

THE COMING OF AGE OF HUMANITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR
PSYCHOTHERAPY

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Abstract

Humanity is undergoing revolutionary change. The world is shrinking, and the current state of politics, morals and ethics are no longer adequate as tools in which we can successfully navigate the challenges of today. Whether it is medicine, science, economics or psychology, every facet of civilization is affected. Like the natural world that progresses in stages around us— examples of which include changes of season, transitions from seeds to fruit and the caterpillar into butterfly—humanity likewise passes through stages of development as well. From the infancy of humanity to present times, prophecies from every culture have predicted the arrival of a long-awaited stage of maturity. There are many indications that we are on the cusp of the most profound, collective transition ever experienced, a change that heralds the inevitable and promised fulfillment of these prophecies, and the ultimate unification of the planet. The implications of these revolutionary changes, this collective transition from an age of turbulent adolescence to the first indications of the coming age of maturity deserve exploration. This paper investigates such implications for the future of the world, of psychology in general, and psychotherapy in particular. It examines a recognition and greater level of respect for the human psyche, the soul/spirit and consciousness that this revolutionary change demands. It explores how psychotherapy will need to evolve in order to both serve this new world and assist in its transformation. It is time for a new and more profound worldview, one that not only appreciates the beauty inherent in diversity, but one that honors the intrinsic spiritual nature of humanity while maintaining an unshakeable consciousness of the power of unity.

Dedication

For my dear husband Russell and daughters, Amber and Jennifer. You are my shining lights that listened when you were tired, put up with my impatience when interrupted, and stood by my side through it all. Thank you. A special thanks to Bauback Anvary who edited my work with such love and patience and to all of those friends who cheered me on. Thank you.

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The writings of the prophet founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh, together with those of Dr. Ron Kurtz and of Sri Aurobindo—whose wisdom is a wonderful new discovery—each and all proved themselves a great inspiration for this work.

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PREFACE

The world is in travail. People are disillusioned, depressed and afraid of what the future may bring. According to the World Health Organization, “unipolar depressive disorders were ranked as the third leading cause of the global burden of disease in 2004 and will move into first place by 2030” (Wan, 2011).

Citing a multitude of world problems and seemingly insurmountable challenges, there are many who fear and believe that the end of the world is at hand. There exists an alternative perspective however, one that sees the world as undergoing a major process of transition from adolescence to adulthood. Not only does this alternative perspective offer answers that make sense of our collective confusion, but it awakens a new awareness of the many signs of hope glimmering out of the present, turbulent darkness. Albeit difficult, this transition signifies a major leap forward in the organization and unification of the planet.

Although finding itself seduced by ongoing attempts to reduce it to a quasi-scientific adjunct to psychiatry, psychotherapy is experiencing a Renaissance. With the growing acceptance and exploration of transcendence and discoveries in Nonduality consciousness, the future of psychotherapy looks bright. Never before has there been such profound changes as witnessed today; changes that continue to lead to a psychology that will—in the future— more fully recognize the essential spiritual nature of homo-sapiens and the mystery of consciousness.

CHAPTER ONE

The Adolescence of Humanity

At the beginning of this cycle of time, long ago, the Great Spirit came down and He made an appearance and He gathered the peoples of this earth together they say on an island which is now beneath the water and He said to the human beings, "I'm going to send you to four directions and over time I'm going to change you to four colors, but I'm going to give you some teachings and you will call these the Original Teachings and when you come back together with each other you will share these so that you can live and have peace on earth, and a great civilization will come about (Brown, 1986).

An Ancient Prophecy

This is an ancient Hopi prophecy told by Native spokesperson Lee Brown, a First Nations native of Canada. Although it is a legend with slight variations depending on the tribe, the story remains the same: that of leaving paradise, going out into a foreign world and eventually returning to the garden wiser and kinder. According to this legend, called the Mending of the Hoop, each race was given special gifts and talents. They were to develop these gifts to give back to all of humanity when the hoop of life was restored and the unity of humanity finally established. It has been a long, arduous journey of an awakening consciousness that has reached a crescendo of crisis from every corner of the planet and although the promised "great return" has not yet been fulfilled, the signs of its desperate need scream louder every day.

Transition. This time of unprecedented change, weapons of mass destruction, a suffering environment and financial insecurity is having a profound effect on the psyche of every soul across the globe. No one is exempt from the waves of distress billowing from every corner of the earth. Stress, anxiety and the resulting high levels of

depression are on the rise. Intimacy is suffering as communication becomes increasingly electronic, mirroring a disconnect not only between each other but also with nature itself. People are dealing with issues unheard of in the past as humanity enters a new “evolutionary stage” as described by Kearl:

According to social scientists, owing to massive urbanization, economic globalism, multiculturalism, rapid change in transportation and communication technologies, secularization, and the accelerating growth of the knowledge industries, the developed nations of the planet are entering a new evolutionary stage in the human condition--one they oxymoronicly refer to as “postmodernism.”....Typologizing the new kinds of people produced by this new kind of society has preoccupied a number of social observers. They are described as being increasingly individualistic, other-directed, narcissistic, atomistic, and unable to develop intimacy with others (Kearl, 2010).

As awareness and communications grow, every secret is exposed: tribal people in the heart of Africa have cell phones; everyone is connected on the internet; and “there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known”, according to Luke, chapter 12, of the Bible (Crossway, 2001).

The Berlin Wall’s collapse in 1989 is a prime metaphor for the walls that for centuries protected secrets but which ultimately must crumble and fall. As such disintegrative processes unfold, politicians, clergy, and global conglomerates cannot avoid the glaring spotlight as their most private secrets become headlines on the evening news. And this daily onslaught of bad news has a definite effect. Many who are unable to cope with this onslaught of bad news disconnect and bury themselves in their own little world, as songwriter Leonard Cohen put it so succinctly in his song, Democracy is Coming to the USA.

“I'm sentimental, if you know what I mean,
I love the country but I can't stand the scene,
And I'm neither left or right,

I'm just staying home tonight
Getting lost in that hopeless little screen" (Cohen, n.d.).

The problem with this tactic is that it produces the opposite effect than the one desired. Not only does it lead to a sense of helplessness and depression, sadly, it is the condition of many who have given up hope of finding answers or solutions for a world whose problems are too large and complex to manage. Instead, a growing number of distractions demand attention, such as increasing preoccupations with sports, computer games, habits of addiction and a preoccupation with sex. When hope dies, inventive problem-solving and creative responses stall and apathy ensues.

There has never been a time when creative, inventive minds are needed to discover solutions to today's problems. Never before has there been such a dire need for a new worldview that gives a different understanding of the process the world is undergoing. As problems become more apparent, many assume that the world is in a hopeless state but understanding that it is actually in an evolutionary and necessary developmental stage casts a more hopeful light on the situation.

History demonstrates how the growth of unity has emerged in stages: from the unity of the family to the clan, on up from the tribe and into that of a city-state and even to the nation, the next obvious stage is the unity of the planet. This major transition the world is presently undergoing—from a turbulent adolescent stage to maturity—difficult as it may be, signals the struggle toward this unification. As in any transition, there are obstacles to overcome.

A shrinking planet. Changes in cultural behaviors and beliefs that have remained constant over the centuries can change in an instant as the world lurches from one catastrophe to another. As the planet shrinks, we inevitably share life with

people who are racially or culturally different. We no longer live in isolated little pods with people who look like us, talk like us and think like us. The choice between division, breaking people into smaller and smaller points of agreement or an expanding unity that is inclusive is a choice that humanity faces daily.

Martin Luther King's refusal to be bound by exclusivity and division guided a conflicted nation into making the right choice, a choice celebrated as a national holiday in his name every year. Out of the darkness and confusion of these times, there are indications that the world is learning through trial and error, the consequences of its choices. Conflict and suffering are the outcome when actions are governed by a closed mentality, a mentality that denies the reality of the global oneness of the human race. The wind of unity is blowing and whatever resists its power is toppled over like a giant oak unable to bend. The human family is converging through air travel, the Internet and cataclysmic events. Sadly, it is often still in an atmosphere of despair and distrust:

After thousands of centuries of slow, relatively isolated development, we are experiencing a forced, potentially explosive fusion of deeply ingrained, conflicting ideas, customs, laws, and languages. From a global perspective, we live in tension and diversity everywhere. That tension is killing millions and exhausting the world's resources. It is a time for change. It is a time for relativists, for generalists, for holists, for people who love diversity, a time to find beauty in the whole and meanings we can all agree on (Kurtz, 1990).

Global confusion. Every conscious person today must ask themselves what the meaning these times imply and wonder where we go from here. A rampant capitalism and industrialization of the planet —the trademark of the age of modernity— the remnants of colonialism that continue to enforce their social, cultural and economic control over nations and a seductive materialism with false promises of happiness are forces that continue to demoralize the planet.

The complexity of the world's problems is not only daunting but disequilibrating. It has clouded and frayed our sense of direction. Sri Aurobindo, an Indian nationalist, philosopher, and guru describes this conundrum in his book, *The Ideal of Human Unity*: "Nothing is more obscure to humanity or less seized by its understanding, whether in the power that moves it or the sense of the aim towards which it moves, than its own communal and collective life" (Aurobindo, 1999).

The world issues cited below are examples that demonstrate the results of systems built on disunity; systems archaic in design and indicative of the immaturity of adolescent consciousness from which they evolved.

Global financial instability. The interconnectedness of the world financially is a progressive sign of unity, but we have recently seen how vulnerable it is when a crisis hits. When one country experiences a financial crisis, the whole edifice trembles and threatens a worldwide collapse. European countries stand paralyzed and bewildered by the economic upheavals they are now experiencing. America, once considered the financial stability of the world, is not immune. The following quotation was written in 1938 by Shoghi Effendi, the appointed Guardian and translator of the Bahá'í Faith:

Not even America, which until very recently prided itself on its traditional policy of aloofness and the self-contained character of its economy, the invulnerability of its institutions and the evidences of its growing prosperity and prestige, has been able to resist the impelling forces that have swept her into the vortex of an economic hurricane that now threatens to impair the basis of her own industrial and economic life (Effendi, 1991).

With the swelling ranks of the unemployed, the demoralization of international markets and the destruction of the environment, it is easy to assume that the fundamental principles underlying the very foundation upon which these systems have

been built are severely lacking. Rather than cooperation, equability of resources and justice; competition, greed and dishonesty have ruled the marketplace. The essential construction of an economy lacking in these principles is doomed to fail. Its failure is built into its design. The chasm between the wealthy and the poor for example, must lessen as these extremes have created an imbalance the world cannot sustain.

According to chaos theory, systems evolve to a higher degree of complexity until they become unstable. Seeking equilibrium they can either jump to a higher system with more sensitivity, bifurcate and split in two or disintegrate and fall apart. Disintegration or further degradation of the financial system would be a huge jolt but it is exactly these kinds of jolts that provoke new and better solutions.

Chaos theory is a helpful tool to understand the complexities and unpredictability we face; however, it is the emergence of re-organization and creativity necessary to meet the challenges that are the most remarkable. In the case of world finance, a shift from ideas of scarcity and exploitation to a new worldview of cooperation and the equitable sharing of resources is the obvious transition these tests demand.

War upon war. In March of 2003, the United States first invaded Ba'athist Iraq. Prior to the war, the United States and England claimed that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction. Based on this claim and the need to punish someone for 9/11, war was declared. Later, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, before resigning, would apologize for providing misinformation to both the United Nations and to the President confirming that the information given to him claiming that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction was false. However, this did not stop the war. Critics have accused

President Bush and his administration of having ulterior motives and providing false information to the public to pursue their invasion of a country rich with oil.

Many wars and conflicts are caused by racial, ethnic or religious intolerance but the growing scarcity of resources such as water, viable agricultural land and fossil fuels are bound to trigger new waves of conflict.

Environmental crises. Severe weather changes are also demanding attention and can no longer be ignored. The growing awareness of a distressed environment adds to the despair and sense of hopelessness of people who are cynical that their governments can act fast enough to delay a major catastrophe, as denial is often a strategy used by powers determined to protect their investments.

Mohamed Nasheed, the recently ousted president of the Maldives, brought attention to the serious impact of climate change on the Maldives archipelago. It is sinking underwater and if it continues, his children's generation will be environmental refugees. He appealed to world leaders at the 2009 Amsterdam Global Environmental Change Summit, explaining to them that his beloved islands were in danger of disappearing due to the environmental effect on the ocean.

Nasheed pleaded with the U.S., India and China to save his islands and the world by lowering the current level of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere. His plea was to cap carbon emissions at 350 parts per million as any higher would pose a severe risk to the environment. Both India and China asserted their right to use carbon fuels to advance their country's needs. They wondered why their countries should be penalized when the U.S. has had the opportunity to develop its economy with complete disregard

of the effects of fossil fuels on the environment. This is a logical argument but completely insane. Unless there is cooperation between all countries, including the U.S., the fate of the Maldives is assuredly grim and merely a token of the fate awaiting the rest of the world. The current level of CO₂, measured in April 2013 at Mauna Loa Observatory, Hawaii, is 400. Award-winning journalist Richard Harris, who has followed this story for NPR, states "... but certainly I'm among those who think if we wanted to be prudent about this we shouldn't have let it go over 350, so we're already into dangerous territory. And now that we've reached 400 parts per million, we're heading deeper into the unknown" (Harris, 2013).

Nasheed stated that his appeal might be the suicide note of his country if the world did not listen. Sadly, it has largely been ignored. This is a powerful example of the spell of crippling narcissism and egoism rampant in the world, a spell so powerful it has gripped common sense by the throat and continues to extinguish the hope of a survivable world if the right choices are ignored.

The material advantages born of industrial societies developed in the 18th and 19th centuries cannot meet the demands of a world straining for a consciousness adequate to manage the challenges of an emerging, global society. In fact, the disease of materialism has created an alienation from nature that has ruptured the very notion of sacredness. This sense of separation from one another and our natural connection to the earth, fosters depression, fear and a global psyche that is fundamentally at odds with itself.

Although there are increasing signs of positive growth, the symptoms of a disturbed world need to be carefully considered and understood if appropriate

interventions are possible. One of the most common characteristics of adolescence is rebellion against authority. Although this characteristic is problematic, it has been very necessary. In earlier stages of childhood, humanity believed and obeyed authority without question. Religions, kings and leaders, God the father; all demanded obedience and humanity bowed the knee in forced surrender to autocratic rule. As adolescence dawned, rebellion and revolt ripped through the fabric of every country, community and family system. Nation building became the industry of the planet while science evolved as the panacea to all problems. Author and physicist David Peat calls science a story in the following quotation:

To me science is a story. Perhaps it has more power today than other, older stories in that it affects so much of how we operate in our environment. Those other stories are much more about containing meaning within a group. Giving an order to behaving, to celebrating, to acknowledging spirits. But the belief in science as ultimate truth can result in too much confidence in our mental capacity, in our ability to manipulate the environment. I see danger if science isn't recognized for what it is: a beautiful story of incredible creativity (Peat, 1993).

The heavy reliance on science as the ultimate truth and only way of understanding reality has not only led us to the belief that nature is a measurable, weigh-able commodity for our exclusive use but it has divorced us from our own connectedness with ourselves. "One major reason we do not sense our connectedness with all things at the deeper levels of consciousness is that our reliance on the teachings of classical Western science has colored the way we perceive reality" (Corbett, 2007)

Western science uses diligent disciplines and quantifiable observations to examine the physical universe. It does not, however, recognize subjective experience as legitimate or verifiable proof, therefore limiting its scope of investigation. Supposing

that the mind is only an emergent property of the brain— an epiphenomenon— is a short -sighted view, as the mind is not a physical property. Buddhists have reflected on the mind and consciousness for centuries. They have developed an understanding that surpasses most common understanding and have a great deal of valuable information to share with Western science. A collaboration between the two would give a greater insight into the totality of reality, including both subjective and objective experience and data. This process has begun.

Science has benefited humanity in a vast multitude of ways, as it is the method for investigating material reality. However, it is but one side of the coin. The other is the investigation of spiritual reality. Both are necessary for balance. Science without spirituality can lead to monstrous outcomes that defy imagination. Spirituality without science leads to superstition and conformity. This again demonstrates the need for unity, but what does unity mean? Certainly it cannot mean uniformity as the attempts at homogeneity experimented with in the past have all met with disastrous results.

An economy staggering from crisis to crisis, wars and conflicts abounding and a deteriorating environment are some of the examples of a wayward world struggling in the grips of a profound darkness. The hope is that it is the darkness just before dawn.

A Turning Point

Teetering on the edge, as we are, of extreme possibilities to choose annihilation or rebirth, faith is needed; faith that this turning point, this chapter of cataclysmic consequences is part of the grand scheme of things. The Hopi prophecy described in the beginning of this chapter emphasizes the cathartic role “world shakings” perform in creating a new level of consciousness. The inevitable result is the waking of a

slumbering world out of its ignorance. Awareness of the reality that global events are intensifying and chaos mounting demands recognition and action. This process is taking place at such a heightened pace, it is impossible to measure. But if we are the least bit sensitive and aware, we can know from our own experience that a new breeze is blowing, a spiritual revival unlike anything we have ever experienced is on the horizon. Kurtz alluded to this shift in the following:

We are affected by the new sciences (which gave rise to the bomb, TV and computers, for example) new medicines and all the new ways to live and work and relate that were not around thirty years ago. With the world around us changing so fast, it is easy to believe a change in the structure of consciousness is under way. Or to wonder what awaits us, if it is not. If a transformation of consciousness is emerging, then something incredibly new and wonderful is happening. It could easily be the most important happening of the last three centuries (Kurtz, 1990).

It is likely the most important happening ever experienced simply by the mere fact that we have a consciousness of being one planet, one world, one humanity; a reality that is quite a new discovery when viewed in the context of eons of history. It is only in recent history that humanity visually saw the planet Earth from space for the first time. This event alone testifies to the oneness of our beautiful water planet and that we are indeed one country and subsequently, one human race.

The unity and diversity glimpsed by holy people, humanitarians and mystics of both the past and the present have not reached critical mass, but as these concepts continue to spread to every heart, a transformation is indeed taking place. The firm grasps on ego and self-centeredness cannot endure if the planet is to survive.

A rocky transition. What is this sickness of self that manifests in every aspect of a strangely disturbed world, a sickness that perplexes and concerns every person of

conscience? The hopeful answer is that similar to the stages in the growth of the individual, humanity also evolves from one stage to the next. The Universal House of Justice, the elected governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, wrote a document released in 1985 entitled "To the Peoples of the World." The following paragraph from that document is a stunning description of the transition the world is undergoing:

The Bahá'í Faith regards the current world confusion and calamitous condition in human affairs as a natural phase in an organic process leading ultimately and irresistibly to the unification of the human race in a single social order whose boundaries are those of the planet. The human race, as a distinct, organic unit, has passed through evolutionary stages analogous to the stages of infancy and childhood in the lives of its individual members, and is now in the culminating period of its long-awaited coming of age. A candid acknowledgement that prejudice, war and exploitation have been the expression of immature stages in a vast historical process and that the human race is today experiencing the unavoidable tumult which marks its collective coming of age is not a reason for despair, but a prerequisite to undertaking the stupendous enterprise of building a peaceful world. That such an enterprise is possible, that the necessary constructive forces do exist, that unifying social structures can be erected, is the theme we urge you to examine (The Universal House of Justice, 1985),

Having passed through organic stages of development analogous to the developmental stages of the individual, humanity, as described in the above quotation, has entered a stage of adolescence in which impetuous, rebellious behavior is the norm. Having turned away from Mother Earth and Father God—in whatever way those wisdoms present themselves— adolescent humanity has found itself marooned on the shores of doubt and confusion, susceptible to the next passing custom, phase or self-appointed guru. Elsa-Brita Titchenell, author and former member of the Philosophical Society, summarizes this developmental stage:

The soul of humanity is adolescent and, like any adolescent, it possesses the characteristic powers and frailties of youth. It has passed through the initial phases of learning to cope with material existence on this plane of the universe much as the child learns to use its senses to hear, see, and to walk and talk.

Peculiar to this phase of life is our preoccupation with experimental science and technology. Like any adolescent, the collective soul of mankind is subject to the untamed feelings of half-grown youth when emotions run riot, mind is burgeoning, and all the potentialities of the inner, psychological, or soul-nature await fuller development. Many people, nations too, think and act in a childish fashion. A few rare individuals outstrip the norm and serve to show what mankind may and should become (Titchenell, 1993).

Developmental Stages

Humanity's evolution has been marked by progressive stages such as family, tribe, city-state and nation. The next and ultimate stage is world unity. Humanity in its collective development has moved through stages that are analogous to the stages of development in the individual. Dr. Danesh, a Canadian psychiatrist and author, describes the three main spiritual capacities of the individual: "The three main human capacities of knowledge, love, and will are at the very core of being human. They occur universally and transcend gender, race, and cultural boundaries." (Danesh, 1994).

Dr. Danesh, categorizes infancy as the stage where the power of knowledge is limited to the instinctual level responding to outward or environmental stimuli. Love is experienced as bonding and will by automatism. Freud described these early stages from a more materialistic understanding; psychosexual stages such as oral, anal, phallic and so on. This definition focuses and identifies knowledge, love and will as the primal *spiritual* attributes or powers of the human spirit.

As the child develops, these three capacities are still egocentrically based. But as early adolescence dawns, these three capacities grow as the adolescent seeks to discover her/his own personal identity. As maturity arrives in the healthy individual, the power to know and to love expands. Moving from the fixation on self and self-gratification, this expansion now includes the ability to care for others. The development

of ethical principles and a need for the expression of meaning found in service to others are examples of a growing maturity. This process of development is an ideal model to describe the progress of civilization's transformation from stage-to-stage.

Signs of a growing maturity. This last century was the stage of the greatest convulsions of distress to the most remarkable advances reflective of a dual- process at work. As every parent of an adolescent knows, there are also great positives as well as negatives in the life of the adolescent and the same applies to the healthier aspects of humanity. This adolescent stage exemplifies the energy, inquisitiveness, adventure and the process of learning from experience. Signs of a growing maturity certainly cannot be overlooked in the world today. The following is a modified list of significant historical events indicating this growth, discovered on a website called *Signs of Our Waking Planet*:

- In the 1920s, the Women's Suffrage Amendment passed.
- The 1930s, saw significant victories won by the Labor Movement in the US.
- In 1947, Mahatma Gandhi inspired millions toward nonviolence.
- 1945 gave birth to the United Nations.
- The 1950s saw Dr. Martin Luther King head up the civil rights movement.
- 1969 saw our planet from space for the first time, proving undeniably that the world is one.
- In the 1970s, the Women's Movement rose again to the spotlight.
- The 1980s saw the emergence of the Gay Rights Movement.
- 1989 saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War.

- In 1990, Apartheid was dismantled in South Africa.
- In the 1990s, the Communication Revolution connected the world through the internet.
- The dawning of the 21st century brings the largest explosion of not-for-profit, peace, justice and environmental organizations in the history of the world. Paul Hawkins calls them “humanity’s immune response” (“Signs of Our Waking Planet”, n.d.).

Death and Rebirth

Just as the lessons learned from adversity can foster the development of spiritual attributes in the individual, humankind collectively can learn from its cultural and national challenges. Social transformation requires a shift in consciousness and a letting-go of assumptions and beliefs that are limiting for a higher level of reality; apartheid is a prime example. The dual process at work portrays the dynamic tension between the deaths of old systems that no longer work and the birth of new spiritual realities dawning on the consciousness of humanity. This process is eloquently described below by Bahá’u’lláh, prophet/founder of the Bahá’í Faith in the compilation, *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era* by J.E. Esslemont:

But, in the world of nature, the Spring brings about not only the growth and awakening of new life but also the destruction and removal of the old and effete; for the same sun, that makes the flowers to spring and the trees to bud, causes also decay and disintegration of what is dead and useless; it loosens the ice and melts the snow of winter, and sets free the flood and the storm that cleanse and purify the earth. So is it also in the spiritual world. The spiritual sunshine causes similar commotion and change. Thus the Day of Resurrection is also the Day of Judgment, in which corruptions and imitations of the truth and outworn ideas and customs are discarded and destroyed, in which the ice and snow of prejudice and superstition, which accumulated during the season of winter, are melted and

transformed, and energies long frozen and pent up are released to flood and renovate the world (Esselmont, 2006).

The changes taking place in the world are described as the operation of two fundamental processes. One is disintegrative as witnessed by conflict and dissention. The other is integrative, witnessed by the undeniably tremendous advances in equality and human rights prevalent in many parts of the world.

The destructive process —although painful— is a cleansing action, sweeping away old systems that are no longer useful and making way for new opportunities. Human inspiration and innovation are born out of hardship. As each new dilemma presents itself on the human stage, humanity is challenged to discover a solution. If this initiative is thwarted or denied, the consequences are amplified until corrected. The human body operates in similar fashion: if a symptom is ignored, it continues to grow and get worse until it is taken care of. The Universal House of Justice describes this dual process of disintegration and integration:

Though devastating in their effects, the forces of disintegration tend to sweep away barriers that block humanity's progress, opening space for the process of integration to draw diverse groups together and disclosing new opportunities for cooperation. The principle that is to infuse all facets of organized life on the planet is the oneness of humankind, the hallmark of the age of maturity. That humanity constitutes a single people is a truth that, once viewed with skepticism, claims widespread acceptance today. The rejection of deeply ingrained prejudices and a growing sense of world citizenship are among the signs of this heightened awareness (The Universal House of Justice, 1985).

When globalization of the planet is done unwisely, one consequence among many is the uniformity that impinges on diverse cultures. Helped along by the materialistic seductions portrayed by the international media, whole countries, villages and ethnic groups are swept into a vortex of imitation that is culturally destructive: cell

phones, T-shirts, Coke and the internet are found in the deepest jungle villages of Africa. Globalization, no matter how many barriers it overcomes, is doomed to fail unless diversity is not only respected but also cherished and protected.

Children of the Half Light

At this time in history, we have one foot in the darkness and one in the light, straddled between yesterday and a tomorrow filled with promise; we are the changelings. To be alive at this time is complex and difficult, blessed and magnificent. Understanding the significance and opportunity before us has the power to transform hopelessness into a sense of certitude that the world is indeed evolving. It has been said that the prophets of old claimed that they would give a thousand lives for just one day at this time. We are at the crest of a great tidal wave that marks the shift from adolescence to maturity, from the limitations of duality to a new consciousness of unity.

CHAPTER TWO

Emergence from Duality to Unity Consciousness

Love is the reflection of God's unity in the world of Duality. It constitutes the entire significance of creation" (Baba, 1987, 2000).

Duality

Descartes' concept of mind/body dualism along with his mechanistic understanding has had a significant influence on Western thought. His *cogetō ergō sum*, "I think, thus I am" created a division of human consciousness between thinking and existing. Newton's cosmological paradigm saw the universe as a mechanical construct with no room for consciousness, let alone spirit. This combination created a Cartesian/Newtonian spell of secular materialism prevalent in today's society, one that influences science, medicine, religion and many other aspects of Western civilization.

Duality consciousness has conditioned the way we think and experience life. The separation between the observer and the observed is an illusion that Eastern mystics have been well aware of for centuries. "When there is a division between the observer and the observed, there is a conflict. But when the observer is the observed there is no control, no suppression. The self comes to an end. Duality comes to an end. Conflict comes to an end" (Hesselink, n.d.).

Duality consciousness or ego-consciousness as it is sometimes called, is a problem for the person when trapped in the illusion of a fragmented reality, a reality where attachment is promoted by a dualistic society via the media and encouraged by the values of a consumerist inclination. The struggle between polarities leads to the

desire for one and the exclusion of the other, leading to possible suffering when the opposite of one's preference is experienced. Desire combined with ignorance creates a formula for suffering described in Buddhism's Second, Noble Truth.

Duality has created a culture constricted to having to take sides; politics is a prime example. Duality consciousness is responsible for the split between church and state, the body and soul and it has exiled spirituality in many cases, to strange formalities and rituals performed only on certain days such as Sunday church.

It has divided medicine, science, philosophy and the very way we view one another. The most critical consequence has been the erosion of belief or experience with the nature of our true selves and our relationship with the infinite. "We all have a kind of cosmic hunger, a need to be related to all things including the infinitude of the Universe. This is a natural by-product of consciousness" (Jordan, 1980). Psychologist Dr. Dan Jordan is correct but sadly, the erosion of belief can short-circuit the journey toward a connection to the underlying ineffable reality before it even begins.

Duality is a great teacher. Duality however, has been, and continues to be a great teacher. It has taught us how the systems that evolved from this consciousness affected nature, how the illusion of an "us and them" led to competition, greed and war. It revealed to us a longing for a connection to our hearts where unity consciousness awaits recognition. It taught us through hard and painful lessons the appreciation of attributes such as compassion, love and kindness. Though duality of this world is a reality of our existence, inherent in the human soul is the impetus for transcendence.

Nonduality is a term originally derived from the Sanskrit word Advaita which means “not-two”. The split between the subject and object, perceiver and the perceived, and the self and the world are the illusion spoken of by sages and wisdom traditions for millennia. These polarities appear to be real as they are mental constructs that are deeply ingrained and supported by cultural norms. The unitive reality that underlies these binary dualities can be experienced however. This experience is often referred to as a radiant, spaciousness, a connection with the true self. Sometimes it happens due to a practice such as meditation and sometimes it happens unexpectedly. This state was once only experienced by the spiritually adept but this is no longer true. It is happening to more people, more frequently which has significant implications for psychotherapy.

This new resurgence toward spirituality must be inclusive, uniting and able to create a new worldview of the oneness of humanity otherwise what use is it? True nonduality consciousness is the discovery of the unity underlying the cosmos and our oneness with it. David Bohm, an American theoretical physicist, refers to it as the “implicate order” (Bohm, 1980). If everything is interconnected, then it stands to reason that our worldview has an influence, not only on the way we live our lives and the choices we make, but an influence on the world around us. As the inner and outer become one, world unity becomes a value. As identification with others grow with the realization that there really is no “other”, care and compassion for the welfare of humanity is a natural result.

Unity however, cannot be a shallow type of monism that denies diversity. It is diversity itself that animates and creates a unity that endures without division. Indeed, it is this diversity that distinguishes unity from a deadening homogeneity or conformity:

If the flowers of a garden were all of one color, the effect would be monotonous to the eye; but if the colors are variegated, it is most pleasing and wonderful. The difference in adornment of color and capacity of reflection among the flowers gives the garden its beauty and charm. Therefore, although we are of different individualities, different in ideas and of various fragrances, let us strive like flowers of the same divine garden to live together in harmony. Even though each soul has its own individual perfume and color, all are reflecting the same light, all contributing fragrance to the same breeze which blows through the garden, all continuing to grow in complete harmony and accord. Become as waves of one sea, trees one forest, growing in the utmost love, agreement, and unity ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1982).

In essence, duality and nonduality, are two sides of the same coin, the marriage, the alchemical process of creation. The trap of duality consciousness is the lack of understanding of the necessity and the unity of both, the lack of acceptance that both polarities are part of the same whole, which the yin yang symbol portrays so elegantly.

The Lack of Reality

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” – Martin Luther King, (King, 1977). Philosophers, religionists and psychologists have debated the existence of evil for centuries. It is a topic that people have struggled with forever. Carl Jung thought that evil could not be written off as a lack of good and that instead, it was a real force to be reckoned with. Religions vary in their interpretation of evil, but according to Bahá'í philosophy there is no such thing as positive evil:

... It follows from the doctrine of the unity of God that there can be no such thing as positive evil. There can only be one Infinite. If there were any other power in the universe outside of or opposed to the One, then the One would not be infinite. Just as darkness is but the absence or lesser degree of light, so evil is

but the absence or lesser degree of good, the undeveloped state (Esselmont, 2006).

Negative qualities like fear, greed, hate or any other negative, can have power if seen as a concrete reality that demands attention, denial, aversion or worse, attack. Any one of them is really a description of a *lack* of reality or quality. For instance, hate is a lack of love; fear/courage; greed/generosity, and so on. This understanding views evil then as a non- reality, therefore, ending this age-old binary conflict.

Of course, it would be foolhardy to ignore danger or under-evaluate the pain caused by life's hardships. However, even they can promote the development of qualities and attributes previously absent as many a severely tested, wise soul can attest. If seen from this light, the problems of the world can be viewed as portraying the absence of the qualities that represent maturity and yet, each one can also serve as a demand for growth of whatever quality that situation so direly needs. If ignored, the pain increases until it can no longer be overlooked.

A New World View

The resilience of human consciousness is forging a new and growing worldview out of the chaos of clamoring worldviews that deny the spiritual capacity and destiny of every soul. Just as personal trauma and heartache in the life of the individual is a catalyst for change or a cause for despair until a change is made, humankind is facing the same choice. Old models of power, violence and greed no longer work. Thankfully, change and the dawning concept of unity is growing in the minds of people in every field: quantum psychics in science, natural healing modalities that understand the body is one, and certainly, psychology. This shift is happening in every field. Eastern religions

understand that unity is a reality and that notions of separate entities are illusion: especially destructive is the division between the perceived self and others.

There is such a need for a new language that can describe spiritual realities, as the current language, evolved from archaic, unconscious assumptions and from historic worldviews no longer work. Our culture is steeped in duality and therefore, lacks a language that describes underlying unity, infinity and/or non-duality consciousness. Many say it is impossible as duality is intrinsic in language, but maybe the truth is that we have yet to really develop one that does the job because non-duality consciousness has not fully dawned. In the future, language and a world culture befitting this evolutionary step are inevitable.

One advantage of *today's* society is the personal freedom in many parts of the world to explore new concepts and adopt worldviews that may be completely different from those dictated by culture or upbringing. Walter Wink touches on this freedom in the book *Sacred Stories*:

What we believe is not, however, merely a matter of preference. To a far greater degree than we have acknowledged, it is a function of what we are allowed to believe by our functional worldviews. Perhaps for the first time in history, we are now able to step outside the worldviews that shape us and choose which we will believe. As this happens, the Age of Doubt may be replaced by a new Age of Belief, dictated not by ecclesiastical authorities, but by individuals free to make conscious choice (Wink, 1993).

A New Therapeutic Relationship

Forces in the world that are destructive can seem overpowering and disheartening, but over and over, the light of consciousness finds a way to overcome against all odds. Isn't this the very essence of myth and fairy tales, the protagonist discovering through hardship the right outcome and the learning that came with the

suffering? At the heart of most mystical experience is the experience of being a part of the whole. Whether it is with source, nirvana, God or however one describes it, it is that connection found in the inner self that is transformative. It is here where both client and therapist can discover the deepest healing resources, if there can be an escape from the roles traditionally accepted as the therapeutic relationship. Changing one's perspective from a dualistic to a non-dualistic experience means letting go of the identifications usually associated with this therapeutic relationship. Baba Ram Dass, formerly known as Dr. Richard Alpert, shares his thoughts in his "Advice to a Psychotherapist":

Whatever the role relationships, to the extent that you are comfortable yourself in the place behind all of your melodrama, when you meet another being you allow them to be in the place behind their melodrama, because you see another being like yourself in her or him... You can only see a being who is being a child if, when you look at yourself, you see, not a psychiatrist, but a being who's being a psychiatrist. Your model of being a psychiatrist or being a woman or being any label is entrapping, because labels are limiting,... finite, they have suffering connected with them. And part of the work of consciousness is to redefine your own being...to the point where you are, and then there's psychiatriness and there's womanness and there's personalyness and there's opportunityness and so on; these are more like phenomenal rings around your essence rather than who you are (Ram Dass, n.d.).

There are many pitfalls therapists must avoid, but one of the most important is the pitfall of ego. The assumption that the therapist is the most healthy, knowing one who has all the answers prevents the experience of communion and locks the client in the role of being less-than, needy or sick. On the other hand, a therapist using an exclusively non-dual approach can risk overlooking problems the client is experiencing as reality, thereby ignoring the suffering in need of assistance. Non-duality and psychotherapy are not at odds with each other as long as the uniqueness of the client and their issues are not dismissed in the process. Being flexible, open and able to use

the duality of psychotherapeutic approaches while maintaining a nondual position is a challenge:

The different emphasis between nonduality and psychotherapy has its place. Nonduality tends to highlight unity and sameness, while therapy often addresses diverse individual situations. However, nonduality is not at odds with diversity, just as the trunk of a tree is not inherently separate from or at odds with its branches or blossoms (Kahn, n.d.).

Focusing on the positive. Rather than focusing on dysfunction and pathology as many therapies do, Health Realization, developed by Sydney Banks, is a good example of a therapy that focuses on the innate health and common sense of the client. It focuses on their own ability to learn how to recognize the illusory nature of their negative thinking. This awareness helps the client to find their inner resources of wisdom, common sense and love, enabling them to solve their own difficulties. In this light, it is not uncommon for problems to evaporate as stronger, healthier realizations take their place. Therapists who themselves are jaded by a dismal worldview and maintain a lack of faith in the client's innate health and wisdom have lost the fundamental basis necessary for a contract with a client that guarantees trust and safety. Focusing on the strengths of the client, as in the example of Health Realization, is one method of inviting the consciousness of the clients into a more non-dual view of themselves.

This shift to a new worldview, in psychotherapy, necessitates an understanding that the individual her/himself is one united being no matter how many divisions different schools of psychology or science appoint to fulfill a theory. It is a revolution of thinking, a transformation, that borrowing from the world of science, could also be termed a paradigm shift. Below is a graph demonstrating how this paradigm

shift is transforming the way we think. On the left are some of the signs of the paradigm the world is emerging from and on the right are the characteristics of the new paradigm.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Fundamental separateness | - Unbroken wholeness, fundamental connectedness |
| 2. Absolute certitude; materialism, the only matter is real | - Uncertainty, relativity, consciousness is real (dualism, monism) |
| 3. Exclusive, either/or logic | - Inclusive, both/and logic |
| 4. Mechanical and energy models, linear causality | - Negentropic, co-evolving information models, multiple determination, non-linear causality |
| 5. The mind/body split | - Mind/body integration |
| 6. Reductionist explanations | - Systems explanations |
| 7. External creator-authority | - self-organization, participatory authority |
| 8. Simple universal laws, fluctuations insignificant | - Universal complexity, disorder significant, chaos |
| 9. Dominator models, society ordered through violence | - Partnership models of society, ordered through family, and work association |
| 10. Biology is destiny | - We create our own destinies (Kurtz, 1990). |

Shift From illusion. The basis of every great spiritual principle, regardless of what religious or spiritual source, is love and unity. Buddhism and Hinduism understand nondualism in slightly different ways, but share with other great faith systems the belief that a shift is needed from the egocentric mind, from the illusion of separateness to a shift to a higher reality. A new dimension of consciousness is needed where a paradigm shift is no longer just a scientific maxim but a transformative shift of the heart, inspiring a new way of being in the world. As consciousness expands, more and more individuals claim experiences with the divine or the underlying reality. It happens either through religious or spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer or yoga, or through an internal, mystical experience of some kind. Sometimes it is a result of experiencing hardship or

having a difficult life experience in which a new insight is gained. There is a multitude of ways each soul is called.

In the book *Flatland*, Edwin Abbott uses the two-dimensional world of Flatland to describe the social hierarchy of the period, but most significant is his description of transcending dimensions. Abbott's allegorical tale illustrates the difficulty of comprehending a higher state of consciousness as his Flatland character, the Square, discovers when he encounters a three-dimensional sphere in which he cannot comprehend. Square has only ever experienced two dimensions: when he meets a sphere that is three-dimensional, his reality is altered. Only after he had experienced a higher dimension is he able to accept that other dimensions are possible:

My Lord, your own wisdom has taught me to aspire to One even more great, more beautiful, and more closely approximate to perfection than yourself. As you yourself, superior to all Flatland forms, combine many Circles in One, so doubtless there is One above you who combines many Spheres in One Supreme Existence, surpassing even the Solids of Spaceland. And even as we, who are now in Space, look down on Flatland and see the inside of all things, so of a certainty there is yet above us some higher, purer region, whither thou dost surely purpose to lead me (Abbott, 2002).

In the sixties, Timothy Leary, Baba Ram Dass and many others purported that psychedelics were the pathway to spiritual, Nonduality experiences. It is ironic to think that these experiences could come in the form of a little pill, tablet, or powder, but then again, what better way to reach a materialistic society than with a material agent? Drugs have not gone away but are generally viewed as a crutch and not a helicopter depositing you on the top of the mountain for the view. Instead, a growing number of people claim to be learning through trial and error how to use their own spiritual muscles to walk up the mountain. Whether turning to ancient practices or newer systems (including psychotherapy), the search for meaning, connection and higher levels of

consciousness has become almost commonplace and not just a prerogative of the spiritually adept. It demonstrates not only that people are attempting to shift from the egocentric mind, but are now reflective enough to know that there is such a thing! When the striving after material gains is quieted and survival is not the most dominant preoccupation, the opportunity for inner reflection increases and the exploration of reality is ignited.

Compassion, Love, and Kindness

Eastern philosophies and practices have established roots in the Western world, including a new level of awareness of the need for spiritual development. Such a blossoming change is necessary, if the transition from adolescence to adulthood is to succeed. Characteristics of this transition are the subsequent development of compassion, love and kindness: the golden rule of every religion. The Dalai Lama expresses the urgency of this requirement and its impact on society in his book, *A Policy of Kindness*: "Love and kindness are the very basis of society. If we lose these feelings, society will face tremendous difficulties; the survival of humanity will be endangered" (Dalai Lama, 2002). Eastern religious tradition teaches the concept of unity and the illusion of separateness. Unity, however, cannot exist without diversity. Diversity is intrinsically a part of unity and any unity that does not include it becomes conformity instead:

The best hope of humankind is to maintain as rich a diversity of social types as possible, with the expectation that each of these experiments in the human future will cross-fertilize with others, and thus maintain the vital diversity essential for indefinite survival. Competition for ascendancy in world trade, power, or military might are simply empty, meaningless concepts for the future. By encouraging diversity elsewhere, each society ensures a rich source of ideas and techniques for its own future (Clark, 1989).

Underlying Unity

This unity is the same one that underlies most religious or spiritual philosophies. Mystics from all cultures claim the experience is indescribable and yet have tried for eons to share their findings. Greek philosophers from Thales to Socrates, Plato and beyond; these early thinkers not only dared to think outside the box but dared to share their insights. Some were ostracized and in the case of Socrates, even murdered but nothing can stop the human mind from inquiring.

Each philosopher described his method for acquiring knowledge or indicated what to avoid in order to arrive at truth. Heraclitus claimed breathing and the power of reason. Parmenides claimed high reason, and Anaxagoras tells us that through the weakness of the sense perceptions, we cannot judge the truth. However, each is describing the indescribable in their own way when they talk about “Being”, “Logos”, and or “Mind”. The only way that kind of information can be obtained is through insight and inner reflection. Their theories may seem archaic and out of date but under closer scrutiny the essence of their truth appears to be recognizable as that same underlying unity described by philosophers, scientists and visionaries of today:

Despite the immense diversity of creation, we all accept that there exists in nature a profound underlying unity. The search for this unity provides the motivation for the lives of many different men--some who, like Einstein, search for it in general natural laws and others who, like Teilhard de Chardin, would trace cosmic evolution to a divine origin” (Dubos, 1990).

Unity and Diversity

Unity and diversity are not only inseparable parts of each other, but demand the expansion of consciousness to acknowledge their inter-connectivity. The concept of unity and diversity is not new. In addition to the Greek philosophers mentioned above, it

was honored in many diverse cultures, including numerous indigenous groups and ancient Taoist societies. What is extraordinary about this time in history is the growing number of people who are discovering this reality for the first time, a reality that is no longer the purview of mystics and visionaries alone. A new worldview is being born that is essential to overcoming the problems of today and vital to carving out a new future where unity and diversity are not only accepted, but cherished. If a new worldview gained popularity that honored the love of diversity so highly that racism and prejudice can no longer find a home, the world would be transformed:

These principles lie at the core of all the major religions and our most noble cultural traditions. The values of universal brotherhood, love for one's neighbor, and the golden rule of treating others as we ourselves would wish to be treated are just some of the ideals that are common to all cultures. They have fostered social union and amity between people for countless generations, inspired great works of art, and continue to underscore our highest aspirations. Today's world would indeed benefit from a profound affirmation of these essential spiritual truths (Laslow, 1989).

A worldview such as this, one that reflects this essential shift from duality to non-duality consciousness and the love of diversity must be, if psychotherapy is to keep stride with this shift, a prerequisite for anyone who ventures into this field. It is a consciousness that is beginning to broaden and expand into almost every realm of human endeavor:

There are such people in almost every field: philosophy, science, medicine, theology. We are in the middle of a revolution that they are making. They are offering us something new—not our usual way of knowing, being and doing. It is a vision coming into focus, a “second language” we are still learning. The new paradigm does not deny the past. On the contrary, its most significant contribution will be to integrate past and present and to make common sense of the great diversity of our inherited wisdom. It is a comprehensive spiritual/philosophic/scientific system. It is incomplete and only just beginning to affect us. Wherever we're going, we surely are not yet there. Still, the voyage has begun and the direction is clear enough (Kurtz, 1990).

Essential to this shift is a new orientation to spirituality and the re-discovery of the sacred.

CHAPTER THREE

The Marriage of Mother Earth and Father God

Some traditional, mainstream psychotherapists whose training have been influenced by Freud's judgment of religious life as self-deceptive often fail to meet the needs of clients who are either religious or spiritual. In that atmosphere clients daring to share mystical or religious experiences take the risk of having their experience diminished as a symptom of disease. There is no denying that certain clients may be experiencing a detachment or a psychotic episode, but that type of material also needs to be honored as mystical experiences are often mistaken as a symptom of psychosis. Reaching for the DSM-5 (*Fifth Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) for an appropriate label needn't be the first response. Determining what is actually taking place is the first step. Being present and allowing its expression in a safe, comforting environment may be all that is needed to re-frame a negative or fearful experience into a positive one.

Although many traditional therapies have been devoid of an accepting attitude of spirituality and religion in the past, there has been great progress lately in understanding the importance of psycho-spiritual development and the acceptance of spirituality as a valid aspect of the therapeutic process. Respect for the client's belief system is not only important for the client, but good practice for the therapist regardless of whether the therapist is religiously or spiritually inclined. In order to have a real respect and a sincere ability to honor the spiritual nature of the client a broader, bias free perspective is imperative. This implies an attitude of curiosity and a willingness to

honor the beauty in the beliefs of others. While maintaining one's own beliefs, gaining familiarity and respect of the mystical core of any other spiritual or religious faith helps to unravel those unconscious judgments and biases that surreptitiously may interfere with the therapeutic relationship.

Awareness of a lack of religious belief prevalent in a secular society is also an equally important aspect to be mindful of. Many may have left religion behind but have found spiritual meaning from other sources. Some may not recognize that their love for nature for example, may be a source of spiritual sustenance. Acknowledgment of the client's religious or spiritual belief system, when it arises, develops empathy in the therapeutic relationship. New and different forms of the non-traditional spirituality are cropping up every day. Questionnaires or other methods that ask questions about the client's belief system are becoming popular methods of discovery in the intake process, especially in spiritual counseling, but if there is an accepting, safe environment it is likely that the subject will arise naturally when needed. It becomes just one more thread in the rich and complex tapestry of the client's experience that is available for investigation.

Familiarity and respect of different theologies, myth and spiritual experience are part of a lifelong learning curve that deepens tolerance and understanding, an understanding that can expand the practice of psychotherapy to a higher level. Although it is controversial, sometimes it is appropriate and healing to incorporate spiritual modalities in a therapeutic session but only when initiated or agreed to by the client. Prayer, meditation, guided imagery, forgiveness work, use and support of the client's

religious community, helping to identify and deconstruct negative religious concepts: all are useful when needed but training in the use of spiritual interventions is lagging behind. Just as diversity training has become commonplace, so too must training incorporating an appreciation of religion/spirituality and the role it plays in psychotherapy, become commonplace.

Although the groundswell of research as well as continued efforts to ensure diversity competence may prompt increased attention to religion and spirituality as relevant to clinical practice, at present there is no evidence to suggest significant curricular investment to ensure systematic and comprehensive education and training in this area (Shafranske, 2005).

The Loss of the Sacred

On the first day of this new millennium, Prince Charles of Wales said the following:

In an age of secularism I hope with all my heart that, in the new millennium, we will begin to rediscover a sense of the sacred in all that surrounds us, whether in the way *we grow our crops or raise our livestock on the land that God has given us, whether in the way we create places for people to live in the countryside we have inherited, whether in the way we treat disease in our fellow human beings or whether in the way we educate or motivate our young people* (Charles, 2000).

Secular societies have lost touch with a sense of the sacred. Losing faith in most organized religions, people are searching for answers. As a religion ages, it can deteriorate developing many symptoms of decay. It becomes prone to a growing number of schisms, each sect with its own version of the truth and an inborn distrust of other religionists outside of their group. The ecclesiastical hierarchy often warps the essential truth that founded the religion in the first place, and their misuse of power becomes fodder for the daily news; priests accused of sexual misconduct and mullahs preaching hate, encouraging acts of terror are prime examples. In the meantime,

fundamentalism claims many converts as evangelism packs the house. Religions can become so bogged down with dogma that they lose their ability to transform the human heart. To whatever extent the essential teachings still exist, is the extent of their remaining regenerative power.

The following is a peek into some of the major faith systems of the world. It is only a very brief description but hopefully one that inspires therapists to continue broadening their knowledge on behalf and in support of the multi-racial, multi-religious backgrounds of their clients.

The Three Gates of Faith

Religion, myth and experience. Having a general knowledge of these three, may help the therapist appreciate and understand the client's experience while creating an empathetic bridge; especially with clients from a culture or faith system different from their own. For this purpose religion, myth and experience are divided below into three separate gates. As these three gates all share aspects with each other, it's impossible to completely separate them but this attempt will hopefully clarify them:

A religion is set forth as a theology, a body of ritual and personal practices, a form of social conduct, and a mystical core. The practices use mythic and symbolic structures, and the mystical core rests on numinous experiences. Similarly, myths can be elaborated in terms of theology, forming the basis of a sect or cult and reduced psychologically to numinous experiences. Again, numinous experiences are usually the foundation of religions with their theologies, symbol systems, and practices. Thus theology, symbolism, and numinous experience imply each other but can form independent gates of entry to universal spiritual understanding (Banerji, personal communication, July 23, 2013).

Religion, the First Gate

Monotheistic, Abrahamic religions believe in one God, and trace their common origin to Abraham. History has proven that when a divine teacher like Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh brings a message for humanity— a message the Revelator claims to be a revelation direct from God— it is generally met with opposition and persecution. Even so, the essences of these powerful teachings survive and share some identifiable principles that unite them. The worship of one God (no matter the title used: God Allah, or G-d), admonitions for the development of spiritual qualities such as love, kindness, compassion (e.g. The golden rule), the existence of life after death and belief in the human soul are just a few examples. However, the main point in common is the shared belief by Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Bahá'í Faith in one God, the Creator of the universe. They are all monotheistic faiths that have sacred writings as the core authority and guide for living.

The differences primarily stem from the refusal to acknowledge each other's prophets. Judaism refuses to accept Jesus, Christianity accepts Moses but does not accept Mohammed. Muslims accept the prophets of the past but do not accept Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'ís, however, must accept the messengers of the past if they are faithful to the strong admonition in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh to accept all past prophets as messengers of God.

Christians believe in sin and the downfall of Adam and Eve. It is accepted in Islam but is not shared by the others. Islam and the Bahá'í Faith both claim that the human is born innocent. Jews await the Messiah while Christians claim Jesus as the

Messiah. Muslims claim that Mohammed was the “seal of the prophets,” meaning none would follow. Bahá’ís believe that there has been and always will be a continuing line of messengers that appear approximately every 1,000 years. The term used is “progressive revelation.”

The other main differences pertain to the rituals that have developed around the religion and the diverse forms of practice such as communion, baptism, food laws, prayer laws and the Sabbath. There are many layers of difference in practice and application but the fundamental unity is the belief in God and the attempt to live a life pleasing to God in order to move closer to Him after death. Each religion has specifics about the immortality of the soul and its destination. Traditionally, Judaism maintains the belief in resurrection and reincarnation. Louis Jacobs, author of *The Jewish Religion: A Companion*, posits that it could be due to Islamic mysticism. However, Cabbalists claim that reincarnation is one of the teachings of the oral Torah. Reincarnation is a common belief in Buddhism and in some sects of Judaism, but the concepts are very different. Judaism’s concept of an eternal soul demands that a particular soul must reincarnate. As there is no soul in Buddhism that continues, the differences are obvious.

Non-theistic Buddhism does not believe in a god or gods. The spiritual goal of Buddhism is to escape the repetitive cycle of life and reach a state of Nirvana, at which point suffering no longer exists. Although most Buddhists do not believe in the existence of God or any supernatural being, Japanese Buddhism is an exception as Buddhism is often intertwined with the Shinto religion, which believes in numerous supernatural entities.

Buddhism is similar to other religions in that it was founded by a Revelator Gautama Buddha, but remains different in its goals and practices. The commonality between Buddhism and other faiths are the principles at its core. The eightfold path is an example: 1. Right View, 2. Right Intention, 3. Right Speech, 4. Right Action, 5. Right Livelihood, 6. Right Effort, 7. Right Mindfulness, 8. Right Concentration. They may be expressed differently and the path to achieving them may also differ but these principles are recognizable as worthy regardless of the spiritual path chosen. Like most faiths, it stresses the importance of the acquisition of spiritual virtues such as compassion. Buddhism is built on compassion and it is this compassion that desires to end suffering by attaining Nirvana. Buddhists also believe in life after death but in very different forms. Buddhists describe how karma effects reincarnation and the experience of different Bardo states (or levels of being) that exist soon after death and before reincarnation takes place.

Buddhism is now so popular in North America that making contact either by phone or in person to different schools to gain a deeper understanding is easy to do. Following is a very brief outline of the three major sects of Buddhism.

Theravada, which means “the teaching of the elders”, is the oldest school of Buddhism. Their belief is that insight or enlightenment does not come gradually but all at once and the goal is to become an arahant, meaning that no further reincarnations are needed. **Mahāyāna** Buddhism’s fundamental principles are based on the possible liberation from suffering for all beings, and finally **Vajrayana** Buddhism’s goal is to

experience ultimate truth, to become a Bodhisattva, a Buddha after many reincarnations.

All Buddhists believe in meditation as the primary tool for reaching Nirvana and this Nirvana implies the final cessation of suffering and conflict. That said, Buddhism places importance in this life and living it correctly in order to avoid karma that generates future difficult reincarnations.

Polytheistic Hinduism believes in many gods but many Hindus describe these many gods as aspects of one Supreme Being. Hinduism is often called the oldest religion in the world. The Vedas are considered the earliest literary record and form the bedrock of Sanatana Dharma (a Sanskrit word meaning “the eternal law”). Although there are many sects of Hinduism, the four main sects are: Saivism, the oldest of the four major sects that revere Shiva. Vaishnavism, the worshipers of Lord Vishnu; Shaktism, followers of Shakti, also known as the Divine Mother; and Smartism, liberal Hindus who accept all major deities as forms of Brahman. There are many subdivisions of these four that also may or may not accept the Vedas as authoritative scripture.

Hinduism—with its many gods and astonishing number of philosophies, gurus, rituals, and strong emphasis on right practice—is often and thus understandably referred to as a way of life rather than a religion. Hinduism may be more accurately called a collection of religious traditions. And with such a variety of ways to practice, it has been subject to many changes, both evolutionary and from the influences of geographical, cultural diversity. The transition in Hinduism from many gods to a

common understanding that these many gods are a reflection of the one Brahman is one example of the organic changes over time.

The Hindu concepts of God and the soul are complex and multidimensional. While the Divine or Absolute is generally considered timeless infinite and unknowable, according to some belief systems, it is also a prisoner of the material world. This is one of the many paradoxes found in Hinduism. Indeed, there exists great controversy related to where Brahman actually exists. Some say He is in everything and others say He is above and beyond His creation; yet others say He and the Atman in humans are one. In some schools, Brahman refers to the essence found in all things. In other schools, Brahman is personal, impersonal or transpersonal depending on the sect; however, He is a central theme of almost all of the Upanishads where He is described as the eternal principle, the omniscient, without beginning or end. These descriptions are similar to descriptions of God in other faiths.

From the many gods in Hinduism to an angry, punishing God in the Old Testament, to a loving, forgiving God in the New, to Allah, the All Knowing in Islam and then to no God at all in Buddhism— presents a staggering range of belief but the unity of them can be found in the virtues they endorse and inspire.

Myth, the Second Gate

A myth is a story and is often considered sacred. It is one that describes reality of some sort. A study of myth and symbology is fascinating and also a very important key for working with multi-cultural clients. Myths are a rich source of wisdom and provide an insight into the originating culture. Most myths use metaphor, the beauty of which being

that they leave room for the creative ability of the listener. John Hatcher, author of *The Metaphorical Nature of Reality*, describes the process.

The term *metaphor* is often used to designate this process in general, though strictly speaking, the metaphor is a relatively short, implicit analogical device. Sometimes the term *figure* or the term *image* is also used in this general sense, *figure* denoting *figure of speech* or *rhetorical device*, and *image* designating *figurative image*. But whatever term one uses, and regardless of whether the device is a one-word metaphor or an elaborate parable, a particularly interesting process must occur if the device is to work effectively. The reader or listener must be made to think, to be a bit creative, because he must complete the final and most important part of the process himself. He is responsible for determining in what way the tenor and vehicle are similar (Hatcher, 1979-1983).

A myth travels throughout the centuries by word of mouth and in written form. It is a currency of understanding that forms a component of religious theology, ritual and practice. All religions use myth and symbology to convey deeper meanings of their particular teachings. Myths are also vehicles for passing down moral and cultural values.

Myth plays a predominant role in dreams and is used to convey symbology of the psyche. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung both expounded on the meaning of myth and the role they play in the human psyche though each utilizing different interpretive keys. Joseph Campbell, one of the world's foremost authorities on myth, was strongly influenced not only by Sigmund Freud but also Carl Jung's dream work in particular. In his book, *The Power of Myth*, Campbell writes: "Myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life." When asked by his interviewer, Bill Moyers, "What do you think we are looking for when we subscribe to one of these myths?" Campbell responds, "I think we are looking for a way of experiencing the world that will open to us

the transcendent that informs it, and at the same time forms ourselves within it. That is what people want. That is what the soul asks for” (Campbell, 1988).

Heinrich Zimmer was known for his work with myth and symbols found in Indian art and philosophy.

Zimmer's method was to examine religious images using their sacred significance as a key to their psychic transformation. His use of (Indian) philosophy and religious history to interpret art was at odds with traditional scholarship. His vast knowledge of Hindu mythology and philosophy (particularly Puranic and Tantric works) gave him insights into the art, insights that were appreciated by Joseph Campbell among others. Campbell edited many of Zimmer's writings after his death. The psychiatrist Carl Jung also developed a long-standing relationship with Zimmer, and incidentally edited a volume of Zimmer's entitled *Der Weg zum Selbst* (*The Way to the Self*) (Lafontaine, 2013).

The creation of myth is a product of the human mind in an effort to understand the universe that exists both without and within. Some of the most beautiful and religiously significant myths are creation stories and myths that portray the integration of the masculine and feminine; the portrayal of the marriage of the polarities within the human psyche as well as the intertwining of the mythical father God and Mother Earth.

Mother Earth, Father God myths.

There is a multitude of creation myths from around the world that depict the interaction between the masculine and feminine. It also represents the relationship of the *Creator* (as he is called in many native cultures) and Mother Earth. The Creator God is given the active male assignment while Mother Earth retains the role of receptive.

The idea of a higher deity or God having a male gender varies, but it appears that the more literal the belief, the more God anthropomorphic the designation

becomes. Many religious scriptures are replete with male references to God and in some ancient mythologies, anthropotheism is quite common as it is in many Christian religions. This idea that God is somehow human-like or of a male/female gender detracts from the metaphorical meaning in these myths, the marvelous story of unity and cooperation between the yin and the yang, creating the oneness or reality. If understood metaphorically, God and Goddess myths are rich with meaning. And yet, the word God itself can create division and misunderstanding. It bears remembering that any concept of God is bound to be false as it is naturally limited by human incapacity therefore, arguments over God are pointless.

The wedding stories. The Zuni is a native tribe that lives in the Pueblo region of New Mexico. One of their creation stories, the story of Earth Mother and Sky Father, begins when there was nothing, but darkness. When “Áwonawilona (the Maker and Container of All, the Creator of all, the All-father Father) solely had being” (Cushing, 1896, 2006). And after creating the Sun Father whose appearance brought light, He the creator created the waters. The Sun Father meanwhile, created two balls from His flesh. One became Mother Earth and the other, Father Sky. While Mother Earth and Father Sky were together, Mother Earth conceived the first humans.

Earth Mother soon moved away from Father Sky and sank into the waters below, but when concerned for her progeny, she re-emerged to consult with Father Sky. The story continues with a long description of how the two cooperate together to help their children, both humans and creatures alike.

Similar wedding stories exist in other religious traditions. In Hinduism, the Kundalini is depicted as the Divine Mother Shakti. Coiled at the base of the human spine like a serpent, Shakti awakens and rises up through the chakras of the spine, bringing about life and enlightenment. As she unites with Shiva, the masculine principle, the consummation of their divine marriage produces spiritual rebirth.

This consummation, this story of the marriage of divine forces, is one told in most cultures and has occurred throughout history. It is a story that applies to our inner psyche and the world of duality. It describes both the process of spiritual awakening and the resultant alchemical wedding of opposites within us. It implies the journey of discovery each seeker must make but it also has bigger implications. It is a mythical description of creation and the unification of polarities to achieve it.

The circle, a major symbol worldwide. Common to all ethnic groups is the sacredness and importance of the circle. Not only is it the main format for ceremony, but it is a way of seeing the world; tipis are round, villages were built in a circle, and the way of thinking is nonlinear, circular. There are many examples and it is an interesting comparison to the worship of the square in modern society: homes, furniture, books, windows, shopping malls, fields of crops and so on, are square.

Since the beginning of recorded history, the circle has been a central symbol culturally and spiritually. The moon, the sun, these circles were given great import. The development of the wheel was a major turning point for humanity without which modern locomotion and the machinery that followed, would not be possible. Science, mathematics, astronomy and so many aspects of civilization that are taken for granted

would either not exist or be locked in a primitive stage if it were not for the circle. In addition to these physical examples, there were deeper implications of the wheel or circle as key symbols with spiritual significance. Some ancient civilizations believed that their gods lived in the sky and named the constellations after them. Although other civilizations strictly believed in the earth goddess, some early spiritual traditions incorporated elements of both.

Early communities centered on agriculture and performed rituals to celebrate the connection to their seasons and to the earth. The earth was often considered a goddess— one who could either be nurturing and life-giving or destroying. Ceremonies revolved around the seasons with many performed in circles or wheels. Remnants of some of these ceremonies still exist today; Stonehenge and Avebury in the British Isles are two well-known examples. In addition, stone circles have been discovered in Nabta, Egypt and date from the 5th millennium B.C.E. Suffice it to say, the wheel or circle has been a part of religious culture all over the world for thousands of years. Joseph Campbell said:

The circle on the other hand, represents totality. Everything within a circle is one thing, which is encircled, enframed. That would be the spatial aspect. But the temporal aspect of the circle is that you leave, go somewhere, and always come back. God is the alpha and the omega, the source and the end. The circle suggests immediately a completed totality, whether in time or in space (Campbell, 1988).

Islamists— especially Islamic artists— revere the circle because it is infinite and represents how Allah is infinite. In Christianity, the circle represents eternity; one example is that of the wedding ring, symbolizing the union between individuals and the connection they have forever with Christ. In Hinduism, the word “chakra” means wheel;

It features eight spokes to mark the directions much like the Medicine Wheel of North America and represents the circle of time, cycles of existence and the interweaving of space and time. Buddhism also includes use of an eight-spoked wheel—each spoke representing one of the eight tenets of Buddhist belief in addition to denoting the eightfold path to enlightenment.

Similarly, the Celtic wheel has four quadrants representing the four directions, the four elements, and so on. The circle is also common to Wicca and other pagan practices. Holy sites such as the Hajj in Mecca and the Temple of the Báb in Israel are circumambulated. Mandalas are circular and used for meditation in Buddhism. Taoism uses the very familiar yin/yang symbol also round in shape. In the wheel of Dharma in Buddhism, the Hindu God Shiva is depicted as dancing in a circle. There are so many varieties of religions, customs and beliefs where the concept of the “wheel” or circle is prominent.

As structures, labyrinths also can be found in most religious traditions and most often take the shape of a circle; possibly the oldest examples exist at Luzzanas in Sardinia, found in a rock carving and dating back to 2500-2000 B.C.E. Most classical labyrinths have eleven concentric circles with a twelfth being in the center. Circles and labyrinths of ancient times were built on principles of sacred geometry and inspired by the intricacy of design and shape found in nature. Some were inspired by visions, as this vision portrayed by the famous holy man, Black Elk:

Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred

manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy (Black Elk, 1961).

The circle was such an essential symbol that it represented the magic circle of life, the unity of creation and of course, Mother Earth. The burial mounds of North America were all round, as were the calendars of the Aztecs, the Hindu mandala, and the Bindu circle of both Hinduism and Buddhism.

The Medicine Wheel Circle

Ancestors of North American native tribes believed in a great many gods and mythical beings. The medicine wheel of the Lakota for example, currently reflects some of this ancestral belief. Their medicine wheel places the Creator stone at its center from which all else flows and within the wheel are other stones representing mythological beings such as Mother Earth, Father Sun, and Grandmother Moon. The Lakota claims that their teachings came from the White Buffalo Calf Woman while Daganawida, also referred to as the Great Peacemaker was the founder and teacher of the Haudenosaunee, or the Iroquois Confederacy. Just as religions from the East stemmed from a prophet or Revelator, it is quite possible that the same process happened in the West but they are less well known or remembered.

The medicine wheel of the North American tribes of the Western Plains continues to be a very vibrant practice and is a key to understanding the indigenous spirituality or philosophy of North America. Primarily of Lakota origin, the medicine wheel provides a window where non-natives can gain an insight helpful in understanding native

philosophy but also in re-connecting— in some way— with religious roots in countries of origin, long lost and forgotten. It is a golden opportunity to shift perspectives, to venture from the world of the square to the understanding of the circle perspective.

Although indigenous teachings differ from nation to nation, the teachings of the medicine wheel have been adopted by many other tribes across North America and by a growing number of non-tribal people around the world. The medicine wheel is very appealing as it embodies the idea that divinity or sacredness is present in all things.

Symbols are multivalent not only amongst different cultures but depending on the circumstance, they can also vary within the same religion or culture. Although examples of medicine wheels vary amongst Native nations, they remain very powerful and beautiful symbols manifesting the principle of unity. Having some understanding of this point of view is not only personally enriching to therapists but of particular importance for those who may have indigenous clients and/or who practice in North America. Becoming familiar with the mythical roots of where one resides or works provide an opportunity to gain insight into the spiritual philosophies of its native people and the influences those beliefs may still exert on the culture in general.

While the medicine wheel teachings can by no means be viewed as the best or the only truth emerging from earth religions, (whether they be from ancient or from neopagan sources), the fact that this one in particular is derived from North America is significant. It is significant because it co-exists in one of the most secular, materialistic societies in the world, it is also significant because it is a portal, not only as a connection point with the profundity of the teachings it represents but as an opportunity to

reconnect with ancient spiritual heritages left behind in countries of origin by the millions of immigrants to this land. This may explain why so many Americans of European descent are attracted to the medicine wheel and Native spirituality.

Description of the Medicine Wheel. Although medicine wheels differ slightly, for the most part they consist of thirty-six stones: The **Creator** stone is in the center of the circle and radiates out to create the rest of the wheel. The second stone, slightly to the east, represents **Mother Earth**. Continuing clockwise is the **Father Sun** stone, **Grandmother Moon**, followed by the four clan stones, **Turtle** clan (stone), **Frog** clan (water), **Thunderbird** clan (fire) and **Butterfly** clan (air). The gifts of these clans are learned and experienced by moving from one stone to the next both in life and in one's journey around the wheel. Each stone has great significance. The seven stones that surround the Creator stone represent the foundation of life.

The medicine wheel is a mirror of the universe. It sets apart everything in its place within the complete unity of the wheel. One of the great lessons of the wheel is the understanding that everything is sacred when in its proper place; it is a matter of relationship. A snake is a wonderful creature of nature in its right environment, but not so sacred if found in your boot! It is a matter of understanding the relationships between everything in creation and honoring diversity while maintaining the comprehensive sense of the unity of all things.

The center of the wheel is the Sacred Mystery, the Creator and everything else radiates from this point. There are four main branches or pathways with three stones between each one forming a cross whose four limbs reach out to the outer

circumference. Each limb forms a pathway that takes the traveler on the rim of the wheel to the Creator at the center. Their approach is from one of the four cardinal directions. A spirit keeper, responsible for teaching the power of the cardinal direction it represents, guards each pathway. In Native spirituality, the number four is very sacred. The number seven is also discovered here; it is the four directions, the sky above, the earth below, and the center of now. The organizing principle of the natural systems of the world is read in fours: the seasons, the elements, the directions, the four stages of life, and the four aspects of personality are just a few examples.

The Spirit Keepers. The following spirit keepers each represents one of the four main quadrants, cardinal direction and one of the four paths of this particular wheel: **Waboose** of the North, **Wabun** of the East, **Shawnodese** of the South, and **Mudjekeewis** of the West. Different tribes assign different names and attributes to these Spirit Keepers, but the description used here originates from the vision of Sun Bear, a teacher of Chippewa descent. The following is a modified synopsis of his book, *Dancing With the Wheel*: (Bear, 1991).

- **Waboose**, Spirit Keeper of the North, represents earth, winter, midnight, old age, and wisdom. Its plant is the sweet grass, the animal, white buffalo. Waboose represents the time when everything appears asleep, and yet the roots and seeds deep in the ground are performing the magic of transformation. The major lesson of Waboose is the giveaway.
- **Wabun**, Spirit Keeper of the East, represents air. The season is spring and the age is childhood. The Eagle is the animal that sees from great heights. The time

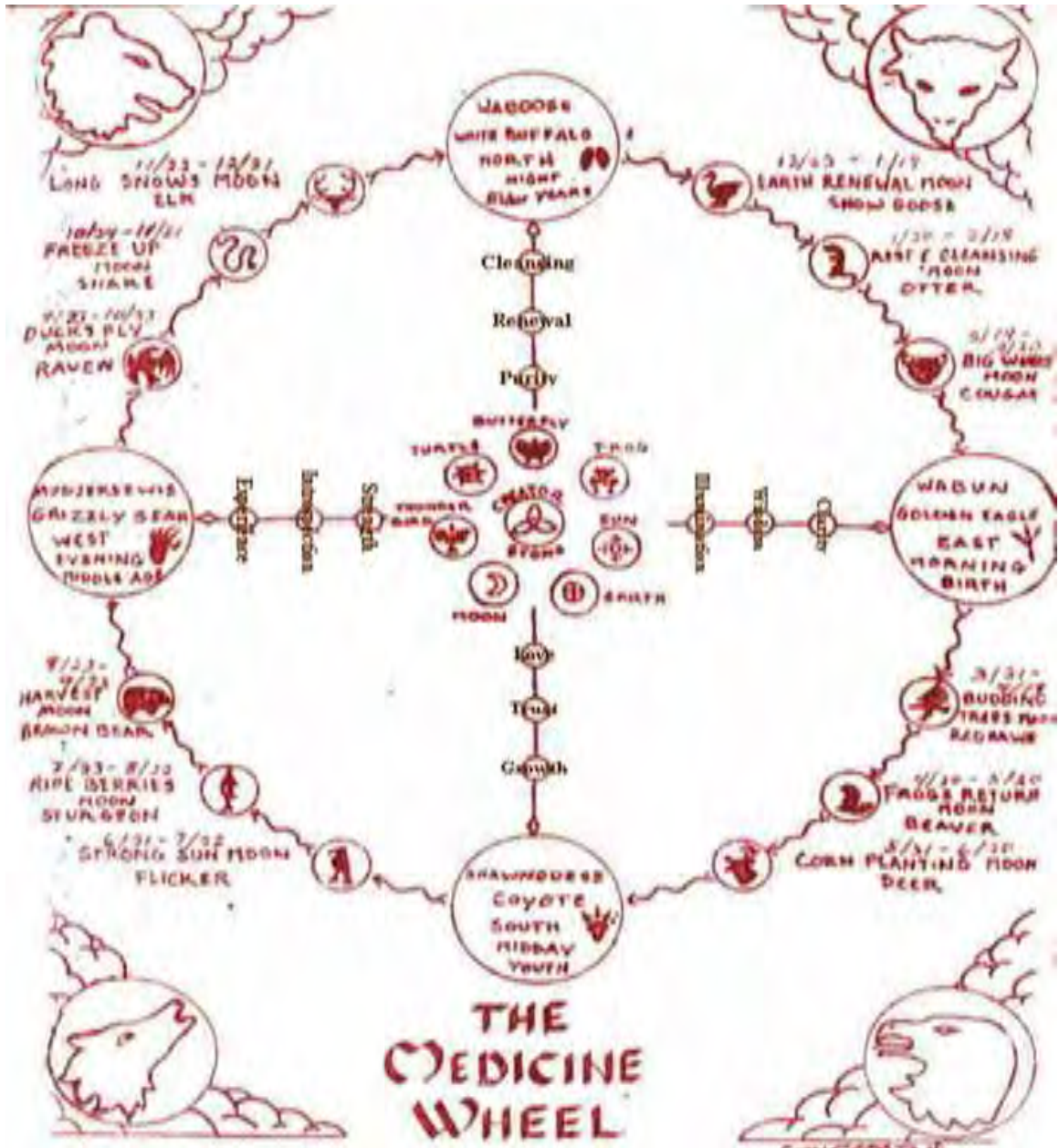
of day is dawn. This is the time of new beginnings, a time of freshness and creativity. The lesson of Wabun is illumination and the ability to question.

- **Shawnodese**, Spirit Keeper of the South, represents water. The season is summer and the age is adolescence. The animal is the coyote, the trickster, who always wonders how he trips over his own tail. Shawnodese is paradoxical, a time to learn the true meaning of love through trial and error. Shawnodese is the power of growth.
- **Mudjekeewis**, Spirit Keeper of the West, represents fire. The season is autumn and it is the age of maturity. It is during this time that the lesson of giving to the community of one's talents and skills is learned. It is the harvest and the giving back to Mother Earth. The animal of Mudjekeewis is the grizzly bear. Just as the bear gets ready for the long sleep, so too is this a time for reflection and the understanding of one's true purpose in life.

The medicine wheel is only complete when we learn our place in the grand scheme of things. To do so, we must learn to honor the unity of the wheel as we journey around it, learning from each quarter. All four gifts are an integrated part of one another. When they are isolated, they lose balance, the wheel is disjointed and the system falls ill.

The perception of the universe as a whole is not unique to Native Americans. Many of the world's mystical traditions describe a cosmos that is whole and sacred. The beauty of this system lies in its simple yet elegant and profound portrayal of the integral nature of the universe and the journey of spiritual discovery that the soul undertakes as it travels around the wheel of experience.

Sun Bear's Medicine Wheel gained through a vision (Bear, 1991).



The Numinous Experience, The Third Gate

The numinous is an English word derived from the Latin Numen. It was popularized in the early twentieth century by the German theologian Rudolf Otto in his book *Das Heilige* (1917; translated into English as *The Idea of the Holy*, 1923). It is used to describe the power or presence of a divinity. It can invoke fear and trembling, or

a sense of compelling awe. The person experiencing it often feels that they are in contact with an outside source. It could be God, angels, aliens or merely a voice. It completely depends on the individual. Usually it is unexpected and not something one can intend. It sometimes will occur in dreams or moments of insight or synchronicity.

The numinous experience is sometimes conditioned by complexes developed from life experiences. For instance, a bad mother experience could produce a numinous experience that represents a terrifying Kali or devouring mother image. In other words, a numinous experience may not always be beautiful and peaceful, but regardless of how it appears, because it is the Self that is trying to communicate, the message will be exactly what is needed at that time for personal growth.

There is sometimes a warning that appears, a messenger that prepares the way. Sometimes this messenger is just a passing feeling of complete and utter wellbeing or it can come as a prophetic clue that may not be understood until the whole experience has taken place.

Perennialist Dr. Robert Forman argues that while mystical experiences are similar at their core, he divides religions and their numinous experiences into three categories: 1. Transcendental nihilism (an example would be Buddhism, negative theology), 2. Nondualism (Advaita Vedanta); and 3. Theism (Christianity and Vaishnavism). In his book, *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy*, Forman describes some of these differences:

A constructivism emphasizes, mystical traditions are highly diverse. The first issue is how far they control or produce the resulting experience and whether they converge on a common result. To emphasize the diversity, I consider

theistic, Advaitan and Buddhist mysticism, though I provide only rough sketches of some typical features. They differ in their concept of the goal, in their evaluation of the stages along the way, and in their practices for reaching the goal. As for the goal, theists do not seek to merge with *Brahman*, Advaitans do not yearn for God, and Buddhists speak merely of extinguishing the self rather than of yearning for or merging with anything. As for stages of the journey, when for example ordinary discursive thought ceases, it may be followed by a vision or a silent dialogue. Theism may see this as a central paradigm of the relation of the soul to God, while other views may treat it as a lower stage in the transforming of our consciousness. As for practices, theism typically moves from intense devotion into nonseparateness in the presence of God, while Advaita and Buddhism seek through meditation an awareness of the nature of being that sees God as at best an inadequate representation of the One (Forman, 1998).

There is a debate in religious studies between perennialism (the view that world religions share a universal truth) and pluralism (the idea that there can be more than one correct religion). In Dr. Banerji's dissertation "Structure and Process", he describes how Sri Aurobindo's integral consciousness of Supermind integrates this binary while maintaining the distinctions of both. Banerji goes on to describe these two characteristics of this integral consciousness:

1. The constituents of an integral consciousness are not merely its parts, assembled into an inclusive organization, but each nameable "part" is also the entire integral being.
2. To think an integral consciousness, one must think radical monism and radical pluralism at the same time (Banerji, 2012b).

Banerji concludes with the following:

Thus, there is no proper order to the process leading to Supermind. Nor is there a proper tradition. One may approach from any tradition, but one must have a will to the integral, as that which is plural, cosmically inclusive and transcendental all at once, without the erasure by any of any of these states. Such an apparatus and unthinkable experience can be an evolutionary Telos, approachable from any tradition as starting point (2012b).

Welcoming The Numinous. The trans-personal self is one of the main points of departure from Freud. The subjective communication with the trans-personal allows for the introduction of the mystical because it extends itself from the personal psyche to universal possibilities. The psyche is no longer prisoner and from this communication the numinous can find us.

Jung's concept of the trans-personal self is very reminiscent of the Atman/Brahman concept described in Hinduism: it is what is sacred. Jung views the divine as being an experience or an internal event, rather than something outside of the self. Jung's preference for making God something we experience in the numinosum is thus a valid position. Understanding that God is within was a historic breakthrough in consciousness.

Understanding the tremendous impact formative religious experiences, good or bad, have on the individual's belief system is paramount. Negative religious beliefs or experiences are often causes of deep psychological/spiritual trauma. Therapists who have limited awareness of spirituality or religion diminish their ability to offer a safe place for clients to access, unfold, or even discuss this aspect of their inner experience.

At the other end of the spectrum is the therapist who imposes their beliefs on the client, believing that their own particular brand of religion or belief is the only truth and one that the client should have. A therapy that genuinely allows the client to take ownership of their own material and allows for the natural unfolding of spiritual, mystical, or religious experience inherent to the client is paramount for the safety and integrity of the therapeutic relationship.

According to Hakomi Therapy, founded by Ron Kurtz, any agenda of the therapist's that prevents the client from accessing and exploring whatever arises in the client organically runs counter to the principle of non-violence. Violence can be subtle and can originate from a hidden agenda on behalf of the therapist or a trace of superiority. Traditional psychotherapy can inadvertently breed these attitudes in the therapist when the training received is based on the medical model. The dualistic view of the sick patient turning to the all-knowing, superior therapist is a set-up and a construct difficult to escape.

Regardless of the deterioration of many world religions, they continue to play a vital part in many people's lives. By scratching the surface of ceremony and dogma, truth is discovered that can be nourishing and healing. The earth-based teachings are being remembered once again in many parts of the world and form another aspect worth consideration and finally, the numinous, the intrinsic experience of intimate communion with the Divine, completes this trio.

Each of these paths expresses different approaches and fulfillments that need honoring. Just as each part of the human body is unique and different but part of an integral whole, so too is truth. The responsibility to sort truth from error lies with each person; it can no longer be left up to clergy or any other authority. Acquiring knowledge and appreciation for these multiple paths and the diversity they present can go a long way in enhancing the therapeutic relationship when these subjects arise in a therapeutic setting. By exchanging a limited or biased position for a larger and grander worldview,

especially when it comes to religion and spirituality, is a step toward one that contributes to a more united world.

Religion, myth and experience each contain a vast array of diverse symbology, meaning, and methods of practice. Sensitivity to this diversity grows with the art of investigation. In this age of the growing maturity of the human race, personal investigation of the truth is a responsibility upon the shoulders of every human being on the planet.

CHAPTER FOUR

Implications for Psychotherapy

Something Borrowed, Something New

Psychotherapy has always existed. Cultures around the world utilize medicine men, shamans and spiritual elders who fill the role of therapist. Shamanism is an umbrella term under which are found many spiritual practices, the most significant being the ability to transcend other dimensions. However, many of these practices are drowned by a rampant modernization insensitive to the delicate balance of indigenous cultures. Scientists and other researchers are engaged in a desperate attempt to acquire the knowledge of the medicine people of various tribes before it is too late. There is deep concern as many of them who are steeped in this wisdom are dying and taking their knowledge with them without passing it on to successive generations.

But the shamans are a dying breed. Like a bellwether species whose decline signals that an entire ecosystem is in peril, the dwindling number of shamans is a sign of the demise of their cultures. Today most shamans are elderly, members of the last generation to have fully learned native lore. Ethnobotanists report that, around the world, younger generations are rapidly losing interest in learning what the local shaman knows, lured away by the pulls of the modern world. In more and more native groups, there is no one to whom shamans can pass on their knowledge. "Each time a medicine man dies, it is as if a library has burned down," said Dr. Mark Plotkin, an ethnobotanist at Conservation International, a Washington-based foundation seeking to save endangered ecosystems (Goleman, 1991).

As of late, many fields of Western science and medicine are developing a growing interest in shamanic belief, medicine and the practices involved.

Upon learning more about religious traditions across the world, western scholars also described similar magico-religious practices found within the indigenous religions of other parts of Asia, Africa, Australasia and the Americas as

shamanism. Various historians have argued that shamanism also played a role in many of the pre-Christian religions of Europe, and that shamanic elements may have survived in popular culture right through to the Early Modern period. Various archaeologists and historians of religion have also suggested that shamanism may have been a dominant pre-religious practice for humanity during the Palaeolithic (Mohapatra, 2009).

Magic, ceremonial rituals, drumming and remedies derived from nature, (including hallucinogenic substances), were, and still are, some of the tools used. The shaman or medicine person's ability to transcend dimensions entering supernatural realms to gain knowledge is part of the practice.

One common view is the oneness of the mind and body. The mind/body split does not exist in most indigenous cultures. Illnesses are often attributed to the spiritual world of demons, gods and spirits to which the holy person or healer could communicate. This ability to communicate with mystical beings in other dimensions is also used to communicate with the physical world. The accounts given by Jeremy Narby— an anthropologist and writer who spent several years living with the Ashaninca people in the Peruvian Amazon—describe the intimate, silent language between shamans and plants. He examined indigenous knowledge systems and the utility of a psychoactive plant ayahuasca in gaining knowledge. Much to his amazement, these shamans described visions of double intertwined serpents, very similar to the description of DNA. After many experiences with shamans, which included his own ingestion of the psychoactive ayahuasca, he came to some amazing conclusions. In an interview with Todd Stewart of *Random Media*, Narby said, "Research indicates that shamans access an intelligence, which they say is nature's and which gives them information that has stunning correspondences with molecular biology" (Narby, 2009).

The secular perspective of science and psychology, has often labeled these practices as quaint or even absurd. However, there is a new acceptance emerging as they are increasingly explored and applied by many Western practitioners of psychology, medicine and science. Like Narby, some of these practitioners are studying these healers and are importing this knowledge back into their own disciplines. Regardless of the bias of Western science and the disdain of orthodox religion, the revival of shamanism and other ancient forms of healing are a growing trend in the West as witnessed by the tremendous interest in this subject.

These practices were once considered as existing on the fringe or outside the standard, but these views are changing. The emergence of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), which refers to non-traditional therapies now commonly used in medicine, is one example of such changing views. In fact, an increasing number of social workers, psychotherapists and other mental health workers are incorporating various aspects of CAM in their work. Jeffrey Barnett and Allison Shale, both from the American Psychological Association, describe the relevance of CAM to psychologists:

CAM is also relevant to psychologists and the care that they provide to their clients in the context of evidence-based practice in psychology (APA, 2005), described as "the integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture and preferences." The emphasis on the consideration of "patient characteristics, culture and preferences" when selecting treatment strategies and techniques is directly relevant to earlier reported data on societal trends toward health promotion, wellness and spirituality, as well as the data on how many Americans are now seeking out CAM treatments. The emphasis on "the best available research" highlights the need for psychologists to focus their research efforts on the many uses of CAM to create an expanded knowledge base about CAM, its uses and its limitations. The emphasis on "clinical expertise" makes clear the need for psychologists to develop competence regarding CAM so that it may be appropriately applied to meet clients' ongoing needs (Barnett & Shale, 2012).

An evolving understanding of the oneness of the mind and body, together with a growing acceptance of cultural wisdom that has been denied access for so long, is creating a new kind of therapy we have yet to completely envision. Carl Jung's portrayal of the unconscious, his ideas concerning alchemy and the theory of archetypes he introduced to explain behaviors and personalities are all descriptive of other levels reminiscent of the types of experiences shamans describe. Although guided imagery, dream-work, holotropic breath-work, hypnosis and the use of mindfulness resonate with techniques found in shamanism, the primary difference is that their foci are more psychological and less spiritual than that which lies at the core of shamanistic practices. And although belief systems differ, there is a growing acceptance of other realities beyond emotion and mental processes within psychotherapy as it continues to evolve and rediscover the wisdom of its origins.

Sacrifice of the Soul

During the 18th and 19th centuries, psychology and medicine were heavily influenced by Freud's theory of the psyche just as Freud was influenced by the scientific thinking of the time. His simple understanding of the psyche as the epiphenomenon of somatic processes contributed to a soulless philosophy, one that gathered momentum on into the early days of Modernism. This divorce from the spirit was beneficial in one respect: the discrimination between science and superstition led to a more compassionate view of those suffering from psychological disorders than had been previously considered. In the 17th century, for example, those considered insane were chained in dungeons, and in the 18th century, patients were subjected to bloodletting, chair spinning and all manner of devices that today would be considered torture.

According to Sri Aurobindo in the *Synthesis of Yoga*, The work of B. F. Skinner, Ivan Pavlov, Sigmund Freud, John Watson and other American psychologists of the early 20th century could be classified as a “subjective science and practical psychology” (Banerji, 2012a). The attempt to apply scientific rigor to psychotherapy, to distance itself from ingrained religious superstition, cultural beliefs and generations of superstition-laden mysticism was a praiseworthy ambition. However, the outright sacrifice of the soul as an outcome was and is far too high a price to pay... No matter how scientific or evolved a psychotherapeutic theory may appear and regardless of how well it professes to cure— if it denies the essential, spiritual reality of the human being, then it is a limited system.

The emerging worldview, from a cosmos made up of mechanistic parts to the understanding of wholeness sponsored by discoveries made in quantum physics, a holographic universe and other current theories imply a definite shift to a more holistic point of view. In 1944, physicist Max Planck offered these astounding words:

As a man who has devoted his whole life to... the study of matter, I can tell you as a result of my research about atoms this much: There is no matter as such. All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds it together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter (Planck, 1944).

Early Beginnings

Known today as one of the founding figures of modern psychology, Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt founded the first formal laboratory for psychological research at the University of Leipzig in 1879. A psychologist, physician, physiologist, philosopher and professor, Wundt’s research in this laboratory did much to establish the field of

psychology as a separate science from others. Following is a brief review of the work of major Western contributors who followed, beginning with Freud. This review cannot possibly include everyone, including many of the tremendous contributions made by Eastern philosophies and psychology, but provides a general sense of the evolutionary steps psychotherapy has taken.

The Evolutionary Four Forces of Psychotherapy

The following theories of psychotherapy are characterized by four major trends or forces. They include: **1. Psychoanalysis, 2. Cognitive/behavioral, 3. Humanistic, and 4. Transpersonal.**

1st Force: Psychoanalytic therapy pioneered by Sigmund Freud describes the mind as having three parts: the conscious, preconscious and unconscious. Of the three, Freud's therapy focused primarily on the preconscious (where memories are stored) and the unconscious. It being connected to awareness less directly than the preconscious, Freud posited that the unconscious was where urges, ideas and feelings attached to painful or anxiety-producing material were stored. Driven by the pleasure principle, the id strives for immediate gratification. The ego strives to satisfy the id's desires in realistic and socially appropriate ways. The last component of personality, the superego holds all of the internalized moral standards and ideals that are acquired from parents and society.

There is a great amount written obviously about Freud's theory of personality and vast theoretical structure beyond the scope of this piece. Suffice it to say that Freud's psychoanalytic system dominated the field of psychology of the twentieth century and

became the basis for a multitude of therapies that followed. Aside from his brilliant definition of the unconscious, Freud did something so simple and yet so profound; he listened! He listened to his patients!

All conscious exertion is to be withheld from the capacity for attention, and one's "unconscious memory" is to be given full play; or to express it in terms of technique, pure and simple: one has simply to listen and not to trouble to keep in mind anything in particular. Failure to do this risks "never finding anything but what he already knows" (Freud, 1952-1974).

Although Freud's theories have been disputed hotly over the years, probably the two most contested are his views on penis envy (a battle cry to many feminists) and his mind-body problem. His mechanistic understanding and belief that mental activity is based on neurology is not a surprise given the nature of 19th century science.

Many of Freud's students and colleagues went on to develop their own therapies. Including Alfred Adler who pioneered new frontiers in psychotherapy. Adler maintained that personality difficulties are rooted in feelings of inferiority and postulated a single drive, a motivating force is behind behavior and experience. Adler's desire to fulfill potential is similar to the idea of self-actualization, a term used by many psychologists, including Abraham Maslow who coined the term in the final stage of his hierarchy of needs.

Other neo-Freudians include Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, Erick Erickson, Harry Stack Sullivan, Clara Thompson and a host of others who agreed with Freud's ideas such as the unconscious and early childhood influences but disagreed with enough of Freud's concepts to motivate them to create their own theories, many of which are still popular today.

The basic tenets of psychoanalysis according to psychoanalyst and psychologist Erich Fromm, include the following:

1. Besides the inherited constitution of personality, a person's development is determined by events in early childhood;
2. Human behavior, experience, and cognition are largely influenced by irrational drives;
3. Irrational drives are unconscious;
4. Attempts to bring these drives into awareness meet psychological resistance in the form of defense mechanisms;
5. Conflicts between conscious and unconscious (repressed) material can result in mental disturbances such as neuroses, neurotic traits, anxiety, depression, etc.;
6. The liberation from the effects of the unconscious material is achieved through bringing this material into the conscious mind (e.g. Via skilled guidance such as therapeutic intervention) (Fromm, 1992).

A major shift in psychotherapy was taking place in the 19th century. New ideas about mental illness were emerging. Works by greats like William James, American philosopher and psychologist, emerged that set the stage for a major shift in the concepts of psychology. James was interested in all aspects of human psychology, from the physical to the psychical. His understanding of the full range of human possibility had and still does have a major influence. His focus was on pragmatism and the

discovery of the usefulness of an idea rather than whether it could be proven or not; functionalism focused on the whole and how the environment affected behavior; and the theory of emotion developed by James and Carl Lange suggests that “emotions occur as a result of physiological reactions to events” (Lange & James, 1922).

One of Freud’s students and associates was Carl Jung whose contributions have had a profound effect not only on psychotherapy but also in the way we understand ourselves and the world around us. Building on Freud’s theories, Jung described the psyche as having three components. Within the first component—the personal unconscious—are stored memories and drive. As the second component, the collective unconscious not only stores one’s ideas, experiences and memories related to images of the world but is also home to the archetypes. Jung’s definition of ego as the third component is unique: "By ego I understand a complex of ideas which constitutes the center of my field of consciousness and appears to possess a high degree of continuity and identity. Hence I also speak of an *ego-complex*" (Jung, 1976/1990).

The Self is the core of the collective unconscious and governs the ego. This Self is transcendental and can represent a union of opposites or a unified duality. The integration of all of the parts of the psyche is called individuation, and Jung described the process of individuation as a process of becoming who we truly are. The latter phase is the transcendental function. Transcendence is the unifying of opposite tendencies and an emergence into non-duality.

If Freud built the basement, Jung certainly built the attic when he developed the theory of the collective unconscious and the recognition of the spiritual aspect that

drives the need for individuation. Jung's theories made a giant leap toward the recognition of the inherent spiritual nature of humanity, describing the human being as having a spiritual dimension. This was a definite departure from Freud. Jung perceived that this journey, the journey of transformation and individuation was at the mystical heart of all religions. "It is a journey to meet the self and at the same time to meet the Divine" (Jung: n.d.).

2nd force: Cognitive behavior therapy, grew out of two traditions, cognitive therapy developed by Aaron Beck and Rational Emotive Therapy by Albert Ellis. Mainstream behavior therapy challenges the client's way of thinking and resultant reactions. There are many varieties of this type of therapy and it is one of the most popular in the treatment of phobias, anxiety and depression. A primary principle of behaviorism, according to John B. Watson and others maintain that behavior can be described scientifically. As famous for his work with rats as Pavlov is with dogs, Skinner applied his understanding of rat behaviors to humans; many have objected to this comparison. Skinner believed that if the environment reinforces behavior, it is strengthened.

Behaviorism emerged in the 20th century as an opposition to the perceived unscientific approach of psychoanalysis that did not use rigorous, experimental methods. Behaviorism emphasized the use of laboratory experiments and observation of behavior to predict behavior. Critics of this method argue that the therapy lacks an appreciation for the inward aspects of consciousness in favor of outward behavioral response. It also does not go deep enough to uncover the underlying cause, the deeper

belief systems that may be triggering thinking and behavior. Cognitive-behavioral therapies are continually evolving and are popular. There are many branches that evolved according to latest developments made in clinical practice and current research. One of its benefits is its short treatment plan and thus its reduction in cost. Cost has become a large determinant of treatment due to insurance regulations that seek short-term therapies that have a proven track record.

The sixties and seventies saw a tremendous growth of self-help groups for clients dissatisfied with traditional approaches. The stigma of therapy began to lessen and become a vehicle for growth and exploration and not simply as a method for dealing with mental or emotional illness.

3rd force: Humanistic psychology was founded by, among others, William Glasser and Carl Rogers as a reaction to psychoanalysis and behaviorism. William Glasser, the creator of reality and choice therapy, stressed personal choice, personal responsibility and personal transformation as his main concepts. Glasser's theories have also been applied to issues such as marriage, education and other social structures. His ten axioms of choice therapy include the following:

1. The only person whose behavior we can control is our own.
2. All we can give another person is information.
3. All long-lasting psychological problems are relationship problems.
4. The problem relationship is always part of our present life.

5. What happened in the past has everything to do with what we are today, but we can only satisfy our basic needs right now and plan to continue satisfying them in the future.
6. We can only satisfy our needs by satisfying the pictures in our Quality World.
7. All we do is behave.
8. All behavior is Total Behavior and is made up of four components: acting, thinking, feeling and physiology.
9. All Total Behavior is chosen, but we only have direct control over the acting and thinking components. We can only control our feeling and physiology indirectly through how we choose to act and think.
10. All Total Behavior is designated by verbs and named by the part that is the most recognizable (Glasser, 2010).

Glasser was not well-liked by his critics, and some claimed that “Glasser demonizes the entire profession as charlatans who have been brainwashed by their predecessors or who simply misrepresent many of the psychiatric illnesses to patients as having a biological basis” (Jackson, 2003). Regardless, William Glasser was a prolific author and his theories have had a tremendous impact both in the therapy room and the classroom. Glasser’s focus on the choice of behavior and provision of supportive guidance to new, healthier behaviors for the client or the student was a complete shift away from psychoanalysis. While this therapy has proven useful, especially in its application to education, it does not deal with deeper, core material. That said, each therapy is an important piece of the collage and this is certainly a valid contribution.

Carl Rogers, one of the most eminent psychologists of the 20th century, used a humanistic, client-centered, or person-centered therapy. His belief that the therapist should not direct the client, that the client, (a term he used instead of patient), should be in control. As a result, the job of the therapist/client relationship leads to insights and change. A focus of this approach is a supportive, equal relationship between client and therapist, rather than conforming to the rigid medical model of doctor/patient. For Rogers, the therapist must have a genuine approach that is both humanistic and authentic as opposed to presenting a façade. This takes a certain level of personal development of the therapist and goes beyond technical expertise alone.

According to Rogers, self-actualization is the most fundamental drive and motive shared by all living things, whether of a person or by a tree, and his therapy was designed to assist clients to reach that end. Some viewed Rogers' expectations of people as naïve, from his clients to other therapists practicing his model. His response was the following:

I would not want to be misunderstood on this, I do not have a Pollyanna view of human nature. I am quite aware that out of defensiveness and inner fear individuals can and do behave in ways which are horribly destructive, immature, regressive, antisocial, hurtful. Yet, one of the most refreshing and invigorating parts of my experience is to work with such individuals and to discover the strongly positive directional tendencies which exist in them, as in all of us, at the deepest levels (Rogers, 1995).

Rogers championed the importance of a genuine, supportive and empathetic environment in order for the person to reach their goal of self-actualization, the fulfillment of one's potential. Rogers was the first in the field of therapy to focus so

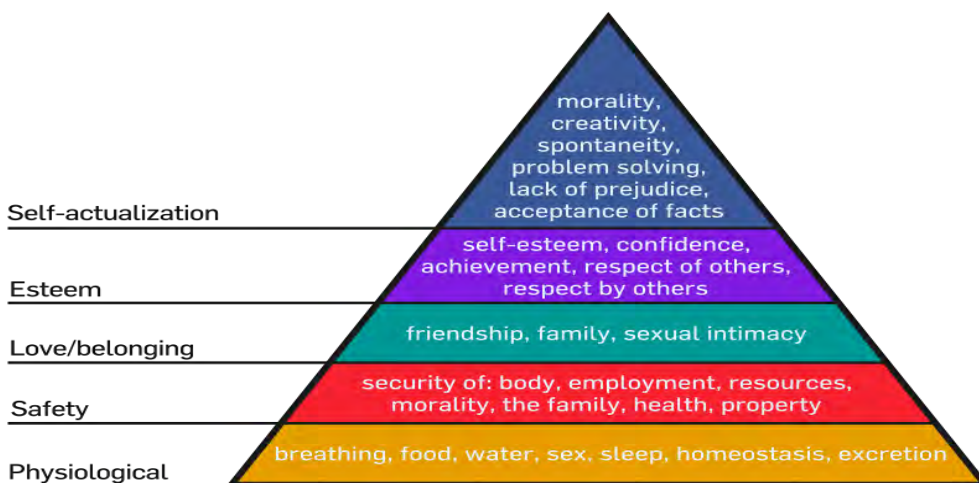
deeply on the reality of human potential and he did much to acknowledge the importance of a therapeutic relationship built on equality.

4th Force: Transpersonal psychology has many different approaches. One of its important characteristics is the inclusion of other cultural points of view and traditional knowledge. Psychotherapist and author Marianna Caplan conveys the history, and aims of transpersonal psychotherapy well:

Although transpersonal psychology is relatively new as a formal discipline, beginning with the publication of *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* in 1969 and the founding of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology in 1971, it draws upon ancient mystical knowledge that comes from multiple traditions. Transpersonal psychologists attempt to integrate timeless wisdom with modern Western psychology and translate spiritual principles into scientifically grounded, contemporary language. Transpersonal psychology addresses the full spectrum of human psychospiritual development - from our deepest wounds and needs, to the existential crisis of the human being, to the most transcendent capacities of our consciousness (Caplan, 2009).

Maslow's Basic Principles

Abraham Maslow, is best known for his hierarchy of needs:



(J. Finklestein, n.d.)

The bottom four needs are considered deficiency needs while the top-level needs are psychological, related to growth. Unless the lower levels are taken care of, the higher ones cannot be attained properly.

Maslow understood the spiritual capacity of human beings to attain peak or transcendent experiences. He believed that personal growth, integration, and self-actualization could be achieved by studying these experiences. These important experiences can also be called intuitive, spiritual and numinous. Maslow challenged older theories of psychology with his underlying theory that people are basically good and once their lower biological needs were met, the ability to naturally and organically achieve self-actualization was possible. Additionally, Maslow asserted that self-actualization evolved from his scientific research of healthy and successful individuals to discover the attributes of a self-actualized person. His idea of self-actualization determined that a person had achieved this level of development once the basic needs of safety/security, love/belonging, and self-esteem were accomplished. Maslow's theories were based on the following principles:

- The normal personality is characterized by unity, integration, consistency, and coherence. Organization is the natural state, and disorganization is pathological.
- The organism can be analyzed by differentiating its parts, but no part can be studied in isolation. The whole functions according to laws that cannot be found in the parts.

- The organism has one sovereign drive, that of self-actualization. People strive continuously to realize their inherent potential by whatever avenues are open to them.
- The influence of the external environment on normal development is minimal. The organism's potential, if allowed to unfold by an appropriate environment, will produce a healthy, integrated personality.
- The comprehensive study of one person is more useful than the extensive investigation in many people of an isolated psychological function.
- The salvation of the human being is not to be found in either behaviorism or in psychoanalysis as they deal only with the darker, meaner half of the individual. We must deal with the questions of value, individuality, consciousness, purpose, ethics and the higher reaches of human nature.
- Man is basically good, not evil.
- Psychopathology generally results from the denial, frustration or twisting of our essential nature.
- Therapy of any sort is a means of restoring a person to the path of self-actualization and development along the lines dictated by their inner nature.
- When the four basic needs have been satisfied, the growth need or self-actualization need arises: a new discontent and restlessness will develop unless the individual is doing what he individually is fitted for. A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write—in short, what people can be, they must be (Maslow, 1954).

The field of psychotherapy has been so enriched by great, gifted minds whose contributions have pulled back the curtain to not only the components of the psyche, but to the emerging wholeness and universality possible in the human being. Maslow describes his hierarchy of needs and the expansion of self as the outcome if the needs are completed or fulfilled. He also described how peak experiences and self-actualization are rare experiences. He defines peak experiences as a blissful, joyous, transpersonal and ecstatic state of being.

Maslow's description of these states is essentially a description of a spiritually mature human being. His views are in accordance with other views proposed by the Institute for Consciousness Research for example. Their claim is that the awakening of the Kundalini and cosmic consciousness is appearing in more and more people:

As the evolution of our species proceeds, and new faculties of mind such as cosmic consciousness begin to appear in more and more people, as a result of the Kundalini process, science will have to expand its horizons to include non-physical aspects of creation invisible to us today" ("The Unification of Faith and Science", n.d.).

The implication here is that this state of self-actualization, often characterized by peak experiences, is no longer a rare phenomenon of mystics and saints. In 1974, The Kundalini Research Center, based in Montreal, was engaged in research to discover not only the growing number of people having experiences that could be identified as the Kundalini arousal of consciousness, but to assist people having difficulty with the process.

In addition to his work as a transpersonal psychologist, Maslow has also been considered a humanistic psychologist. Criticisms of Maslow include comments that he

lacked scientific rigor and that his theory was not applicable to cultures outside of his own; hence, he was considered biased by his critics. There is no doubt that Maslow's recognition of transcendence and the spiritual capacity of humans for self-actualization was a giant step in the right direction.

Ken Wilber integrates a vast array of Eastern and Western thought into a "single model" (Frager, 2009). The integral approach popularized by Wilber attempts to coordinate and harmonize all of the practices humans are engaged in. He includes cultural, behavioral, and subjective experience and social systems into a cohesive philosophy: "You can't [realistically] honor various methods and fields, without showing how they fit together. That is how to make a genuine world philosophy" (Wilber, n.d.).

The phrase "integral psychology" is a "term coined in the 1940s by Indra Sen a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, who established the field of integral psychology, based on Sri Aurobindo's teachings" (Mohapatra, 2009). In his paper "Structure and Process: Integral Philosophy and Triple Transformation," Dr. Debashish Banerji traces the term integral in the following:

This brings me to the notion of the integral, which I touched on with respect to Ken Wilber. Wilber, of course, is not the founder of the term 'integral', even in its contemporary philosophical or psychological usage, though his popularization of the term is swiftly turning his use of it hegemonic. In the U.S., the academic precedents for this term can be found in Haridas Chaudhuri (1913-1975) (1974), the philosopher and educationist who founded the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), and Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968), a Harvard sociologist who coined the term "integral culture" (Sorokin, 1964, p.75). The usage of both these figures can be traced in turn to Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950). The use of the term by Wilber himself can also be traced to Sri Aurobindo, whose definitions and contexts of use are thus instructive to our discussion. Sri Aurobindo uses the term "integral" in two contexts, that of an "integral yoga" and of an "integral consciousness" (Banerji, 2012b).

In his book *A Theory of Everything*, Wilber claims to have assembled over a 100 conclusions from different developmental psychology researchers. He describes how similar they are: “Of course there are dozens of disagreements and hundreds of conflicting details. But they all tell a generally similar tale of the growth and development of the mind as a series of unfolding stages or waves” (Wilber, 2001a). This statement is indicative of the mindset of Wilber as he attempts to coalesce many fragments into a whole. He criticizes other psychologies for their inability to see the whole picture, as their focus was limited to their own particular aspect.

Behaviorism notoriously reduced consciousness to its observable, behavioral manifestations. Psychoanalysis reduced consciousness to the structures of the ego and their impact by the id. Existentialism reduced consciousness to its personal structures, and modes of intentionality. Many schools of transpersonal psychology focus merely on altered states of consciousness, with no coherent theory of the development of structures of consciousness. Asian psychologies typically excel in their account of consciousness development from the personal to the trans-personal domains, but have a poor understanding of the earlier development from prepersonal to personal. Cognitive science admirably brings a scientific empiricism to bear on the problem, but often ends up simply reducing consciousness to its objective dimensions, neuronal mechanisms, and bio-computer like functions, thus devastating the lifeworld of consciousness itself (Wilber, 2000).

Psychotherapy, according to Wilber, is a synthesis per se of all therapies.

Although there are many interpretations of integral psychotherapy depending on the practitioner, the essential aim of Integral psychotherapy is to harmonize mind, body and soul. Notions of the self that stem from the East, the West and all over the world are used in Wilber’s process.

Wilber’s theories are complex and far-reaching due to the extensive territory he covers, and includes philosophy, religion, psychology and science. He attempts to heal

splits he perceives not only in the human psyche, but those occurring between different fields of knowledge. His aim was to establish a “world philosophy” that could weave the world’s wisdom traditions and psychologies from both the East and the West into a “Theory of Everything” (Wilber, 2001a).

Ken Wilber’s understanding of unity and the oneness of the world of humanity is commendable and his contribution is great; however, there are criticisms. It is to be expected that the supporters of a particular philosophy or school of psychology with whom he criticizes and determines is limited, would object and consider him arrogant and bereft of a true understanding of their philosophical position.

The insight to no longer exclude the wisdom of Eastern thought, but instead, to attempt a marriage of Eastern and Western psychology is a good one. Great care however is needed to avoid the Western habit of consuming and claiming what it admires and then labeling it as its own. Sifting through philosophies and cherry picking the ideas that agree with one’s own perspective may be gratifying and interesting but having an openness to feedback and corrections is also important.

The spiritual and psychological wisdom of the East is dawning in the West at a rapid rate. From spiritual philosophy to healing practices, Eastern influence has permeated many fields and includes psychotherapy. Wilber’s work reflects this contribution and champions it as a major thread in the synthesis he creates. However courageous his intentions and no matter how significant are his contributions, a word of caution is in order.

While the idea of a synthesis is appealing, there exists a risk of losing the essential wholeness and diversity of each system of thought by amalgamating it all into one. Integration is a noble but dangerous aspiration if the distinctions of each are no longer recognizable. The quality of therapy then, must depend on the integrity and knowledge of the practitioner; otherwise, it becomes a matter of loose interpretation.

As the world discovers the reality of oneness, it is a natural process to borrow and learn from each other. But these exchanges must be implemented with care. The preservation of diversity, true respect for the gifts of others and the ability to retain and protect the original flavor and the truth of each, as well as the recognition of where or who it originated from, are imperative. Otherwise, there is a loss and a potential for a homogenization that loses the distinct and unique features of the original contribution. On the other hand, the West is very creative and many of the therapies emerging today are sincere in their attempt to honor principles gleaned from the world's wisdom traditions.

Therapies Uniting East and West

Already numerous, new schools of psychotherapy are emerging every day. Given the constant debate over which ones are the best, the task of integrating them would seem an impossible task. By looking at psychotherapy objectively, just as with religious systems, a trace or a thread can be found that unites them. The underlying premise and intent of all psychotherapy is to be of assistance, along with the desire to bring about change and transformation. Many of the new schools that recognize the spiritual reality of human beings are direct reflections of Eastern philosophies stemming

from yoga, Buddhism, meditation and other great works such as integral psychology proposed by Sri Aurobindo; such schools include transpersonal, transformational, spiritual, nondualism and other psychologies. Over the last century, Eastern philosophies have without a doubt permeated Western culture. The marriage of the two is creating very exciting prospects that will continue to unfold newer and better hybrids as yet unimagined.

Each stage of development in the field of psychotherapy creates a clearer, grander definition of the human being and this process of discovery continues to evolve. Although efforts to materialize and force psychotherapy into a medical/quasi-scientific model do exist, newer therapies that accept the profound complexity and immanently divine nature of the mind or soul are also exuding their influence.

Descended from great thinkers such as William James, Abraham Maslow and Carl Jung and Eastern philosophies, this path represents a shift in both the field of psychology and the consciousness of the world.

Eastern Psychologies

Buddhist and Yoga psychologies are in accordance with Western ones in that both view the relief of suffering as a primary goal but have a different methodology and philosophical path to attain it. Buddhist teachings are more concerned with experience than philosophy, and stress the individual's responsibility for helping themselves through the use of mental, physical and spiritual disciplines guided by a guru or teacher.

The psychology of Buddhism is based on the notions that all things are impermanent, that a separate self is but an illusion and that the cause of suffering is desire. The goal is to achieve a higher state of consciousness where the illusion of separateness and permanence evaporate like smoke in the face of self-knowledge and detachment. Meditation is the primary tool used but different schools may employ different styles. Zen, for example, uses the meditation of koans and/or paradoxes to achieve enlightenment.

Yoga, derived from the Pre-Hindu culture is mentioned in the Vedas that date back to 12000 B.C. - 4000 B.C. In yoga, a variety of methods are used to focus the mind so that it can rise to a level of self-realization, one where contact with the Source or Self can be made. Moving away from fear, attachment and ignorance, this process of transformation is the goal of yoga. There are many types that address different aspects or different personalities: Karma-yoga (the Yoga of action), Jnana-yoga (the Yoga of knowledge), Bhakti-yoga (the Yoga of devotion), Hatha-yoga (the Yoga of the body), Mantra-yoga (the Yoga of sound), Kundalini-yoga (the Yoga of energy) and Raja-yoga (the Royal Yoga of mind and body) (Frager, 2009).

Most yogas focus on just one particular aspect of being. Developed by Sri Aurobindo, Integral Yoga is different as it focuses on the whole being and include the physical, mental, vital, psychic and spiritual aspects. The *Sapta Chatusthaya* (Seven Quartets) is the program for spiritual practice that was revealed to Sri Aurobindo and has four goals: 1. *Shuddhi* (purification); 2. *Mukti* (liberation); 3. *Siddhi* (realization); and 4. *Bhukti* (enjoyment) (Sandeep, n.d.).

The overarching goal is to achieve the transformation of all aspects of the human being where no aspect is left behind. The yoga of Sri Aurobindo seeks an integral consciousness, a wholeness that does not depend on any particular technique or formula. Rather, it allows for individual creativity in creating a practice based on attention, volition and affect. This transformation is to a higher state of consciousness, to a level of truth beyond Mind to a connection and harmony with the Divine.

In the early 1900s, Sri Aurobindo described this yoga as a path for seeking the Divine that would lift humanity out of the troughs of ignorance. Aurobindo felt that humanity was on the brink of a major evolutionary leap. A leap to a supramental state of knowing that would lend to the ability of perceiving the true nature of existence. The Seven Quartets is not considered psychotherapy but more a practical psychology where “it is rather, a system of creative practice, an archive of attention, a toolbox of engagement and experience” (Banerji, 2012a).

Sufism is considered the mysticism of Islam. The Nafs—or the lower self, where negative traits such as anger greed reside—is what prevents the soul from achieving union with God. Transforming the Nafs is a lifelong journey but assisted by Sufi practice. Sufis choose a guide who is spiritually mature and can guide the initiate from a position of experience and wisdom.

Sufi psychology acknowledges other states of awareness and describes the range as being from waking sleep to unity with God, the highest existing beyond words. Whether one is a therapist, a teacher, guru or merely a lover of humanity, it appears that the most sacred of all tasks is to assist one another on that journey. What is

needed is a refined heart that can share wisdom, light to illumine the path and faith, the kind of faith that comes from positive knowledge that truth and love are a constant no matter how veiled by material creation.

As Eastern philosophies have continued to exert their influence in the West, psychotherapy has begun to adopt and modify some of these principles and practices into new configurations of therapy. Some of the most useful adaptations are the use of mindfulness, mind/body holism and nonduality consciousness stemming from both Hinduism and Buddhism. These principles are such a profound contribution that they merit further description of their therapeutic application.

Mindfulness is one of the seven elements of enlightenment in Buddhism. “Correct” or “right” mindfulness is the seventh element of the eightfold path to enlightenment. It can also be traced back to the early Upanishads, part of Hindu scripture. In therapy, mindfulness is used in various ways; from teaching the client the use of meditation to using it as a tool to deepen the process of becoming aware of inner states. Fritz Perls, who coined the term gestalt therapy, used mindfulness as an enhanced awareness of the present moment, including sensations, feelings, thoughts and the relationship between the self and the environment.

Mindfulness is used in a variety of therapies, including Hakomi. In fact, Hakomi therapy claims mindfulness as a fundamental principle and a main therapeutic tool. Hakomi encourages clients to turn their awareness inward, staying with an experience to gather more information. Hakomi uses interventions to help the client maintain a state

of mindfulness, allowing the client to plummet down to the level where “organizing beliefs” can be contacted and brought into awareness.

Organizing beliefs are those unconscious beliefs that are formed in childhood and continue exerting influence through life. As organizing beliefs affect how we see ourselves and how we are in the world, real change happens when these beliefs are changed at the core level. Mindfulness is a tool to access them quickly.

Focusing on present experience, especially emotional ones, is not new. Reichian therapy, gestalt, psychodrama and many encounter groups used this approach. In the 1980s, Moshé Feldenkrais began to move beyond to the organization of experience in the development of the Feldenkrais method; a method that focuses on movement. Hakomi also studies the body for clues on how these experiences are organized; how each group of experiences gather around a particular belief. The experience of not being loved for instance, can result in a belief that manifests in thought, body language and behavior. Changing the original belief creates a chain of events that transcends the previous habits controlling the client’s life.

Mindfulness directs the client toward the here and now with a focus on observation, as opposed to changing the experience. The therapist then loses any agenda other than supporting the inward journey of the client as each experience bubbles to the surface. There is no force needed here, no ordinary conversation and no manipulation. Of course, skills are needed but essentially, the main role of the therapist is to provide safety and support so that the client can learn and explore, using the state of mindfulness as a powerful tool to uncover beliefs that are no longer helpful.

According to Hakomi Therapy if this process is supported, the client will arrive at wherever attention is needed. This may include mystical states, if that is what is required to bring about healing.

Psychotherapy is healing and healing only happens to living organisms. You can fix a car or a bookcase, you can repair a television set or computer—, but you don't heal them. And they don't heal themselves. Only living systems heal. Healing is an act of self-recreation. One being cannot heal another. The other can only help or hinder. The Organicity principle places the locus of healing and control within the client and the client-therapist relationship. The client's growth and unfolding, his or her answers and resolutions, completions and new directions are all within. The therapist is there to help manage the process through which the client goes there and gets them (Kurtz, 1990).

Mindfulness has many applications including use in guided imagery. Mindfulness can be used to make a connection with the "inner advisor" as described by Dr. Martin Rossman in his book, *Guided Imagery for Self-healing*. The inner advisor is a wisdom figure, the small voice within that can provide guidance. The client uses imagery to contact other states such as the advisor, inner child, or guide.

Freud's use of free association was also an attempt to delve beyond the limitations of ordinary consciousness; almost every therapy since has developed different strategies for uncovering what is hidden from normal consciousness. The inclusion of mind/body and mindfulness awareness in the practice of therapy revolutionizes it into a full experience that transcends mere talk. With the refinement of the use of mindfulness as a therapeutic tool has come dramatic change within talk-therapy. From conversational, long-term therapies to mindfulness-based ones, the client has gone from *talking* about experiences to *having* them! The introduction of mindfulness into the therapy session has revolutionized the way therapy is done. As the

use of mindfulness expands, its effectiveness and adaptability will continue to reveal itself. “Although much remains to be worked out at theoretical and practical levels, the future of mindfulness-based therapies are likely to depend on demonstrations of their distinct, effective, and lasting contributions that other clinicians cannot ignore” (Mace, 2007).

Mind/body integrity is the recognition of the interconnectedness of both the mind and body, as well as how they interact. Many new holistic psychotherapies use mind/body holism and there are as many interpretations of this integration as there are therapies. One of the most interesting uses is the understanding that the body offers constant clues that can be indicators of internal psychological processes. Often, these clues are very subtle... but a well-trained therapist both notices and uses them as a dynamic pathway to access interior activity like thoughts, feelings, memories and intentions.

A plethora of new therapies has evolved over the last fifty years and cover a wide range of modalities. One example is Contemplative therapy, which is a fusion of Eastern and Western philosophies that focuses on discovering the “brilliant sanity” that exists within. This therapy is similar to Psychology of Mind that understands the mind has inner wisdom and health but that incorrect thinking clouds that reality. Core Process therapy and Hakomi therapy are two additional examples that have as a similar goal of allowing clients to discover their own reality and trust that whatever arises in the session is what needs addressing. Both use awareness of the body as a manifestation of consciousness.

As therapy evolves, it increasingly incorporates the body. Integrative body psychotherapy, biodynamic psychotherapy, bioenergetics, body psychotherapy and concentrative movement therapy are just a few examples.

Additional examples of newer therapies include art, play, dance and drama therapies that utilize methods that have evolved to engage the whole person. They are often shorter and thus less expensive.

Non-duality and transpersonal therapies are breaking new ground. Clients seek out therapists who use a non-duality therapy to overcome the myth of the self and duality in an attempt to heal and overcome problems. Mindfulness is used alongside other methods, but the main skill is the ability of the therapist to reflect back to the client her/his essential nature. This is a very different role for the therapist and one that demands a mature awareness and familiarity of higher dimensions of reality.

This flowering of nondual wisdom is presenting new challenges and opportunities for the field of psychotherapy. While Wilber and other Integral/Transpersonal philosophers and psychologists have mapped out non-dual awareness as the pinnacle of self-realization, it has been presented as a rarefied condition. Surprisingly, this no longer appears to be as true. As a result, a new generation of clinicians and teachers has begun to explore how this awareness directly impacts the way psychotherapists work (Krystal, 2011).

This new awareness is the awareness of a fundamental consciousness beyond duality that has been referred to throughout the ages by mystics and sages alike. It is a core realization in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and many other great faiths.

Another Eastern concept that can be detected in non-dual therapy is that of detachment: “An important function of non-dual therapies is to reveal attachment to

problems, and through awareness create the possibility of releasing those attachments” (Krystal, 2011).

The Challenges Facing Psychotherapy

There is a disconnect between psychology and religion as described by Gerald May in his book *Will and Spirit*:

The present state of confusion regarding psychology and religion is not a sudden phenomenon. Its roots go back to the times when religion held almost total power over the psychological arena. In those days, psychological disorders were seen as resulting from demonic possession or moral turpitude, and relief was to be sought through exorcism or repentance. It is no wonder that modern society has felt considerable relief in finding objective, scientific explanations for human behavior and experience. But the pendulum of history may have swung a bit too far. Now, instead of seeing our experience in solely moralistic and spiritualistic terms, we are tempted to see it in the context of a positivism that leaves no room for meaning or spirit. Still, we continue to look for spiritual nourishment through modern psychological methods, and often wind up increasingly hungry (May, 1987).

Homo-sapiens are multi-dimensional. To exclude any dimension (the spiritual in particular) or to view it as an unwelcome part of the therapy session is a disservice to the client and a betrayal of the original intent and nature of psychotherapy. Throughout history, many cultures, including Egypt and Greece, have wondered about the nature of the mind, the soul and the spirit. Theories of psychology emerged that evolved into the multitude of psychotherapeutic models known today. If psychotherapy is to survive, it must not abandon its original mandate in favor of a financially driven, “quick-fix” methodology. Psychotherapy must courageously maintain its integrity or risk sinking into the materialistic swamp that threatens to swallow it. Following are six policies that

have good motive but pose issues that will need to be followed closely and corrected to avoid endangering the very essence of psychotherapy.

Medications. Psychotherapy is facing extreme challenges when it comes to the rise of medications prescribed by medical practitioners and psychiatrists. When Prozac was first introduced, it began a new trend in the treatment of depression where reliance on medication has grown while numbers seeking psychotherapy has dwindled.

During the decade from 1998 to 2007, the percentage of the general population who used psychotherapy remained stable. Over the same period, however, psychotherapy assumed a less prominent role in outpatient mental health care as a large and increasing proportion of mental health outpatients received psychotropic medication without psychotherapy (Olfson & Marcus, 2010).

Eclectic Therapy. The trend to choose a therapeutic method to fit the client is commendable as each client is unique; not all therapies fit all clients. However, there is a similarity in this approach to psychiatry where the selection of a medication, or in this case a method, is made from a large catalog of possibility.

Although eclectic therapy can be advantageous in that it can offer a variety of psychotherapeutic styles depending on the need of the client, the focus on the method or methods is misleading. No matter how amazingly effective a method may appear, if the quality of the therapist as a person is lacking, the method will fall short. Training which consists of cramming as many techniques and methods into a young therapist's head becomes a disservice not only to the therapist but to his/her future clients. The problem is that the focus becomes mechanical, materialistic and develops a reliance on the technique while ignoring the necessary development of spiritual attributes like compassion. Professional expertise is imperative in any training, but to emphasize

method in order to fulfill expectations of a trend toward evidence-based practice is shortsighted.

Evidence-based practices (EBP), originally developed for medical practices, are treatments that are supposedly based on scientific evidence. Results are determined by studying certain treatments in large-scale clinical trials and the goal is to discover treatments that are the most effective and that take the least amount of time. This is an attempt to meet those important needs and at the same time, to apply some regulation in the field of psychotherapy. While it is very important to protect the best interests of clients, there are some very real dangers that raise the following questions.

How is a therapeutic practice judged as either a best practice or not? Every client and every session is unique regardless of the method used, and secondly, who is doing the judging and how do their biases affect the results? If the research is done outside of a laboratory, in a natural setting like a therapist's office, there are so many variables. How can any concrete conclusion be made when the individual client comes with a unique set of problems combined with a unique set of strengths? Add to this a unique therapist using a model or not, in their own unique way? How can such subjective experience be quantifiable? Then there is the problem of application. Are therapists all of a sudden going to be visited by some outward authority to check if they are following the rules? "*Psychotherapy* is an English word of Greek origin, deriving from Ancient Greek *psyche* (ψυχή meaning "breath; spirit; soul") (Psychotherapy, n.d.). Trying to force psychotherapy to fit into a scientific construct designed for the study of the natural world is surely a death knell for psychotherapy.

Regulation. Another major issue involves regulation. Anyone can call themselves a psychotherapist and that is an obvious danger that needs a solution. However, a move toward state regulation is an even greater danger:

Might psychotherapists and psychoanalysts be sleep walking to disaster in their collusion with the rapid progress toward state regulation? Powerful structures and processes that have been set in motion that could reduce psychotherapy (including psychoanalysis) to a set of prescribed, manualized, procedures. Sanctions may be applied to practitioners whose practice does not conform to these 'National Occupational Standards' set by the state appointed Health Professions Council (HPC). Furthermore, any practitioner using the state protected title *psychotherapist* could be subject to legal action if they are not registered with HPC. This state control would replace the regulation that has been developed by the professional organizations themselves (Mollon & Reeves, 2009).

Economics is a real concern, especially in this economy. Having insurance is an asset as therapy can be a very expensive investment that may be prohibitive for those not covered. This is a positive step but there are some important cons to consider. The discretion to authorize or deny treatment rests with a clerk in the insurance company; it is not based on the client's decision or even that of the therapist. The therapist must provide a diagnosis, a "malady" in order for treatment to be covered. Again, this is designed after the medical model and is *problem*-focused. The insurance company also determines the length and frequency of sessions; not the client or the good judgment of the therapist.

Confidentiality is no longer sacrosanct. Therapy records are a part of the client's medical records and can be accessed by many, including insurance companies, law enforcement, employers and courts. Insurance companies also have way too much control and force the therapist into a rigid position of excessive note taking and a

cautious, defensive stance. Feeling centered, confident, innovative, creative and completely present with eyes on the client instead of a notepad proves difficult under these circumstances.

The Coming of Age of Psychotherapy

Western psychotherapy has come a long way since Freud. Through each “force” or stage, the unfolding new paradigm, the growing maturity of humanity can be traced. Psychotherapy is porous allowing as much influence in as it gives out. Each of the pioneers in psychology mentioned herein and the many others left unnamed were each and all influenced by the world around them. As the new paradigm emerges the higher dimensions of consciousness and spirit are gaining recognition. In many therapies, there already exists an integration of spiritual principles, the recognition of the spirit or soul and the welcoming of the numinous. Of note is how the view of the human psyche and theories of personality has undergone such a change from Freud’s nature-based view to the transpersonal and mindfulness-based therapies of today. On the cutting edge is a broadening of the psychotherapeutic practice beyond a narrow focus on complexes and problems. It is not a dismissal of them by any means but rather an attitude of acceptance of the multiple aspects of the psyche including the spiritual.

The relationship. Most schools of psychotherapy agree that the relationship between the client and the therapist is very important, if not crucial. In order to acquire the cooperation of the unconscious, the client must feel that the therapist is aware of whatever is happening. The ability to understand deeply comes not so much from technique but from the depth of experience, where compassion and acceptance have

had a chance to develop. And again, the creation of safety for the client is paramount in order for there to be an environment that encourages the deeper layers of the self to become accessible.

The intention of the therapist must be to allow, allow and allow rather than supplant or assign problems or agendas to the client that somehow meet the need of the therapist or a regulating authority more than the client. Intentions are vitally important; constant monitoring of one's own unconscious intentions is a healthy and necessary practice. The problem often is the focus on doing rather than allowing. A therapist often feels the need to be useful, helpful and competent and leads them to want to "do" something: try a new intervention, interpret the client for them or maybe give some good, encouraging advice. Knowing how to do all of these is important and they have their place in the session when appropriate. But if the "doing" interferes with the ability to relax and stay present with the client's own unfolding in mindfulness, they are a distraction and a detriment.

The new therapist. As psychotherapy evolves, it necessitates a higher level of consciousness on the part of the therapist. Training is no longer enough. Maturity, compassion, detachment, and an expansive view of humanity are the requirements a therapist, now and in the future, will need in other words, maturity. In order to provide real assistance to clients living in a complex world in transition, therapists must expand their boundaries of knowledge beyond their personal beliefs, tradition, or training.

Beyond training is the development and refinement of the intuitive capacity of the therapist. It is this intuitive capacity that picks up on what is actually happening beyond

the words spoken, and if used properly, confirms trust in the client that the therapist is on board and connecting. Any training or licensure requirements that rule out the use of intuition or ignore its importance, are forgetting that most of the great advances in psychological theories were born from someone's intuitive ability.

Leaning away from the autocratic roles of the past, of doctor/patient or any other permeation that gives the therapist a higher status than the client is something new for the therapist and still under construction. Knowing how to maintain a "we" consciousness in the therapy session is difficult. An analogy could be scuba diving with a client. Imagine swimming along with the client as they describe what they are experiencing: the role of the therapist is not to divert attention but to assist their clients to pursue what interests them, which is usually important and leads to core material. This is done in a mindful, here-and-now state. Anything outside of this is just conversation and although helpful and necessary at times, it is not as powerful an agent of change as the use of methods that assist the client to turn inward toward their own internal experience.

The new therapist is a citizen of the world who rejoices in diversity while remaining in contact with the fundamental oneness we all share. Staying abreast of the latest developments in both science and psychotherapy that stretch awareness and excite the imagination prevents falling into a comfortable rut. Developing a personal practice in one's life to maintain balance is essential. Humility and the understanding of the equality between therapist and client, as well as the humility to accept one's own shortcomings, are important. There is liberation in knowing that the role of therapist

does not demand being all knowing and perfect; instead, it demands being present in the most authentic, humble, and loving way; it demands being a real human being.

Psychotherapy, philosophy, medicine, science; all of these facets of civilization are spiritually based. They evolve from the mind, from inspiration and insight. It is the magical transformation of ideas from the mind and the soul to the material plane. Each of these many facets has a vital role to play in the transformation of society. They, too, are recipients of this new wind of universality and as such must also play a role in bringing about this stage of global maturity into fruition. This time offers a glorious opportunity to contribute to the process. How can psychotherapists participate?

- Have faith in the evolutionary process of the world.
- Have faith in your client's inner health.
- Develop a worldview that includes a deep appreciation of diversity.
- Appreciate the beauty of other faith systems.
- Broaden your understanding of unity and diversity.
- Find peace within yourself.
- Believe in yourself.
- Defend the integrity of psychotherapy.
- As communication with the world is a two way street, communicate.

The Work

Psychotherapy is struggling not to be consumed by the vortex of materiality, which is the signature of a juvenile culture that has yet to understand its capacity for greatness. Just as there are signs in the world of a nascent maturity however, so too

are there hopeful signs in the field of psychotherapy, a blossoming which reflects the major paradigm shift currently underway in the world. One such indicator of a growing maturity in psychotherapy will be its ability to find its footing in refining the dangerous systems previously described. It must winnow out the useful systems, modifying or discarding whichever ones threaten to suffocate the creative, innovative and intuitive brilliance: the very fiber psychotherapy was created from. Psychotherapy needs to recognize fearlessly the full capacity of the human being while resisting the very definitions that diminish it. Psychotherapy, it must be remembered, is a method that helps people change by discovering within themselves the power and wisdom to do so. And psychotherapists need not forget that the greatest privilege is to be invited along on the journey.

When clients seek a counselor, a psychiatrist, a psychologist or a psychotherapist, what they are really seeking is to become whole. Regardless of the presenting problem, the need for wholeness is always at the heart of the issue. From time immemorial humans have sought integration and wholeness, but never was the need as clear or as imperative as it is at this time in history. Dr. Banerji describes it as such:

This (drive) was not so prominent in earlier times, because the world didn't force us to deal with so much bewildering and hostile difference. We can do this using our limited personal and cultural resources, but anything we do leaves a greater and greater footprint in terms of the interdependence of our times. Hence, apart from mindfulness, psychological models and practices which see the need for an expansion of personal consciousness into a true understanding of "others" through individuation/universalization begin to be more properly indicated the times to come (Banerji, personal communication, July 23, 2013).

Transcendence and the process of individuation is not the desire to assimilate, nor is it a true representation of the elimination of differences. It is a new way of being with oneself and as a result a new way of being in the world. It is this process, this evolutionary step that allows one to see the “other” as the self. In a paper written by Michael Bryson professor of English at California State, an understanding of the process outlined by Jung and de Chardin is described:

Transcendence of the Self is a process of leaving behind *and* bringing along; the old self-the separate, unconnected self-is abandoned, and yet it is precisely what is brought to the Other in any attempt at contact and joining. Jung calls this the process of *individuation*, in which one holds on to a sense of one's unique individuality while realizing one's connection to a larger experience of human existence. This is what Pierre Teilhard de Chardin calls the Grand Option, "the coming together of separate elements [which] does nothing to eliminate their differences. On the contrary, *it exalts them*" For de Chardin, it is of the utmost importance that this joining, or as he refers to it, this *convergence*, be a "conspiracy informed with love" (Bryson, 2013).

The demands of a globalizing world whose transitional changes are so acute and rapid call for a higher level of consciousness. Understanding that the human race is one is a required aspect, but it goes deeper than that: the realization that sees the “other” as the self. Throughout religious history the golden rule, “treat others as you yourself desire to be treated”, has been difficult to practice. If the awareness of oneness is not at the heart of this practice, it becomes a moralistic effort grounded in duality. “The ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity by which modern civilization is held accountable are important but these also are realizable in their fullness only through a psychological condition in which the ‘other’ is known deeply as another aspect of the ‘self’ (Banerji, personal communication, July 23, 2013).

In the past, enlightenment and transcendence were matters that concerned only a very few and were generally mediated by the clergy, a guru or some authority figure but this is no longer the case. As previously stated, an increasing number of people are experiencing higher states of consciousness—and sometimes with alarm—due to the lack of knowledge needed to understand what is taking place. Imagine if these people could avail themselves of a wise psychotherapist to assist and enable the process. Instead of viewing psychotherapy as only for the sick or disturbed, psychotherapy could become a vehicle for growth way beyond our present standard. Most psychotherapists understand that therapy is a growth process, but the kind of work indicated here is going to become an urgent need as the world continues its own process of awakening.

The world is giving birth to a new age or era and is in need of its own collective doula. Today the psychological need for this awakening is a calling that can be heard from all sides. It is calling out to psychotherapy; hopefully it is listening.

Conclusion

Against All Odds

History has shown that human evolution is not limited, that the potential for further development is limitless. Humanity has faced so many narrow escapes and beaten so many odds, but it nevertheless continues to survive and evolve. Instead of being destroyed by challenges, it thrives when it chooses to overcome them, just as the individual grows wiser when hardships are conquered. The plant and animal kingdoms are restricted by their genetic code, but humans have a consciousness, a soul that is not bound by material existence.

An emergence from the primordial ooze to the level of sophistication of this century, this amazing journey of transformation clearly indicates two things: that humanity will inevitably reach an unimaginable future and that there are strong indications that this amazing saga of evolution of the human race is and never will be an accident. Therefore, a divine Intelligence with a definite plan is secret (and not so secretly) guiding the ship. This process of accelerated evolution is awakening the minds of the world to a new awareness, one that indicates an awakening to a compelling impulse in moving forward or facing an intensification of pain and suffering until a move is made:

Reflecting upon the stupendous cosmic coincidences and the multibillion-year defiance of odds that evolution exhibits, we sense that a purpose, a Telos, calls the universe toward a greater existence. And we find such a calling in us. There is a profound affinity between the emergence of consciousness from the inorganic world and the emergence of new life in us (Leonard & Murphy, 1995).

Choosing life and the unknown take courage. The unknown is both attractive and terrifying at the same time, but this courageous movement forward unleashes potential. The capacities to know and to love are the bedrock of all other attributes like kindness, compassion and curiosity to name but a few. As humanity evolves, this ability to know and to love finds its highest expression in service to humanity, the trademark of a growing maturity. Although the world is besieged with problems, signs of a new awareness of the oneness of humanity and the responsibility it demands, like the sun at dawn, will eventually and predictably rise to its zenith:

Evolution is an act of courage. The seed has only the promise, only the signal. It is an act of faith, a leap into uncertainty. The seedling must emerge from its strong, protective sheath and venture forth. It is a time of vulnerability and danger. If conditions change, the seed is lost. I would agree — growth and change seem inevitable. It seems we must (Kurtz, 1990).

Albeit sporadic, the human race has evolved through the stages of infancy, childhood and adolescence. Although not uniformly, as different cultures are at different levels, there is a global and an observable shift to a new level of consciousness. Changes in all fields of human endeavor have been so swift and unimaginable that people living just a hundred years ago could never have imagined it. This shift from adolescence to maturity has been marked by the convulsions of birth into the next stage as the emergence from turbulent adolescence is transcended.

The human race, as a distinct, organic unit, has passed through evolutionary stages of infancy and childhood in the lives of its individual members, and is now in the culminating period of its turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age. Far from signaling the end of civilization, the convulsive changes towards which humanity is being ever more rapidly impelled will serve to release the “potentialities inherent in the station of man” and reveal “the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality” (The Universal House of Justice, 1985).

Extrication from materialism. In infinite ways, attachment to materialism has proven to be a recipe for the destruction of the planet and the suffering of humanity. Detachment is a fundamental teaching of most religions and faiths. Science is beginning to unfold a vision of reality that corresponds to the spiritual understanding that the material world, as we have understood it, is an illusion. The models built from attachment to this illusion are crumbling and no longer work:

The old model, with its certainties and hierarchies and violence, became unworkable just when it seemed to be enjoying its greatest successes. Now that the atom can be split, and machines of untold power and cleverness and diversity populate the countryside, now we feel the loss of meaning, the threat of death and the taste of metal in the air. Now, when the war machines are suddenly capable of killing us all, there is a growing awareness that somehow we have gone quite wrong. The old model has reached its limits. When the physicists searched for the atom with the tools of modern science, they found no solid, indestructible, absolute, eternal, separate pieces of the great machine. The “stuff of the world,” as Sir James Jeans noted, “is mind stuff.” A whole new view has emerged (Kurtz, 1990).

The crumbling of the old model and the creation of the new is fraught with danger. The world is in turmoil, but as the old model crumbles and however painful, people are freed from slavery and oppression, women are insisting on equality and with the help of electronic communications, the world is discovering its oneness for the first time. A vision once limited to mystics and prophets only is now an experience open to everyone.

Science is learning a new story. The signs of a revolution of thought are observable in science. There is a gradual shift from the purely mechanical, materialistic view. Lynne McTaggart gives voice to this transition in her book, *The Field*:

It is time to relegate Newton and Descartes to their proper places, as prophets of a historical view that has now been surpassed. Science can only be a process of understanding our world and ourselves, rather than a fixed set of rules for all time, and with the ushering in of the new, the old must often be discarded (McTaggart, 2002).

Moving away from a mechanistic orientation where people are viewed as things and consciousness as an epiphenomenon of the material brain is necessary if the development of a more helpful worldview is adopted. As science discovers that the tiniest particles have interiority, and that atoms are mostly empty space, there is no alternative but to detach from a view of the world as a despiritualized reality. As it leans to the growing realization that spirit animates matter it re-discovers a realization that spiritual people the world over have always known.

Modern science has cast a spell over the world; rejecting and banning spirituality as a prerogative only of the delusional and misguided. As its revolution of thought progresses, it will have a new influence that will assist in demolishing the last dregs of a worldview that dehumanizes people and denigrates nature. This is one of the tools that will help the world extricate itself from the prison of materiality. This is the hope for science.

Intrinsic to humans is the drive toward unity. Isolation and a sense of separation are anathema to the modern soul and contribute to the breakdown of society into reductionist splintering. The field of medicine is a prime example: specialization is so extreme that the reality of holism is eclipsed by the view that the body is merely a collection of parts and when parts no longer communicate with each other, illness ensues. Health on the other hand demands that each part of a healthy body necessarily

communicates to all other parts, creating a process of healing integration. There is then organization into whole systems, which cells do naturally without any loss of purpose or identity. Liver cells don't become kneecap cells and stomach cells are unique from brain cells. It is the spirit that manifests itself in the body and communicates to the brain. Like a brilliant computer, the brain directs unity and cooperation of the diverse parts; when this process is interrupted, confusion and disease ensue and if not corrected, the body falls into chaos and collapse.

This is a parallel to the workings of civilization: the lack of connection and unity in the world has allowed for the many illnesses or problems the world is experiencing. There is a backward attempt to heal everything else before focusing on unity, but it is unity itself that will bring the answers so sorely needed.

“We have to heal the lack of connection between the mind and the body, which is emblematic of the lack of connection between us and our larger physical context, the earth itself. We haven't yet accepted the truth that despite whatever divides us—gender, race, nationality, and ethnicity—we are a single global civilization” (Gore, 1993).

A new wind of unity is blowing and irresistible. The spiritual impulse, this cycle of renewal has commenced and receptive souls are feeling its effects. It may be identified in any number of ways and attributed to a variety of sources, but its transformative impact is undeniable.

The Birth of a New Cycle

Throughout history, there have been these peaks, recurring cycles of brilliance: the great philosophical traditions of ancient Greece, the age of Enlightenment, the Renaissance are just a few pivotal ages that transformed civilization. Regardless of the

issues that stemmed from 19th century European colonialism, nationalism and industrialization, that recent period is known as a time of great transition. Not only did it see an enormous spike in scientific achievements, but also a new level of understanding in philosophical and spiritual circles began to emerge. For example, philosophers began to move away from perceiving the world as a static, unchanging reality. “Hegel, the elder James, and Aurobindo represent an historic shift of perspective by many thinkers from the view that the world is static to a belief that it is moving, however haphazardly, toward higher levels of existence” (Leonard & Murphy, 1995).

In his book *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo describes the impulse of spirit as being involved in matter: “If it be true that Spirit is involved in Matter and apparent Nature is secret God, the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realization of God within and without are the highest and most legitimate aim possible to man upon earth” (Aurobindo, 1990/2006).

In mid-18th century Europe, Freud was developing his perspective of human nature. His psychoanalytic theory was an important advancement but was bereft of a spiritual dimension. Soulless psychologies and materialistic philosophies of the period denied the spiritual aspect, the most important reality of the human being, but this did not deter the great strides into spiritual discovery others were making. While Freud was developing his theory, Bahá'u'lláh who was unlawfully imprisoned in the fortress prison of Akka elucidated a different perspective of human nature. From that lonely prison cell He claimed that human nature is basically spiritual and affirmed that “the soul is a sign

of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel” (Bahá'u'lláh, 2006).

'Abdu'l- Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh and His official interpreter, goes on to explain more about the nature of the soul as per his father's teachings:

The soul is not a combination of elements, it is not composed of many atoms, it is of one indivisible substance and therefore eternal. It is entirely out of the order of the physical creation; it is immortal! Scientific philosophy has demonstrated that a simple element ("simple" meaning "not composed") is indestructible, eternal. The soul, not being a composition of elements, is, in character, as a simple element, and therefore cannot cease to exist. In the world of spirit there is no retrogression. The world of mortality is a world of contradictions, of opposites; motion being compulsory everything must either go forward or retreat. In the realm of spirit there is no retreat possible, all movement is bound to be towards a perfect state. 'Progress' is the expression of spirit in the world of matter. The intelligence of man, his reasoning powers, his knowledge, his scientific achievements, all these being manifestations of the spirit, partake of the inevitable law of spiritual progress and are, therefore, of necessity, immortal ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 2011).

The 19th century was a time of great change and progress. Many spiritual movements grew out of this period and included many mystical schools of thought that remain influential today. Most significant was the maturation and inspirational thinking that emerged from those whose voices were not drowned out by the forces of colonization, materialism and a soulless science. On May 24, 1844, the first electronic transmission that launched the information age was sent by Samuel Morse, reading "What hath God wrought" ("What Hath God Wrought", n.d.).

A Vision of Hope

Without a positive vision of the future, one is at the mercy of the ups and downs presented by life. Bouncing like a cork on a turbulent sea of world problems, it is easy to

lose hope. As a therapist, hope and faith in the future have a palpable influence on a client and needn't be verbal for it to exert its effect. Clients are often demoralized, depressed and afraid, feelings exacerbated by daily exposure to the traumas the world is experiencing. But the ability to view the strengths in the client instead of fixating on the problems, an ability to re-frame when necessary and the capacity to find humor when appropriate: all such skills come from a solid sense of hope. In 1966, Robert Kennedy gave his Day of Affirmation Speech at the University of Cape Town in South Africa and described hope as something that triggers initiative, courage and creativity:

Some believe there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills -- against misery, against ignorance, or injustice and violence. Yet many of the world's great movements, of thought and action, have flowed from the work of a single man. A young monk began the Protestant reformation, a young general extended an empire from Macedonia to the borders of the earth, and a young woman reclaimed the territory of France. It was a young Italian explorer who discovered the New World, and 32-year-old Thomas Jefferson who proclaimed that all men are created equal. 'Give me a place to stand,' said Archimedes, 'and I will move the world.' These men moved the world, and so can we all (Kennedy, 1966).

The vision of Nonduality and its implications for the social restructuring of the planet as a developmental next stage, the coming of age of humanity, the understanding that the turbulence of this period is akin to labor pains... all are part of a matrix from which psychotherapy cannot only maintain hope but re-discover its role in the process. The main pillar of this understanding is the oneness of humanity and the realization of "other" as an aspect of self. It can only be conceived by the complete love and acceptance of diversity, without which it will remain a pollyanic utopia or worse, a state-enforced globalization that threatens human rights by its inclination toward homogeneity.

Hope is nourished by the realization that humans are designed to evolve and history certainly testifies to this fact. The potential inherent in humans is inexhaustible; children are born with exceptional talents, skills and gifts more now than ever before. This is a growing phenomenon that invites contemplation of what lies ahead. In the distant future, it is quite possible that we will be viewed as spiritual pygmies.

Some have currently demonstrated great paranormal skill and documented by P.S.I. researchers like Dr. Jeffrey Mishlove who used stringent, laboratory testing to prove their ability. One such individual could create natural events like lightning on a sunny day or a storm out of nowhere. However, Mishlove expressed in his class on P.S.I. at the University of Philosophical Research that these skills are often premature as there is a lack of spiritual development as yet to balance them. It is clear that any concept of what a spiritually mature human race will be like in the future is mere speculation at this point, but knowing it is both possible and inevitable is enough.

The Art of Healing

Psychotherapy originated out of compassion for the suffering and remains as its core value. Forgetting this risks the deterioration of psychotherapy into some sort of quasi-scientific method prone to a cold, mechanistic response. As the world undergoes a crisis of healing, the splits that divide it become glaringly obvious. Whether between science and religion, men and women, extremes of wealth and poverty, racial and religious divisions, hostility between countries: all of these splits need healing and integration. So too do we, as individuals living in a fractured world.

The client and therapist are both subject to its influence; in his or her own regard, each needs to do the work necessary to heal the splits that divide their own psyche. Knowing we are “all in this together” keeps the playing field level and leaves hubris out of the equation to a large extent. The art of healing lies within the client; when it is inspired and protected by a compassionate and talented therapist, a therapist with a broad experience and love of humanity, the work becomes a healing and an inspiration for both.

As psychotherapy evolves, numerous new approaches will develop that reflect the shift the world is undergoing. On the one hand, there is a move toward scientism. But on the other, the rapid unfolding of more spiritual approaches indicates a growing awareness and inclusion of the many aspects of the human psyche that were once overlooked:

In psychotherapy, a shift is surely underway. For one thing, there is a great variety of approaches which weren't available before. Many of these are not taught in our universities yet, nor are they sanctioned by the health care or academic establishments. For another, the context has broadened to include not only neurosis and mental illness, but teaching, organization, and personal and transpersonal growth. In all of this, allegiances have shifted too. Many who practice psychotherapy today find philosophical ground for their work, not within the sphere of medicine, but in other traditions, spiritual or esoteric. For understanding the self, the old sciences, physics and chemistry, have been found wanting. The new sciences of chaos and self-organizing systems, especially as they relate to biology and physiology, are showing promise (Kurtz, 1990).

Evolution is an adventure and never has there been such a need for the brave of heart. Psychotherapy must be brave now as it assists the world through this transition. It must not lose faith in its ability to create a positive influence by believing in the highest possibility of humanity and its clients:

Like the human heart, the world points beyond itself to something greater and more beautiful than its present condition. That something attracts us all, in different ways, and leads many of us to seek transformation. Does it secretly inform the entire evolutionary adventure? Could it be that the human heart and the world's heart are one in their self-surpassing? We believe that they are. As we grow in love and strength, we become vehicles for the world's growth. We bring new sustenance to our families, new joy to our friends, new light to our places of work. We enhance the physical things around us, and the earth itself (Leonard & Murphy, 1995).

Amidst the chaos and confusion of a world in travail, it is important to remember the beauty of the world and the beauty of this magical time of transition, for peace of mind and the replenishment of joy, as described in the following words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

Soon the whole world as in springtime will change its garb. The bleakness of the wintertime is over and the spiritual springtime is at hand. The black earth is becoming a verdant garden; the deserts and mountains are teeming with red flowers. Along the borders of the wilderness the tall grasses are standing like advance guards before the cypress and jessamine trees, while the birds among the rose branches are singing loudly like the angels of the highest heavens, announcing the glad tidings of the spiritual springtime and the sweet music of their voices is causing the real essence of all things to vibrate and quiver ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1956/1976).

The Hopi prophecy about The Mending of the Sacred Hoop and the vision of Black Elk described in the opening chapter are but two of a great many number of Native prophecies. The prophecy of the unification of humanity exists in every culture and can be found in every country of the world. The signs of both destructive and integrative processes in the world at present are evident and exemplify the visionary truths of these many prophecies. In fits and starts, humanity is coming of age. The choice to assist in the process is not only one psychotherapy must make but one that faces every soul who finds themselves here at this propitious time. Humanity may inadvertently slow the process by making wrong choices, but if the unity and peace of the world is part of a Divine Plan, then nothing can stop it; its realization is only a matter

of time. Though difficult, the convulsions that the world is experiencing serve to release the potentialities inherent in humanity, progressively uncovering the profound, true nature of the human being. As children of the half-light —living between the dark night of one age and the breaking dawn of another—we are faced with a choice. Which one do we desire to support and choose to live in? This is the choice, this is the choice.

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