality. In Assagioli the ‘I’, the subject of all conscious personal actions, is defined as a level of the Self (personal self), the experience of which is a reflection of the transpersonal Self. It is that which exercises free will. Assagioli emphasizes the importance of the will throughout the whole of the psychosynthetic process (Assagioli, 1973a). In contrast, although Jung values the role of the will implicitly in the process of individuation and in the
functioning of the ‘I’, he gives it much less attention overall and does not consider it in and of itself to be a function strictly so called.

One final point of difference, this one having to do specifically with Assagioli’s theory of the Self and ‘I’, concerns disidentification, the practice of distancing oneself from the features of one’s own personal identity. Assagioli was of the position that this practice is essential to being able to distinguish the Self in its various levels from the contents of the global personality (Assagioli 1973b). In contrast, Jung gave little attention to disidentification.

The Therapeutic Relationship

Jung places everything within the context of the transference, including both the personal dimension and the collective archetypical dimension, uniting them in the symbolism of an alchemic text. In fact he admits not having known how to treat this subject other than with the help of the symbols of the “Rosarium Philosphorum” [Rosary of Philosophers] (Jung 1971). Instead, for Assagioli, the therapeutic relationship is best seen according to the four stages set out in his 1966 lectures on “Jung and Psychosynthesis” (Assagioli, 1967b). Jung says that the alchemical concept of coniunctio [conjunction] corresponds to the transference (Jung, 1956, 1967). Assagioli says that “Jung confuses in the conjunction the relation and the horizontal and vertical [original underlinings] union (hieros-gamos) between personality and Soul, between Ego and Self” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.1, 73). Notwithstanding this difference, both Assagioli and Jung agree in emphasizing the importance of the psychotherapeutic relationship as a vehicle for healing and for experiencing human presence.

The Processes of Psychosynthesis and Individuation

For both authors the human existential journey has a progressive transpersonal character, like a spiritual quest. It proceeds according to various stages of transformation and inner growth, tending towards the realization of one’s essential uniqueness and wholeness, that is, towards realizing or becoming one’s own Self integrating all the different conscious and unconscious elements of the psyche. Jung calls this the process of individuation: “by which a person becomes a psychological ‘in-dividual’, that is a […] indivisible unity or ‘whole’” (Jung, 1939, pp. 489–524). Along similar lines Assagioli defines the psychosynthetic journey in its most complete development as the process of realization of the Self. This is a journey that requires coming to know one’s own personality completely. Major stages of the journey include an initial discovery of the Self or at least the discovery or creation of a unifying centre; an ensuing transformation or reconstruction of the personality around this new centre (personal psychosynthesis); and, then, the development and manifestation of the qualities of the Self (transpersonal psychosynthesis) (Assagioli 1973b).
Views on Spirituality and Asian Philosophies

Both Jung and Assagioli held mysticism and Asian philosophy in high regard. They had similar approaches to using techniques such as symbols, imagery, and dream work. Assagioli affirms that Eastern psychology was a source of inspiration for the theory and practice of psychosynthesis (Assagioli 1973b). While sharing with Jung an appreciation for the Eastern perspective, Assagioli differs from Jung in believing that the Eastern approach to the psychic world can be confirmed in one’s own experience. Assagioli’s theory of the Self provides a chief example of such experiential confirmation. According to Assagioli, the Self is a conscious, immanent, and at the same time transcendent experience, as is explained in the Hindu philosophical and spiritual tradition of Vedanta and the Upanishads (transpersonal Self as Atman). Moreover, Assagioli believed that East and West could be brought together in a practical way through the use of meditation and other active techniques. He makes this point in an unpublished manuscript, the general outline of which presents a psychosynthetic perspective on transpersonal development (Assagioli, n.d.).

Interpersonal and Social Relations

The inter-individual and social components of the psychosynthetic process and Jung’s process of individuation have some points in common and some differences. For Jung “the actual process of individuation carries with it an awareness of what the human community is [...] Individuation presupposes a unification with oneself and therefore with humanity, of which everyone carries a particle within him” (Jung, 1953, p. 228). As for Assagioli, he stresses “Jung recognises that individuation and social dimension are not opposed, in theory, but then he neglects the social and interpersonal aspects” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.1, 73). Assagioli emphasises both the relational aspect of the Self and the need to help people participate in constructive relationships. Again the main difference between Assagioli and Jung in this area is the pragmatic methodological aspect. In fact Assagioli says that “Jung recognizes [original underlining] will, but does not utilize it” (Assagioli, 1976, 10.2.3, 73) and he encourages people to use active techniques and practical methods to experience a true interpersonal and social psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1967b, 2011).

The Process and Integration of Psychotherapeutic Techniques

Both authors share a synthetic, constructive methodology in psychotherapy. Jung expressly rejects the view that the therapeutic process is reductive and governed exclusively by the principle of causality. According to Jung, the incorrectness of this view becomes apparent when symbols can no longer be reduced to personal reminiscence and the images of the collective unconscious start to surface: “I had to realize that analysis necessarily needs to be followed by synthesis and the images or symbols of the collective unconscious reveal their value only if they undergo synthetic treatment” (Jung, 2012, p. 115).
This synthesis that follows analysis is based on what Jung refers to as “the transcendent function,” which is a function that bridges and thus brings together consciousness and the unconscious. Guided by the transcendent function, the synthetic process works in an entirely natural way to unite opposites and to integrate the unconscious within the prospective of consciousness (Jung, 1916; Staude, 1992).

To facilitate the synthetic process and the integration of unconscious materials analytic psychology uses various techniques, including dream work and self-exploration by means of symbols, creativity, and the imagination. Assagioli is close to Jung in this analytic-synthetic way of dealing with the unconscious, sharing with him a belief in the importance of symbols, especially as they are elaborated in imaginative language. However, Assagioli extends even further the conscious and active use of symbols and images (techniques of symbolic visualization and guided imagery) (Assagioli, 1973b).

In general, in addition to the analytical techniques, psychosynthesis uses the so-called active techniques. These techniques, which can be used even outside the therapeutic setting, are essential to the constructive and synthetic aspect of the therapeutic process in Assagioli’s view. They represent a more extensive use of the principle of synthesis than is found in Jung’s analytic-synthetic methodology. Assagioli’s favoring of active techniques is also evident when it comes to working with the transpersonal unconscious (or spiritual dimension). For Assagioli, exploration of the transpersonal unconscious is facilitated by meditative techniques, or at least by those that psychosynthesis recommends (Assagioli, 1963a, 1963b).

Turning finally to the matter of reciprocal influences, particularly regarding the transpersonal dimension, Gary Lachman recently put forward the view that “Jung got the idea of psychosynthesis from Roberto Assagioli, whose work he admired, who like Jung was a disciple of Freud, and who took the spiritual dimension of human nature seriously” (Lachman, 2010, p. 236). This statement is true as far as it goes; however, it speaks to only one side of the relationship. Looking at the other side, it is a plausible hypothesis that Jung—who in 1909 was apparently the first to propose the term “psychosynthesis” (McGuire, 1974), although he then abandoned it—had at least as great an influence on Assagioli. Jung’s influence is especially evident in Assagioli’s conception of the collective unconscious within a wide prospective view of psychic life. Assagioli himself often affirms this influence, even though he stresses differences as well, for example, differences with respect to his theory of the transpersonal unconscious.

Looking back on their relationship, Assagioli acknowledges that Jung was both a senior precursor and a “courageous and brilliant pioneer who opened up new paths and gave new dimensions to the human mind [...] contributed greatly to the freeing of psychology [...] and expanded its field immensely” (Assagioli, 1967b, p. 10). The historical influence of Jung was preeminent in the chronology of events. However, the resonance between the two men is clear.
from the beginning and is evident in the vast quantity of written material they produced over the course of their lifetimes.

In conclusion, our research on the psychological models of these two men provides evidence of their parallel development, in particular with respect to the transpersonal dimension. The papers and other materials in the Assagioli Archives are valuable sources that bring Assagioli’s contribution to the development of transpersonal psychology into clearer focus and reveal that his contribution was in no way inferior to Jung’s. Our research indicates that both scholars played equally important and pioneering roles. At the same time our study particularly deepens Assagioli’s specific and clarifying contribution in laying the foundations for transpersonal theory and practice. Moreover, through Assagioli’s considerations the study clarifies and enriches Jung’s vision of the transpersonal dimension.

NOTE

1 The numbering 10.2.3, 73 and the following numbering: 10.2.1, 73; 10.2.2, 73; 3.5.5, 4; 11.1-15, 75; 76; 77; does not correspond to page numbers but to the numeric codes adopted for cataloging the unpublished material in the Assagioli Archive of the Institute of Psychosynthesis in Florence.

REFERENCES


The Authors

Massimo Rosselli, M.D., a former student of Roberto Assagioli, is a didactic trainer of the Institute of Psychosynthesis and of the School of Psychosynthesis Psychotherapy (SIPT – Società Italiana di Psicosintesi Terapeutica) and of the latter he is a founder and past-president. A psychiatrist and psychosynthesis psychotherapist, he has carried out research particularly in clinical psychosomatics and the body-mind area at Florence University where he was professor of Psychosomatics and Clinical Psychology in the Faculty of Medicine and professor of Clinical Psychophysiology in the Faculty of Psychology. He also directed the Psychosomatic Consultation Service within Florence University Teaching Hospital and is author and co-author of numerous publications, author of a monograph and co-author and editor of 4 books. Today Massimo Rosselli has a private practice in psychotherapy and psychiatry in Florence and teaches and lectures on Psychosynthesis, Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics in Italy and abroad.

Duccio Vanni, M.D., was born in Florence (Italy) in 1967. He graduated in Medicine & Surgery in 1993 at the University of Florence where he specialized in psychiatry in 1998. He took his Ph.D. in “Physiopathology of nervous functions” in 2002 and from 2005 to 2013 was researcher in Clinical Psychology. Throughout that period he worked firstly in the School of Medicine & Surgery and from 2008 in the School of Psychology of Florence University. During his period at the School of Psychology Dr. Vanni also taught History of Psychology. In November 2013 he became full researcher in History of Medicine at the University of Florence and today he is a member of the Health Sciences Department of the same University where he also teaches History of Medicine in the School of Human Health Sciences. Dr. Vanni has always been fond of historical topics (in medical and/or psychological fields) and has written and published over 100 publications on these subjects since 1995.
TRANSPERSONAL AGROECOLOGY:
THE METAPHYSICS OF ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURAL THEORY

Travis E.B. Cox, M.A.
Fairfield, Iowa

ABSTRACT: Industrial agriculture has taken over as the dominant form of food production globally, resulting in alternative production methods converging as a sustainable counter. Unfortunately, the ideological and metaphysical underpinnings of these alternative agricultural philosophies have been ignored as have the metaphysics of industrial agriculture. Using transpersonal ecology as a disciplinary analogue, this paper demonstrates an ideological commonality among alternative agricultural theorists, such that the term transpersonal agroecology covers their beliefs like the term transpersonal ecology covers the commonality of deep ecologists. The commonality is threefold. First, theorists are united in opposition against the scientism and economism that make up the productionist mentality. Second, there is awareness that in the practice of sustainable agriculture there is a process for and experience of identification with the beings on the farm, and with the farm itself. Finally, theorists contribute to the transpersonal conversation through their emphasis on values, alternative methodologies, and spirit.

KEYWORDS: Sustainable Agriculture, Transpersonal Ecology, Identification, Agroecology, Environmental Philosophy.

For most people, sustainable agriculture pertains to the on-farm activities of practitioners, such as cover crops, integrated pest management, and no-till. This is true even for the off-farm activities of consumers, who choose to purchase their food locally or look for the USDA organic seal. However, a study of the progenitors of sustainable agriculture—people such as Albert Howard, Masanobu Fukuoka, and Rudolf Steiner, who developed organic agriculture, natural farming, and biodynamics, respectively—indicates that there is something more than just practice to sustainable agriculture. There is something deeper at the level of the mind-set of the farmer.

By employing transpersonal ecology (TE) as a disciplinary analogue, including direct quotes from the aforementioned theorists, as well as many others, this article shows that sustainable agriculture has implications for the worldview of its practitioners. These implications include an opposition to the scientism and economism of industrial agriculture, a sense of the process and experience of identification with the farm and the beings on the farm, an awareness of alternative methodologies and epistemologies, and an explicit role for values and spirit. The end result of this study is a theory, transpersonal agroecology (TPAE), that conceptualizes the commonalities of these alternative agricultural theorists and thus opens a discussion about the deeper and more human aspects of sustainable agriculture and provides a framework with which to guide such a discussion.
METHODOLOGY

The enterprise of bringing to light the transpersonal aspects of alternative agricultural theory could be undertaken in numerous ways. For the purposes of this article, several seminal texts from the field of sustainable agriculture and from the past 100 years were chosen. Two main criteria were used to select theorists and texts.

First, selected individuals contributed in some way to shaping actual agricultural practices. Steiner has a peculiar place in this group of selected theorists, given that he was not an agriculturalist and that any clarifications about biodynamics practice were thwarted by his death a year after his lectures. Therefore, Koepf, Pettersson, and Schaumann (1976) were used here in order to show a theory in action. Also, Bailey might be a new name to many people, even those aware of some of the history of sustainable agriculture. Bailey, Dean of Agriculture at Cornell University from 1903 to 1913, is credited with being a pioneer of the national Extension Service, and was appointed Chairman of the National Commission on Country Life by president Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 and author of its final report in 1909 (Minteer, 2006; Peters, 2006).

Second, selected individuals were ones representing more contemporary voices, particularly voices of farmers and leaders in the field of sustainable agriculture. Aldo Leopold appears to be the odd man out in this group. He neither created an alternative agricultural practice nor was even a farmer. Leopold was included because he discussed farming at length in *A Sand County Almanac*, which fills a gap in the time line of the other selected authors. Also, Leopold is widely recognized as the forerunner of modern environmental ethics, and because TPAE will obviously contribute to that discipline, his inclusion here was necessary. Finally, it should be noted that many of the terms included here were used as synonyms. For instance, *alternative agriculture*, *sustainable agriculture*, and *agroecology* were all used more or less interchangeably.

TRANPERSONAL ECOLOGY

TPAE draws its inspiration from TE as defined by Warwick Fox (1990). Fox quoted various deep ecology (DE) thinkers to show how there is an even deeper level uniting the members of the DE family. Colloquially, DE is “deep” because it asks questions about the assumptions that typify modern thinking. Philosophically, deep ecologists have articulated a set of basic principles and have noted the various sources from which they draw.

However, Fox noticed that many deep ecologists also share similarities of other kinds—similarities not articulated in the literature. He pointed out that most deep ecologists are against issuing moral “oughts” and are for human “self-realization” as a condition of DE. Drawing on the discipline of transpersonal psychology, Fox argued that it would make more sense to call the discipline of DE *transpersonal ecology* because most adherents of DE reveal a transpersonal
awareness in articulating a sustainable human relationship to the natural world.

Transpersonal was a better term for Fox for a number of reasons. First, it has explicitly psychological ties, which he thought better expressed the nature of DE because Naess (the DE founder) articulated it as a psychologically, rather than axiologically, based approach to the understanding of the human relationship to the natural world. Second, the term can be used in a number of etymologically appropriate ways: as beyond, as changing thoroughly, and as transcending. Fox’s key concept was identification, through which an individual widens the sense of self through ecological awareness to include more and more of the natural world. Therefore, Fox could say that TE goes beyond other forms of ecophilosophy because it has a different sense of self—one that is changed thoroughly as a result of the process of identification—and has transcended the limitations associated with a narrower conception of self. This is significant because a major tenet of DE/TE is that it is not anthropocentric, meaning it does not confer upon humans “unwarranted differential treatment” (Fox, 1990, p. 89). Thus, the particularly Western concept of self as a skin-encapsulated ego separate from and superior to the natural world is left behind, and a more inclusive, big self is embodied.

Transpersonal Agroecology

TPAE is similar to TE in several ways. First, the theory is derived through comparing and finding similarities among the quotations of various alternative agricultural theorists. Second, TPAE mirrors TE in that the proponents are united both in opposition and in subscription. Where TE theorists are united in opposition to issuing moral oughts, TPAE theorists are united in opposition to a productionist mentality, and where TE theorists are united in subscription to individuals becoming ecologically self-aware though a process of identification with the natural world, TPAE theorists are focused on farmers becoming ecologically self-aware through the process of identification with the land that they work.

Therefore, to paraphrase the deep ecologist Freya Mathews (Fox, 1990, pp. 85–86), TPAE is concerned with the metaphysics of agriculture. From the point of view of TPAE, what is wrong with industrial agriculture is that it offers the farmer an inaccurate conception of the self. It depicts the personal self of farmers as existing in competition with and in opposition to nature. They thereby fail to realize that if their farming methods destroy the environment, they are destroying what is in fact their larger selves.

To paraphrase Fox (1990, p. 79), who was discussing the deep ecologist John Rodman, TPAE is the view that the sense of self of the farmer can be as expansive as the individual’s identifications and that a realistic appreciation of the ways in which we are intimately bound up with the world around us, especially the farm and the beings on the farm, which inevitably leads to wider and deep identification, and hence alternative modes of farming.
For instance, Rudolf Steiner was of the position that the farmer should be conceived of as a meditator:

Oh, it is very much that he meditates in the long winter nights! He does indeed acquire a kind of method—a method of spiritual perception. Only he cannot express it. It suddenly emerges in him. We go through the fields, and all of a sudden the knowledge is there in us. We know it absolutely. Afterwards we put it to the test and find it confirmed. (Steiner, 1958, pp. 51–52)

Masanobu Fukuoka, in *The One-Straw Revolution*, gave his own take on the Buddhist eightfold path:

Unless people become natural people, there can be neither natural farming nor natural food. In one of the huts on the mountain I left the words, “Right Food, Right Action, Right Awareness” inscribed on a pinewood plaque above the fireplace. The three cannot be separated from one another. If one is missing, none can be realized. If one is realized, all are realized. (Fukuoka, 1978/2009, p. 147)

Liberty Hyde Bailey, in *The Outlook to Nature*, invoked something very similar, noting both action and awareness in the growing of food:

It is all a drama, intense, complex, ever moving, always dying, always reborn. I see a thousand actors moving in and out, always going, always coming. I am part of the drama; I break the earth; I destroy this plant and that, as if I were the arbiter of life and death. I sow the seed. I see the tender things come up and I feel as if I had created something new and fine, that had not been seen on the earth before; and I have a new joy as deep and as intangible as the joy of religion. (Bailey, 1915/2013, p. 79)

In his writing, Wendell Berry directly connected soil and spirit:

It is impossible to contemplate the life of the soil for very long without seeing it as analogous to the life of the spirit. No less than the faithful of religion is the good farmer mindful of the persistence of life through death, the passage of energy through changing forms. (Berry, 1997, p. 86)

Finally, Wes Jackson, in *Becoming Native to This Place*, demonstrated a similar view:

What if we had an ecological worldview as our operating paradigm? An ecological worldview is also an evolutionary worldview. Time-honored arrangements would inform us of what has worked without our running the empirical experiment. Our evolutionary/ecological worldview would inform our decisions, inform our do’s and don’ts in scientific investigations. This is another way of saying that we must turn to nature to inform us, to serve as a reference, must turn our thoughts to building a science of ecology that reflects a consultation of nature. Ecology is the most likely discipline to
engage in a courtship with agriculture as we anticipate a marriage. (Jackson, 1996, p. 25)

**TRANSPERSONAL AGROECOLOGY: OPPOSITION**

**Productionist Mentality**

For the purposes of this article, the productionist mentality that the TPAE theorists are united against is the one defined by Keller and Brummer (2002) in “Putting Food Production in Context: Toward a Postmechanistic Agricultural Ethic.” In this article, a productionist way of thinking about agriculture was typified by four components. First, the productionist approach is mechanistic, in that it believes that the natural world can best be understood as a machine. Second, because it views nature as just a complex and complicated machine, it does not ascribe intrinsic value to the natural world. Third, it has an accompanying epistemology that separates facts from values, gives credence to only those aspects of reality that can be quantified, and uses science as the only method to solve agricultural problems. Fourth, its quantitative and mechanistic thinking is easily translated into the realm of economics, thus promulgating “an economic model of human–nature interactions” (Keller & Brummer, 2002, p. 265).\

As their direct quotes will demonstrate, for TPAE theorists the problematic scientific and economic aspects of the Keller and Brummer definition are too mild. A more accurate explanation of the productionist mentality is that it comprises economism and scientism to the point that economics and science are given weight beyond what they can be shown to deserve (even according to their own individual theories) such that a productionist belief in science and economics becomes a fundamentalist ideology rather than a theory. For instance, Berry (1997, p. 89) wrote that “the discipline of agriculture—the ‘great subject,’ as Sir Albert Howard called it, ‘of health in soil, plant, animal, and man’—has been reduced to fit first the views of a piecemeal ‘science,’ and then the purposes of corporate commerce.”

**Scientism**

There are two facets to scientism (Peterson, 2003). One is methodological, in that science is taken as the only true way to acquire knowledge. The other is ideological, in that scientific understanding is believed to have trumped other disciplines such as ethics or religion. Both kinds of scientism are reflected in the objections of TPAE theorists. I quote from the following theorists by way of illustration:

**Bailey:**

I preach the near-at-hand, however plain and ordinary, – the cloud and the sunshine; the green pastures; the bird on its nest and the nest on its bough;
the rough bark of trees; the frost on bare thin twigs; the mouse skittering to its burrow; the insect seeking its crevice; the small of the ground; the sweet wind; the silent stars; the leaf that clings to its twig or that falls when its work is done. Wisdom flows from these as it can never flow from libraries and laboratories. (Bailey, 1915/2013, pp. 9–10)

Howard:

The insistence on quantitative results is another of the weaknesses in scientific investigation. It has profoundly influenced agricultural research. … Many of the things that matter on the land, such as soil fertility, tilth, soil management, the quality of produce, the bloom and health of animals, the general management of live stock, the working relations between master and man, the esprit de corps of the farm as a whole, cannot be weighed or measured. (Howard, 2010, p. 211)

Berry:

But under various suasions of profession and personality, this legitimate faith in scientific methodology seems to veer off into a kind of religious faith in the power of science to know all things and solve all problems. … This religification and evangelizing of science, in defiance of scientific principles, is now commonplace and is widely accepted or tolerated by people who are not scientists. (Berry, 2000, p. 19; see also p. 24)

Leopold:

One of the facts hewn to by science is that every river needs more people, and all people need more inventions, and hence more science; the good life depends on the indefinite extension of this chain of logic. That the good life on any river may likewise depend on the perception of its music, and the preservation of some music to perceive, is a form of doubt not yet entertained by science. (Leopold, 1949, p. 154; see also p. 138)

Steiner described the scientistic fixation upon the physical in this way:

You see a magnetic needle. You discern that it always points with one end approximately to the North, and with the other to the South. You think, why is it so? You look for the cause, not in the magnetic needle, but in the whole Earth, inasmuch as you assign to the one end of the Earth the magnetic North Pole, and to the other the magnetic South.

Anyone who looked in the magnet-needle itself for the cause of the peculiar position it takes up would be talking nonsense. You can only understand the direction of the magnet-needle if you know how it is related to the whole Earth. Yet the same nonsense (as applied to the magnetic needle) is considered good sense by the men of to-day when applied to other things…. The several spheres of modern life have suffered terribly from this, and the effects would be even more evident were it not for the fact that in spite of all
the modern sciences a certain instinct still remains over from the times when
men were used to work by instinct and not by scientific theory. (Steiner,
1958, pp. 19–20)

Here is some perspective from Fukuoka, who was referred to by Berry as “a
scientist who is suspicious of science” (Fukuoka, 1978/2009, p. xiii):

But scientific truth can never reach absolute truth, and philosophies, after
all, are nothing more than interpretations of the world. Nature as grasped
by scientific knowledge is a nature which has been destroyed; it is a ghost
possessing a skeleton, but no soul. Nature as grasped by philosophical
knowledge is a theory created out of human speculation, a ghost with a soul,
but no structure. (Fukuoka, 1978/2009, p. 125; see also p. 113)

Early on in *Becoming Native to This Place*, Jackson took up the fact–value
divide that pervades Western culture, in which science and the facts it discovers
are believed to be value free and therefore closer to true knowledge: “But the
reality is that our values are able to influence the genotype of our major crops
and livestock” (Jackson, 1996, p. 21). He went on to talk about “Chicago
Board of Trade genes,” or “fossil fuel wellhead genes,” meaning that the values
that have led us to industrialize agriculture and create a food system based on
fossil fuels have directly affected the breeding of plants and animals, so that
their very genome reflects the ideology that went into their creation. Jackson
then contrasted these industrial agriculture values and genes with a story about
a Native American woman who saved both the large and small ears of corn
because “corn is a gift of the gods and to discriminate against the small in favor
of the large would be to show a lack of appreciation for the gift. What she was
doing, in genetic terms, was maintaining genetic diversity. Values dictate
genotype” (p. 22).

Where Jackson eventually settled, with the help of Douglas Sloan, was on the
idea that there is a “scientific and technological worldview” that is quantitative
and mechanistic and that our culture has expanded this worldview beyond its
discipline “to the point that it has become our all-encompassing picture of the
universe as ultimately dead, mechanical, meaningless” (Jackson, 1996, p. 38).
This is essentially scientism which, when coupled with the institutions of today,
“has been thousands of times more ecologically destructive than the church–
state alliance ever was” (p. 109). However strong his criticism, Jackson made
sure to point out that “none of this suggests an end to science so much as an end
to our emphasis on science only as we now know it” (p. 41).

**Economism**

Economism is analogous to scientism: where scientism believes that the
scientific method provides the only recourse to true knowledge, economism is
the ideology where “the needs and values of business have come to dominate
Though profuse in his opposition to scientism, Fukuoka dealt with economics sparingly. In one place he gave an example of when an economic advantage becomes a social disadvantage for the farmer: “The competition then brings the prices down, and all that is left to the farmer is the burden of hard work and the added costs of supplies and equipment. Now he must apply the wax” (Fukuoka, 1978/2009, p. 87).

In *The Holy Earth*, Bailey commented on economics in much the same way that Jackson commented on science—by placing it in proper perspective: “The morals of land management is [sic] more important than the economics of land management” (Bailey, 1915/1988, p. 35). Bailey also wrote:

> We shall learn how to distribute the satisfactions in life rather than merely to assemble them. Before this time comes, we shall have passed the present insistence on so-called commercial efficiency, as if it were the sole measure of a civilization, and higher ends shall come to have control.” (Bailey, 1915/1988, p. 45; see also p. 52)

Jackson, with the gift of historical perspective, had an additional critique to add to the charges against economism. Besides noting that “more modern economists will have to admit that much of what is important to the life-supporting system and culture does not compute” (Jackson, 1996, p. 112), Jackson was acutely aware of “economic imperialism” (p. 100) operating in agriculture because “economic anxiety has increased and preoccupation with economic issues is higher than ever” (p. 105). This awareness of the assumptions of economism led him to conclude that “we should not expect sustainable agriculture to exist safely as a satellite in orbit around an extractive economy” (p. 26).

When reading Howard, it is difficult to divorce his disdain of scientism from his disdain of economism, since he was so aware of the ways that the two work together against what he perceived to be the real goals of agriculture. Consider the following:

> Agricultural research has been misused to make the farmer, not a better producer of food, but a more expert bandit. He has been taught how to profiteer at the expense of posterity—how to transfer capital in the shape of soil fertility and the reserves of his live stock to his profit and loss account. (Howard, 2010, p. 213; see also 1947/2006, pp. 31–32)

> The slow poisoning of the life of the soil by artificial manures is one of the greatest calamities which has befallen agriculture and mankind. The responsibility for this disaster must be shared equally by the disciples of Liebig and by the economic system under which we are living. (Howard, 2010, p. 236)

However, in some places, the focus of his derision was clear:

> But economics has done a much greater disservice to agriculture than the collection of useless data. Farming has come to be looked at as if it were a
factory. Agriculture is regarded as a commercial enterprise; far too much emphasis has been laid on profit. … The nation’s food in the nature of things must always take first place. The financial system, after all, is but a secondary matter. Economics therefore, in failing to insist on these elementary truths, has been guilty of a grave error of judgment. (Howard, 2010, p. 213)

Leopold wrote:

The “key-log” which must be moved to release the evolutionary process for an ethic is simply this: quit thinking about decent land-use as solely an economic problem. Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. (Leopold, 1949, p. 224)

In that same text Leopold also wrote, “The fallacy the economic determinists have tied around our collective neck, and which we now need to cast off, is the belief that economics determines all land-use. This is simply not true” (Leopold, 1949, p. 225).

Berry is similar to Howard in that he sees the negative implications of the mutually reinforcing mentalities of scientism and economism:

The collaboration of boomer science with boomer mentality of the industrial corporations has imposed upon us a state of virtually total economy in which it is the destiny of every creature (humans not excepted) to have a price and to be sold. In a total economy, all materials, creatures, and ideas become commodities, interchangeable and disposable. (Berry, 2000, p. 132)

Finally, Steiner also took exception to economism. He stated it most bluntly when he wrote this passage:

No one can judge of Agriculture who does not derive his judgment from field and forest and the breeding of cattle. All talk of Economics which is not derived from the job itself should really cease. So long as people do not recognize that all talk of Economics—hovering airily over the realities—is merely empty talk, we shall not reach a hopeful prospect, neither in Agriculture nor in any other sphere. (Steiner, 1958, p. 19)

Identification

In articulating the theory of TE, Fox expounded upon the idea of identification in his own way, highlighting three ways in which an individual can expand the sense of self—personal, cosmological, and ontological. Critics of Fox find his specific characterization problematic. For instance, Stavely & McNamara feel
it is not properly transpersonal, in that it still focuses on an individual’s conscious intentions, whereas the transpersonal lies outside of conscious intentions (Stavely & McNamara, 1992).

But even when taking Fox’s definition of identification as the sole criterion for justifying TPAE, as opposed to enlarged possibilities, there is still sufficient evidence, and this exercise serves as a good introduction. Again, Fox characterized the three paths to expanding self-identity as personal, cosmological, and ontological. Personal identification “refers to experiences of commonality with other entities that are brought about through personal involvement with these entities” (Fox, 1995, p. 249). Ontological identification “refers to experiences of commonality with all that is[,] that are brought about through deep-seated realization of the fact that things are” (pp. 250–251). Cosmological identification “refers to experiences of commonality with all that is that are brought about through deep-seated realization of the fact that we and all other entities are aspects of a single unfolding reality” (p. 252).

As these three forms of identification pertain to TPAE, both the personal and the ontological match up well with TE. The cosmological, on the other hand, can be delineated into three nuanced sub-categories—a cosmological identification (a) where there is no distinction between self and world, (b) through the realization that all things are interconnected, and (c) through the understanding that individuals “belong” to the environment.

In his writing, Fukuoka demonstrated a “no-distinction” cosmological identification:

> My thinking on natural food is the same as it is on natural farming. ... If people will acquire food through “no-mind”** [emphasis added] even though they know nothing at all about yin and yang, they can attain a perfect natural diet. **A Buddhist term which describes the state in which there is no distinction between the individual and the “external” world [emphasis added]. (Fukuoka, 1978/2009, pp. 127–128)

Berry wrote on “interconnected” cosmological identification:

> For some time now ecologists have been documenting the principle that “you can’t do one thing”—which means that in a natural system whatever affects one thing ultimately affects everything... The Creation is one; it is a uni-verse, a whole, the parts of which are all “turned into one.” (Berry, 1997, p. 46; see also p. 22)

Bailey and Steiner both wrote on “belonging” cosmological identification. Bailey did so with regard to the “countryman,” as opposed to the “city man,” where the countryman does not think of the qualities, or “features” of the country, because “all the features are his; he escapes neither weather nor season, since he belongs to the country as much as the trees and fields belong to it [emphasis added] (Bailey, 1915/2013, p. 69). Steiner uses similar phrasing but addresses the nature of all humanity:
As human beings we cannot truly say that we are separate. We cannot sever ourselves. We are united with our surroundings—we belong to our environment [emphasis added]. As my little finger belongs to me, so do the things that are around us naturally belong to the whole human being. (Steiner, 1958, p. 49)

Berry wrote on personal identification:

On the other hand, an agriculture using nature, including human nature, as its measure, would approach the world in the manner of a conversationalist. … On all farms, farmers would undertake to know responsibly where they are and to “consult the genius of the place.”…The use of the place would necessarily change, and the response of the place to that use would necessarily change the user. The conversation itself would thus assume a kind of creaturely life, binding the place and its inhabitants together, changing and growing to no end, no final accomplishment, that can be conceived or foreseen [emphasis added]. (Berry, 1990, pp. 208–209)

Finally, Leopold spoke about ontological identification:

We know now what was unknown to all the preceding caravan of generations: that men are only fellow-voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution. This new knowledge should have given us, by this time, a sense of kinship with fellow-creatures; a wish to live and let live; a sense of wonder over the magnitude and duration of the biotic enterprise [emphasis added]. (Leopold, 1949, p. 209)

As the field of TPAE is cultivated and begins to bear fruit, it may well turn out that there are many more paths to identification than those laid out above. The purpose here is not to make the claim that the short list above constitutes the definitive role that identification plays in TPAE. Instead, it should be seen for what it is: the use of a previously successful framework applied to a new field in an effort to show a novel finding and to suggest further exploration. Thus, it is enough to say that in TPAE, as it is being first articulated, the alternative agriculture theorists are cognizant of the role that personal, ontological, and cosmological identification play in sustainable agriculture.

Process

When explaining the second component of TE—the subscription to self-realization through identification—Fox used Naess to say that the importance of the concept lies in the process of identification, in which identification is more than a similarity; it is a commonality. For TPAE, what is important is not only the concept of commonality but also the explicit nature of identification being a process. This distinction is important because, for farmers, the process is going to be the specific farming practices that engender this awareness of commonality and the feedback loop that this awareness creates. Part of the loop has implications for modifying the farming practices.
The other implication is for the farmer. TPAE theorists make explicit the developmental nature of this new way of relating to the natural world, and some go so far as to directly connect the growth of the human individual with the kind of relationship the farmer has with the land. Finally, many theorists make this process of development explicit by noting that it is taking place within the daily activities and existence of the farmer. It is a way of being of in the world that develops over time through a new way of relating and understanding.

Fukuoka was particularly attuned to the role of development in the relationship between farmer and land: “Ultimately, it is not the growing technique which is the most important factor, but rather the state of mind of the farmer” (Fukuoka, 1978/2009, p. 46), and, “The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings” (p. 119).

Bailey is very similar to Fukuoka when it comes to the role that development plays in his theory—it is huge. In fact, The Holy Earth seems to be written specifically to advocate the moral and spiritual development of the farmer in relationship to the land. He wrote that “one does not act rightly toward one’s fellows if one does not know how to act rightly toward the earth” (Bailey, 1915/1988, p. 2; see also p. 1). He then went on to say:

The living creation is not exclusively man-centered: it is bio-centric. We perceive the essential continuity in nature, arising from within rather than from without [emphasis added], the forms of life proceeding upwardly and onwardly in something very like a mighty plan of sequence, man being one part in the process [emphasis added]. (Bailey, 1915/1988, p. 23; see also p. 24)

Bailey was also aware that this process occurred through the daily experience of the farmer, where “the reverential attitude is the result of our feeling toward the materials of life,— toward the little things and the common things that meet us hour by hour” [emphasis added] (Bailey, 1915/1988, p. 88). In addressing all three aspects of the process of identification—the implications for the farmer and farm, inner development, and the quotidian nature of the process, Bailey could be characterized as holistic in his understanding of just how this process of identification unfolds.

If one were to enumerate all of the philosophical benefits of A Sand County Almanac, surely one positive would be Leopold’s capacity to show how the power of human worldviews is manifested through day to day situations. This would put him on par with Bailey in terms of the holistic nature of his thinking. However, Leopold’s emphasis on the everyday is diffuse throughout the work, so the following two quotations focus on his awareness of the implications of worldviews for farmer and land and the developmental process, respectively. Leopold wrote:

The cowman who cleans his range of wolves does not realize that he is taking over the wolf’s job of trimming the herd to fit the range. He has not
learned to think like a mountain. Hence we have dustbowls, and rivers washing the future into the sea. (Leopold, 1949, p. 132)

These two farmers have learned from experience that the wholly tamed farm offers not only a slender livelihood but a constricted life. They have caught the idea that there is pleasure to be had in raising wild crops as well as tame ones. (Leopold, 1966, p. 203)

Koepf et al. give an example of where the implications, “new possibilities,” are explicitly tied to “daily work”:

Over and above their [the forces within plants, the soil, and the universe] actual application they open for the spirit in man new possibilities of achieving a clear and conscious relationship to the world of forces appearing in living organisms. In turn the daily work is given more of a meaning and an aim. (Koepf et al., 1976, p. 31)

In addressing the processual quality of identification in TPAE, Jackson illuminates the recursive nature of the developmental aspect, in a way that mirrors Berry’s characterization of personal identification in the previous section:

I am not talking about how we can load up with different kinds of ideas, different thoughts that various people have had about the world. I am talking about how, as Sloan puts it, the “quality of consciousness” itself can change, and how this affects what we can experience and know of the world. (Jackson, 1996, p. 39; see also pp. 107–108)

Finally, as noted above, Berry is keen on the iterative element of development, which should have an enormous impact on daily living. For instance, Berry is of the position that the “mentality of conservation” (Berry, 1997, p. 28) is divided between protection and production. In Berry’s estimation, a third way has not been articulated because conservation “is not yet sensitive to the impact of daily living upon the sources of daily life [emphasis added]” (Berry, 1997, p. 28). Elsewhere, Berry makes a point of equating the “good” with the everyday:

Good work is not just the maintenance of connections—as one is now said to work “for a living” or “to support a family”—but the enactment of connections. It is living, and a way of living; it is not support for a family in the sense of an exterior brace or prop, but is one of the forms and acts of love. (Berry, 1997, p. 139)

Thus, many TPAE authors felt it necessary to bring into focus the processual nature of identification, with implications for the farm and farmer, with an awareness toward human development, and an understanding that this process gets embodied mainly through day to day life on the farm. While, there may be some debate within transpersonal disciplines about the nature of ecological or
spiritual identity and development, with an eye toward the possibility of a
totalizing conversion experience, it seems clear that in TPAE, it is not a one-
time experience but a way of being for the farmer in relationship to the farm,
which affects the farmer and has effects for the farm, and is continually refined
on daily, seasonally, and yearly bases.

**Transpersonal Agroecology: Contribution**

A final aspect of TE that is necessary in the discussion of TPAE is Fox’s (1995,
p. 199) assertion that TE is not subordinate to transpersonal psychology (TP).
This is true of TPAE in two ways: (a) TPAE is not subordinate to TE, and (b)
TPAE is also not subordinate to TP. There are important aspects of TPAE that
are mentioned tangentially in the other two theories. The fact that they may
not be central concepts in TE or TP in no way diminishes these concepts’
importance for TPAE.

**Values**

For instance, Fox did not talk very much about values in delineating his theory
of identification. However, Stavely and McNamara (1992), in summarizing
Fox’s position, characterized it as a “reorientation of value theory from
instrumental and intrinsic value explanations to ecological values as
axiomatic” (p. 203). Most TPAE theorists raise questions about values in
terms of the misguided values of modernity, exhibiting a transpersonal
orientation that becomes even clearer as other aspects of transpersonal theory
are overlaid on the agricultural theorists’ concern for values.

These critiques of modern values, or lack thereof as the case may be, and their
relationship to agriculture, comes in two forms: (a) a simple critique where
values are forgotten or lost and (b) a critique that also advocates new values.
Fukuoka and Koepf et al.’s critiques fall in the first category. Fukuoka wrote,
“Another problem is that spiritual and emotional values are entirely forgotten,
even though foods are directly connected with human spirit and emotions”
(Fukuoka, 1978/2009, p. 140). Koepf et al. wrote:

> The crisis, rather, is a structural one, and includes the single farm and the
> positioning of farming in the social fabric. … Finally, the crisis includes
> man. When his interest is absorbed in a onesided way by economics and
> technology, important human values are lost. The ethical foundations of
> the farming profession remain undernourished. (Koepf et al., 1976, p. 398)

Jackson also included economics in his critique of modern values but he ties
that critique to the hope that a new economics will follow from a new way of
being in the world:

> An extractive economic system to a large degree is a derivative of our
> perceptions and values. But it also controls our behavior. We have to loosen
its hard grip on us, finger by finger. I am hopeful that a new economic system can emerge from the homecomer’s effort—as a derivative of right livelihood rather than of purposeful design. (Jackson, 1996, p. 99)

Leopold echoes Jackson in making explicit the idea that value change cannot come from within a paradigm, but the object of derision here is specifically conservation education:

It defines no right or wrong, assigns no obligation, calls for no sacrifice, implies no change in the current philosophy of values. In respect of land-use, it urges only enlightened self-interest. Just how far will such an education take us? (Leopold, 1949, pp. 207–208)

Finally, Berry (1997) took a different tack than the economics of Jackson or the conservation education of Leopold. Berry addressed “the machine metaphor” which, “in modern agriculture…is allowed to usurp and wipe from consideration not merely some values, but the very issue of values” (p. 91). He went on to say, “the good use of such land (use that is at once full, efficient, and careful) requires something altogether different and is probably unthinkable in terms of our present agricultural economy and cultural values” (p. 186).

Whether simply leveling a critique, or coupling that critique with a new vision, as it pertains to economics, education, or language, TPAE seeks to bring an understanding of values into alternative agriculture practices as an integral part of what truly sustainable farming will be.

**Alternative Methodologies and Epistemologies**

TPAE theorists are explicitly interested in alternative methodologies and epistemologies for two reasons, both of which have transpersonal implications. First, they react against the fundamentalism associated with the methodology and epistemology of the productionist mentality. Second, they advocate a theory of knowledge that goes beyond rationality and intellect, including methodologies like poetry, art, and conversing with nature, as well as epistemologies which honor feeling, sensitivity, and religious knowing. This second part, concern with alternatives, is particularly transpersonal in that, in Walsh and Vaughan’s (1993b) estimation, “the transpersonal disciplines stand alone in adopting an eclectic epistemology that seeks to include science, philosophy, introspection, and contemplation” (p. 205). This openness to alternatives across methodological and epistemological boundaries is important for the next section of this article, where the spiritual dimensions of TPAE are explored. By default, a practitioner of these alternative agricultural practices must diverge from a reductionistic, mechanistic, materialistic epistemology in order for the spiritual to play a role.

Fukuoka invoked alternative epistemologies in the two ways highlighted earlier. On one hand, he pointed to the inability of the intellect to provide total knowledge, particularly as it pertains to scientism. On the other hand, he pointed to those things that he believes provide the necessary larger picture:
Scientists think they can understand nature...But I think an understanding of nature lies beyond the reach of human intelligence. ... Why is it impossible to know nature? That which is conceived to be nature is only the idea of nature arising in each person’s mind. (Fukuoka, 1978/2009, p. 25; see also pp. 154–155)

Fukuoka went on to tell a story, relative to insect control and who should have a say in how it is practiced, about spiderwebs covering his fields overnight to the point that a field-hand rushed to Fukuoka’s house to ask him if he covered his fields in a net. He closed the paradigm-shifting story by saying, “The spectacle is an amazing natural drama. Seeing this, you understand that poets and artists will also have to join in the gathering” (Fukuoka, 2009, pp. 27–28). In ruminating on this theme, Fukuoka later included philosophers and “men of religion” on the guest list (Fukuoka, 2009, p. 28).

In his critique, Bailey also included the limitations of the intellect, but he emphasized enlarging the scope of what is important in making good agricultural decisions, if not good life decisions. Like Fukuoka, he included the heart, writing how “soft green things push up out of the earth, growing by some sweet alchemy that I cannot understand but that I can feel” (Bailey, 1915/2013, p. 78). In another passage he wrote, “The old-time formal and literary attitude, with facility in a particular group of academic subjects, is much to be prized; but sensitiveness to life is the highest product of education [emphasis added]. (Bailey, 1915/2013, p. 99)

In these quotations from Outlook, which preceded Holy Earth, Bailey seems to be giving voice to the inkling of heart-centered alternative epistemologies. In Holy Earth, Bailey took this concept as a given; there are examples of second-level thinking seemingly derived from these alternative, spiritual, epistemologies. For instance, “An oak tree is to us a moral object because it lives its life regularly and fulfills its destiny” (Bailey, 1915/1988, p. 12). Here he was most explicit, stating that to take nature spiritually isn’t a form of dogma but is a form of objectivity available to everyone: “The good spiritual reaction to nature is not a form of dogmatism or impressionism. It results normally from objective experience, when the person is ready for it and has good digestion” (p. 52).

It would benefit the reader to reflect on this for a moment. While this last quotation is in a section on “alternative” methodologies and epistemologies, Bailey does not consider “the good spiritual reaction to nature” at all alternative; in point of fact, he thinks it is “normal” and is an “objective experience” (p. 52). Besides being in stark contrast to what is currently considered “normal” and “objective” in agriculture today, this position is important to note because the epistemology of relatedness (through feeling, emotion, or sensitivity) is shared by so many of the theorists, to such a degree, that both Berry (1997) and Koepf et al. (1976) used the same terminology as Bailey—the necessity of sensitivity:

The use of land cannot be both general and kindly. ... To treat every field, or every part of every field, with the same consideration is not farming but
industry. Kindly use depends upon intimate knowledge, the most sensitive responsiveness and responsibility. As knowledge (hence, use) is generalized, essential values are destroyed. As the householder evolves into a consumer, the farm evolves into a factory—with results that are potentially calamitous for both. (Berry, 1997, p. 31)

Nevertheless, it is also important to be able to feel one’s way into the processes of nature. It is then important to form thoughts that can penetrate into the structure of nature for such thoughts will stimulate rather than banish the appropriate sensitivity. (Koepf et al., 1976, p. 125)

Leopold expressed both a critique and advocated an alternative, writing that “nevertheless, there are many discontents in agriculture which seem to add up to a new vision of ‘biotic farming’” (Leopold, 1949, p. 222), and “the evolution of a land ethic is an intellectual as well as emotional process” (p. 225).

So too did Jackson, who with the benefit of time and perspective, was succinct and direct in his analysis of current methods and his proposal for the future: “Here lies my worry. Most proposals for bringing about a sustainable agriculture and culture carry the fingerprints or markings of the Baconian-Cartesian worldview. At best, it amounts to Smart Resource Management” (Jackson, 1996, p. 25), and, “If we can [risk looking downward from the ecosphere and seeing nature’s ecosystems in the mosaic as primary objects of study], then we can fashion a new research agenda for agriculture featuring a dialectical interaction with nature and, ultimately, a conversation with nature” (pp. 111–112).

Along with Berry’s contribution to the concept of an epistemology of relatedness above, he also leveled critiques and offered an additional alternative: “To define knowledge as merely empirical is to limit one’s ability to know; it enfeebles one’s ability to feel and think” (Berry, 2000, p. 103; see also p. 101; 1997, p. 48). Berry’s alternative, which could be shown to correspond to an epistemology of relatedness, is the belief that “religious faith may be a way of knowing things that cannot otherwise be known,” (Berry, 2000, p. 28) over and against the scientistic, narrow “definition of reality” that E.O. Wilson puts forward as the only legitimate possibility.

Nowhere is the significance of these alternatives better articulated than by Koepf et al. The following passage serves not only as a conclusion to this section, with its summary of the necessity of seeing the limits of a scientistic framework and its support for an alternative methodology, but also as a culmination of previous sections. Notice how personal development is mentioned, as is an awareness of the recursive nature of the process. Indeed, this quote offers a nice segue into the final section of the article on Spirit:

Natural science has as far as possible detached man from knowledge in order to reach objective results. But in the processes described here man works on himself in order to become an ever more complete instrument for understanding nature. In doing so he begins to meet layers of reality that

Transpersonal Agroecology 51
must remain incomprehensible to one who proceeds only by measuring, counting and reckoning. He then experiences more consciously something belonging to the most ancient experiences of mankind: that in natural beings themselves something lives and works that can only be comprehended if he compares it with his own will and indeed grasps it with his own will.

This is the path that is likely to suggest itself to the farmer, for he constantly experiences himself as working in nature out of his will. He has to adapt to conditions and yet he can transform them. (Koepf et al., 1976, pp. 200–201)

**Spirit**

Spirit and a sense of the numinous also exist in TPAE writings, appearing in a way that forgoes strict religious affiliation. This too is a shared attribute of transpersonalism. One way of looking at it is through Walsh and Vaughan’s attempt to define the transpersonal realm. They specifically noted that transpersonalism has a relationship to religion, albeit a complicated one. They began with a “simple definition of religion” as “that which is concerned with, or related to, the sacred” (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993a, p. 5). They went on to say that the overlap occurs where transpersonal experiences are religious and religious experiences are transpersonal. This definition, in which an individual has an experience of the sacred outside the boundaries of institutionalized religion, matches almost exactly the accepted definition of a spiritual experience, which also matches much of the writings of the TPAE theorists. For example Fukuoka wrote:

> So for the farmer in his work: serve nature and all is well. Farming used to be sacred work. When humanity fell away from this ideal, modern commercial agriculture rose. When the farmer began to grow crops to make money, he forgot the real principles of agriculture. (Fukuoka, 1978/2009, p. 113; see also p. 111)

As its name suggests, Bailey’s *The Holy Earth* was directed entirely toward the spiritual relationship between humanity and the earth, and this is especially true for farmers. Even in *The Outlook to Nature*, Bailey was clear about the role of spirit and in particular its relationship to agriculture, and at the end of the book it is possible to see how Bailey’s thinking honed in on the spiritual in a way that gave birth to *The Holy Earth*:

> The countryman’s training, whether in home or school, should be such as to intensify his spiritual reactions. There is a danger that we miss the reverential attitude toward life...

> One stimulates it in himself only as he feels that the earth is holy and that all the things that come out of the earth are holy….Such an attitude of mind as inclines one to pause to listen to a bird’s song (even though he may not stop his work), to give more than a passing glance to a potato plant, to inhale some deeper draught of the fragrance of new-plowed land, will produce in
him a sweet seriousness that will stand him in good stead in stress and strain, and will much reinforce his spiritual stability. (Bailey, 1915/2013, pp. 87–88; see also pp. 80, 189)

Given the above, in relation to the preceding sections of this article, it is easy to see the “trans” nature of the transpersonal. This quotation could easily have been included in the alternative epistemology section because Bailey here is talking about “the reverential attitude toward life” as a learning outcome of proper agricultural training. Furthermore, it could also have been included in the process section with its many references to seemingly mundane agricultural experiences (like looking at potato plants or smelling new plowed land) as playing a role in reinforcing the farmers “spiritual stability.”

While the theme of the importance of spirituality and religion, again with regard to nature and agriculture, filled the majority of *The Holy Earth*, in this text Bailey also introduced philosophical, practical, and moral implications, which he used to the same effect:

> The sacredness to us of the earth is intrinsic and inherent. It lies in our necessary relationship and in the duty imposed on us to have dominion, and to exercise ourselves even against our own interests. We may not waste that which is not ours. To live in sincere relations with the company of created things and with conscious regard for the support of all men now and yet to come, must be of the essence of righteousness. (Bailey, 1915/1988, p. 11; see also pp. xi, 20, 78)

Here, Bailey uses terms like “intrinsic” and “inherent,” which came with their own weight at the time that he wrote them, but contain even more now with the decades of debate of these terms in environmental philosophy. But he makes these concepts practical by relating them to “our necessary relationship” while at the same time making them moral by adding that we should adhere to this understanding “even against our own interests.” That is the power of the spiritual: to contain the religious, moral, philosophical, and practical arts within one frame.

Few are better at simultaneously containing the religious, moral, philosophical, and practical arts than Wendell Berry. Berry expressed himself on spirituality in agriculture when writing “but [farming] is also a practical religion, a practice of religion, a rite. By farming we enact our fundamental connection with energy and matter, light and darkness” (Berry, 1997, p. 87; see also pp. 11, 131). He also stated:

> The “drudgery” of growing one’s own food, then, is not drudgery at all….It is—in addition to being the appropriate fulfillment of a practical need—a sacrament, as eating is also, by which we enact and understand our oneness with the Creation, the conviviality of one body with all bodies. (Berry, 1997, p. 138)

To bring Leopold into a section on spirit is to be walking a paradoxical tightrope. On one hand, Curt Meine, Leopold’s biographer, stated that
Leopold was “reticent on matters of the spirit” (as cited in Pryor 2011, p. 487). On the other hand, Leopold’s daughter called him “the most religious person I ever knew” (Van Horn, 2011, p. 406). While *A Sand County Almanac* is peppered with religious references, like the “Mosaic Decalogue” (Leopold, 1949, p. 202), one would be hard pressed to find Leopold using overt spiritual language or concepts in arguing his case. One important exception (see also Leopold, 1949, p. 210) is a story that he tells about an atheist boy who ‘converted’ when confronted with “a hundred-odd species of warblers” (Leopold, 1966, p. 230). Nothing but the spiritual could grant an understanding of such beauty: “I dare say this boy’s convictions would be harder to shake than those of many inductive theologians” (Leopold, 1966, p. 231). What makes this story so interesting is that Leopold’s brother, Frederick, suggested that it was likely that Aldo was writing about himself (Swan, 2010). This story, and the possible autobiographical nature of it, goes a long way towards describing the deep spiritual roots of Leopold’s land ethic, and in turn, the spiritual roots of TPAE.

Finally, turning to Steiner, there is another spiritual story that bears telling: the very origins of biodynamics. It appears that this method of agriculture was Steiner’s answer to the series of questions posed by an agricultural associate, Ehrenfried Pfeiffer.

[Steiner] had been speaking of the need for a deepening of esoteric life, and in this connection mentioned certain faults typically found in spiritual movements. I then asked, “How can it happen that the spiritual impulse, and especially the inner schooling, for which you are constantly providing stimulus and guidance bear so little fruit? Why do the people concerned give so little evidence of spiritual experience, in spite of all their efforts? Why, worst of all, is the will for action, for carrying out these spiritual impulses, so weak?” …Then came the thought-provoking and surprising answer: “This is a problem of nutrition. Nutrition as it is to-day does not supply the strength necessary for manifesting the spirit in physical life. A bridge can no longer be built from thinking to will to action. Food plants no longer contained the forces people need for this.” A nutritional problem which, if solved, would enable the spirit to become manifest and realize itself in human beings!…This puts the Koberwitz agricultural course in proper perspective as an introduction to understanding spiritual, cosmic forces and making them effective again in the plant world. (Steiner, 1958, pp. 7–8; see also Koepf et al., 1976, p. 24)

This quotation also puts the role of spirit in proper perspective: whether it is Leopold’s land ethic, Steiner’s biodynamics, or Fukuoka’s natural farming, spirit is instrumental in undertaking a truly sustainable agriculture.

**CONCLUSION**

The conceptualization of TPAE and its recoupling with the practices of sustainable agriculture are of great importance. As has been shown, TPAE
theorists not only put forward alternatives to the unsustainable practices of industrial agriculture but also challenge the productionist mind-set. Unfortunately, what is taught and undertaken as sustainable agriculture is mainly its practice; the unsustainable productionist mind-set is left more or less intact.

In the academic context of teaching sustainable agriculture, the cause of this omission might stem from higher education’s reluctance to entertain the spiritual. Since TPAE calls for alternative epistemologies and an acceptance of the spiritual, it tends to challenge “the often-unacknowledged presuppositions that guide higher education and that can stifle the legitimate exploration of our larger human concerns, including what we can call our moral and spiritual concerns” (Zajonc, 2003, p. 50). Shahjahan provided a remarkable analysis of the marginalization of spirituality in the academy. His conclusion was to “dialogue so that we can address the question of spirituality in research from different social locations and spiritual traditions” (Shahjahan, 2005, p. 703). This article is an attempt to start such a dialogue with the discipline of sustainable agriculture.

The economic reasons for ignoring the spiritual in sustainable agriculture are inherent in the economic system itself. Vandana Shiva, a farmer and environmental leader and thinker, noted that “the organizing principles of development based on economic growth render valueless all resources and resource processes that are not priced in the market and are not inputs to commodity production” (Shiva, 2005, p. 49). C. A. Bowers, ecojustice educational theorist, stated that “one of the hallmarks of modernization has been the shift in market relationships from a peripheral though essential aspect of community life to the dominant focal point of human interaction” (Bowers, 2001, p. 159). In agriculture this development has taken the form of the stereotypical farmer knowing “as much about financing and business accountability as his banker,” in the estimation of former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz (Berry, 1997, p. 33). Therefore, most farmers, even ones interested in alternatives, are tied up in a system where their primary thinking is done through the lens of business and where their intimate relationship with the land is not valued.

As it stands now, sustainable agriculture seems held back. However, if sustainable agriculture, in both discipline and in practice, were to take seriously the ideas of its founders, as they are conceptualized in TPAE, it could more fully deal with what Wendell Berry considered the first disruptive boundary of a practitioner of the productionist mentality: “Its first disruption is in his mind” (Berry, 1997, p. 71).4

Notes
1 Additionally, Paul Thompson (Thompson, 1995) has written a book about agricultural ethics that discusses the productionist paradigm, but he separates out the economics, and his treatment of the issue in general has been actively criticized, with even Thompson admitting his shortcomings (Campbell, 1998; Raffensperger, 1998; Thompson, 1998). This paper focuses more on Keller and Brummer’s characterization.
2 But not to be mistaken for identity, “that I literally am that tree over there, for example” (Fox, 1990, p. 81).

3 Bailey (as well as the other theorists quoted in the rest of this section) is not unequivocal like Fukuoka, and so italics will be used here (as well as elsewhere in this section).

4 Here “practitioner of the productionist mentality” is used synonymously with Berry’s concept of the “specialist.”

REFERENCES


The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 2014, Vol. 46, No. 1


The Author

*Travis Cox*, M.A., is a Ph.D. candidate at Iowa State University in Sustainable Agriculture and Assistant Professor in and Co-Director of the undergraduate department in Sustainable Living at Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, Iowa. He received his Master’s in Philosophy and Religion, with an emphasis in Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness, from the California Institute of Integral Studies. His research and teaching interests include social movements and social justice, education, metaphysics and spirituality, environmental philosophy, consciousness, and agriculture.
THE EXPRESSIONS OF SPIRITUALITY INVENTORY: EVIDENCE FOR THE CROSS CULTURAL VALIDITY IN A MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

Haslina Muhamad, Ph.D.  
*Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

John Roodenburg, Ph.D.  
*Victoria, Australia*

Dennis W. Moore, Ph.D.  
*Victoria, Australia*

**ABSTRACT:** This study sought to assess the validity of the Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (ESI) for use in the Malaysian context. The ESI was developed and validated in English to measure five overarching dimensions of spirituality that capture constructs commonly found across spirituality literature. No study focusing on the validation of a Malay version of the ESI has been reported to date. The English version of the ESI was translated into Malay in a rigorous process that included back-translation and then administered to a calibration sample of 236 Malaysian young adults, with the final model of the ESI cross-validated using a replication sample of 201 Malaysian young adults. Structural equation modelling indicated satisfactory construct validity. The $\chi^2$ difference tests supported the five factor structure of spirituality in the Malaysian context.

**KEYWORDS:** Spirituality, Expressions of Spirituality Inventory, Malaysia, Reliability, Validity, Young Adults.

Spirituality is a worldwide concept, made up of constructs that have been positively associated with valued wellbeing outcomes such as life satisfaction and happiness, and negatively related to social problems such as depression and substance abuse (Moreira-Almeida, Neto, & Koenig, 2006). However, despite considerable research on the topic researchers continue to differ in their definitions of spirituality or its component dimensions, this often attributed to spirituality being a subjective, personal and individualistic construct (Coyle, 2002, p. 589). The lack of agreement has led to the development of a plethora of disparate assessment techniques in the field, with over a hundred instruments, many psychometrically weak, now available (MacDonald, 2000b; MacDonald & Holland, 2003; Paloutzian & Park, 2005).

We were interested in understanding spirituality in a Malaysian context, and more specifically among Malaysian young people because of the potential for facilitating wellbeing. On reviewing existing measures of spirituality, we concluded that the Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (ESI) (MacDonald, 1997, 2000a) was the preferred instrumentalized model for a number of reasons.

---

Email: haslina_m@um.edu.my

Copyright © 2014 Transpersonal Institute
First, the ESI encompasses a broad range of spirituality constructs as it is based on a meta-study of spirituality studies rather than one proponent’s theory. However, it was noted that most of this empirical work has been undertaken within the context of a Western, Judeo-Christian tradition, indicating a need for cross-cultural and cross-contextual validation of the instrument in order to ascertain cross-cultural universality and relevance.

Second, the ESI has some clear strengths over other spirituality measures such as the widely used Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Ellison, 1983) and the Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS) (Piedmont, 2001). The ESI was developed after taking into account controversy surrounding spirituality measurements, such as the content domain that comprehensively make up spirituality (MacDonald, 2000b). Spirituality has been defined with 40 elements such as a search for meaning, supernatural beliefs, faith, and trust (Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). With this in mind, MacDonald conducted an extensive meta-analysis of available theoretical and empirical literatures, in an effort to identify the main pervasive factors or facets of spirituality. MacDonald’s subsequent model of spirituality is thus a multidimensional construct which includes experiential, cognitive, affective, physiological, behavioural, and social components and is inclusive of “spiritual, religious, peak, mystical, transpersonal, transcendent and numinous phenomenon” (MacDonald, 2000b, p. 158).

Third, the ESI development involved a meticulous process. The items in the ESI were determined on the basis of factor analytic techniques applied across a representative sample of about 18 pre-existing scales of spirituality reflecting a broad range of conceptual models of spirituality. The analysis allowed balanced and comprehensive identification of common underlying spirituality components variously evident in those existing measures (MacDonald, 2000a).

Fourth, in terms of sound psychometric properties, the ESI has achieved sound reliability ($r > .80$) and excellent factorial, convergent, discriminate, and criterion validity (MacDonald, 2000a). In this regard, the dimensions of spirituality captured by the ESI have already been replicated in some cultures and languages significantly different from the West such as India, Japan, and Korea (MacDonald, 2009), although none as yet with a predominantly Muslim population and culture.

Fifth, with regard to predictive validity, the utility of the ESI in relating spirituality to various psychological constructs such as personality, boredom proneness, depression, paranoia, and hypochondriasis has been demonstrated (MacDonald & Friedman, 2002. As well, the ESI has been useful in investigating the validity of various measures of spirituality such as the Spiritual Orientation Inventory and the Temperament and Character Inventory-Revised (MacDonald & Friedman, 2002; MacDonald, 2009).

Finally, the ESI is proving useful for theory development. To illustrate, based on his five dimensional theoretical model of spirituality, MacDonald (2009) has proposed a structural model of spirituality and spiritual identity. The model attempt to provide a coherent picture of the contribution of the five
dimensions of spirituality to the formation of spiritual identity and its effect on one’s self-perceived sense of well-being. The development of the spiritual identity model provides an empirically testable model that allows for an understanding of the spiritual influences on the formation of identity.

The ESI’s appeal then lies in its meticulous construction, that has seen it offer psychometrically the most robust and comprehensive set of dimensions of spirituality including Islamic Spirituality (Naail, Ali, & Mohamed, 2011). As such the ESI broadly reflects the different ways in which spirituality may be expressed both in Western and non-Western contexts.

While the ESI has been translated, and used for research in non-English-speaking countries such as India, Japan, Czech Republic and Poland (MacDonald, 2009), an extensive search on Malaysian spirituality literature failed to locate any research on translated versions of the ESI suitable for use in Malay. Using an English language version or simply transliterating the ESI into Malay would not suffice as significant linguistic, cultural and religious differences between West and East would not be appropriately taken into account. Muslim researchers (Shamsuddin, 1992; Amer & Hood, 2008) have argued that the Islamic concepts of religion, and thus its measurement, are fundamentally dissimilar to Judeo-Christian perspectives.

This study set out to determine the relevance of spirituality constructs derived from the Western context for an Eastern context as represented in the Malaysian culture by appropriately translating and validating the ESI into the Malay language and testing it on a Malaysian population.

**The Current Study**

Malaysia is a developing country in the South-East Asian region that offers an appropriate context for examining cross-cultural validity. Malay or Bahasa Melayu is the principal and official national language (Goddard, 2000). The Malaysian population is very multicultural: 67.4% are Bumiputeras (Indigenous), 24.6% are Chinese, 7.3% are Indians and 0.7% ‘others’. The many different expressions of religious views are unsurprising: 61.3% Muslims, 19.8% Buddhists, 9.2% Christians, and 6.3% Hindus (Census, 2010); three out of four Malays are of non-Judeo-Christian faiths.

This study was part of a broader study exploring the relationship between spirituality, personality predispositions, and cognitive beliefs. Using the ESI in a Malaysian context utilised a complex translation process, taking into account linguistic and/or cultural appropriateness (Nintachan & Moon, 2007). For example, certain idiomatic English expressions and colloquial phrases have no direct equivalents in Malay so literal translation cannot adequately capture the original meaning and intent. An improperly-translated instrument would seriously threaten the validity of any research outcomes (Peña, 2007; Yu, 2004). This article reports on the principles of test translation and validation.
(Brislin, 1970, 1980) applied to translating the ESI for the Malaysian linguistic and cultural context and on the psychometric properties of the Malay version.

**Study Sample**

A packet of questionnaires including the MEV-ESI was prepared to enable validation and to allow for subsequent investigation of the relationship between spirituality and key factors such as personality and cognitive beliefs. Participants were students at a Malaysian public university recruited via flyers explaining the study’s general purpose and inviting their participation by paper and pencil or online using Survey-Monkey.

The final study sample in this research consisted of 437 students with 193 (44.2%) men and 244 (55.8%) women. The participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 25 years, with a mean of 21.15 (SD = 1.754). Eighty percent of the participants are Malay and 83.8% of the participants are Muslims. This diverse demographic reflects the cultural diversity of contemporary Malaysia. The 437 respondents were randomly allocated to a *Calibration sample* of 236 (Mage = 21.2, SD = 1.69) and a *Validation sample* of 201 (Mage = 21.1, SD = 1.83).

**Translation of the ESI**

The ESI is comprised of five dimensions: *Cognitive Orientation toward Spirituality* (COS), a measure of spiritual beliefs, attitudes and perceptions pertaining to everyday life experiences; *Experiential/Phenomenological Dimension of Spirituality* (EPD), a measure of spiritual experiences; *Existential Well-Being* (EWB), a measure of spirituality reflected in the sense of meaning and purpose in life and the ability to cope with life’s uncertainties; *Paranormal Beliefs* (PAR), a measure of the expressions of spirituality related to the possibility of paranormal phenomena; and, lastly, *Religiousness* (REL), a measure of religious attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and practices.

The original ESI (comprising 98 items) was reduced by MacDonald to 32 items, six measuring each spirituality dimension (MacDonald, 2000a). With this revision two extra items were included as validity items. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale from ‘strongly disagree’ (0) to ‘strongly agree’ (4). Besides reporting favourably on discriminant, convergent and factorial validity, MacDonald (2000a) reported the Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .80 to .89 with psychometric properties comparable to the original version of the ESI (MacDonald, 2000a).

**Translation Method**

The ESI-Revised was adapted using a procedure based on Brislin’s translation/back-translation method and committee approach (Brislin, 1970, 1980) as follows:
1. Three translators (A, B and C) independently translated the English version of the ESI into Malay.

2. The principal investigator and another bilingual translator (D) compared and discussed inconsistencies in the three versions of the Malay-translated ESI. A draft version of the Malay-translated ESI was produced after consensus was reached.

3. Another translator (E), who had not seen the original English version, translated the draft back into the English language.

4. Two native English speakers (F and G) worked independently on the original version and the back-translated version comparing the similarity in language and meaning (on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 7, with 1 ‘not at all comparable/similar’ to 7 ‘extremely comparable/similar’). Items scoring less than an average of 4 were revised; those scoring more than an average of 4 were retained in the questionnaire (Nintachan & Moon, 2007).

5. Steps (a) to (c) were repeated until the translated version was comparable to the original English version. Another bilingual expert (H) compared the reconciled version with the original version: the resulting Malay experimental version (MEV-ESI) was then ready for initial validation with a calibration sample of respondents.

Translation Results

The back-translated version of all 32 ESI items did not reproduce invariant items. For instance, the item “spirituality is an important part of who I am as a person” resulted in “spirituality is important in determining who I am as a human being.” To optimise the preservation of meaning, equivalence testing was conducted using the procedures demonstrated by Sperber, DeVellis, and Boehlecke (1994).

Word-for-word transliteration was deemed inappropriate because it would produce awkward and unnatural sentence structures, for example, Item 13 “Much of what I do in life seems strained” was back translated into “Many things I have done in my life seem stressful.” The word “strained” was back translated into “stressful” as the English word “strained” has a different connotation in Malay where its meaning of “stress” was not the original meaning. After discussion with the original ESI’s author (personal communication, March 14, 2012), it was decided to base translation on the sentence’s whole meaning, rather than a simple transliteration. The final back-translated version of Item 13 therefore read “Most of what I do in my life is stressful and takes a lot of effort,” which differed literally from the original English item. If it captured the meaning and intent of the original item, it was considered acceptable (Cha, Kim, & Erlen, 2007).

The two versions were evaluated in terms of language and interpretability with the two evaluators seeming to agree that the back-translation version of Items 2 and 13 was not comparable to the original (mean score less than 4). These
items were re-translated until satisfactory translations were achieved (see Table 1).

**Validation of the MEV-ESI**

**Validation Results**

*Data Screening.* The raw data were examined to ensure that it met the prerequisites for multivariate analysis (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010) including multivariate normality critical for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) (Byrne, 2010). All pairs of variables were evaluated as normally distributed if Mardia’s coefficient indicating normalized estimates of multivariate kurtosis (Byrne, 2010) were less than 5 (Bentler, 2005 cited in Byrne, 2010).

Mardia’s estimate for the MEV-ESI was 15.409, indicating multivariate non-normality, making the maximum likelihood (ML) estimation method inappropriate since such non-normal data distribution adversely affects chi-square values, fit indices and standard errors (Byrne, 2010). Bollen-Stine bootstrapping (Bollen & Stine, 1992) was consequently used to accommodate the violation of multivariate normality: Multiple sub-samples were created by randomly redrawing samples, with replacement from the original sample to produce modified chi-square test statistics that adjusted for the lack of multivariate normality.

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).* The MEV-ESI was analysed using Maximum Likelihood Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) routines in AMOS 19 (Arbuckle, 2007) with bootstrapping. Following Kline’s (2005) and Hu and Bentler’s (1999) recommendations, six fit indices were used to evaluate the model fit: CMIN/df, Bollen-Stine p-value, CFI, TLI, SRMR and RMSEA. Cut-off values were as follows: CMIN/df, below 5 is acceptable, value close to 1 indicates a good fit; Bollen-Stine, p-value greater than 0.05; CFI and TLI, greater than 0.9 (Holmes-Smith, 2011); and, finally, SRMR and RMSEA, less than 0.08 (Byrne, 2010).

The following two-step analysis and refinement established factors supported by items maximising construct validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Jöreskog, 1993). The process, based on Jöreskog’s (1971) and Holmes-Smith and Rowe’s (1994) recommendations, involved estimating a series of one-factor congeneric measurement models: each model consisted of a set of observed variables measuring a single underlying latent construct. Using SEM, relationships between the single latent variables and indicator variables were evaluated with modification indices (MI) identifying items for removal to improve goodness-of-fit indices. Squared multiple correlations (SMC) evaluated whether a substantive relationship existed between an item and its underlying latent variables (Holmes-Smith & Rowe, 1994). If an item had SMC < 0.30; low regression weights; and several error covariances (Berry & Shipley, 2009, p. 61), item deletion was considered. The model (with the item deleted) was re-run to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Original version</th>
<th>Malay version</th>
<th>Reconciled version A</th>
<th>Back-translated version</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>Reconciled version B</th>
<th>Back translated into English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have had an experience in which I seemed to be deeply connected to everything</td>
<td>Saya mempunyai pengalaman di mana saya merasakan yang saya mempunyai perkaitan yang mendalam dengan segala-galanya</td>
<td>Saya telah mengalami satu pengalaman di mana saya merasa saya dapat memahami segala-galanya</td>
<td>Saya telah merasai satu pengalaman di mana saya merasa saya dapat memahami segala-galanya</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Saya telah merasai satu pengalaman di mana saya merasa saya dapat memahami segala-galanya</td>
<td>I have gone through an experience where I felt I could understand everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Much of what I do in life seems strained</td>
<td>Kebanyakan perkara yang saya lakukan dalam hidup ini nampak tegang</td>
<td>Banyak benda yang saya buat dalam hidup nampaknya tegang</td>
<td>Banyak perkara yang saya buat dalam hidup nampak tegang</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Banyak perkara yang saya buat dalam hidup nampak tegang</td>
<td>Many things I have done in my life seem stressful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Problematic Items in the Translation/Back-Translation Version of the ESI
assess the item removal’s impact on that particular single factor. The process was repeated until a satisfactory model was gained. The fit indices for five congeneric models of the MEV-ESI are reported in Table 2.

Fit statistics for the COS and EWB models suggested that the hypothesized model fitted the data well. This was not the case for the EPD model, the Bollen-Stine p-value and SRMR, indicating that one or more items were poor indicators of the EPD trait in the Malaysian context. Most fit indices for the REL and PAR models did not show an acceptable fit; therefore some problematic items from the EPD, REL and PAR models were removed to enhance their validity and reliability. From this modelling, five observed variables were removed from four latent constructs measuring spirituality. COS was measured with six substantive items while the other ESI constructs retained either four or five observed items (see Table 3 for the deleted items).

The second step identified and eliminated multi-factorial items by conducting pair-wise multi-factor confirmatory factor analyses that identified cross-loadings between factors. Items where the standardised residual values exceeded ± 1.96 and with large MIs (Byrne, 2010; Holmes-Smith, 2011) were identified for removal. Such items were ESI22 (I have had an experience in which all things seemed divine), ESI11 (I am more aware of my lifestyle choices because of my spirituality), ESI28 (I am an unhappy person), ESI15 (I see myself as a religiously oriented), ESI10 (I feel a sense of closeness to a higher power) and ESI14 (It is possible to predict the future).

The original version of the ESI operationalised 32 items: after the two-step process, only 20 items (including the validation items) were found to be

**TABLE 2**
*Fit Indices for the Congeneric Models in the Calibration Sample (n = 236)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>CMIN/df</th>
<th>Bollen-Stine p-value</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COS</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.533</td>
<td>0.281</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPD</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.555</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWB</td>
<td>16.374</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.819</td>
<td>0.184</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL</td>
<td>50.57</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.619</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>35.123</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.903</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $\chi^2$ = chi-square, df = degrees of freedom; CMIN/df = Normed chi-square; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker Lewis Index; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean-Square Residual; RMSEA = Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation.

**TABLE 3**
*Summary of Item Deletions After the Modelling of One-Factor Congeneric Measurement Models*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COS</td>
<td>No item deletion indicated as acceptable model fit indices and satisfactory SMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPD</td>
<td>ESI 12 (I have had a mystical experience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWB</td>
<td>ESI 3 (It always seems that I am doing things wrong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL</td>
<td>ESI 30 (I believe God or a Higher Power is responsible for my existence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESI 9 (I believe witchcraft is real)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>ESI 19 (I do not believe in spirits or ghosts)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
satisfactory indicators of spirituality in the Malaysian context. The final model had \( \chi^2 (df = 125) = 182.239 \), Bollen-Stine \( p \)-value = .08, \( \text{CMIN}/df = 1.458 \), \( \text{SRMR} = .05 \), \( \text{RMSEA} = .04 \), \( \text{CFI} = .96 \) and \( \text{TLI} = .95 \).

In this study, Hancock and Mueller’s (2001) \textit{Coefficient H} was used to calculate the reliability of each subscales because it allows for a maximised reliability of congeneric measures (Holmes-Smith, 2011). A cut-off value of .70 for \textit{Coefficient H} is recommended (Hancock & Mueller, 2001). Calculations of \textit{Coefficient H} revealed that the reliability for EWB, EPD, COS, REL and PAR was 0.82, 0.78, 0.81, 0.77 and 0.61 respectively. This finding is consistent with the finding by MacDonald (personal communication, March 30, 2012) where he also found that the PAR reliability tends to be low in his other cross-cultural samples.

\textit{Model Cross-Validation with Replication}. To assess chance factors, the ESI model was tested for and shown to achieve satisfactory invariance between the calibration and replication samples (Byrne, 2010), a process where the factor loadings were constrained equally across groups. The model invariance is evaluated with the \( \chi^2 \) difference test. Evidence of non-invariance is demonstrated if the \( \chi^2 \) difference value is statistically significant (Table 4).

Computation of the \( \chi^2 \) difference test between the unconstrained and constrained model yielded a difference of 6.713 with 13 degrees of freedom, statistically non-significant at \( p = 0.92 \). The \( \chi^2 \) difference test indicated multigroup invariance; that is, MacDonald’s five factor model of spirituality is sufficiently invariant across the calibration and replication samples to indicate robustness of the factors.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Model & \( \chi^2 \) & \text{CMIN}/df & \text{df} & \text{CFI} & \text{TLI} & \text{RMSEA} \\
\hline
Constrained & 388.377 & 1.477 & 263 & .96 & .95 & .03 \\
Unconstrained & 381.664 & 1.527 & 250 & .95 & .94 & .04 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Goodness-of-Fit Indices for Model Cross-Validation (\( n_{\text{calibration}} = 236, n_{\text{validation}} = 201 \))}
\end{table}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textit{Note}. \( \chi^2 \) = chi-square, df = degrees of freedom, \( \text{CMIN}/df \) = Normed chi-square, CFI = Comparative fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index, RMSEA = Root mean-square error of approximation.
\end{footnotesize}

\section*{DISCUSSION}

\textbf{Scale Translation and Adaptation}

This study sought to determine the cross-cultural relevance of Western spirituality constructs for an Eastern culture exemplified by a Malaysian context by appropriately translating, adapting and validating the ESI, a well-established Western five-factor model of spirituality.

The adaptation solved a number of challenges including the preservation of meaning, which was well-achieved by comparing the similarity in language and
meaning between the original and translated versions as demonstrated earlier. Another challenge that we addressed involved maintaining the content equivalence from the original to the translated instruments. For example, an item in the ESI “it is possible to communicate with the dead” is problematic, as in Islam (most participants were Muslim), communicating with the dead is very unlikely as illustrated by the following verse in the Holy Qur’an:

“Indeed, you will not make the dead hear, nor will you make the deaf hear the call when they have turned their backs retreating.” (An-Naml: 27:80)

The verse means that the dead are unable to listen to others or to make others listen to them preventing any communication. This item cannot be fully captured in the Malaysian context and is not applicable to a predominantly Muslim population due to its inconsistency with Islamic teachings and values. These problematic items were generated to measure the PAR dimension. As illustrated by the low Coefficient H value (0.61), the problem of content equivalence across cultures may have implications for the validity and reliability of this particular dimension. The problems that the current research faced were reported in other validation studies such as that conducted in Malaysia by Lim et al. (2003). They encountered semantic and conceptual problems in generating the Malay version of the International Index of Erectile Function (IIEF).

The translation process takes time and effort but is crucial and needs to be conducted. It enabled the identification and correction of confusing items, resulting in a more relevant and meaningful instrument.

Validity Analyses

Results showed that the ESI’s constructs are relevant for understanding spirituality in the Malaysian context, however the CFA results indicate that the original ESI needed to be modified before it could be used in the Malaysian context.

The modelling showed that four items from four different latent variables (see Table 3) were invalid indicators of spirituality in the Malaysian context. Some invalid items, “I do not believe in spirits or ghosts,” (ESI 19) and “I believe witchcraft is real,” (ESI 9) were initially covaried to improve the model fit. A possible explanation was that these items seemed redundant to the Malaysian participants; belief in spirits or ghosts tended to also mean belief in witchcraft: one of the items was removed from the scale. The SMC exhibited by ESI 9 was very small (0.04) suggesting little commonality with other items measuring the PAR dimension: as recommended by Berry and Shipley (2009), this item was removed from the scale. Accordingly, the new model was found to fit the data well.
Results from modelling confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of two multifactors showed six multifactorial items. For example, ESI 22, “I have had an experience in which all things seemed divine,” (measuring the EPD dimension) was found to cross load on the COS factor. This item’s attraction to the COS factor made substantive sense because to Malaysian participants, “I have had an experience in which all things seemed divine” may be cognitive-perceptual and an indicator of spiritual experiences. Modelling the measurement models two by two was to identify only uni-factorial items, so this item was removed from the EPD scale. No previous research was available for comparison with the current findings.

Following validity analyses, 18 items were found to be relevant for measuring Malaysians’ spirituality. It was puzzling that items such as ESI 4, “it is possible to communicate with the dead,” suggested as being content-irrelevant during the translation process, were retained in the scale. To Muslims, the possibility of communicating with the dead was more likely to be superstitious belief than religious belief. This issue could not be explored further due to this study’s quantitative nature. Future studies should employ a mixed-method research design to enable deeper probing into the emic construct of spirituality.

In terms of factorial validity, the CFAs’ parameter estimates, consistent with MacDonald’s previous work (2000b), supported the five-dimensional structure of spirituality. This study’s results also showed that the multidimensional structure of spirituality was invariant across the calibration and replication samples, and implied that the five-factor model did not capitalize on chance relationships. Nevertheless, although this study found evidence of factorial invariance, it should be acknowledged that the findings did not establish cross-cultural invariance since as an initial study only a single Malaysian sample was involved. Nevertheless, this study gives an initial indication of likely validity of the ESI in the Malaysian context. Further research is needed to fully consider cross-cultural measurement invariance by employing two or more different cultural groups.

The validity analyses’ results support the construct validity of the five-factor model of spirituality from the MEV-ESI. The findings also imply that Western spirituality constructs are generalizable to Malaysian communities with their many religions, traditions and languages, despite some stark contradictions between religions from the West and East. The MEV-ESI can be used to evaluate spirituality in pluralistic societies such as Malaysia. This result aligns with the concept of ‘1Malaysia,’ introduced recently by Malaysian Prime Minister, Dato’ Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abd Razak, which emphasised the notion of racial harmony and unity in Malaysia (EPU, 2010). Using one spirituality measure may help, albeit in a modest way, to promote unity and oneness in Malaysia with its many different races and religions.

Future studies are needed to further the findings by overcoming some of the limitations including that neither sample was fully representative nor necessarily balanced regarding age, race and religious affiliation. Study participants were university students, mainly Malays and Muslims potentially
reflecting a bias toward an Islamic perspective. Other demographic groups need to be considered in future. However, given the lack of validation studies, particularly within the Malaysian context, the current study contributes to more understanding of the scale’s adaptation process and of spirituality concepts in non-Western contexts.

CONCLUSION

In summary, our results promisingly support the Western based MEV-ESI as valid for delineating spirituality constructs in an eastern multicultural context as represented by a sample within the Malaysian context. Our results indicate that it will be worthwhile to embark on further studies validating the MEV-ESI, including investigations of the MEV-ESI in relation to other spirituality measures such as the Islamic Spirituality Scale (Naail, Ali, & Mohamed, 2011).

Our findings support the ESI as a well-designed “sociopsychometric” measure meeting Moberg’s (2002) criteria: “any well designed sociopsychometric scale to measure it should be appropriate for all people because of their common humanity, with but minor adaptations for social, cultural, and linguistic differences” (p. 49). Clearly, the constructs underlying the ESI are cross-culturally relevant in other than Western, Judeo-Christian contexts results.

REFERENCES


The Authors

Haslina Muhamad, Ph.D., is a senior lecturer with the Department of Anthropology & Sociology, University of Malaya, Malaysia. Her current research focus includes personality and its relationship to spirituality and cognitive constructs; and the assessment of imported psychological measures.

John Roodenburg, Ph.D., is a psychologist and senior lecturer in Counselling Psychology, and Educational and Developmental Psychology, Faculty of Education, Monash University. His research interests are in mixed method construct validation of individual differences, and more specifically in personality centred cognitive style.

Dennis W. Moore, Ph.D., is a professor in the Faculty of Education at Monash University. His research interests include the development, trialling, and evaluation of instructional processes for children with special educational needs / disabilities including children with autism; and the assessment and evaluation of treatment effects and the application of functional assessment processes.
THE NADIR EXPERIENCE: CRISIS, TRANSITION, AND GROWTH

Russell Stagg, Ph.D.
Ladysmith, British Columbia, Canada

ABSTRACT: The author summarized research on the nadir experience, the experience of one of the very lowest points of life. Although a sense of disintegration, powerlessness, and emptiness marks its immediate aftermath, survivors of rape, bereavement, and maritime disasters have shown that a nadir experience can also be an opportunity for personal transformation and psychological growth. Severe trauma is more likely to lead to positive change, and reflection seems to play an important role in this process. Among the positive changes observed are increases in personal well-being, sense of meaning in life, spirituality, inner wisdom, and compassion. The author described how he experienced such positive changes following a nadir experience in his own life. Therapists dealing with persons undergoing the nadir experience should encourage reflection oriented toward the future as well as the past. The author has suggested mindfulness meditation as a useful technique to encourage such reflection.

KEYWORDS: nadir experience, posttraumatic growth, trauma therapy, reflection, rumination, mindfulness, meditation, spiritual assessment.

Half a century ago, Thorne (1963) introduced the term nadir experiences to describe the very opposite of peak experiences, the highly positive experiences that transcend everyday life (Maslow 1964/1970). While peak experiences are worthy of study, so too are the deep emotional traumas such as bereavement, depression, loss, or a crisis of existence that Thorne was referring to. Despite their devastating effect on a person’s quality of life, nadir experiences that challenge core beliefs and offer the opportunity for reflection can become opportunities for personal transformation and psychological growth.

Thorne (1963) defined the nadir experience to be the “subjective experiencing of what is subjectively recognized to be one of the lowest points of life” (p. 248), and claimed that both peak and nadir experiences could give valuable information for clinical personality studies. He set about obtaining data about such experiences in a systematic way, by asking subjects to write about the three best and three worst experiences of their lives. He then created a detailed classification scheme for the peak experiences, and observed that the nadir experiences usually involve “death, illness, tragedy, loss, degradation or deflation of Self” (p. 249). Although he noted that his research was ongoing, Thorne never published further information on the nadir experience. In a preface to Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences written shortly before his death, Maslow (1964/1970) called for more research on nadir experiences.

The author gratefully acknowledges the helpful comments of Ms. Sara Kulba, Dr. Sharon Moore, Ms. Caylee Villett, and the anonymous referees.

Email: stagg.russell@gmail.com

Copyright © 2014 Transpersonal Institute
Although recent research such as that of Joseph (2011) has addressed the nadir experience, there is still a lack of research into such concepts as spiritual growth in the aftermath of trauma, and its implications for therapy. This article is an attempt to address this lack.

Like a peak experience, a nadir experience is transcendent in that it marks a dramatic shift from ordinary everyday life. However, it is transcendent in a negative way. While the peak experience provides a sense of personal integration and oneness with the world (Maslow, 1987), a nadir experience initially leads to the opposite feeling: a sense of aloneness and vulnerability (Kumar, 2005). My purpose in this paper is to investigate the nadir experience and the circumstances under which it can result in positive growth. I describe the types of initial events in the nadir experience, the characteristics of the transition stage that follows, and the factors that allow a person to experience growth and transformation and to return to a life that may have been much changed by the event. I point out the ways in which the nadir experience can result in meaning-making, spiritual growth, inner wisdom, and increased compassion. I discuss the implications for counseling clients undergoing a nadir experience. I also describe the positive results of a nadir event that occurred in my own life. Since studies of the nadir experience date back five decades, I examine both current and historical research on the subject.

CHARACTERIZING THE NADIR EXPERIENCE

In On Grief and Grieving, Kubler-Ross and Kessler (2005) described the nadir experience of grief as consisting of five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Their use of the word *stages* is unfortunate, since the authors cautioned that not all people go through all stages, and even when they do, they do not necessarily go through them in order. How, then, should one characterize a nadir experience such as grief? First, I propose making a distinction between the nadir *experience* and the nadir *event*. The nadir event may be short-lived, but the nadir experience continues as a person deals with the aftermath of that event. Persons living through the same nadir event may have quite different nadir experiences, as the survivors of marine catastrophes have demonstrated (Joseph, 2011; Joseph, Williams, & Yule, 1993). A person who perceives a nadir event as challenging core values is more likely to experience long-term positive change (Tedeschi, Calhoun, & Cann, 2007). A person who perceives a nadir event as challenging core values is more likely to experience long-term positive change (Tedeschi, Calhoun, & Cann, 2007). In fact, both Lancaster, Kloep, Rodriguez, and Weston (2013) and Boals, Steward, and Schuettler (2010) found a positive correlation between posttraumatic growth and *event centrality* (the degree to which a nadir event challenges central concepts of self-identity). Regardless of the nature of the traumatic event, however, nadir experiences share important characteristics.

One of these characteristics is the way a nadir experience divides into three phases. For example, following the nadir event of bereavement there comes a grieving period and finally a return to life after the loss. I propose describing the nadir experience by including in it these three natural phases: the event, the adjustment, and the return. In doing so, I shall make use of the terminology

Nadir Experience 73
originally used to characterize rites of passage. Van Gennep (1909/1960) was the first person to recognize these stages, terming them séparation, marge, and agrégation, which may be translated as severance, threshold, and incorporation. As Hine and Foster (2004) emphasized, however, the incorporation stage is really a reincorporation, marking a return to life again after being severed from it in some way.

There will not necessarily be an orderly progression through the threshold stage. As Stroebe and Schut (1999) pointed out, a grieving person (in the threshold stage) needs to look backward and forward, focusing on both loss (toward the severance stage) and restoration (toward the reincorporation stage). The threshold stage can be likened to a journey through the no-man’s-land that once separated nations and tribal regions (van Gennep, 1909/1960). Often the journey is a long one through constantly changing terrain. Neeld (1990/2003) has described this changing terrain as consisting of seven stages or choices. The threshold stage comprises the choices of second crisis, observation, the turn, reconstruction, and working through.

SEVERANCE: TRAUMA AND CRISIS

The nadir event cuts us abruptly off from our normal state of existence. It is as if our ordinary life and the ground on which we stand are no longer there. In the nadir event, we suffer “the loss of a predictable and safe world” (Kumar, 2005, p. 7). Often, as in an accident or the death of someone close to us, the nadir event is external. At other times, however, the nadir event may be an internal one, such as a mental illness or a person questioning his or her long-held religious faith.

Trauma

The literal meaning of the Greek word trauma is “wound,” and that wound may be physical, emotional, or psychological. Just as a physical injury has an external cause, so too does a psychological injury. Bereavement, rape, or assault can all create profound psychological trauma, but there is a danger in viewing such nadir events solely as trauma. As Stroebe and Schut (1999) pointed out in the context of bereavement, it is not enough for a bereaved person to do grief work that focuses attention only on the loss and the circumstances surrounding it (a loss orientation). The nadir experience continues long afterward, as these authors noted. The bereaved person has important secondary tasks involving a restoration orientation, such as learning how to handle finances, doing cooking, selling a house, or relating to a new identity such as widower or parent of a deceased child. In short, a restoration orientation addresses the entire nadir experience, which includes building a new life in the aftermath of loss.

Psychological Crisis

In some cases the nadir experience may be the result of an internal event such as the onset of depression, anxiety, addiction, or other mental illness. Such an
event may not be as obvious as an external trauma, but it is measurable using formal assessment tools. Although psychological crises are not generally viewed in the same light as trauma, some (such as depression) may be devastating or even fatal. Clients recovering from such psychological crises often have the sense that they are building a new life, a life (in the words of one of my clients) “that I never thought I would have.”

**Spiritual Crisis**

Sometimes a nadir experience takes the form of a spiritual crisis confronting an outwardly religious person. Assagioli (1978/1989) described such a crisis as beginning with a sense of dissatisfaction, a sense that something is missing. Ordinary life comes to seem empty, unreal and unimportant. The person begins to question the meaning of life and of suffering. This crisis of faith brings into question the very things the person previously took for granted. Another form of spiritual crisis may be a fear of the afterlife, as in the case of a client of mine who felt her guilt was unforgivable and that she would “burn in hell.” Extreme spiritual crises are traumatic for the sufferer, but are often difficult to observe or measure. A counselor dealing with a client undergoing a nadir experience needs to be alert for references to God, spiritual matters, meditative practices, and questions about meaning, and to respond in an affirming way. The counselor may even need to make a passing mention of God, and see if the client responds.

**Threshold: Disintegration, Powerlessness, and Emptiness**

Although the result of a nadir event may be a profound sense of loss, the grief process may nonetheless be “one of the most meaningful tasks you will ever do” (Kumar, 2005, p. 70). When our old life is destroyed, the nadir experience of grief gives us the task of rebuilding a new one. To convey this sense of destruction and rebuilding, Foster and Little (1989) expanded the meaning of the term threshold to include a threshing place, where the part of the grain that is no longer important falls away.

**Disintegration**

Dabrowski (1976) saw the threshold in somewhat similar terms to Foster and Little (1989), although he termed the threshing process disintegration. He believed that, in order for a person to develop psychologically, the aspects of personality based on instinct and socialization had to disintegrate in order to make way for something better. However, this disintegration contains positive elements which help an individual plot the course of his or her psychological development. Dabrowski created an entire theory of psychological development based on this concept of positive disintegration.
Powerlessness

An important characteristic of the threshold stage is a sense of powerlessness over what has befallen us. Such powerlessness is an inevitable consequence of bereavement, but it also occurs with other nadir experiences such as addiction. A person struggling with substance abuse often feels that he or she can do nothing to overcome the dependence. This is reflected in the first step of Alcoholics Anonymous, that “we admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2002, p. 59). By reciting this step, the recovering alcoholic recognizes that he or she has reached the lowest point and wants to recover. James (1902/1997) also noted that the same sense of powerlessness occurs when the crisis is a spiritual one.

Emptiness

A nadir event may abruptly cut us off from our past and our sense of personhood that depends on the past. The familiar terrain of our life before the event is gone, and we feel disconnected from the world around us. Various terms have described this profound disconnection: Almaas (1986/2000) referred to it as a deficient emptiness, Frankl (1946/1959) as an existential vacuum, and Perls (1959/1969) as a desert or a sterile void (pointing out that it does not necessarily remain sterile for long).

Moving on or Becoming Stuck

After the Herald of Free Enterprise ferry sank in the English Channel in 1987, claiming 193 lives, Joseph (2011) surveyed some of the survivors. While many showed symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, he was astonished to find that 43% reported positive changes in their lives following the disaster—almost the same percentage as those reporting negative changes (46%). Using passengers’ written responses as to how their lives had changed, he constructed the Changes in Outlook Questionnaire (CiOQ; Joseph et al., 1993). The 26 items of the CiOQ measured both negative changes such as “my life has no meaning anymore,” and positive ones such as “I value my relationships more now” (p. 275). When the cruise ship Jupiter sank off Greece in 1988, claiming four lives, Joseph et al. (1993) were able to confirm that the earlier results were not an anomaly. Ninety-four percent of respondents agreed with the statement that “I don’t take life for granted anymore,” and 91% with the statement that “I value my relationships much more now.” Eighty-eight percent agreed with the statement that “I value other people more now,” and 71% with the statement that “I’m a more understanding and tolerant person now” (p. 275).

Various investigators have discovered similar changes in persons undergoing the nadir experience of bereavement. Braun and Berg (1994) analyzed extensive interviews with ten mothers who experienced the unexpected loss of a child, and found that respondents reported an increase in their understanding of what was important in life. Milo (1997) interviewed eight mothers who had lost
a child with a developmental disability. Six of these mothers felt they had experienced personal transformation in the areas of priorities in life, their identity, their relationships, their spirituality, and their view of the world. To investigate such positive changes occurring in bereaved persons (and also negative ones), Hogan, Greenfield, and Schmidt (2001) developed the Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist (HGRC). The instrument contains 49 negative and 12 positive statements that respondents rate using a five-point Likert scale. An example of a negative statement is: “My hopes are shattered,” while an example of a positive statement is: “I care more deeply for others.” Using the HGRC on a group of 586 bereaved adults (mostly mothers who had lost a child), the authors found that these adults saw themselves as tougher, more compassionate, more loving, more resilient, and more forgiving in the aftermath of their loss. In short, they saw themselves as having been transformed by the nadir experience of grief.

When Burt and Katz (1987) surveyed 113 rape survivors, they included in their survey a list of 28 questions about “changes that come from my efforts to recover” (p. 70). Items, which included “I believe my life has meaning,” and “I’m able to get my needs met” (p. 70), were rated on a seven-point Likert scale. More than half the respondents agreed with 15 or more of the questions. In the wake of devastating events, many people experience positive change and growth. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) first used the term posttraumatic growth to describe such positive change. They noted that survivors of trauma often experience a deepening of relationships, a desire for more intimacy, greater compassion, a sense of being strengthened by the experience, and a renewed appreciation for life. However, not everyone will achieve growth and reach the reincorporation stage. The widow, who years after her husband’s death, continues to set a place for him at the dinner table, is clearly stuck in the threshold stage. She has a loss orientation, rather than a restoration orientation. What enables a person to move on, to focus on restoration, and to enter the reincorporation stage?

Degree of Trauma

The degree of trauma may be an important factor. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) used the Traumatic Stress Schedule (TSS; Norris, 1990) to measure the degree of trauma suffered by 604 undergraduate psychology students in the previous year. The TSS is a list of 14 to 26 questions (depending on the type of event) regarding events such as assault, bereavement, and rape. Questions included “how many loved ones died as a result of this incident?” and “did you ever feel like your own life was in danger during the incident?” (p. 1717). Tedeschi and Calhoun subjectively rated the respondents as suffering “no trauma” or “severe trauma” (p. 465). They then created the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) to measure positive change following trauma. The PTGI includes 21 questions in five categories: relating to others, new possibilities, personal strength, spiritual change, and appreciation of life. Examples of characteristics that respondents rated on a six-point Likert scale were: “a sense of closeness with others” and “knowing I can handle
difficulties” (p. 460). Tedeschi and Calhoun found that the trauma sample experienced greater growth than the non-trauma sample at a 99.9% significance level. In addition, the trauma sample experienced greater growth in every category except Spiritual Change (which I will discuss in a later section). In a subsequent work, Tedeschi et al. (2007) concluded that growth only followed an event that confronted a person’s core beliefs.

Janoff-Bulman (2004), responding to the work of Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996), hypothesized that posttraumatic growth is a result of three factors. The first, strength through suffering, refers to trauma survivors discovering new strengths and developing new coping skills and resources. The second, psychological preparedness, deals with trauma survivors being better prepared for subsequent events, and being less traumatized by them. The final one, existential reevaluation, concerns the survivor’s renewed appreciation for life in the aftermath of catastrophe. These proposed mechanisms for posttraumatic growth are plausible, but they require further investigation.

Reflection Rather than Rumination

As I will discuss in a later section, meaning-making is an important part of posttraumatic growth. However, searching for meaning and finding meaning are two different things. Boyraz, Horne, and Sayger (2010) used three assessments with 380 bereaved individuals to test the hypothesis that reflection may be an important part of meaning-making. The first assessment, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule of Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988) contains 20 feelings such as “upset” or “strong,” which respondents rank according to their experienced over various time intervals from “this moment” to “over the past year” to “in general” (p. 1070). The second assessment, the Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire of Trapnell and Campbell (1999) includes 12 ranking questions on rumination such as “I often find myself reevaluating something I have done,” and 12 on reflection such as “I love to meditate on the nature and meaning of things” (p. 293). The final assessment, an adaptation of the Positive Meaning Scale of Tugade and Fredrickson (2004), consists of four questions:

- “Did anything good come out of dealing with this loss?”
- “Do you think you might find benefit from this situation in the long term?”
- “Do you think it is likely that there is something to learn from this experience?”
- “Do you think it is likely that this experience could change your life in a positive way?” (Boyraz et al., 2010).

The authors found a positive correlation between positive affect and reflection, a positive correlation between reflection and positive meaning-finding, and a negative correlation between negative affect and reflection. They concluded that positive affect promotes reflection (and vice versa), and that reflection promotes positive meaning-finding. They cautioned that “a search for meaning
that is accompanied by negative affect may prevent bereaved individuals from receiving positive benefits from their loss” (p. 246). To deal with the fact that bereaved individuals often suffer from negative affect, the authors suggested using therapy as a tool to aid in reflection following a loss.

While reflection is beneficial in thinking about an event, rumination is its opposite, as Williams, Teasdale, Segal, and Kabat-Zinn (2007) explained. “When we ruminate,” they wrote, “we become fruitlessly preoccupied with the fact that we are unhappy and with the causes, meanings, and consequences of our unhappiness” (p. 43). Reflection is a creative process that often involves the critical examination of thoughts. As a client explained to me, reflection can defeat the toxic effects of rumination:

It used to be that a negative thought would get hold of me and go round and round in my head, and I would spiral down into suicidal depression. Now when I get a negative thought, I write it down in my journal. I look at it and reflect on it, and I realize how wrong it is.

Rumination involves preoccupation with the nadir event, a loss orientation. Its antidote, reflection, involves a focus on life after the nadir event, a restoration orientation. Such reflection leads to a discovery of meaning, which may be as simple as learning to enjoy life again (Kumar, 2005). As Joseph et al. (1993) discovered, the discovery of at least some meaning in their lives seems to be a characteristic of disaster survivors. In a later section, I discuss therapeutic tools to encourage reflection and meaning-making.

REINCORPORATION: WELL-BEING, MEANING, SPIRITUALITY, WISDOM, AND COMPASSION

Many survivors of the Herald of Free Enterprise and Jupiter disasters made positive changes in their lives following these nadir experiences. They were able to focus on life after the event (a restoration orientation) rather than the event itself (a loss orientation). They somehow reincorporated themselves into lives forever changed by their brush with death. Such changes did not take place immediately of course, but disaster survivors who do not suffer psychological trauma may actually be experiencing psychological growth (Joseph et al., 1993). The immediate aftermath of a disaster may well be a desert or a sterile void, but as Perls (1959/1969) pointed out, sometimes the sterile void turns into a fertile void and “the desert starts to bloom” (p. 61). What characterizes this changed landscape of the reincorporation stage?

Personal Well-Being

Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) found that those suffering severe trauma experienced an increase in personal well-being, especially in the areas of appreciation of life and personal strength. They found positive change in the areas of new possibilities and relating to others. They also found positive
spiritual change occurred for women, a finding de Castella and Simmonds (2013) confirmed in their interviews with women trauma survivors. On the other hand, Tedeschi and Calhoun did not find positive spiritual change for men survivors or for survivors overall. The two qualities these latter authors used to assess the Spiritual Change factor should be noted, however. The first quality, “I have a stronger religious faith” (p. 460), clearly has to do with religion. The second quality, “a better understanding of spiritual matters” (p. 460), requires an explanation of the difference between spiritual and religious matters. Without such an explanation, respondents are liable to interpret the question as having to do with assimilating religious teachings. The Spiritual Change factor then becomes a measure of religious, not spiritual, change. Counselors working with persons undergoing a nadir experience need to be wary of confusing the two concepts as Tedeschi and Calhoun apparently did. Spiritual intervention can be a powerful therapeutic tool, but as I discuss in a later section, religious observance and spiritual experience are quite distinct. In that section, I also suggest a more effective way of measuring spiritual change.

Meaning-Making

Although the CiOQ (Joseph et al., 1993) did not include a question on whether respondents had found new meaning in life, it did include under Negative Change an item “my life has no meaning anymore” (p. 275). Of all the questions in the CiOQ, it is the only one with which no respondents from the Jupiter disaster agreed, and its overall Likert score was the lowest. Clearly, then, respondents did find meaning in life after the disaster. The later PTGI assessment (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) included the items “I established a new path for my life” and “my priorities about what is important in life” (p. 460), both of which relate to meaning-making. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) noted that the PTGI assessment had excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$). Dropping items one at a time, they found that Chronbach’s alpha never dropped below .89, “indicating that all items contribute relatively equally to the consistency of the scale” (p. 461). Questions relating to meaning were therefore an important part of their posttraumatic growth measure.

The “changes that come from efforts to recover” questionnaire of Burt and Katz (1987) included a question on meaning, although the authors did not provide information on the number of respondents answering this item positively. Another assessment to include the item “my life has meaning” was the Psychological Well-Being Post-Traumatic Changes Questionnaire (PWB-PTCQ) (Joseph et al., 2012, p. 421). To test its reliability and validity, the authors obtained Internet responses from 254 adults in an Internet survey linked to Websites dealing with trauma. They also obtained data from two control samples of 299 adults in workplace, church, and community groups in the United Kingdom, and found the instrument to have high internal validity ($\alpha > .87$). Eighteen test items were chosen, and factor loadings for a one factor solution varied from .44 to .61, with the item “my life has meaning” having a
factor loading of .47. The item related to meaning, then, is an important part of the well-being measure. Its inclusion in the PWB-PCTQ is an acknowledgment that meaning-making is an important part of posttraumatic growth. As Kumar (2005) pointed out with respect to the nadir experience of grief, the grief journey can be a journey into the meaning of life.

**Spiritual Growth**

Spiritual meaning-making can also be an important outcome of a nadir event, as the experience of John of the Cross illustrates. In 1578, he was imprisoned and kept in solitary confinement except for times when he was taken out and publicly whipped (Merton, 1952). Out of his captivity came the famous poem *Dark Night of the Soul*, and a prose manuscript of the same name (John of the Cross, 1585/1959) in which he wrote at length about how his experiences ultimately helped him. Out of hardship, he wrote that his soul had learned to commune with God, and that God had helped him to a clearer understanding of the truth. Clearly, John of the Cross experienced a deepening of his Catholic faith, but was this deepening an example of spiritual growth?

When a person undergoes such growth, it may sometimes seem as if he or she is coming out of a spiritual sleep. Assagioli (1975) wrote about the spiritual awakening that follows a spiritual crisis, noting that it brings a sense of meaning, purpose, inner security, and an appreciation for the sacredness of life. It may also bring a greater sense of closeness to a higher power. Such spiritual growth can occur with alcoholism. Although the Alcoholics Anonymous program does not address alcoholism as a nadir experience, it does have a spiritual focus, and the end result of surrendering to powerlessness is not sobriety, but spiritual awakening (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2002). Given the importance of spiritual growth in the nadir experience, it is disappointing that authors such as Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) and Joseph et al. (2012) did not include an item on their questionnaires relating to spiritual (as opposed to religious) change.

Denney, Aten, & Leavell (2011) found evidence of posttraumatic spiritual growth, however, in 13 cancer survivors in a study using focus groups. Eleven reported increased acceptance of their circumstances and greater ability to surrender control to God. Nine reported experiencing richer prayer lives, eight felt an increase in divine peace, and eight reported an increased sense of divine purpose. Given the discrepancies between reported spiritual change for men and women reported by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996), it is unfortunate that only three of the 13 group members were men, and that the authors did not compare the enhanced spirituality of male and female survivors.

What is the best way to measure spirituality (rather than religion) in such studies? From the standpoint of spirituality and posttraumatic growth, the most important categories of religious scales (Hill & Pargament, 2008) are those measuring closeness to God (Hall & Edwards, 1996; Kass, Friedman, Lesserman, Zuttermeister, & Benson, 1991; Maton, 1989; Pargament et al.,...
(1988) and orienting, motivating forces (Gorsuch & Venable, 1983; Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993). Three of these scales (Gorsuch & Venable, 1983; Pargament et al., 1988; Ryan et al., 1993) were designed for Christian subjects, while that of Hall and Edwards (1996) was designed “from a Judeo-Christian perspective” (p. 233). The scales of Maton (1989) and Kass et al. (1991) are not specifically Christian or Judeo-Christian, but still have a profoundly theistic outlook. Future investigators need to flag non-theistic, non-religious items in the latter two scales such as a question about “an experience of profound inner peace” (Kass et al., 1991, p. 211). They would also do well to consider including items in such as “do you now feel closer to something greater than yourself?”

**Inner Wisdom**

Wayne Muller is a therapist and minister who has spent more than three decades helping individuals who grew up in troubled families. He noted that their lives were blighted by their early experience, but at the same time he observed that

> adults who were hurt as children inevitably exhibit a particular strength, a profound inner wisdom, and a remarkable creativity and insight. Deep within them—just beneath the wound—lies a profound spiritual vitality, a quiet knowing, a way of perceiving what is right, beautiful, and true. (Muller, 1992, p. xiii)

In some cases, survivors of childhood abuse eventually abuse their own children, abuse drugs or alcohol, or engage in self-injurious or criminal activity. Do these survivors experience any posttraumatic growth at all? Kira et al. (2013) used the PTGI (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) to conclude that survivors of ongoing traumas (such as childhood abuse) do not experience posttraumatic growth. However, this finding does not mean that Muller (1992) is wrong. None of the items on the PTGI, the CiOQ (Joseph et al., 1993) or the PWB-PTCQ (Joseph et al., 2012) seem to capture Muller's quality of inner wisdom. It may be that survivors have suffered the worst, and now appreciate what life can offer, even if they are unable to direct their own actions to fully experience it. Perhaps the only way to measure inner wisdom is through the observations of an experienced therapist like Muller.

**Increased Compassion**

The PTGI (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), the PWB-PTCQ (Joseph et al., 2012), and the HGRC (Hogan et al., 2001) include a self-evaluation of compassion as an important factor. The “changes that come from efforts to recover” questionnaire (Burt & Katz, 1987) includes compassion in a negative way with the item “I’m unsympathetic to other people’s problems” (p. 70), although the authors did not indicate the number of respondents disagreeing with this statement. The CiOQ (Joseph et al., 1993) contains the item: “I’m a more
understanding and tolerant person now” (p. 275) with which 71% of the Jupiter respondents agreed. Chodron (2001) suggested that such compassion arises naturally out of a heart-breaking experience:

Sometimes this broken heart gives birth to anxiety and panic, sometimes to anger, resentment, and blame. But under the hardness of that armor there is the tenderness of genuine sadness. This is our link with all those who have ever loved. This genuine heart of sadness can teach us great compassion. It can humble us when we’re arrogant and soften us when we are unkind. It awakens us when we prefer to sleep and pierces through our indifference. This continual ache of the heart is a blessing that when accepted fully can be shared with all. (p. 4)

Berliner (1999b) also noted that the genuine heart of sadness can create a heightened vulnerability and a longing to help others.

**Implications for Therapy**

**The Severance Phase**

At the end of every synagogue service, mourners rise for the recitation of kaddish (the mourner’s prayer) in a powerful acknowledgment of their separate status. In general, however, bereaved persons often find others have “an intolerance of their grief” (Cacciatore & Flint, 2012, p. 167). Deceased persons have “departed” or “passed on,” and bereaved clients themselves are often reluctant to use words like death to describe their experience. To come to terms with the reality of loss, Cacciatore and Flint (2012) suggested the use of rituals in which metaphor and symbol, stories, and ceremonies all play a role. A ritual “provides a forum where the death is acknowledged and accepted as real” (Reeves, 2011, p. 417). It is a reminder to the bereaved person that they are forever separated from the life they once had with the deceased. However, the motivation for the ritual must come from clients themselves (Reeves, 2011).

How should the therapist deal with rituals with an overtly spiritual or religious content? Saunders, Miller, and Bright (2010) described four possible approaches in dealing with such matters, two of which the therapist should avoid. Spiritually avoidant care neglects the importance of spiritual matters to a client and so amounts to malpractice, and spiritually directive care is only appropriate for persons acting in a religious capacity. Spiritually conscious care implies an awareness of spiritual matters and a willingness to refer if necessary, and it should be considered a minimum standard. In spiritually integrated care, a therapist helps the client identify spiritual needs and suggests spiritual and religious activities. My experience as an interfaith hospital chaplain helps me to be spiritually integrated, but I encourage even those without a religious background to consider helping a client in this way. A spirit of openness, inquiry, and some knowledge of religious customs is more important than formal religious training.
The use of rituals is not restricted to the nadir experience of bereavement. Goldstein (1998) described the use of a mikveh, a Jewish ceremonial bath, as a healing tool for a rape survivor. She noted that “having a Jewish framework in which this woman could rid herself of the ‘stain’ she felt, was crucial to the successful completion of therapy and her ability to go back to work, synagogue, friends and family with a sense of peace” (p. 129). Clients surviving other types of trauma may wish to construct rituals to commemorate, for instance, the anniversary of the nadir event.

Neimeyer (1999) and Neimeyer, Torres, and Smith (2011) suggested various writing exercises to help acknowledge the reality and depth of loss. The therapist can adapt them to fit nadir experiences other than grief, since every nadir experience is in some sense a loss. One exercise is for a client to compose a carefully-thought-out epitaph that captures the essence of the person who died. Another is to journal about the loss, keeping in mind that the material should be something the client has never adequately discussed with others, and that involves the client’s deepest thoughts and feelings. Finally, poetry can be an important reflective exercise, as can the virtual dream, a brief spontaneous story with a prescribed structure.

Other grief exercises (Neimeyer, 1999) may be used or adapted in therapy. One is to note the imprint a deceased person made on the client’s life, the way the person still lives on in the client. Such an imprint may involve mannerisms, personality, values, or beliefs. Another is for the client to find ways to link objects associated with the deceased to the client’s everyday life. For example, a bereaved mother kept her late child’s stuffed toys in a display case. A final exercise is the use of metaphors to help with the reflection process. An example of such a metaphor is a client seeing the grief she carries around with her as a suitcase with treasures hidden away inside it.

**The Threshold Phase**

The sense of emptiness following the severance phase is a painful yet necessary one. Clients may wish to numb their pain through drugs or alcohol, or to rush through this phase (as in the example of a widow who remarries soon after her husband’s death). For a person who decides to sit with his or her grief, however, this phase becomes a time of reflection. Yet how can an individual overcome negative affect enough to make such reflection possible? It is helpful for therapists to tell clients that while they cannot take away the pain resulting from a nadir experience, they can help clients cope better with their feelings, especially when those feelings are most intense. The writing exercises described in the previous section (Neimeyer, 1999; Neimeyer et al., 2011) are helpful here, as is expressive writing (Pennebaker, 1997). This latter exercise involves persons writing about their deepest thoughts and feelings and tying them to relationships and to “who you have been, who you would like to be or who you are now” (Pennebaker, 1997, p. 162). Sloan, Marx, Epstein, and Dodds (2008) found such writing encourages reflection and discourages rumination.
Kumar (2005) has recommended mindfulness as another way to deal with the pain of this stage of acute grief. Mindfulness deals with powerful emotions by providing a middle road. While some clients obsess about the nadir experience, others try to avoid difficult feelings through overwork, drugs, or alcohol. Mindfulness allows clients to stay with difficult feelings as they arise and dissipate in the present moment. It is neither a “cure” for difficult feelings, nor a technique that will instantly change clients’ lives. It requires repeated practice, and Kumar (2005) has recommended that grieving persons engage in mindfulness meditation three or more times a week, for at least ten to 15 minutes at a time. Mindfulness practice is uncomplicated, but it is hard to do well and impossible to do perfectly. It is for this reason, Kumar pointed out, that it is called practice.

The late Chogyam Trungpa introduced Tibetan Buddhism to the West, and with it the practice of mindfulness meditation, and Berliner (1999a) has relayed Trungpa’s original instructions. The most crucial ones involve the practitioner sitting in an upright posture and focusing attention on the outbreath. When a thought comes up, the practitioner is to experience it, but not to analyze it or hold onto it. He or she should silent label the thought and return attention to the outbreath again. Mindfulness practice is not a form of relaxation, and it is not a way of pushing away painful thoughts and feelings (which only increases their hold). Rather, it gives space, allowing consciousness to expand to include all experience—good or bad—and simply letting that experience be (Davis, 1999).

Sometimes the nadir experience is complicated by the presence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but individuals with PTSD may actually experience greater posttraumatic growth (Dekel, Ein-Dor, & Solomon, 2012). Mindfulness meditation is a promising tool for dealing with this condition (Cuellar, 2008). Niles et al. (2012) have shown that a brief introduction to mindfulness can significantly decrease symptoms of PTSD among military veterans. Vujanovic, Niles, Pietrefesa, Schmertz, and Potter (2011) pointed out several benefits of mindfulness meditation including better distress tolerance and ability to deal with triggers, better ability to engage in treatment, and decreased emotional arousal and reactivity.

The treatment of PTSD is beyond the scope of this article, and I refer the reader to the handbook of the Management of Post-Traumatic Stress Working Group (2010). A note is in order, however: Clients who dissociate or experience flashbacks need to ground themselves in “the sounds of normal life all around” (Boon, Steele, & van der Hart, 2011, p. 6). In such cases, focusing on external sounds is a better strategy than focusing on an internal process such as the breath.

The Reincorporation Phase

Ultimately, our aim is to help our clients reintegrate with life even though they may have been profoundly changed by their experience. As one client said to
me, “I’m looking forward to getting back to normal again—but it’s a new normal.” The task of rebuilding is as much a part of the grief process as mourning the loss (Stroebe & Schut, 1999) and it is here that meaning-making is most important. Indeed, Kumar (2005) has pointed out that finding meaning in a loss may have more to do with a person’s response to that loss than with an attitude to the loss itself. Dennis (2012) observed that, in focusing on meaning in this way, Kumar “masterfully provided the transition from older to newer perspectives” (p. 412). Hibberd (2013) has reviewed studies of meaning-making in the wake of trauma and concluded that “implicit in these formulations… is life significance, or the felt perception that some aspect of one’s life matters” (p. 688). To help in the process, Kumar recommended that grieving persons pay attention to the times they feel healthy, alive, or at peace. He also recommended considering which relationships or activities are most meaningful; or if a person feels isolated, what is holding them back from making relationships. Journaling is an excellent way to encourage such reflections and to help give direction to a person’s life.

What therapeutic approaches work best in dealing with the nadir experience? Those such as existential therapy are obviously geared toward meaning-making, while Neimeyer (1999) has described narrative approaches to dealing with grief. However, the meditation and reflection interventions I have described are appropriate for use with any therapeutic model, even the person-centered type of therapy I practice. Meditation and reflection can help clients cope with loss and discover meaning in their lives: a meaning that could be as profound as changing the world, or as simple as enjoying a sunset.

A Personal Note

My interest in the nadir experience arose partly out of events in my own life. In 2007 I was a lecturer and campus chaplain at the University of Calgary. Two days after Christmas that year, my wife Suzy died suddenly and unexpectedly while we were visiting her family in northern Wisconsin. Her death was undoubtedly a nadir event. I busied myself with preparations for her funeral, then for an interfaith memorial service thousands of miles away in Alberta. I was surrounded by friends and family, with tasks to do and people to talk to. It was not until ten days later that I finally found myself alone for the first time. I experienced the emptiness of the void, the desolation of the desert (Perls, 1959/1969). Every day for the first few months after that I got out of bed, had breakfast, and drove to work feeling as if I were engaged in a pointless exercise. The long walks I took with my dog brought me no joy. I was experiencing the profound powerlessness, sense of disintegration, and emptiness of the threshold stage. Something was happening to me, however. What had previously been a weekly mindfulness practice now became a daily exercise. As the shock and numbness started to wear off, mindfulness helped me practice radical acceptance of the feelings of sadness and anger that began to surface. Bit by bit, the feelings of acute grief lessened.

The following September I left my position as a university teacher and campus chaplain, and returned to hospital chaplaincy. Even to me, the decision seemed
absurd. I had interned as a chaplain in 2006, and finished my assignment with enormous relief, deciding that hospital chaplaincy was too stressful for me ever to do again. Now I was taking on the role of Chaplain Resident for the Emergency, Intensive Care, and Burn Units at one of Canada’s largest hospitals. I recognized that something had happened to me, that an increased feeling of compassion had motivated me to take on a task I had once thought beyond my capacity. My experience in dealing with a suicidal patient then led to my decision to pursue a counseling career where I could use my insight and inner wisdom. While I had undoubtedly experienced the changes in personal well-being noted by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996), most remarkable was my personal transformation in terms of meaning-making, spiritual growth, inner wisdom, and increased compassion. Today, in counseling persons who are undergoing a nadir experience, I am alert to such positive changes in their lives as well. Sometimes when the heart breaks, it breaks open.

**CONCLUSION**

The *nadir experience* (Thorne 1963) is the experience of one of the very lowest points of life. Nonetheless, as survivors of the *Herald of the Sea* and *Jupiter* disasters demonstrated, it can become an opportunity for personal transformation and psychological growth (Joseph, 2011; Joseph et al., 1993). Unlike the peak experience, which brings with it a sense of oneness and integration (Maslow, 1987), the nadir experience initially causes a sense of aloneness and vulnerability (Kumar, 2005).

The crisis or trauma which initiates the nadir experience, the *nadir event*, marks a severance from everyday life. In the aftermath of this *severance stage* comes a transition period, the *threshold stage*, marked by a sense of disintegration, powerlessness, and emptiness (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2002; Almaas, 1986/2000; Dabrowski, 1976; Frankl, 1946/1959; James 1902/1997; Perls, 1959/1969). Often, though, this stage is followed by an important change. Surprisingly, those who suffer severe trauma are those most likely to experience positive change in their lives (Boals et al., 2010; Lancaster et al., 2013; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Reflection also seems to play an important role in this process (Boyraz et al., 2010).

As persons rejoin lives changed by the nadir event in the *reincorporation stage*, they often experience a feeling of increased personal well-being, a sense of meaning in their lives, a deeper spirituality, an inner wisdom, and increased compassion (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2002; Assagioli, 1975: Berliner 1999a, 1999b; Burt & Katz, 1987; Chodron, 2001; John of the Cross 1585/1959; Joseph et al., 2012; Muller, 1992; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Following the death of my wife in 2007, I also experienced such positive change in my own life.

Therapists dealing with persons undergoing the nadir experience would do well to encourage reflection (Neimeyer, 1999), although such reflection would be oriented toward the future as well as the past (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Reflective writing exercises and mindfulness are valuable techniques to encourage such reflection (Kumar, 2005). Mindfulness is also an effective
intervention for persons suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (Cuellar, 2008; Niles et al., 2012; Vujanovic et al., 2011).

REFERENCES


The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 2014, Vol. 46, No. 1


The Author

*Russell Stagg, Ph.D.*, is a Registered Clinical Counsellor in private practice in British Columbia, Canada. He has served as a Chaplain Resident at the Foothills Hospital in Calgary, Canada; and as an instructor and campus chaplain at the University of Calgary. Events in his life following the death of his wife Suzie in 2007 sparked his interest in the nadir experience.
RELATIONAL DHARMA: A MODERN PARADIGM OF TRANSFORMATION—A LIBERATING MODEL OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Jeannine A. Davies, Ph.D.
Vancouver, B.C.

ABSTRACT: Presented are the theoretical and experiential foundations of the author’s interdisciplinary model of intersubjectivity, inspired by a contemporary, trans-sectarian and creative re-envisioning of the Buddhist doctrine of dependent co-arising (paticca samuppada). Relational Dharma seeks to illuminate the nature of co-genesis through engaging awareness within a progression of insight within intersubjective experience in human relationship. The purpose of this model is to support refinement of our understanding of relatedness as a means toward liberation from self and self-other generated suffering and capacitate greater influence upon of ones’ own and other’s higher freedom. The doctrine of dependent co-arising, from classical Buddhist perspectives, and a theoretical overview of its mechanics as a living architecture of interdependence that can be directly experienced across myriad phenomena, is explored. Clinical implications are discussed as they apply to resolving trauma, posttraumatic growth, and growth through adversity, along with a framework determining and guiding expressions of higher human relatedness.

KEYWORDS: interdisciplinary, intersubjectivity, dependent co-arising, paticca samuppada, Relational Dharma, insight meditation, Buddhism, Theravada, psychotherapy, mindfulness, trauma, posttraumatic growth, non-violence, Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma.

In this age of wonders no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult is again not in consonance with the spirit of this age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence.

—Mahatma Gandhi (as cited in Gandhian Institute, 2006, para. 119)

Violence and human conflict exist in a myriad of expressions and forms. As a result, there is suffering. Inherent within the fabric of human suffering, whether experienced within our personal lives or expressed by another, is inevitable reciprocity. Our very existence is woven in and through our profoundly connected natures. As the Buddhist poet and activist Thich Nhat Hanh (1992) said, “We need the vision of interbeing, we belong to each other; we cannot cut reality into pieces. The well-being of ‘this’ is the well-being of ‘that,’ so we have to do things together. Every side is ‘our side’; there is no ‘evil side’” (p. 86). Because people suffer together, and indeed often because of one another, so, too, do they share in the capacity to develop the consciousness that is necessary to transcend the conditions that propel this mutually arising fabric of human experience.
For the previous 100 years, Western personality and developmental theories have been dominated by the notion that to become a healthy human being, one must have a solid and distinct sense of self that emerges through autonomy and progressive degrees of separation from others. In contrast, the notion of intersubjectivity, which emerged as an explicit theme of intellectual exploration in the early 20th century, identified a relational or reciprocal dimension of development in which an individual’s internal mental and emotional states could be co-experienced, or shared with another. Disciplines such as early child development, relational psychology, intersubjective psychoanalysis, and interpersonal neurobiology subscribe to intersubjectivity as a formative process in the development of self.

Within Relational Dharma, intersubjectivity can be seen to pervade through the entire spectrum and lifespan of human existence, patterning itself through the window and mirror of our relational interactions and contextual perceptions, and in turn contouring the conditions of self and self–other experience. The elaboration of this subtle and enduring, shared atmosphere is made visible through experiential insight into the mechanics that organize self and self-other development within human relationship, and emerges as the means through which the mind can detangle and liberate itself from the causes of self and self-other generated suffering. Thus, relative to insight into the causes that function to link and give rise to the generation of self and self and other experience, a detangling from their conditions occur, and a progressive acclimating within higher freedom becomes possible.

The result of the consciousness gained through experiential insight into human interrelatedness, fosters a new level of intelligence that reveals how we can engage a more active role in envisioning (or intending) determination. It is for this reason that intersubjectivity within Relational Dharma, as a means to demonstrate subtle degrees of indivisibility, can capacitate valuable insights into the intricate and reciprocally co-arising (causal) nature of human suffering. The study of intersubjectivity may lay a foundation for envisioning new patterns of determination within human nature and thereby provide a means to transform suffering and self-other imposed limitations.

**Intersubjectivity: A Relational Matrix of Human Development**

It is obvious that all of living and all of development takes place only in relationships.

—Jean Baker Miller, Ph.D. (1987)

The term intersubjectivity is conventionally used within philosophy, psychoanalysis, psychology, and phenomenology as a means to illustrate structural or developmental factors “accessible or established for two or more subjects” and the causal interrelations “involving or occurring between separate conscious minds” (Intersubjective, n.d.). The recognition of intersubjectivity as a formative determiner in factors of human growth through reciprocal influence can be recognized across disciplines and psychological models such as bio-genetics.
(Watson, 2001), relational psychology (Gilligan, 1982; Jordan, 1997), clinical psychology and early child development (Beebe & Lachmann, 1988; Bowlby, 1958), humanistic, existential, and transpersonal psychology (Grof, 1975; James, 1902/1999; Maslow, 1968; May, 1967; Schneider, Pierson, & Bugental, 2001; Wilber, 2000), psychoanalysis (Benjamin, 1990; Kohut, 1984; Mitchell, 1988; Stolorow, Atwood, & Brandchaft, 1994), interpersonal neurobiology (Lipton, 2006; Siegel, 1999), and phenomenology (Frie, 1997; Husserl, 2009). This illustrates that diverse areas of contemporary theory are re-envisioning the organization of human development and its patterns of change in the genesis of self, as inseparable to human relationship, as opposed to discrete or autonomous change. To this end, the role of intersubjectivity, as critical in illuminating both influence and organization of the subtle patterns involved in contextual determination, is becoming increasingly relevant.

The notion of a separate self, attained through increasing degrees of autonomy from others equating healthiness as a human being, has influenced the last 100 years within Western personality and developmental theories. As Jordan (1997) stated, “Emphasis on innate instinctual forces, increasing internal structure, separation and individuation have characterized most Western psychological theory” (pp. 85–86). Psychological development in the context of relational interactions—for example, within Freudian theory—was seen as “secondary to or deriving from the satisfaction of primary drives (such as hunger or sex)” (Jordan, 1997, p. 89). Intersubjective theorists and psychoanalysts, Stolorow et al. (1994), along with various feminist theorists (Chodorow, 1999; Gilligan, 1982 Jordan, 1997; Miller, 1987), proposed an alternative theory of development that emphasized intersubjectivity and relational factors in the emerging development of personality. In this view of development, mutuality, or reciprocity within human connection, is paramount to the healthy formation of personality and psychological development throughout the lifespan.

Relational psychology proposed a developmental theory of the self that was interconnected and emphasized the “contextual, approximate, responsive and process factors in experience” (Jordan, 1997, p. 15). This model stresses the intersubjective “relationally emergent nature of human experience” versus “a primary perspective based on the formed and contained self” (Jordan, 1997, p. 15). From a relational psychology perspective, “a personality can never be isolated from the complex of interpersonal relations in which the person lives and has his being” (Jordan, 1997, p. 11).

The potency of intersubjectivity in early human development begins within the parent-infant relationship, and plays a vital role in human development, directly impacting the formation and maturation of the social brain, self-regulation, and emotional resonance, symbol use, and empathy (Beebe & Lachmann, 1988; Bowlby, 1958; Bremmer & Fogal, 2004; Feldman, 2007; Gianino & Tronick, 1988; Klaus & Kennell, 1976; Nichols, Gergely, & Fonagy, 2001; Sameroff, Lewis, & Miller, 2000; Schore, 1994; Stern, 2000; Trevarthen, 1993).
Psychoanalysts Stolorow et al. (1994) also emphasized the “intersubjective context,” where “unconscious ordering principles, crystallized within the matrix of the child-giver system, form the essential building blocks of personality development” (p. 5). As Emde added, the personality structure itself, in part, emerges from the internalization of “infant-caregiver relationship patterns” (as cited in Stolorow, et al., 1994, p. 5). This patterning of experience through an internalization of relational interaction is not isolated to a fixed period of time in human development. Rather, it can be seen to affect personality and the formation of self across the life span. As Emde stated, the “affective core of the self” derives from the person’s history of intersubjective transactions—a history that is being construed all of the time (as cited in Stolorow, et al., 1994, p. 5).

The term **intersubjectivity theory** was introduced in psychoanalysis by Stolorow et al. (1994) and is defined as “a field theory or systems theory in that it seeks to comprehend psychological phenomena not as products of isolated intrapsychic mechanisms but as forming at the interface of reciprocally interacting worlds of experience” (p. x). In this framework, “intrapsychic determinism gives way to an unremitting intersubjective contextualism” and the focus shifts from the isolated individual mind to “the larger system created by the mutual interplay between the subjective worlds of patient and analyst, or of child and caregiver” (p. x).

For Donald Woods Winnicott (1971), the experience of the intersubjective extended beyond an objective interpersonal sharing of separate minds, or of recognizing each other. Winnicott (1971) saw the intersubjective encounter as “life in the exciting interweave of subjectivity and objective observation and in the area that is intermediate between the inner reality of the individual and the shared reality of the world that is external to individuals” (p. 64).

Intersubjectivity, as experienced between the therapist and client, is also linked with being facilitative of new understandings and potential for change within psychotherapy. In a study conducted by Natterson (1993), case illustrations were used to demonstrate the “intersubjectivity transaction” defined as a “process of reciprocal influence in which each person in the therapeutic dyad influences and is influenced by the other,” as critical in marking “turning points” whereby the patient’s “behavior, attitudes, or feelings” shift (p. 45). In this sense, it is not simply the client in therapy in which the therapist must seek to foster an atmosphere of transformation. Rather, it is also the therapist’s ability to enter a state of mutuality and openness to influence, which in turn helps foster communion within the intersubjective atmosphere where transformation becomes possible.

Pickering (2005) added to this perspective in her study of intersubjectivity with couples. She stated that the intersubjective field is “revealed by the communications of the individuals, but controlled by neither” (p. 44). In this way, the intersubjective field can be seen as an additional dimension of space, where consciousness, previously attributed as separate and self-contained, becomes permeable, and shared within the between. As Pickering (2005)
expressed “there are the two partners, the complex network and dynamics of relations between them, and the relationship itself which creates a fluid, interpenetrating and interactive field…” (p. 44).

The interpretation of intersubjectivity, as encounter, arises from the work of Buber (1996) who defined the “I-you encounter of becoming” as

The basic word I-You can be spoken only with one’s whole being. The concentration and fusion into whole being can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You. All actual life is encounter. (p. 62)

Thus, the intersubjective context becomes the means to enter a dynamic atmosphere infused with potentials, capacitating the individual to release his or her self toward a direct encounter with evolitional creativity.

**INTERSUBJECTIVITY WITHIN BUDDHISM**

The theme of intersubjectivity in Buddhism is inseparable to the nature of existence itself, thus underscores the terrain of all Buddhist paths. Intersubjectivity can be seen in and through the oceanic fabric of interdependence, whose composition is made visible through the confluence of nature, as permeated by change or impermanence (anicca) and indivisibility or non-self (anatta). The tides of this atmosphere give rise to the patterns that orchestrate all conditioned phenomena, and the dance of influence in the arising and passing of all forms, including mind.

The architecture of intersubjectivity in its breadth and depth can be mapped through the teachings of paticca samuppada, a Buddhist Pali expression that translates as “dependent origination,” or “dependent co-arising” (Pali derives from the vernacular languages of northern India at the time of the Buddha; Bodhi, 1980, p. 6). Paticea samuppada is the doctrine of causality that the Buddha proclaimed to be the fundamental view of reality. This view of reality and causality asserts that no phenomenon exists (or comes about) without depending on other phenomena or conditions around it. So critical was paticca samuppada to the scope of the Buddha’s teaching that, “an insight into dependent co-arising is held to be sufficient to yield an understanding of the entire teaching” (Bodhi, 1980, p. 6). As the Buddha stated, “He who sees dependent co-arising sees the dharma, he who sees the dharma, sees dependent co-arising” (Bodhi, 1980, p. 6).

Individual existence too, in Buddhism, can be considered at its core, inherently intersubjective. The formation of individual identity, in this way, is a fundamentally contextual occurrence based upon a “matrix of dependently related events,” all of which function in a “state of flux” (Wallace, 2001, p. 1). The experiential realization how an individual’s sense of self is brought into existence is recognized through insight into the power of conceptual attribution. Conceptual attribution occurs either through the identification with the body.
(e.g., I am warm) or through a mental process (e.g., I am happy) and through the confirmation of these conceptual ideations from others. This is the nature of intersubjectivity and dependent origination.

Relational Dharma (Davies, 2006, 2009, 2010), as developed by the author, involves the realization of indivisibility or non-self (anatta in Pali), change or impermanence (anicca), and dependent origination (patiça samuppada), as it is experienced through the manifold of intersubjective consciousness. This realization is illuminated through the experiential and intuitive interface experienced between self and other. Through mind-to-mind contact in the dharma, or higher truth, and subsequent coordination upon the intersubjective terrain, a stability and momentum form (Davies, 2006, 2009, 2010). In this encounter, the mechanics that underlie and form as the genesis within intersubjectivity between self and other can be brought into visibility.

This movement leads to an ignition that propels experience to migrate through cumulative stages or levels as they pertain to liberation. Liberation in this definition refers to a progressive and increasing degree of acclimatization within freedom — the release from the gravitational pull of unconscious or conscious experience of bondage with the self-generated forces within mind that produce suffering and restriction. Concurrent with the dematerialization of conditions that form the tension of habitual psychophysical binding, mind and experience begin their ascension toward the unobstructed knowledge and recognition of freedom within inseparable nature. As a result of this insight into our deeply intertwined nature, higher stages of human development that go beyond the ego and belief in a separate self, becomes possible.

THE BUDDHA’S ENLIGHTENMENT

It was 2,500 years ago that Gotama sat under the bodhi tree, on the eve of his enlightenment, and began to probe his own mind in an effort to understand the root causes of human suffering. After years of searching and intense yogic training, he still had not found any satisfying answers. According to the Buddhist scriptures, Gotama began by naming all the factors that formed the constituents of his own experience, such as ignorance, volitional formations, cognition, name and physical form, sensation, feeling, and craving. He then examined how the specific factors related to each other. He repeatedly asked, “For this factor to arise, what else must happen, for it to cease, what else must stop” (Macy, 1991b, p. 56). Through this form of unrelenting questioning he “re-discovered” that suffering itself had no first cause, no external source, no “prime mover” (Macy, 1991b, p. 56).

It is said that dependent co-arising is re-discovered because it is an “abiding truth about reality” (Macy, 1991a, p. 27). It is then that “Buddhas, as they appear in the world, re-discover and make [patiça samuppada] manifest” (Macy, 1991a, p. 27). As Gotama continued his examination, insight dawned into the nature of mutual causality (i.e., dependent co-arising). He saw that the factors that formed the constituents of his own experience “were sustained by...
their own interdependence” and that the source of suffering was orchestrated by “patterns or circuits of contingency” (Macy, 1991b, p. 56). It was through the collective orchestra of these perceptions that the vision of paticca samuppada descended upon him.

Coming to be! Coming to be!… Ceasing! Ceasing! At the thought there arose in me, brethren, in things not taught before vision, there arose in me knowledge, insight arose, wisdom arose, light arose. (Samyutta Nikaya, 1922/1979, p. 7)

After many years of arduous searching, Gotama perceived paticca samuppada—the insight into dependent co-arising, awakened—and became the Buddha. The Buddha’s account of awakening reveals that liberation opens up a deep and profound appreciation of the inherent interconnectedness of life. Within this transforming appreciation, there is an illumination of the actual factors that arise and which bring a knowing and feeling quality to this deep mutual interconnectedness. Intersubjectivity, in this way, can be recognized as the relative realization of the universal interdependence of all phenomena.

DhArMA AND REALITY

Just as in the great ocean there is but one taste, the taste of salt, so in this Doctrine and Discipline (dhammavinaya) there is but one taste, the taste of freedom.

—(the Buddha as cited in Bodhi, 1976, p. 1)

The late, renowned Burmese meditation and dharma teacher, the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, stated in regard to dependent co-arising,

Paticca samuppada is hard to understand because it concerns the correlations between causes and effects. There is no ego entity that exists independently of the law of causation. It was hard to accept this fact before the Buddha proclaimed the dhamma. (Mahasi, n.d., section 6, para. 3)

Dharma is an ancient Buddhist Sanskrit word (or dhamma in Buddhist Pali) and has a broad and far-reaching meaning in Buddhism. It points to the “truth about existence,” to the specific elements of and the natural laws that govern experience (U Pandita, 2006, p. 153). The meaning of dharma then can be understood as the characteristics and laws that govern the framework of individual and co-existence (interrelatedness) and that manifest through the expression of being in experience of totality. Implicit in this, is the inner development of the good or goodness. For example, the expression of the Paramis, (or ten perfections) the foundation being dana or generosity. The Buddha’s teaching, in this way can be understood as the study of the human condition and the examination of the processes of perception, cognition, attention etc. The dharma can be seen as a path for how to engage suffering for the purpose of overcoming suffering (for example, the fourth Noble Truth) and how to engage the truthful and the good (i.e., the development of the Paramis).
One aspect has to do with the overcoming of suffering, and the other is enhancement.

To practice *dharma* is to discern the distinction between conventional and ultimate realities through direct experience (Davies, 2006, 2009, 2010). A simple example of the distinction between conventional and ultimate reality is the difference between the concept of water and the physical sensation of water. Its salient characteristics are of wetness and of a cool, warm, or hot temperature. As awareness discriminates between the concept of water and water’s physical sensations, an insightful penetration into the nature of conceptual ideation occurs. Concepts are then seen as abstractions within consciousness, mental overlays born through prior conditioning.

This awareness is fostered through an intimate examination of “name” and “form,” or “mind-body processes” (U Pandita, 2006, p. 97). Name (*nama*) refers to mental phenomena and to the mental components of feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Form (or *rupa*) refers to the body, physical phenomena, and sensations and becomes attributed through the “six sense doors” (the six sense doors refer to seeing, hearing, feeling tasting, touching, and cognition through the mind; U Pandita, 2006, p. 70). Parallel to the progression of insight into these two realities, a transpersonal and trans-conceptual awareness is cultivated. As this awareness becomes progressively embodied, it leads to a lessening of fixation in perceiving or interpreting self-identity and reality as experienced through the six sense doors. Through cultivation of this method of introspective observation, mind becomes pliable, transparent, and open. This process, in turn, leads to factors of awakening whose symmetry serve to nurture an advancement toward freedom — the relaxation and eventual extinction of the mental impurities (e.g., greed, aversion, and delusion) that function to restrict and cloud the mind from its deeper nature.

Embedded within the conceptual architectures that incline the mind toward entry into the dharma is the immediacy of their results. Within this view of experience, we recognize the unique symmetry between path and goal: the path leads to the goal, and the goal, in turn, fulfills the path. The seeing, the seer, and that which is seen coalesce as inseparable aspects of each other, and which arise interdependently. In this way, *dharma* is not bound by linear time. Yet, paradoxically, its visibility emerges through time. An emergence made possible through myriad causes and conditions. This progressive ripening, in turn gives rise to an alignment of attention and observation within the direct experience of discernible qualities of “name” and “form” (U Pandita, 2006, p. 97).

Through the continuity of attention on mind-body (*nama-rupa*) processes, a new intelligence is born. This intelligence illuminates the simultaneity of mutual dimensions holistically co-emerging through all appearances. Like looking into a stream that has sediment clouding the surface, at first all one sees is sediment. And then, as the sediment clears, that which is in the stream, and the stream itself, become visible. This progression can be likened to how
dharma, and what is seen and known through dharma, ascends into awareness. As awareness within the intersubjective is enhanced, it dissolves the mind-to-mind gap, promoting a kind of elasticity as the proximity between self and other merges into Relational Dharma (Davies, 2006, 2009, 2010).

**Satipatthana Bhavana: Perceiving the Three Characteristics of Existence: Anicca, Anatta, and Dukkha**

The Satipatthanasutta, which extols meditation (mental development or bhavana) techniques, is the most revered of all discourses in the Theravada Buddhist tradition (Feer, 1960). As the renowned Burmese meditation and dharma teacher, the Venerable Sayadaw U Pandita (1995) explains, “satipatthana is derived from sati, meaning mindfulness or awareness, upatthana is establishment or foundation, meaning that mindfulness approaches its object and stays there” (p. 25). Patthana signifies adherence, firmness, or anchoring upon a continuous occurrence, and bhavana is mental development (U Pandita, 1995, p. 25). As mindfulness or awareness is centered upon the physical sensations of the body, a gradual aligning occurs that in turn forms a resonating accordance with the immediacy of bare experience. As awareness rubs against or lays itself on the contours and features of the phenomena that arise and pass within an individual’s most immediate experience, a deep and blanketimg immersiveness occurs.

The mind is able to stay composed and focused on the objects that arise in the present moment as this practice is engaged. Stability and familiarity increase through this process, causing forms of mental friction, whether emotional, physical, or psychological, to dissipate. The mind experiences a kind of current of quiet peace. From a Buddhist point of view and understanding, when this kind of focus is sustained, it inevitably leads to the development of wisdom and freedom—the penetration that reveals direct insight into the characteristics of anicca, or impermanence, anatta, emptiness or no self, and dukkha, suffering (U Pandita, 1995, 2006).

Sayadaw U Pandita’s teacher, the Burmese meditation master, Mahasi Sayadaw, in relation to the practice of satipatthana bhavana, said the following:

*It is said ... that nama-rupas [name and forms] are in a constant flux and that we should watch their arising and passing away. But for the beginner this is easier said than done. The beginner has to exert strenuous effort to overcome hindrances (nivarana). Even freedom from nivarana helps him only to distinguish between nama [name] and rupa [form]. It does not ensure insight into their arising and passing away. This insight is attained only after concentration has been developed and perception has become keen with the practice of mindfulness. Constant mindfulness of arising and vanishing leads to insight into anicca, dukkha, and anatta of all phenomena... Hence the description of the dhamma is something that is beyond logic and speculation.* (Mahasi, n.d., section 4, para. 3)
In the summer of 2000, during a three-week intensive meditation retreat, I had the opportunity to ask one of my teachers, the Venerable Sayadaw U Pandita, to describe the single most important factor in realizing the highest form of dharma freedom. “The highest form of dharma freedom” Sayadaw U Pandita began, “is the freedom from the bondage of kilesas (mental impurities) such as greed, hatred, and delusion and then the total extinction of the karma and aggregates” (personal communication, August 11, 2000). It was the practice of satipatthana bhavana that he then went on to affirm. As he explained, the practice of satipatthana bhavana functions as a two-fold physics. Concurrent with the spiritual momentum derived through this approach, afflictive mind states within consciousness such as ignorance, self-centeredness, and aggression are quieted. These qualities both protect and develop the mind. Sayadaw U Pandita (personal communication, August 11, 2000) expressed this as follows:

When these modes are strengthened, there will be meditative mind, meaning a developed mind. This leads to path consciousness, and the defilements or impurities within consciousness are eradicated. With the practice of satipatthana, all states of loss will be overcome, which brings higher path consciousness, until you eventually overcome the kilesas (mental struggles) so fully there is no return. And then there is the realization of the fruit of release, by knowledge.

Direct insight into anicca, or impermanence, and anatta, emptiness or no self, punctures the notion of the self as a separate or unchanging, independent entity. As Macy (1991a) stated, “Although masked by the appearance of continuity, impermanence is real and pervasive” (p. 34). Satipatthana enhances transparency upon that which is arising in an individual’s direct experience. Through this transparency on the immediacy of this direct experience, reality, the phenomenal world is recognized as a flux of movement or change, with no ultimate core. Intuitive insight into physical and mental phenomena as they arise and disappear reveals this knowing in a startlingly clear, new way. From within the framework of Buddhism, the nature of suffering is understood as arising from a mistaken belief in a “self” that is both continuous and separate. It is in this way that the practice of satipatthana bhavana allows for the origin of suffering to be seen, its dissolution, as well as the way leading to its dissolution.

The experiential discovery that there is a conditioned nature to the factors that generate suffering is in and of itself profoundly empowering. It is by virtue of their conditionality that they can be “unbound” or undone (Access to Insight, 2009). Nibbana (Pali) or nirvana (Sanskrit) translates as enlightenment or liberation (Liberation in the Buddhist definition refers to the literal “unbinding” of the mind from mental defilement and the round of rebirth; Access to Insight, 2009). “Unbinding” also symbolizes the extinguishing of a fire because it carries the implication of stilling, cooling, and peace. “According to the physics taught at the time of the Buddha, a burning fire seizes or adheres to its fuel; when extinguished, it is unbound” (Access to Insight, 2009, section 1, para. 8).
Insight into *anicca* (impermanence), *anatta* (emptiness), and *dukkha* (suffering) engenders a softness, openness, dexterity, and malleability of mind. Within Relational Dharma, this, in turn, conditions and germinates the way for the emerging intersubjective view of dependent co-arising; the fabric of interdependence across all scales of phenomena and minds intersubjective lens of liberation.

**RELATIONAL DHARMA**

Considering the body carefully,
Everything will be clearly seen:
Knowing all the elements are unreal,
One will not create mental fabrications.

…by the power of perceiver and perceived
All kinds of things are born;
They soon pass away, not staying,
Dying out instant to instant.
—Avatamsaka Sutra (Cleary, 1993, pp. 300–301)

In contrast to attuning to the *dharma* through purely introspective observation, *Relational Dharma* focuses on heightening and refinement of awareness via the interactive interplay of experience in human relationship (Davies 2006, 2009, 2010). The intersubjective field connecting minds becomes the means in which to inspire spiritual momentum. Through the progression of insight as unveiled through gross, subtle and refined filters, a further revealing of the mind’s deeper substratum and organizing mechanics becomes visible.

The realizations that emerge through *Relational Dharma* are in accord with the *Satipaththana Sutta* (as previously discussed). The insights that unfold through understanding its spectrum are considered fundamental to what Wallace (2001) referred to as “the cultivation of a multi-perspectival view of oneself, others, and the intersubjective relations between oneself and all other sentient beings” (p. 2). Through the practice of *satipaththana* within shared awareness in relationship, an anchoring upon the actual experience of self in relation with other is adhered to and sustained. The continuity of this anchoring emerges as a transparency that brings direct clarity to experience by seeing into the actual nature of other.

The liberating insights into the nature of mind and reality that gradually unveil emptiness or no-self (*anatta*) and impermanence (*anicca*), and the nature of how suffering (*dukkha*) arises in relation to the fixed belief in a self that is permanent or unchanging, (also referred to as the three characteristics of existence), and subsequent vision into dependent arising (*paticca samuppada*), emerge through the intersubjective view, enabling a transpersonal exploration of the mutuality and development of spiritual insight.
Although Engaged Buddhism, which seeks to apply insights gained from meditation and dharma teachings to social, political, environmental, and economic suffering and injustice (see Halifax, 2009; Hanh, 1992; Macy, 1991a) has been developing since the 1950s, along with a recent emergence of perspectives exploring relational and collaborative considerations within Buddhist theory and practice (Kramer, 2007; Kwee, 2010), the practice of meditation within Theravada Buddhism has primarily focused on solitary, introspective methods (Satipatthanasutta, vipassana, or insight meditation; or samatha meditation), where stages of insight unfold within a climate of extreme mental seclusion and interpersonal isolation.

All forms of development within the human experience occur within the context of relationality. And, it is our experience of ourselves within our relationships that we return too, after retreat, at the end of meditation. If the dharma has not been recognized through insight that has unfolded through and thus vivified the subtle nuances of human interrelatedness, how are individuals to then live from that understanding within their relationships? Furthermore, how can individuals cultivate the relational wisdom necessary to lead toward more compassionate, wise and tolerant ways of being? The need for forms and practices that achieve this aim is evident in the state of suffering that is procured within human relationships. Outside of an ongoing experience of Relational Dharma, where awareness into the fundamental and interdependent nature of our existence is recognized and cultivated between people, it represents a very complex challenge. We need a dharma that helps us in the world, and that engages directly where all suffering and development occur, the interface of our most intimate and precious folds of interdependence, the human relationship.

**THE PRACTICE OF RELATIONAL DHARMA**

In traditional satipatthana practice, an individual uses the physical sensation of the breath or the abdomen as object of meditation, or attention. In contrast, the practice of Relational Dharma utilizes the full breadth of experience, as it arises in relation with another. In this way, the alignment within the “four foundations of mindfulness” (U Pandita, 2006, p. 70) which include contemplation of the body, feelings, states of mind, and mind objects) as experienced intersubjectively, becomes the ongoing object of meditation (Davies, 2006, 2009, 2010). The practice of Relational Dharma attunes to an individual’s experience of mental and physical occurrences as they intersect in relationship and are not conditional on the body being in any defined posture or locality. As such, it is an attitudinal posture, not confined or contingent upon any form other than the employment of awareness on relations. As Sayadaw U Pandita was fond of expressing in regard to opening the mind to liberation, “It is awareness that liberates the mind, not a form or a doctrine… wisdom is beyond all ideas and forms” (Clements, 2002, pp. 144–145).

As continuity in this intersubjective atmosphere gains further momentum, awareness begins to coordinate with the immediacy of what is occurring as
present experience. As deeper transconceptual natures of self and self-in-relation-with-other are progressively seen-through or un-layered through *Relational Dharma*, the mind and heart soften and open. Transconceptual, in this sense, refers to the felt realization that emerges through the development of insight (cultivating discernment between conceptual understanding and felt realization). As previously mentioned, there is the concept of water versus the actual characteristic of it (i.e., wetness). Meaning, for example, one does not satiate thirst through reading words on drinking. Transconceptual understanding in this way is the felt realization of the actual characteristics of self and self-in-relation-with-other. This malleability gives way to a further synchronizing in the *dharma*, and the experience of self and other as either objective or subjective, or separate and outside of oneself, transforms. Through shared *dharma* resonance, an increasing sense of spaciousness and simultaneous connectedness occurs. The resonance permeates and occupies the intersubjective mind-to-mind atmosphere, and this permeation causes the nature of “other,” as existing outside of self, to progressively dissolve. By knowing this permeation, the arbitrary and illusory nature of the parameters that form divisions in the mind and that function to restrict and or divide the mind’s capacity to encounter an unobstructed flow of experience are recognized.

Whether through individual, couple, or group practice, as awareness coordinates directly with the nature and experience of other, perception of other moves through progressive filters. These filters reveal gradients through which mind, sustaining mindful awareness in relationship, sees its own nature while involved in the process of purification from that which obscures it from its own innate luminosity. In the cleansing of the relational lenses of perception, filters become radiant windows through which nature, as immaculate, reveals itself. *Phottahbba* describes the essence of touching and being touched. To touch, or experience *photthabba*, is to know through direct non-conceptual experience, the primary elements: earth, fire, air, and water. When coordinated with experience, these elements are perceived by the body as solidity and hardness, heat and maturing, and distension and motion (U Pandita, 2006). The water element, which is cognized by the mind, brings a feeling of cohesion and liquidity to these bodily-sensed features (U Pandita, 2006). As awareness moves into accord with the nature of how other is directly experienced, we have allowed ourselves to be touched in this way.

In this relaxation of solidity, or opaqueness, the transition of experience from gross to subtle filtering begins. Mind becomes able to lean into or against the mind of another, feeling the vibrational texture that forms the contour of the perceived ending of self and beginning of other. In addition, as experience moves from gross to subtle filters, the capacity to tolerate increasing degrees of uncertainty is gained, which helps nurture a shift from habituated associations that rely upon identification with self, to immersion in a transconceptual intersubjective atmosphere. Through this sensed vibrational touching, mind-to-mind contact deepens and the progression of relationship in *dharma* continues through gross, subtle, and refined levels. At the refined level, mind interpenetrates mind and “mingles into oneness” (Kunsang & Schmidt, 2005, p. 46).
Gross, subtle, and refined filters represent three discernable structures of experiential transition through purification within *Relational Dharma* and the terrain of intersubjectivity. Though experiential, they can be conceptualized as follows.

**Gross Filter**

At the initial gross level of intersubjective filtering, the primary feature is a structure of self-defined by separateness and autonomy. The matrix of self is referenced as local, contained, and relatively constant, while other is experienced as outside and separate from this containment. As bare attention (a mental posture of non-activity that is characterized by receptivity, focus, and wakefulness) is brought forward, and progressively aligned with mental and physical processes experienced in relation with other, a discerning clarity and familiarity arises. The distinctions between an individual’s feelings and thoughts (mental) and sensations of the body (physical), as he or she intersects with mental projections of the other, become intuitively more clear and punctuated.

As this intimacy within the awareness of relationship continues, momentary concentration (khanika-samādhi) is achieved, further supporting a partial absorption in the objects of attention, and awareness is able to “close in upon and fix on whatever object is being noticed and the act of noticing will proceed without break” (Mahasi, 2009, section 2, para. 3). Mental absorption, (*jhana*), or right concentration (*samma samadhi*), in this sense is defined as a “meditative state of profound stillness and concentration in which the mind becomes fully immersed and absorbed in the chosen object of meditation.” Development of *jhana* or absorption arises from the temporary suspension of the five hindrances (sensual desire, ill will, sloth and drowsiness, restless and anxiety, and uncertainty) and through the development of the following five mental factors: directed thought (*vitakka*), evaluation (*vicara*), rapture (*piti*), pleasure (*sukkha*) and singleness of preoccupation (*ekaggatarammana*; Mahasi, 2009).

This partially interpenetrating and forward-leading attitudinal posture flexes the experiential envelope past the perimeters that previously had limited its extension. Like having one foot move into a door while the other foot extends out the door, the subjective and intersubjective dimensions are now encompassed in parallel. While self is still experienced as predominately separate from other, a co-joining dimension of awareness arises where self-other form is less fixed and more mutual.

**Subtle Filter**

At the subtle level of filtering, the quality of bare attention that rests on mental and physical processes becomes significantly more acute and strong as they intersect with other. This agility facilitates a close proximity and timing in the
meeting of mind-body experience as it arises in tandem with the objects in awareness that formulate the composite of other. Within this immediate lucidity and strength of awareness, experience joins and anchors upon the features of other, illuminating the interactive dynamics to pervade holistically across mind in an effortless way. This ease leads to tranquility, as awareness, so filtered, is able to attend to and directly align with any of the arising objects for any desired length of time. As proficiency is further developed, insight is able to penetrate the objects, and experience illuminates the arising and dissolving formations of mind-body (nama-rupa) cognition (U Pandita, 2006).

As awareness of how this arising and dissolving (pairing) of material processes (seen as object) and mental processes (the action of knowing it) occurs, this helps to illuminate how self and other are fabricated. There is a realization that when visual consciousness arises, both the sense door of the eye and the visual object of the other are co-present. This is true of each of the six sense doors (seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, touching, and cognition). In noticing or reflecting upon an object that is a formation of the composite of other, consciousness becomes engaged in noticing, thinking, reasoning, or understanding.

Mahasi notes “consciousness arises in accordance with each object that becomes evident. If there is an object, there arises consciousness; if there is no object, no consciousness arises,” leading to “knowledge by comprehension through direct experience” that objects noticed are impermanent and impersonal (Mahasi, 2009, section 4, para. 5). As the dynamics of impermanency are directly experienced, a co-arising association within intersubjectivity is enhanced.

From the vantage point of the intersubjective, the surfaces of self and other are penetrated, and form is seen as impermanent and without an inherent or solid existence. The undivided field of Relational Dharma is experienced and inhabited as these moving patterns of change and impermanence are realized. Self-other form appears as translucent emanation co-occupying the unbound nature of intersubjective awareness: that which remains in and through the arising and passing of all formation.

**Refined Filter**

At the level of refined filtering, observance on mind and body (nama-rupa) processes remains continuous, along with increasing equanimity in relation to the arising and passing of formations. This experience reveals a deeper transparency—objects disappear or extinguish immediately at their moment of initial emergence (Mahasi, 2009). Here, the awareness of change, or the arising of mind-body processes, is no longer visible and the appearance of form emerges as one that is already vanishing or disappearing. Perceiving the dissolution of appearances gives way to a pleasure and freedom that reinforces the continuity of observance (Mahasi, 2009).

In the awareness of the action of perceiving, two factors are always present: an objective factor and a subjective one (i.e., the object noticed, and the mental state
of knowing it). According to Mahasi (2009), these vanish or dissolve by pairs, one pair after the other. Within any given moment of the arising there is a multiplicity processes. In this detailed observance, it can be seen that within the very arising of form its dissolving is already occurring. The dissolving is part of the motion of arising: in the moment-by-moment appearance of the other, in the movement of its body and form, in its sound as it meets the ear, and in the direct experience entwining within the relational motion of formation. Like a semi-translucent mirage being pervaded by the sun’s light, its opacity giving way to a fading transparency, emptiness and form are seen as one.

Concurrent with the filter’s refinement and the release from the circuitry that propels self and separation, spiritual ignition (samvega) grows. This momentum, over time, supports the progression through each level of filter upon a terrain of gradual departure from the binding with self-correlates. This terrain is felt to occur in five interwoven stages, and traveling between them is a release parallel to the progression of the filters. The stages unfold naturally and occur in proportion to the progress of insight achieved through the refinement of the filters.

Sayadaw U Pandita described the stages as follows:

1. Part-time liberation;
2. Liberation by distancing the impurities;
3. Total eradication of the impurities (path consciousness);
4. Quieting down the impurities;
5. Total liberation. (U Pandita, personal communication, August 11, 2000)

Although the last of the five stages represents knowledge leading to complete release from the psychophysical bonds of constriction, neither it nor the preceding four stages should be regarded as hierarchical, linear, or mutually exclusive.

As the release of psychophysical constrictions occurs, insight into their conditioned nature becomes enhanced—the emerging view of dependent origination. The flowering of the mind through the gross, subtle, and refined filters and parallel “stages of liberation,” reveals a deeper topography of filters (U Pandita, personal communication, August 11, 2000). These link and inform the pattern of mind itself, and its causal motion in the architecture of self and other.

**PATICCA SAMUPPADA: THE 12 LINKS OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION**

Dependent co-arising (paticca samuppada), considered a central doctrine within Buddhism (Mahasi, 2009), illuminates a map of the way the five aggregates or mental components interact with ignorance and craving and result in human suffering. These five consist of material form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness. In addition, Bodhi (1980) expressed,
As the frame behind the four noble truths, the key to the perspective of the middle way, and the conduit to the realization of selflessness, it is the unifying theme running through the teaching’s multifarious expressions, binding them together as diversified formulations of a single coherent vision. (p. 4)

So important is *paticca samuppada* to Buddhism that it is considered to be the essence of Buddha *dharma*. The Buddha proclaimed that failure to understand dependent co-arising was the cause of suffering. Therefore, through its comprehension, all suffering ceases (Buddhaghosa, 1975).

The meaning of *paticca samuppada* has several translations, including dependent co-arising, conditioned co-production, causal conditioning, causal genesis, and conditioned genesis (Macy, 1991a). Macy describes the breakdown of the meaning of *paticca samuppada* as follows: ‘‘Uppada is the substantive form of the verb uppajjati, which means ‘arising.’ Sam-uppada, means ‘arising together.’ *Paticca*, as the gerund of pacceti (pati + i, means to ‘come back to’ or ‘fall back on’) and is used to denote ‘grounded on’ or ‘on account of’” (p. 34). Therefore the compound means “on account of arising together” or “the being on account of arising together” (p. 34).

According to the Pali texts, dependent co-arising is presented as both an abstract statement of a universal law as well as a means to resolve suffering through the direct experiential application of the law. In the abstract description, dependent co-arising is “equivalent to the law of the conditioned genesis of phenomena … it expresses the invariable concomitance between the arising and ceasing of any given phenomenon and the functional efficacy of its originative conditions” (Bodhi, 1980, p. 6). Buddhaghosa defines *paticca samuppada* as “that according to which co-ordinate phenomena are produced together” (Macy, 1991a, p. 34).

As an applied to the problem of suffering, dependent co-arising is taught through a 12-term or 12-link formula. Each of the links represents the causal factors that the Buddha examined on the eve of his enlightenment as he began to reflect on the origin of old age and death. As Bodhi (1980) expressed, the 12 links seek to describe the “causal nexus responsible for the origination of suffering” (p. 7).

Although ignorance marks the beginning of the classical 12-link chain, which then conditions the arising of ethically determinate volitions (and in turn conditions the arising of consciousness), it is not considered a “causeless root cause of the world” (Bodhi, 1980, p. 7). Rather, it is co-emergent, “with the arising of cankers there is the arising of ignorance” (Access to Insight, 2013). Ignorance is made to serve as a starting point in an exposition of the round of becoming.

The Buddhist definition of ignorance has a different level of meaning than the Western interpretation. For example, the Western definition of ignorance might be described as a lack of knowledge or education, or it might represent
an unawareness of something that is considered important (e.g., racism, nationalism, or sexism). Within the context of Buddhism, ignorance is defined in two ways. The first is ignorance of the four Noble Truths, meaning the truth about suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the way to its cessation. The second definition, as the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw discusses, is framed in “the positive sense,” meaning it “implies misconception or illusion” (Mahasi, n.d.). As Mahasi Sayadaw stated, “It [ignorance] makes us mistake what is false and illusory for truth and reality” (Mahasi, n.d., section 7, para. 1) and “makes us blind to reality because we are unmindful” (section 7, para. 7). As an example of being unmindful, he said the following:

[It] gives rise to the illusion of man, woman, hand, leg, etc., in the conventional sense of the terms. We do not know that seeing, for instance, is merely the name and form nama-rupa or psychophysical process, that the phenomenon arises and vanishes, that it is impermanent, unsatisfactory and unsubstantial. (Mahasi, n.d., section 7, para. 7)

The 12 links were organized into a particular series because it created ease as a “mnemonic device in the oral tradition” (Macy, 1991b, p. 58). The Buddha’s method of teaching dependent co-arising in relation to the 12-link formula was expressed in four different ways (fourfold): “(a) from the beginning (starting with ignorance), or (b) from the middle up to the end (starts with feeling), and (c) from the end (begin with birth), or (d) from the middle down to the beginning (begins with craving)” (Buddhaghosa, 1975, p. 532). The series provided a way to bring direct illumination to the specific factors inherent within experience, and created a kind of scale and composition to recognize, and eventually penetrate, the nature of interdependent causal movement. In this way, the potency of the formula is discovered in two ways: through interpenetrating the pattern (which composes the 12 links as a whole), and through the direct realization of the “interdependent dynamic between” the links (which conditions and links the co-arising factors; Macy, 1991b, p. 58).

The 12 links comprise the factors of existence and are therefore considered to give rise to the wheel of existence or the round of becoming (Samyutta Nikaya, 1922/1979). Each of the psychophysical factors of existence provides the conditions for the subsequent factors, thus indicating the wheel or cyclical nature of life as it arises within interdependent conditions. When certain conditions are present, they give rise to subsequent conditions, which, in turn, give rise to other conditions, and the cyclical nature of life in samsara, meaning “the round of rebirth,” can be seen. The wheel of existence indicated through the 12 links is a graphical illustration of these conditions. The classical or predominant ordering of the twelvefold links that became standard and their account of the arising of the wheel of existence and life are as follows (Samyutta Nikaya, 1922/1979):

- From ignorance (avijja), volitional, or karmic, mental formations (sankhara) arise;
- From volitional, or karmic, mental formations (sankhara), consciousness or cognition (vinmana) arises;
• From consciousness or cognition (vimana), name-and-form, or mental and physical phenomena, the psychophysical entity (nama-rupa) or mind and matter arises;
• From name-and-form the psychophysical entity (nama-rupa), the six sense base (salayatana) arises;
• From the six sense base (salayatana) contact (phassa) arises;
• From contact (phassa), feeling (vedana) arises;
• From feeling (vedana), craving (tanha) arises;
• From craving (tanha), attachment or clinging (upadana) arises;
• From attachment or clinging (upadana), becoming/volitional actions (bhava) arises;
• From becoming/volitional actions (bhava), birth (jati) arises;
• From birth (jati) old age and death (jaramarana), sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; arise attachment to views as the cause of rebirth, thus does the whole mass of suffering arise.

The cessation of the wheel of existence and life reverses its order as follows:

• Through the cessation of ignorance, volitional formations cease;
• Through the cessation of volitional formations, consciousness ceases;
• Through the cessation of consciousness, psychophysical phenomena cease;
• Through the cessation of psychophysical phenomena, the six sense base ceases;
• Through the cessation of the six sense base, contact ceases;
• Through the cessation of contact, feeling ceases;
• Through the cessation of feeling, craving ceases;
• Through the cessation of craving, attachment/clinging ceases;
• Through the cessation of attachment/clinging, becoming/volitional actions cease;
• Through the cessation of becoming/volitional actions, birth ceases;
• Through the cessation of birth, old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair cease; thus does the whole mass of suffering cease.

(Samyutta Nikaya, 1922/1979)

After Gotama’s reflection upon dependent co-arising in both its positive, or forward (anuloma), and negative, or reverse (patiloma) aspects, he proceeded to contemplate the nature of the “aggregates of grasping” (feeling, perception, volitional formations, consciousness and sense media; Mahasi, n.d., section 3, para. 3). It was then, as Mahasi Sayadaw stated, “he attained the successive insights and fruitions on the Ariyan holy path and finally became the all-Enlightened Buddha” (Mahasi, n.d., section 3, para. 3).

PERCEIVING INTERRELATIONSHIPS

According to the Pali texts, the teachings of dependent co-arising were first spread through the formulation of the following four-part statement that, “This being, that becomes; from the arising of this, that arises; this not being,
that becomes not; from the ceasing of this, that ceases” (Samyutta Nikaya, 1922/1982, p. 23).

In this way, the teachings describe how phenomena materialize and dematerialize through an intertwining reciprocity. As Macy (1991b) discusses, “Things do not produce each other or make each other happen, as in linear causality,” rather, “they help each other happen by providing occasion or locus or context” (p. 58). As things are “helped” to happen within a “context,” a mutual motion occurs, and “in so doing, they in turn are affected” (p. 58). This relational, wave-like reciprocity sinews itself through all phenomena, informing the arising and passing.

Within this framework, the nature of dependent co-arising encompasses a shared motion that functions to inform the ongoing linkage between what give rise to nama-rupa (name and form, mind and matter, mentality-physicality). Through the co-arising union of mental phenomena (nama) and physical phenomena (rupa), there is the arising or materialization of the five aggregates (feeling, perception, volitional formations, consciousness, and sense media). It was through the direct experiential investigation of what gives rise through the interplay of mind and matter with consciousness that the Buddha perceived dependent co-arising. The Buddha realized that there was a circuitry that both conditioned and held the stencil of interrelated causes, and that the circuitry itself, in turn, composed the conditions of the physical and psychological genetics of formation.

Insight into dependent co-arising undoes the conditions within consciousness that lead to self-generated suffering. The Samyutta Nikaya (1922/1979) distinguishes three types of suffering, or dukkha (in Buddhist Pali). The first is dukkha-dukkha, meaning the pain of pain for example body or mental pain, illness, old age, death, and grief. The second is viparinama-dukkha; meaning suffering that is caused by change for example violated expectations or the failure of happy moments to last. And lastly, sankhara-dukkha, meaning the pain of formation, a subtle form of suffering that is inherent in the nature of conditioned things and which include formations and the factors that constitute the human mind.

When practitioners perceive the pattern, or architecture, of dependent co-arising, they, in turn, experience a relaxation of mental rigidity (often not even previously noticed), and with this relaxation there is a natural release of attachment and cravings. In this way, by entering the formulaic motion, conditions can be undone. Within the motion of undoing, there is the embodying and enhancing of the qualities of consciousness that nurture beauty and the pure freedom and inquisitiveness to explore that which stretches beyond the confines of habitual and superficial perception.

In its purest sense, dependent co-arising is a holistic system of accordance, an operating software that is transdisciplinary in nature. Through directly perceiving the unbroken pattern of change found within the matrix of cause and effect relationships, there is the realization of a fabric that stretches to
encompass our deepest felt sense of interconnectedness. As Macy (1991a) suggested,

No immutable essence is posited from which paticca samuppada, as a regulative principle, emanates. Rather it is the pattern of change itself. As such, it represents a dual assertion—of change and order, or order within change. In the linear view of causality, order requires permanence, a static basis impermeable to change. But here order and impermanence go hand in hand. (p. 35)

This process, or pattern of change, is across all scales of phenomena, inclusive of both micro and macro. Like a living vine, this regulative principle construes itself as a pattern within perception as it perceives. Not recognizable through linear thinking, the view encompasses a bilateral directionality, holding its tension between a simultaneous backward and forward reciprocal entwining. Unity, or order, is perceived in the process of change.

Although paticca samuppada reflects an interdependent probability structure, it does not suggest a reality defined through certainty. To the contrary, it is through the view of dependent co-arising itself that then reveals a potential for choice and the resulting freedom to emerge. When the awareness of dependent co-arising is recognized as an “accordance structure,” it can be utilized as a kind of geometrical conceptual experiential tool (Davies, 2009, p. 131). When discovered in this way, it offers both a deeply intimate and holistically inclusive map for encountering new forms of freedom.

By recognizing and entering into the in-between of everything that arises and passes, we interject awareness in the middle of the habitual circuitry and activate the potentiality of liberation. The in-between, or gap, that is inherent within the ongoing interplay of name and form, mind and matter, formation itself, gives rise to a dimension of what is conventionally untapped human potential. When entered, there is the recognition of how the relations themselves are constructing the cause of formation. This seeing activates a higher, more detached, transdisciplinary form of witnessing. The relational interplay itself is seen as the sewer of perceptual formation. In this way, the intuited view of dependent origination becomes a mechanism in and of itself to evolve and compose novelty in consciousness. By function of the scope and depth that this kind of seeing incurs, the human mind encounters new manifolds of awareness. As reference with these manifolds stabilizes, it becomes progressively easier to climb out of the circuitry of conditioned and habitual responses and awaken into another sphere of identification and directly influence an individual’s own freedom.

**Perceiving Wholeness**

The holistic view of paticca samuppada and the Relational Dharma, by which we may encounter it, involves an overarching awareness that stretches to encompass a metasymmetry of deep, multilayered causality. To touch and be
touched by its architecture is to step away from linear reasoning, intellectual judgment, conventional modes of thought, and our usual ways of filtering information. As Macy (1991a) stated, “It is not a dissecting or categorizing exercise of the intellect” (p. 63). Buddhist scholar Herbert Guenther (1989) described this movement away from a “mechanistic linguistics,” as a requisite for encountering the immediacy involved in this kind of experiential knowing (p. 9). As Guenther (1989) described, there is a “shift in attention and interest away from the surface of sensuous and mental objects and toward the dynamic background and source of all that is” (p. 9).

In the teaching of paticca samuppada, a phrase was utilized to assist in the conveyance of the kind of thinking involved in the perception of mutual causality. The term is “yoniso manasikara” (Macy, 1991a, p. 63). Manasikara is a noun and translates as “to attend to, to consider, to reflect on” (B. Bodhi, personal communication, 2012, personal communication). The other half of the phrase, Yoniso or (yoni) literally translates as “womb,” and by extension came to mean “origin,” “way of being born,” and “matrix” (Macy, 1991a, p. 63). In this way, as Macy (1991a) discussed, womb “connotes generation, the arising of phenomena,” and matrix suggests the “interdependence in which these phenomena participate” (p. 63).

As awareness expands to encompass this matrix, or wholeness, there is an illumination of a kind of nonlinear mathematics that elucidates the otherwise invisible dynamics that are contributory to being. It is, as Macy (1991a) stated, “synthetic rather than analytic;” there is both a deep penetrative immersion and a simultaneous inclusion of all that can be mutually held in the field of awareness (p. 63). This holistic pattern is felt as an unending mosaic, a music composed through a fluid symmetry. It is the embodiment of process as synthesis, a dimension of felt motion. As Macy (1991a) stated, “It involves an awareness of wholeness—a wide and intent openness or attentiveness wherein all factors can be included, their interrelationships beheld” (p. 63).

Seen from this vantage point, the map of dependent co-arising reveals a holistic experiential transparency on the structures and substructures that compose the germinating genesis of mind and matter, interdependence and consequential formation. An analogy can be drawn with classical Tibetan Buddhist art. Beneath the colorful rendering of deities in classical Tibetan Buddhist art, there lies a specific geometrical grid, or tigse, that is associated with each deity (Nova, n.d.). The architectural grid provides the structure for the image and sets the guidelines for the image formed. This sacred structure underscores all Buddhist forms, and though conventionally invisible in the final visual creation, if the eye is attuned to this sacred geometry, it can be recognized. In a similar way, as awareness becomes tuned, the geometry of dependent co-arising emerges, rendering an interpenetrating transparency on color and form. When we see into reality with this recognition of its layers and dimensions, existence itself becomes like a magical array of multi-tiered lattices, transparently interrelating tapestries of dimensional movement. We are no longer limited by a superficial perception.
As an approach that seeks to transform collectively imposed and socially/relationally constructed forms of suffering that lead to self-other limitations, Relational Dharma’s (RD) clinical implications are broad and significant. As insight into the nature of RD is generated, a new level of intelligence is fostered that reveals the reciprocally co-arising (causal) nature of human suffering. From this awareness, a view into how we can engage a more active role in envisioning new patterns of determination becomes realized, making higher stages of human development possible. In this way, as a clinical approach, RD encompasses two parallel stages or processes: (a) recognizing and disentangling from the causes and conditions that give rise to suffering (b) subsequent alignment in intersubjective structures of “higher human relatedness” that function to evolve higher freedom.

“Higher human relatedness” (HHR) is a phrase the author conceived to both illustrate and provide a structure for making visible and bringing into form the mutually liberating, relational expressions that can emerge, as we experience insight into human nature as inseparable and interdependent, within the context of Relational Dharma (Davies, 2010).

The underlying structure of HHR is formulated through seven criteria, inspired by an ancient Buddhist methodology called the fourfold defining device. This device was originally used to formally define dhammas (or dharmas), meaning “things, which bear their own intrinsic nature” (Bodhi, 1993, p. 14). In addition, it was used to categorize the Buddhist pāramīs, perfections or noble qualities that a Bodhisattva vows to develop, in which states of mind are defined according to their characteristics, functions, manifestations, and proximate causes. This fourfold defining device is found within the commentaries on the Abhidhamma Pitaka. The source of this device is suggested by modern critical scholars to have originated and derived from two old exegetical texts, the Petakopadesa (“Instruction to the Tipiṭaka”) and the Nettipakarana (Book of Guidance), (Bodhi, 1995). The Abhidhamma Pitaka is the last of the three Pitakas (“baskets”), the preceding being the Vinaya Pitaka and the Sutta Pitaka, which constitute the Pāli Canon (and make up the scriptures of Theravāda Buddhism).

Each intersubjective expression of higher human relatedness (HHR) is characterized by seven criteria and coordinates with the fourfold defining device as follows: The first and second criteria form “characteristics” of intersubjective themes or structures of HHR, in that (a) it is a state of mind and being that can be mutually or reciprocally experienced (not necessarily at the same time or in the same physical location), (b) it can be a single theme or composed by a pattern of interacting qualities (the third and fourth criteria relate with the “proximate causes” of the intersubjective themes of HHR), (c) it arises through and/or reflects insight into inseparable nature, and (d) it is rooted in compassion. The fifth and sixth criteria relate to the “function,” in that (e) it nurtures the well-being of self and other, and (f) it reinforces other
expressions (principles, perspectives, or practices) of HHR. Finally, the seventh criterion is the “manifestation,” as (g) it fosters liberation (Davies, 2010).

These criteria form the underlying architecture for determining liberating expressions of HHR within Relational Dharma. In addition, the formula provides a guide for the recognition of the nature of HHR within our relationships, so that these intersubjective structures can be evoked as a means to transcend habitual patterns of self-other harm and co-evoe our higher freedom. As these mutually liberating potentials are fostered, higher stages of human development are actualized that go beyond ego and beyond the separate self. Thus, they provide a framework for elevating a new level of conscious interaction.

The effects of insight resulting in expressions of HHR within RD have been made visible through the author’s research into the key leaders of the democracy movement in Burma, one of the most awe-inspiring, nonviolent expressions of “spiritual revolution” in modern times. This research applied the criteria of HHR, as a means of identifying the essential intersubjective themes (inclusive of principles, perspectives and practices), underlying Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi’s non-violent approach (along and her two colleagues U Tin U and the late U Kyi Maung) toward achieving democratic freedom over military rule within Burma, 25 themes of HHR were identified (see Davies, 2010). The intersubjective structures, which underlie and inform transformational inner-outer dynamics (self and self with other), illuminate key processes involved in an individual’s ability to engage in non-violent (self and other), personal, relational/social, spiritual, and political, transformational change. In addition, they provide an intersubjective approach that functions to encounter, override, and/or transmute negative mind states and/or traumatic responses and reflect an internal purification from actions born of self-preservation (at the cost of another’s suffering) and illuminate intentions rooted in selflessness, compassion, wisdom, and love.

Of particular relevance in this regard are the contexts in which these themes of HHR were illuminated. Aung San Suu Kyi spent over 15 years under house arrest, in addition to being incarcerated in Insein prison on three separate occasions. As prisoners of conscience, U Tin Oo and U Kyi Maung both spent years in Insein prison, many of which were in solitary confinement. Insein prison is considered one of the world’s most brutal, in terms of its inhumane conditions, abusive techniques, and use of mental and physical torture.

An example of HHR is expressed in the following theme, “Obstacles as Vehicle: Transforming Negativity into Wisdom, Clarity, and Freedom” (Davies, 2010). Any obstacle, whether perceived as inner (such as fear) or outer (for example, the perception that another’s judgment is restricting oneself), can be approached as the vehicle toward higher human development and freedom. When met in this way, obstacles (or perceived negativity) become creative opportunities to develop spiritual strength while evolving freedom through the action of wise interrelatedness. As one engages with and
transmutes suffering, spiritual power emerges. All struggles, in this sense, can be seen as a means to purify the mind; thus, they are vehicles in disguise pointing the way to higher freedom. As Aung San Suu Kyi said, “The opposition is your greatest benefactor” (as cited in Davies, 2010, p. 163; see also Clements, 2008).

An expression of using an obstacle as a vehicle can be seen in the following illustration: U Tin Oo had been sentenced by the military tribunal to serve two separate terms in Burma’s notoriously inhumane Insein prison for being a leader in the democracy movement. While enduring years upon years of torturous conditions and solitary confinement, he turned the barbed wires that encircled his hut into a symbol to reflect on the preciousness of freedom (Davies, 2010; see also Clements, 2008). In addition, to safeguard any feelings that could arise where he would perceive his captors as enemies, he made it a habit to offer them dana, sharing the small precious eatable gifts that his wife brought him when she was allowed to visit. U Tin Oo reflected that by giving dana to his captors while in solitary confinement, he was participating in overcoming his “feelings of seeing them as ‘enemy.’” In this way, he made sharing some of his food with them his dana, his practice. “They, too, had a hard life in prison,” he reflected. “This eased my own emotional and psychological pain…” (as cited in Davies, 2010, p. 152; see also Clements, 2008). Another illustration can be seen in the following expression: U Kyi Maung, also twice imprisoned for a total of 11 years for his involvement in Burma’s democracy movement, on his third day in prison exhibited the power that is possible when we understand the nature of our minds and how to exert influence on it. U Kyi Maung instructed his mind to “renounce thinking.” In so doing, he later reported that he was able to free his mind from the arising of anger, frustration, and suffering (Davies, 2010; Clements, 2008).

Clinical Application Example: Trauma

As a clinical approach toward expressions of human suffering, such as “trauma,” RD (Relational Dharma) has been applied in the prevention and resolution of traumatic stress (Davies & Pitchford, 2010; Krippner, Pitchford, & Davies, 2012) as well as in providing an approach that builds upon a science of human strengths toward generating resilience, posttraumatic growth and growth through adversity (Davies, 2010). While posttraumatic growth (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1999) emphasizes the psychological growth gained from working through trauma, growth through adversity also values the nature of adversity in and of itself, and recognizes it as a valuable part of life (Joseph & Linley, 2006).

Trauma’s impact is often immediate, propelling a disruption of a person’s balance causing a “shattering” that can lead to the destruction of one’s self-regulation capacities or even to a break in the flow of life experience, such as with dissociation. As an approach to the resolution of trauma, RD supports a holistic reintegration of the traumatized individual’s experience, as it is
encountered within the intersubjective field between the client and psychotherapist (or other RD-trained healthcare provider; Krippner, et al., 2012). The intersubjective space, in this way, gives rise to a higher awareness that makes visible the patterns that emerge between self and other and provides the context for a reciprocal formation to develop between the RD practitioner and the trauma survivor. Utilizing the immediacy of the encounter between the RD practitioner and the trauma survivor, the RD approach mediates and attunes within an environment of empathic union, nourishing an atmosphere that assuages anxiety and facilitates the generation of trust and safety to flow in the in-between. This process allows for the possibility of transforming negative or life-diminishing “filters” into associations that widen and deepen identity. In this experience, the appearance of something “foreign,” “not part of,” or “too much,” is relaxed, so that one’s sense of what constitutes a “whole person” naturally broadens and evolves, and a deeper understanding of oneself and the relationship between oneself and others emerges. In this way, in order for RD to be effective in working with trauma, foundational, relational factors must be present for the trauma survivor (e.g., safety, connection); thus, noting that the level of experiencing for the trauma survivor dictates the pace for how RD unfolds.

As deeper insight into oneself and within relationship evolves, an opportunity for a new understanding and vision of oneself begins to emerge. From this understanding, higher forms of relatedness are both discovered and fostered promoting greater forms of freedom, both for oneself and in relationship with others. Examples of these forms of freedom expressed through HHR include the inner liberty to feel another’s suffering as inseparable to one’s own and the compassion to seek to alleviate it, thus respecting the freedom of others as inseparable to one’s own freedom. Another expression of HHR is the freedom to forgive others for their transgressions. In order to forgive, the ability to “step back” and recognize the conditions that gave rise to his or her actions versus reacting from a place of personalizing these actions, must be developed. As awareness into the causal relationships that led this individual to be wounded and act in a harmful ways becomes recognized, relational objectivity emerges and compassion becomes possible.

In this way, RD becomes a means toward a simultaneous release from the trauma that evoked the experience of suffering and the identification with earlier negatively conditioned behaviors and experiences.

From this new orientation, expressions of higher human relatedness naturally emerge, which in turn promote greater freedom to oneself and in relationship to others. In the case of the trauma survivor, he or she may find the freedom to release from the isolation and imprisonment of living imprisonment by his or her wounds (such as feeling hatred toward their oppressor). Instead, in recognition of the deep interdependence of human life, he or she may choose to become a “voice for the voiceless,” someone who seeks to bring peace to all victims, the oppressor and oppressed alike (Krippner et al., 2012).
CONCLUSION

Profound and tranquil, free from complexity,
Uncompounded luminous clarity,
behind the mind of conceptual ideas
In this there is not a thing to be removed,
nor anything that needs to be added. It is merely the immaculate looking
naturally at itself.
—Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche (Sogyal, 1994, p. 50)

Specific processes (i.e. gross, subtle, and refined filters) within Relational
Dharma are illuminated as a means to parameterize and illustrate a
phenomenology for degrees of insight, liberating mind from the forces of
ignorance and self-other generated suffering. As mind moves into greater
proximity with liberation, a deeper substratum of causality becomes visible.
These dependently co-arising relationships can be seen to link and inform the
patterns that give rise to the nature and formation of mind itself, and its causal
motion in the architecting of self and other.

Through this recognition, experience can release from the gravitational pull of
conditioning and become propelled toward the potentiality of full liberation.
With liberation, filters cease to obscure experience from direct knowing. In this
relational accordance, filters become translucent and pliable canvases upon
which emerge the colors of luminosity, compassion, and wisdom in an ongoing
alchemy toward the nature and expression of higher human freedom.

The ethical implications for humanity that these perspectives offer are
undoubtedly the most relevant. In a world that is still addicted to violence
and non-sustainable action, insight into the conscious engagement of
interrelatedness may be one of the most important in terms of its spiritual,
social, and political implications. It is only when we see with greater clarity the
intimate causation of how “we,” citizens of the Whole, affect totality that we
find the inspiration to take personal responsibility for our presence and fine
tune our physiological, emotional, and physical resonance within the Whole.

REFERENCES


The Author

Jeannine Davies, Ph.D., is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and faculty at Saybrook University within the School of Clinical Psychology in San Francisco, California, where she co-developed and co-leads the Complex Trauma and Healing Processes Certificate. She is co-author of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and is the founder of Relational Dharma, an intersubjective and integral model of consciousness, which is being applied toward resolving individual and collective experiences of human suffering, while evolving higher human potentials and freedom.
Chris Carter’s *Science and the Afterlife Experience* is the last book of a trilogy designed to show the strength of substance dualism and its satellite claim that we survive death. His earlier works are *Science and the Near-Death Experience* (2010) and *Science and Psychic Phenomena* (2012). Carter is an Oxford-educated Canadian philosopher with an encyclopedic grasp of the history of psychical research and the philosophical skills to build imposing arguments around it. He enjoys the esteem of many of the world’s foremost psychical researchers, some of whom think his marshalling of evidence deals a near fatal blow to materialism. He writes lucidly in the language of everyman.

What makes this book different from others is Carter’s ability to expose the weak points of materialism and replace it with a dualist metaphysics built around what he considers to be near insurmountable evidence. He is convinced of the following:

1. substance dualism is no more improbable out of the gate than materialism, and Ockham’s razor should not predispose philosophers to favor materialism;
2. careful analysis of paranormal phenomena leaves no doubt that materialism is at a loss to account for them, whereas dualism is consistent with them; and
3. the deceased have long been trying to tell us through mediums what life on the “Other Side” is like, and we have good reason to trust their accounts.

Materialists commonly use Ockham’s razor to support materialism. “Why introduce an invisible factor like a soul when we have a body right in front of us? Keep it simple,” they argue. “But reality is often not simple,” Carter responds. Newtonian physics is much simpler than quantum physics, he points out, but becomes inadequate beyond a certain threshold and has to give way to the more complex, more comprehensive theory. Besides the understandable preference for things that can be seen, a deeper reason for the philosopher’s opposition to dualism, Carter argues, is a fear that it will “usher in a return to an age of religious persecution and irrationality” (p. 15). Dualism, however, is not a religious doctrine, he responds, but a philosophical stance built around argument and evidence. It owes nothing to religion.

Materialists think that chemical processes in the brain produce qualia, or conscious experiences, and Carter grants that materialism works as a theory; it is plausible. But equally plausible, he says, is the theory that the brain is a ‘receiver-transmitter’ (p. 12) for the self. If so, “any change in brain
functioning, such as that resulting from intoxication or a stroke, should be expected to affect its capacity as a receiver-transmitter just as certainly as its capacity as a producer” (p. 13). In other words, the self depends on the brain, and a healthy one at that, for its proper functioning, but not for its existence. It exists even when its instrument, the brain, is impaired. In such a case the self is not impaired, the brain is; the self simply cannot express itself in the usual way.

Carter grants that substance dualism (from now on referred to simply as “dualism”) has its problems: How the self interacts with the brain is highly mysterious. But so is the production of consciousness from the dance of chemicals in the material brain—the equally mysterious explanation provided by materialists. Which is less mysterious? How can we decide between dualism and materialism? We would be left with a standoff if weighing these two mysteries against each other were all we had to go on. But that is not the situation at all, he maintains. The ever-growing mass of scholarship and research being done on paranormal phenomena breaks the tie.

2a. Reincarnation. In common with many parapsychologists, Carter regards “near-death experiences, deathbed visions, children who remember previous lives, apparitions, and communications through mediums” (p. 288) as the five most important types of phenomena pointing toward dualism and survival of death. He is impressed by how “vast and varied” the Big Five are, while all pointing in the same direction (p. 4).

In the present book, he dissects the last three. His method is to analyze cases of each type, show why materialism fails to account for them, then show why dualism does. He begins with children’s memories of what they take to be previous lives.

Ian Stevenson, a Canadian psychiatrist who worked for the University of Virginia School of Medicine for 50 years until his death in 2007, investigated over 2,500 cases suggestive of reincarnation. He devoted most of his career to the study of children, aged 2 to 5, who apparently remembered events from a previous life. Stevenson wanted to see if these memories matched real events. For example, did the village that an Indian four-year-old remembered by name, along with the names of her husband and children and other relatives and friends, fit a real place and real people? Moreover, did remembered events match the actual history of events in the village? His methodology was to record the speech of the child herself (ideally) or of the child’s parents who remembered what she said, then take the child to the village to meet the people she claimed to remember. In many cases, recognition was immediate and uncanny, with the child running up to her now older (and much bigger) children using the same terms of endearment once so familiar. Equally impressive was the child’s ability to navigate through the winding lanes of the village and reach her destination. These and similar ‘hits’ are a hallmark of Stevenson’s best cases, numbering in the hundreds. His colleagues continue the research, with similar results. Of special significance are cases, numbering over 200, of birthmarks that match the place on the former body of a fatal wound. Stevenson was a meticulous and wary researcher constantly on the lookout for
fraud (he found only one clear case) and paramnesia, or “unconscious distortions of memories regarding what the child actually said” (p. 45). He was also concerned that ESP might be a factor in the hits. Did the child for some reason gain information telepathically about the identities of her “former” family members and fake the relationship? Carter takes care to rule out such explanations. Carter also devotes a chapter to the objections brought against Stevenson’s research methods by the materialist philosopher Paul Edwards. Carter says he wrote the chapter to “illustrate the shallowness and poor quality of Edwards’s examination of the empirical evidence” (p. 63). There is not space here to summarize Carter’s analysis of the objections.

2b. Apparitions. Carter has a broad knowledge of what the ordinary person terms a ghost. Apparitions, he says, “may cast a shadow, and be reflected in a mirror. They typically show awareness of their surroundings, avoiding furniture and people, and they may turn to follow a person’s movements. Some are reported to speak, although this is not common; if the apparition does speak, there are usually only a few words” (p. 79). They tend to present themselves shortly before or after the death of the person whose apparition they are, and sometimes they haunt a place, in which case they are often seen by several persons. Carter addresses the usual objection brought forth by materialists: That all apparitions are hallucinations, and that in cases when many people see a ghost, the power of suggestion is the explanation. Such dismissals simply do not take into account the facts, Carter argues.

2c. Spirit Communication through Mediums. “We have done all we can when the critic has nothing left to allege except that the investigator is in [on] the trick. But when he has nothing left to allege, he will allege that” (p. xiii). Carter begins this section of the book, much the longest, with this quotation delivered by Henry Sidgwick, first president of the Society for Psychical Research, in 1882. Not much has changed, Carter concedes, in the last 130 years. When a medium is “on,” she is able to come up with information she has no way of knowing normally. Mediums contend, of course, that they are merely the mouthpiece for the spirit coming through them, who typically uses either the medium’s hand (as in “automatic writing”) or her voice box (often while she is in trance). Carter analyzes the output of Mrs. Leonora Piper of Boston, made famous by William James, who sat through over a hundred séances with her; and the Englishwoman Mrs. Gladys Osborne Leonard, studied in detail by Sir Oliver Lodge. Carter concludes that “in many cases ... the amount of accurate, highly detailed information received far exceeded what could be expected from sheer guesswork” (p. 153). An example is the “book test.” In a book test, “the communicator has to specify the location of a book in a house to which the medium has no access but which was well known to the [alleged spirit] communicator while living. The communicator must also specify a page number of that book, on which will be found a passage that conveys some appropriate message he remembers writing down before his death” (p. 147). Leonard was involved in many successful book tests—so successful in fact that she was sometimes shadowed by detectives to make sure she did not gather information about the deceased communicator and perpetrate a fraud. Her
reputation remained untarnished. After taking us through the particulars of one such test, Carter concludes, “Conscious fraud seems completely out of the question in the most carefully documented cases. For all but the most paranoid conspiracy theorists, this explanation will seem completely inadequate” (p. 153).

Life on the “Other Side.” The last chapter (prior to an epilogue) draws from the testimonies of six mediums—or, depending on your preference, the spirit communicators speaking through them. They describe what it is like to be “dead.” It will no doubt seem strange if not absurd to many a reader that anyone should take seriously such accounts. Nevertheless, bear in mind that Carter has taken pains to show that some mediums are legitimate and gifted. So what is illogical, he asks, about their telling us about their world? We should expect them to. For those of us who can get past our “boggle threshold,” he argues, such accounts may prove to be of great consequence.

Carter analyzes several notable afterlife accounts, including one allegedly provided by Bertrand Russell. The one he draws on the most was ostensibly communicated by Frederic Myers, the “Freud” of psychical research. Myers the gifted Irish medium Geraldine Cummins as his mouthpiece. Their collaboration, The Road to Immortality, published in 1932, is widely considered the gold standard of the genre. In it Myers brings to life the various planes of existence, beginning with earth and extending all the way to realms far beyond his actual experience (he has been dead for only a little over twenty years when he first comes through Cummins). His description of the world he lives in is vivid and arresting, right down to the characters we are likely to meet over there and the astonishing colors of the flowers. He does not hesitate to describe the laws of the after-world and how it all works. The following is typical:

Myers tells us that communities of like-minded individuals with similar tastes come together and live in mutually constructed environments; those of a solitary nature may live in an environment completely of their own subconscious construction. Here, food and water are no longer required; sexual desires are in most cases still present, but women do not bear children. (p. 311)

Myers tells us that we are destined, if we desire, to “take on divine attributes. The reason, therefore, for the universe and … the purpose of existence … [is] the evolution of mind in matter” (p. 305).

Science and the Afterlife Experience has received high marks from those laboring in the trenches with the Big Five, including near-death researchers working in hospitals with patients close to death, lab-coated parapsychologists running telepathy tests on gifted subjects, psychical researchers analyzing sudden changes in brain wave patterns of mediums when they “make contact” with a communicator, and a few philosophers who study these phenomena for hints about the nature of persons. They see Carter’s work as the new benchmark for comprehensive, in-depth presentation and analysis of their subject. Their conclusions are the same as his: That a materialist metaphysics can be defended only by ignoring facts that need to be heeded.
Carter wants to understand where we humans stand in the grand scheme of the universe. For him there is no question more important than the nature of human destiny—whether it ends at death or continues into other realms. He believes that a careful study of paranormal phenomena decisively tilts the balance away from materialism and back toward dualism.

REFERENCES


The Author

Chris Carter, M.A., MBA, is the author of several articles and three acclaimed books that examine controversial issues in science and philosophy. Educated at Oxford University, he currently teaches internationally.

The Reviewer

Stafford Betty, Ph.D., is a professor of religious studies at California State University, Bakersfield, where he specializes in death and afterlife studies. His most recent books are *The Afterlife Unveiled* (2011), *The Imprisoned Splendor* (a novel set in the afterlife, 2011), and *Heaven and Hell Unveiled: Updates from the World of Spirit* (2014).

********


Neo-atheists like Richard Dawkins, the late Christopher Hitchens and Ed Harris have made a major contribution to modern civilization and culture. Their frontal assault on religion as “the source of all evil” has triggered the emergence of a cottage industry of first-rate scholarly and readable works aiming to debunk their sophomoric view of the subject of their ire. One such work is certainly the latest by Dr. Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Great Britain and the Commonwealth and a current member of the House of Lords. Even though his book, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning*, does not directly address transpersonal themes, his work nevertheless is very relevant to the
overall thrust and aims of transpersonal psychology and transpersonal theory in general.

Rabbi Sacks (2011) thunders that, “Atheism deserves better than the new atheists whose methodology consists of criticizing religion without understanding it, quoting texts without contexts … confusing folk belief with reflective theology, abusing, mocking, ridiculing, caricaturing, and demonizing religious faith and holding it responsible for the great crimes against humanity” (p. 11).

The neo-atheists’ claim that religion and science are incompatible with each other, that religion breeds violence and ignorance, and that it “poisons everything,” is masterfully exposed by Rabbi Sacks as a grotesque distortion and over-simplification of reality. Without denying the negative role that religion has often played in history, he demonstrates convincingly that the opposite situation is closer to the truth: The absence of religious anchoring has created far worse calamities for humanity. He mentions the unrestrained slaughter that was unleashed during and after the militantly anti-religious revolutions that took place since the Enlightenment. On this score, his views are similar to the work of sociologist of religion Peter Berger in his book, Pyramids of Sacrifice. If one is to contemplate a calculus of pain, secular ideologies have caused much more horrendous harm than any fundamentalist religion.

“The cure for bad religion,” Rabbi Sacks (2011) insists, “is good religion, not no religion, just as the cure for bad science is good science not the abandonment of science” (p. 11). It is an axiom for Rabbi Sacks that religion and science complement and need each other. Right at the start of his book, he frames his study within the parameters of the well-known aphorism by Einstein that, “Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind” (as cited in Sacks, 2011, p. 6). He hastens to add that one need not be religious to be an ethical and honorable person. In fact, he refers to several of his atheist professors of philosophy at Oxford that inspired him and sharpened his own ethical sensibilities. He does add, however, that overall, and in the long run, the takeover of a civilization by a purely secular worldview invites sooner or later a nihilistic outlook and a vacuum of meaning that can lead more often than not to collective phenomena of unspeakable evil: The French Guillotine, the Stalinist Gulags, the slaughter houses of Maoist China and Pol Pot’s Cambodia, and of course the archetypal horror of the Holocaust, “rationally” planned and scientifically executed by the Nazis.

Rabbi Sacks repeatedly reminds us that the proper sphere of science is explanation, the uncovering of the laws that govern the physical universe. Religion, on the other hand, focuses on meaning and interpretation. Science takes things apart to find out how they work. Religion puts things together to find out what they mean. In this context, Sacks rejects Stephen Gould’s notion of the “non-overlapping magisteria,” that religion and science must be kept separate as a way of solving the conflict between them. Instead, he argues that as Einstein pointed out, religion and science need each other. Sacks argues for a creative partnership of the two. He, in fact, views the essence of Western Civilization as the synthesis between Hebrew monotheistic religion and Greek
philosophical thought. His understanding is reminiscent of the yin and yang of Taoism as well as the much used metaphor of the left and right side of the brain. Ancient Greece planted the seeds of left-brain rational thought that eventually gave birth to the scientific revolution and contemporary secularism. Judaism, from its very beginning, represented the right side of the brain, the meaning side. These two pillars of western civilization need each other for a proper apprehension of reality and a right attitude towards the world in which we humans find ourselves. An interesting part of his work is the contrast he juxtaposes between Athens and Jerusalem as the two “pillars” of the Judeo-Christian civilization. Athens gave birth to tragedy and the notion of fate. Judaism offered hope and trust in an all-loving Creator and, therefore, ultimate freedom and meaning to individual existence. The God of Aristotle is framed in terms of an impersonal unifying principle of the One, the Unmoved Mover, indifferent to the fate of human beings and their tragedies. The God of Israel is the personal reality that interacts, speaks and makes covenants with humanity, starting with Abraham and the other prophets. It is a God who revealed Himself as a loving and compassionate Father, who created human beings in his own image, bestowing spiritual dignity to all humanity. It is the God who listens to prayer and who was inherited by the West through Christianity.

Rabbi Sacks offers us an accessible work that is very enjoyable to read, pollinated with a string of meaningful insights about the relationship between religion and science. His deep knowledge of the subject is awe inspiring, and one feels compelled to re-read his work time and again to benefit from the wisdom it unfolds. It is a real page-turner. Although he approaches his study from a global, non-denominational perspective, his focus and preference, understandably, is grounded almost exclusively within Judaism. The examples he offers in relating science to religion are drawn almost entirely from the Old Testament, which he insists must not be read literally. A literalist approach to religious scripture, in fact, unavoidably leads to distortions, the bread and butter of the religious fundamentalists and the neo-atheists.

One does, however, get the feeling that his deep love for Judaism and the Torah leads him to over-interpret, perhaps, certain aspects of the tradition that may indeed need to be rejected rather than interpreted. A similar approach surely applies to all other religions when scrutinized in light of contemporary vantage points of understanding. How can we “interpret,” for example, God’s injunction to Joshua to kill everything alive in Canaan? How else can we interpret it other than to simply consider it a form of genocidal tribal lore mixed in with authentic divine wisdom as conveyed to humanity via the mystic experiences of the great prophets? Leaving intact violent parts of what passes for inherited scripture by simply re-interpreting them offers fodder to the neo-atheists who debunk religion in its totality, good and bad. Did God actually give such a command to Joshua for mass slaughter or a similar command to Abraham to kill his own son? Can anyone in his right mind today consider such blind obedience as an exemplary form of perfect faith and trust in God?

Another possible and perhaps minor limitation of the work is Rabbi Sacks’ lack of consideration of the religious experience as a central factor in the
emergence and maintenance of religious worldviews; that in fact, contrary to the fervent wishes and beliefs of the neo-atheists, secularization may be impossible in the long run. It may be so because the religious experience is an integral aspect of human nature itself, and therefore will always pop up under diverse cultural and historical conditions. The prophetic stream is always present within any human population and in any historical period. In short, prophets and saints will always be around, even in the most atheistic and secular times.

The above-mentioned possible limitations do not diminish in any way the brilliance of Rabbi Sack’s passionate and scholarly exposition on how to think about the relationship between religion and science. I have no doubt that it will establish itself as a classic.

The Author

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Ph.D., has been Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, and has received honorary degrees from universities around the world. He is the award-winning author of more than twenty books, including To Heal a Fractured World and Future Tense. He writes frequently for The Times of London and other periodicals, and is heard regularly on the BBC. He was made a Life Peer and took his seat in the House of Lords in October 2009.

The Reviewer

Kyriacos C. Markides, Ph.D., is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Maine, and author of several books on religion and mystic Christianity, such as, The Mountain of Silence, Gifts of the Desert, and his latest Inner River: A Pilgrimage to the Heart of Christian Spirituality, all three published by Random House/Image Books. Several of his works have also been translated and published in twelve other countries and languages. He is also the author of an article in this Journal: Markides, K. (2008). Eastern Orthodox mysticism and transpersonal theory, Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 40(2), 178–198.


As someone who has been both excited about the rapid expansion of the scientific knowledge base in areas such as neuroscience, physics, biology,
consciousness, as well as philosophy, but also overwhelmed at the explosion of publications, this book is a godsend. In this edited book, leading researchers and scholars who are experts in these areas have written succinct, yet in depth summaries and reflections about their relevance to understanding the human mind. It is self-consciously in the tradition of William James’s radical empiricism, and the editors, Alexander Moreira-Allmeida and Franklin Santana Santos, follow their own admonition to researchers about the, “need to enlarge timid scope and deal with a much wider range of phenomena if they in fact wish to make a truly significant contribution to the understanding of mind and its relationship with the brain … specifically experiences called ‘anomalous’ and/or ‘spiritual’” (p. xv). Experts from many areas are brought to bear on these questions to facilitate and integrate competing research paradigms. This collection grew out of a conference, thus providing the authors with a chance to refine their reflections based on dialogue with their co-presenters as they wrote their chapters.

The first three chapters set the philosophical context for the entire book project by bringing into question the domination of reductionistic materialism in mainstream science, particularly when applied to understanding mind-body topics and issues such as anomalous experiences. This articulates the evolving postmaterialist psychology approach spearheaded by Lisa Miller and Len Sperry. The next two chapters examine the contributions of physical and biological science to the understanding of the mind. The authors of these are physicist Chris Clarke and physician Deepak Chopra, who are experts in their own areas as they venture thoughtfully into this new territory. The support for nonlocality of both matter and mind is, “building a bridge between spirituality and science” (p. 91). The next two chapters present a lucid overview of neuroimaging, which is certainly one of the most exciting areas currently in contributing to the understanding of mindfulness as well as mental functioning more broadly, and is graphically illustrated with brain image findings. It provides a good antidote to the simplistic positing of and search for a ‘God spot’ in the brain. In addition, it highlights the limitations of the ‘brain as computer’ models of mind.

Anomalous experiences have been a focus in my own research (Lukoff, 2007), and I think that their study has important implications for both transpersonal therapeutic approaches and understanding the mind-body relationship. There are at least 10 well-established anomalous experiences (Cardena, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000), of which this book has chapters on near-death experiences, mediumship, and past lives. Additional anomalous experiences, such as mystical experiences and psychic experiences, are covered in other chapters.

Collectively, these perspectives highlight the possible avenues for unmasking and understanding transcendent realities, which are notoriously difficult to research (as William James also pointed out in his work on empirical radicalism). Moreira-Allmeida and Santos describe theirs as a balanced psychobiological approach, with which I would concur.

I found myself actively involved while reading this book, as I was underlining sections, marking some areas for PowerPoint slides in my own courses and
workshops, and writing down references to retrieve. This recently published work (copyright 2012) is a tour de force of contemporary scholarship, so do not wait until used copies are available for a few dollars. By then, these authors will undoubtedly have moved on to new territory and vision. This is a book by the cutting edge thinkers and researchers of consciousness in our times. I personally believe we have a plethora of contemporary Einsteins addressing these topics, whose contributions to this book make it a wonderful selection to aid in one’s ongoing reflection.

REFERENCES


The Editors

Alexander Moreira-Allmeida, M.D., Ph.D., was trained in psychiatry and cognitive-behavioral therapy at the Institute of Psychiatry of the University of São Paulo, Brazil, where he also obtained his Ph.D. in Health Sciences investigating the mental health of Spiritist mediums. Formerly a postdoctoral fellow in religion and health at Duke University, he is now a professor of psychiatry at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora School of Medicine and Founder and Director of the Research Center in Spirituality and Health, Brazil (www.ufjf.br/nupes-eng). His main research interest involves empirical studies of spiritual experiences, as well as the methodology and epistemology of this research field. His publications are available at www.hoje.org.br/elsh.

Franklin Santana Santos, M.D., Ph.D., was trained in geriatrics at Clinical Hospital of the University of São Paulo, Brazil, where he also obtained his Ph.D. in Health Sciences investigating delirium in elderly patients. Formerly a postdoctoral fellow in cognitive disturbances at Karolinska Institute (Sweden), he is now Professor of post-graduate program of University of São Paulo School of Medicine and collaborator researcher of Laboratory of Neuroscience (LIM-27) at the Institute of Psychiatry of the University of São Paulo, Brazil. He is a leader in the studies in issues related to death, dying and Palliative Care in Brazil. His main research interests involve cognitive disturbances, thanatology, palliative care and medical education, and he has published several articles and books about these topics.

The Reviewer

David Lukoff, Ph.D., is a Professor of Psychology at Sofia University and a licensed psychologist in California. He is the author of 80 articles and chapters on spiritual issues and mental health (several in this journal) and co-author of
the DSM-IV category Religious or Spiritual Problems. In addition, he is currently Co-President of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology.

* * * * * *


“*In my end is my beginning.*” Questions … and more questions about the status of self in the age of neuroscience.

With apologies to T.S. Eliot, I shall start this review at the end of Sangeetha Menon’s book, for the essence of her book is captured in these closing words: “Is there a core-self somehow hidden and which master-controls the living self through the body and the brain? Is that pure consciousness? Is the existence of pure consciousness unhindered by the birth and death of the body?” These are profoundly challenging questions, and they serve to establish here at the opening of my review the rich area of human experience that Menon has chosen to explore. She is to be congratulated for raising her head above the parapet in the general consideration of neuroscience, self, and consciousness to which her book is directed, and to stand up for those core values including free will and the recognition of our potential to embrace higher, perhaps transcendent, realms of being that dignify humanity.

Questions are good … and indeed Menon asks many questions in the course of her writing. What about answers? Well, expecting answers to these questions may be overly simplistic. Menon’s final words that follow the above questions (“A short response is that the core-self is beyond the binary of birth and death of the body, and it is the central key to resolve the puzzle of consciousness”) assert a strong position—that our understanding of self can never be complete if our horizons extend only to the brain and body. Indeed, the very asking of the questions seems to be a stylistic device that Menon uses throughout the book to imply her own position. The questions *are* her answers: There *is* a core-self which master-controls ‘us,’ and this core *is* pure consciousness, which actually *does* exist beyond the physicality that arises and decays in birth and death.

The end is in the beginning since these are essentially the questions that launch Menon’s enquiry. Already on page 2 she writes that “Self is the puzzle for twenty-first century biology,” and page 5 includes a list of 26 questions that distil the book’s substance. Would we not expect answers by the book’s close? Here is the reason why I have commenced my review in this fashion. It seems to me that the reason why Menon closes with questions, is that it is the appropriate, perhaps gentle, way of reminding those whose horizons seem to
end with the physicality of embodied consciousness that there is more to us than that. There is a mystery at the core of our being. It is not available to even the most sophisticated external instrumentation, and yet ignoring or denying it carries consequences.

The fundamental question that interests me concerns the approaches we adopt in engaging with the wealth of research into the nature of consciousness—especially the dominant strand deriving from cognitive neuroscience—whilst remaining faithful, as it were, to that mystery at the core of being. Is the person who lives and breathes that mystery condemned to be on the outside of the coterie of those who see themselves at the forefront in the challenge to understand the nature of consciousness? This I believe is the subtext of Menon’s book. As she writes, “All through the discussion, I underline the importance of considering brain-self interrelations, and also of separating the fleeting self of the cognitive and social sciences from the core-self that is deeply ontological” (p. 5). By “deeply ontological” she seems to be emphasizing that the core-self is “un-ideated” and “non-located” (p. 4), meaning that its presence cannot be detected by the methods of neuroscience. And here is the nub, for it remains unclear as to how a research-based approach might substantiate Menon’s proposals about a core-self that is not dependent on a physical base. I would argue that we need greater clarity here. Indeed, let me put this more strongly: I believe that this—in the more general sense of articulating the epistemological basis whereby we might satisfactorily demonstrate the value of mystical ideas that do not fit into the dominant physicalist paradigm—is the greatest challenge to which we as transpersonal psychologists are called at this point in our discipline’s development.

Let me briefly say more about this challenge before returning to Menon’s work. The notion that spirituality has a role in relation to psychology is no longer the challenge that it was in the early years of the transpersonal movement. However, I have argued that transpersonal psychology remains the only sub-discipline of psychology that can engage with spiritual and mystical traditions on terms that do not squeeze those traditions’ core values and ontological convictions out from any dialogue. The huge explosion of research into mindfulness and its applications, for example, rarely acknowledges the broader context of the role mindfulness might play in an individual’s journey to developing wisdom, attaining more enriching states of being, and engaging with non-physical realms. Whilst this is not the place to go into detail, it is important to acknowledge the deleterious consequences of such emaciation of spiritual and mystical notions for individuals and for our culture more generally.

Menon’s approach is one way of redressing the balance. She endeavours to engage with those who espouse a purely physicalist worldview seemingly on their own terms. By embedding her notions of the core-self and the spiritual perspective that ensues from it in the context of a wealth of neurocognitive research into self and consciousness, she gives the impression that those notions might be evaluated by the criteria of cognitive neuroscience. However, I am not so sure that this particular strategy is the most appropriate. Menon’s book includes valuable overviews of many of the avenues that cognitive neuroscientists have explored in
attempting to understand the role of brain systems in relation to self and consciousness. And she emphasizes what appears to be lacking:

At some point we will have to greet the idea that knowledge of causal connections is trivial as far as the ontology of consciousness is concerned. Otherwise, in spite of amazing neurobiological developments, as persons, we will stay where we started. Inadequate and parochial problematization of consciousness, without considering its ontological nature, will lead to inadequate conceptualization. Such conceptual frameworks might very well throw light on certain biological and cultural traits. However, to believe that the door will open to show the true nature of consciousness is doubtful. (p. 55)

I very much share Menon’s view, and applaud the way she confronts the generally received wisdom that consciousness is to be understood within the confines of a physicalist ontology. The generally-agreed approach within cognitive neuroscience by-passes the so-called hard problem of consciousness (i.e., how physical processes may relate to phenomenal experience) and simply assumes that more of the same will solve the problem. As Crick and Koch express it, “It appears fruitless to approach this problem head-on. Instead, we are attempting to find the neural correlate(s) of consciousness (NCC), in the hope that when we can explain the NCC in causal terms, this will make the problem of qualia clearer” (Crick & Koch, 2003, p. 119). Are “hopes” enough however? And might it not be the case that addressing the hard problem could provide a more appropriate context within which neuroscientific data should be viewed?

As I have already illustrated, Menon’s approach proposes an extra ingredient that needs to be incorporated within our view of self and consciousness, namely the core-self that is pure consciousness. The problem here is that there is no evidence that would, I think, convince those who hold sway in the areas of research she reviews. How could there be, given the non-physical nature of that extra ingredient as conceptualized here? Indeed, the crucial question, I feel, concerns establishing the line of reasoning that might be expected to lead in the direction of incorporating such constructs in the neurocognitive narrative. This is a question about the way we bridge disciplinary boundaries, and is, I believe, critical to the challenge Menon is addressing. In my view her book would have benefitted from more consideration of such epistemological matters.

Again and again in the book, Menon gives a fine review of relevant research, raising poignant questions. But these questions are simply followed by assertions that introducing this core-self answers the questions: (p. 101: “The puzzle is solved only when it is conceded that the core-self is not another experiential … feel alongside taste, smell, etc., but an ontologically different entity;” p. 104: “In order for cognitive processes to be embodied in bodily experiences and actions, and for interactions with the environment, firstly a core self-sense is to be conceptualized;” p. 107: “The minimal self has to be a core, ontic self that could be described as non-structured, non-intentional, substantive, pure consciousness.”). These phrases, “… it is conceded that…,” “… is to be conceptualized …,” “… has to be…” are problematic, for much has to be taken on trust. I wanted Menon to go further; I felt that she could
have developed the ideas, which she asserts are needed, in greater detail. And she does not really grapple with this issue about which lines of evidence might support the proposal of a core-self that exists in some sense beyond the brain.

To be sure there will be many (especially amongst the audience of this review) who rejoice in Menon’s liberating perspective. I have already indicated that I count myself amongst this group. But in reviewing the book I have to ask this key question: Within which scholarly tradition(s) should the arguments be contextualized? In my view, Menon’s perspective brings a refreshing addition to the narrative that arises from the cognitive and brain science, but crucially her ideas cannot be substantiated from those areas. On several occasions, she draws on material in the traditions associated with Vedanta, and it seems clear that the key notions of a core-self and pure consciousness derive substantively from her knowledge and practice of these traditions. It is a great shame therefore that nowhere in the book is the Vedantic material elaborated. We have brief allusions only.

The strength of transpersonal psychology and its contemporary importance lies in its capacity to integrate across scholarly divides. This is where I would situate Menon’s book: it is clear that she is fully at home in two scholarly areas—cognitive neuroscience and Vedanta—which gives her an authoritative voice. I feel that she could have built a richer integration had she developed the input from the latter further. Again, it is not that I would have the book be something the author had not set out to achieve—that would be unjust. It is that the arguments she builds seem to be lacking without a more substantive base.

To follow further this point of criticism I would have to raise a concern over the treatment of ideas having roots in Vedanta. There is, for example, a large literature critical of any notion of pure consciousness. Where is Menon’s reply? What about contemporary scholarship into Vedanta—if a work such as this is going to build the kind of bridges that I for one would very much like to see, then the author must engage with the scholarly treatment of the material drawn from spiritual and mystical traditions just as she engages critically with the theories of cognitive neuroscientists.

And, given the context, I would like to have seen a further consideration discussed. Menon criticises the view advanced by most cognitive psychologists today that there is no coherent and continuing self, that self is a narrative constructed from moment to moment (e.g., Bruner, 1997; Dennett, 1991; Gazzaniga, 2013). By contrast, Menon asserts the continuity of self: “Experience itself is influenced by the continuity of the experiencer as a continuing self …. The self is not a point of awareness that exists for a moment…” (p. 172). Now, those with an understanding of the historical roots of Buddhism will know that this debate is not new; notions of the impermanence of self (or perhaps better expressed—the impermanence of the immediate sense of ‘I’) is one of the divergences that led to Buddhism arising as a tradition separated from its Hindu backdrop. It would have been stimulating to see this modern tension contextualized against the Hindu-Buddhist background (especially since the Buddhist view is one that has influenced some key thinkers in contemporary psychology).
Menon articulates her view forcefully:

I would think that this [the view that there is no continuous self] is a dangerous and exceedingly superficial view ... a serious blunder to commit if one is interested in the character of the person, and deeply philosophical views such as freedom and moral choices. I will not attribute the finer values of human pursuit such as freedom and universal love to a fleeting self .... But in absolute terms these are values that can only originate from the 'core-self', which is the seat of the body-sense and the self-sense. (p. 173)

I certainly agree, and again congratulate Menon on flying her colours with a flourish. But the Hindu-Buddhist backdrop could have been instructive here. After all, a great tradition such as Buddhism never abandoned the value of moral choices. It would, I feel, have been instructive to chart the course taken when momentariness was asserted over continuity; embedding the contemporary debate in the context of such a background could enlighten us.

As it stands, Menon’s position is open to challenge. One of the authors whose views Menon addresses in this context is Metzinger (2009) who has argued forcefully that there is no-one within ‘us,’ as it were. And the evidence from cognitive studies such as those of Gazzaniga (2013) and Wegner (2002) is compelling. Weighed against this we have a series of questions posed by Menon:

Is the brain being taken to be the grand organ that masterminds one’s mind, mental life and experiences? Is the singular attention on brain, at the cost of dumping the self, on overrated position? Would considering the brain not as the lone, grand organ but as a ‘mediating organ’ be a plausible option? (p. 101)

Again, I am sympathetic to Menon’s perspective here, but I would like to have seen more substantial argument. There is little doubt that Metzinger’s answers to the above would be “yes, no, and no;” and I suspect that Menon’s are “no, yes, and yes.” But couldn’t there be more nuanced positions, and how does Menon’s position accommodate the empirical data? Similarly when addressing the plasticity of the brain, she challenges the universally held view amongst those taking a biological perspective that the brain is a self-organising structure (under environmental influence) when she asserts that “There is something that ‘tells’ the brain to change according to altering conditions” (p. 132). How do we know? Again, it is not that I wish to deny Menon’s convictions—on the contrary, I want to see them leading to influential dialogue and not being casually dismissed by those who argue that the empirical data cannot support the view of something beyond the brain.

Ultimately, in Menon’s scheme the core-self holds the strings. “The core-self is the adherent base of all subjective experiences, that shines up our discrete states of mind and body, giving immediate knowledge and awareness” (p. 134). Yet there are a number of paradoxes: The core-self is the “deep organic self” (p. 194) but it is non-embodied—how do we reconcile its organic nature with its being non-embodied? The core-self is at the root of our character, yet it is pure consciousness—how do we reconcile the contentlessness with the core
patterning of character? These are not paradoxes that can be addressed from the context of psychology and neuroscience. They are aspects of the mystery at the core of our being that is explored in the discourse of mysticism and religion.

Again, I return to the fundamental challenge—the challenge for transpersonal psychology—that of recognizing the complementarity of mysticism and scientific psychology, and drawing on both to build a rigorously-researched extended science of being. Menon’s exploration of the self in relation to cognitive neuroscience is a timely and worthy contribution to meeting the challenge.

I say ‘timely’ since re-evaluating what we mean by ‘self’ and the values we ascribe to personhood seems to me to be overdue. Menon uses a plethora of adjectives to specify the nature of self in its many guises: we have “spiritual self,” “experiential self,” “minimal self,” “extended self,” “lasting self,” and “deeply placed self” in Chapter 1 alone! And maybe this itself reflects a problem: self is the proverbial elephant that eludes full description without a higher overview. I believe transpersonal psychology is the discipline that can provide that overview, and works such as this book certainly move us in the right direction. Menon’s measured and illuminating reviews of key topics at the forefront of contemporary neurocognitive science show the value that can be added when notions of a core, integrative self are introduced. The evidence for such a ‘higher’ dimension of self is not to be found within the remit of “brass instrument psychology” (even when James’s characterization is updated to include PET, fMRI and the like). It is only when authors like Menon pose deeper questions about meaning, the refinement of emotions, and our sense of agency that the inadequacy of the current cognitive orientation in psychology is highlighted.

And I refer to ‘extended science’ not only to mean that we should incorporate a rich and diverse range of methodologies in our quest to understand spiritual and transpersonal issues (Anderson & Braud, 2011), but also to recognize the moral impact of scientific theorizing. For example, a view of consciousness which holds that it is essentially limited to physical computing power—whether in brains or super computers—is not only a wild extrapolation on the basis of inadequate data but also an insidious assault on humanity’s long-cherished values. Where data alone are inadequate to generate a water-tight model, scientists promoting extended science will incorporate moral and other spiritual implications in their speculations. Menon’s work exemplifies such a responsible approach, and should be on the reading list for anyone genuinely interested in a transpersonal approach that engages constructively with the science of consciousness.

REFERENCES


Editor’s Note: As a tribute to scholarly dialogue, watch for a response by the author (Sangeetha Menon) in the next issue of the Journal

The Author

Sangeetha Menon, Ph.D., is a professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore, India, and heads the Consciousness Studies programme of NIAS. She is a nominated member of the International Society for Science and Religion (Cambridge), a Board Member of the International Association for Transpersonal Psychology, and a Council Member of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India. Professor Menon has coedited *Consciousness, Experience and Ways of Knowing: Perspectives from Science, Philosophy and the Arts* (2006); *Science and Beyond: Cosmology, Consciousness and Technology in Indic Traditions* (2004); *Consciousness and Genetics* (2002); and *Scientific and Philosophical Studies on Consciousness* (1999); authored *Beyond Experience: Consciousness in the Gita*, and coauthored *Dialogues: Philosopher Meets Seer*, and has published two articles in this Journal. She has visited and spoken at many universities in India, the United States, England, Australia, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Moscow. She has been visiting professor at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, Oxford University, and at the Nanzan Institute of Religion and Culture, Nanzan University, Japan. She was invited to be a panellist at the World Parliament of Religions, Melbourne, in 2009. Apart from her academic interests, she writes poetry, fiction and is an avid photographer, artist and web-designer. She also engages in charity programmes, being a trustee of the Sambodh Foundation, Bangalore. For further details, see www.consciousnessshop.com.

The Reviewer

Brian Les Lancaster, Ph.D., is Emeritus Professor of Transpersonal Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University, UK, and Honorary Research Fellow in the Centre for Jewish Studies at Manchester University. He is currently Chair of the Transpersonal Psychology Section of the British Psychological Society, and President of the International Board of the International Transpersonal Association. Les’ research interests focus on the cognitive neuroscience of consciousness and the psychology of mysticism, with a specific focus on the
Kabbalah. Over his career, Les has disseminated key aspects of consciousness studies and transpersonal psychology to a wide audience, both academic and more popular. He is committed to the value of transpersonal perspectives in a range of professional areas, including coaching, therapy and management, and is currently Academic Dean for Transpersonal Psychology at the Professional Development Foundation, UK. He runs online postgraduate programmes validated by Middlesex University, UK (www.ita-professional.org). In addition to many journal articles, Les’ published works include *Mind Brain and Human Potential*, winner of a Science and Medical Network Best Book Award, *The Elements of Judaism, Approaches to Consciousness: the Marriage of Science and Mysticism*, and *The Essence of Kabbalah*. 
**BOOKS OUR EDITORS ARE READING**


... Paul M. Clemens


Clearest book out on how a fully trained Shaman works.


Good fiction and best introduction to the complex mind of an autistic teenager available.


A remarkable and well thought-out book. Get the eBook version as there are endless links in the text.

... Jim Fadiman


... Jorge Ferrer


... Stanislav Grof


… Michael Hutton


… David Loy


… Kaisa Puhakka


… Charles Tart


Excellent coverage of what, why, and how to have and work with many kinds of dreams, emphasizing Jungian and spiritual approaches.


A profound depth psychological engagement with the precariousness of our future on the troubled planet.

… Miles A. Vich


... Jenny Wade
The XVI EUROTAS Conference
in collaboration with ITA and ATP

Postkarte
kart postàl — Carta Postale.
Pocztówka

“SYNTHESIS”
Hosts the Transpersonal Community on the Island of Crete in Greece and...
You are Invited to Participate

October 1-5, 2014
Pre & Post conference:
September 27-28, 29-30
and October 6-7, 2014

Plátia Beach Hotel Resort,
Georgioupolis, (between Rethymno & Chania), Crete

Crete Awaits You

The XVI
EUROTAS CONFERENCE
METAMORPHOSIS
DISINTEGRATION, INTEGRATION, CONSCIOUS LIVING

reinforcing the ability of individuals, cultures, and organizations to live in ways that incorporate a richer and more interconnected consciousness.

All who have an interest in a multidisciplinary global collaboration that explores the best of research, scholarship, education, and practice having a transpersonal orientation should attend. We will bring together top academics, therapists, speakers and workshop leaders to open up dialogue on the opportunity of metamorphosis facing the world today.

Crete, is a land of myths and symbols. We have every opportunity to bring the great philosophy of the Ancient World to life again with the rigor of scientific investigation that Transpersonal Psychology warrants. Moreover, we can shed light on the need for such metamorphosis in a country like Greece struggling in an economic crisis.

For all details please visit our web site at www.eurotas2014.com.

Pre- & Post conference:
27-30 Sept and 6-7 Oct.
workshops include:

Transpersonal Research Methodologies:
(Intuitive Inquiry and Intuition as Expressive Intelligence) (Rosemarie Anderson)

Transpersonal Breathwork (Alexandra Raffini-Koopman, Christina Jahrezt, & Ingo Benjamin Jahretz)

One-day workshop, Alchemical Divination: The Well of Memory & the Tree of Visions with Ralph Metzner

Metamorphosis: A Journey of Transformation through Shamanic Practices with Steven Schmitz & Pier Luigi Latrarda

Inviting the Divine Feminine & Masculine into our Lives (EUROTAS Division of Transpersonal Research (EDTR): Lindy McMullin, Giovanna Calabrese, Regina Hess, Rona Newmark

President & Conference Director:
Lindy McMullin, Ph.D. Candidate.