THE SACRED IN COUNSELLING

by

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Abstract

Canada is a multicultural society with a wide variety of religious/spiritual practices. In response to a lack of spiritual training in counselling field, I investigated the different elements involved in developing a counselling practice inclusive and knowledgeable of religion/spirituality. For this purpose, I explored the definition and meaning of spirituality in human development and defined the attributes of a spiritually-informed therapist. I presented some spiritually-oriented interventions and described four spiritually-oriented counselling theories and techniques, the integral therapy, humanistic/existential approach, the transpersonal therapy and psychosynthesis. Subsequently, I discussed few spiritually-associated issues and examined some other approaches promoting spirituality that can be used in counselling. I concluded that spirituality needs more attention, experimentation and investigation in the counselling field.

Keywords : counselling, spirituality, religion, spiritually-oriented interventions, spiritually-informed therapis*t*

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Chapter I: Introduction

During my practicum of Master counselling program, I realized the importance of religion/spirituality in the therapeutic space. My clients were survivors of abuse and traumatic events that mostly occurred during their early life stage, their childhood and/or teenage years. Most of them referred to religious/spiritual beliefs, attitudes, experiences, practices as part of their daily life, their coping mechanisms, their worlview, their cultural background, their community and/or their problems. Some have been wounded in their religious/spiritual beliefs and some of them were struggling to reconciliate their present life and reality with their religious/spiritual beliefs and practices. For others, religion/spirituality was part of their survival and resilience or it was an integral part of their life and who they are. I realized the importance of addressing religion/spirituality in the counselling session as a holistic process of therapeutic work. Even though the multicultural course in the master program taught the counsellor-in-training to approach religion/spirituality with sensitivity and openness as part of cultural diversity, I felt unprepared to address it on equal stance with the emotional, cognitive and psychosocial dimension of my clients.

As part of the human experience dimension (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders, 1988), religion/spirituality has lately attracted more attention in the field of physical health, mental health and counselling (Hage, Hopson, Siegel, Payton, & DeFanti, 2006; Pargament, 2011; Peteet & Balboni, 2013; Tepper, Rogers, Coleman, & Malony, 2001). Current litterature is highlighting the need to address spirituality in psychology, psychiatry and counselling fields (Baetz, Griffin, & Marcoux, 2004; Hage, 2006; Hage et al., 2006; Plante, 2014). However, few counselling master programs include a class on spirituality as part of their curriculum (Hage et al., 2006; Priester, Jones, Jackson-Bailey, Jana-Masri, Jordan, & Metz,

2008; Schulte, Skinner, & Claiborn, 2002). In US, 82% of training directors of APA-accredited counselling programs did not offered any course specialized in religion/spirituality (Schulte et al., 2002). Priester et al. (2008) found that only 35% of the syllabi of multicultural classes in counselling master program explicitly include religion.

Canada is a land of cultural diversity and the last census performed by Statistic Canada (2011) reported that 39.3% of the population in private households were first or second generation immigrants and around 5.5% were aboriginal (this number is an under-representation of the actual number of aboriginal in Canada). British Columbia has a high immigration rate with 53 % of the population being immigrants. This cultural diversity is reflected by the multiplicity of religion/spirituality in Canada with 106 different religion/spirituality categories reported by Statistic Canada (2011). Religiousnesss/spirituality is present in the life of most Canadians. In 2004, 81% of the Canadian population aged above 15 years old stated having a religious affiliation (Clark &Schellenberg, 2006). Statistic Canada (2002) reported that 64% of Canadians conveyed that religion has a moderate to high importance in their life.

These statistics and studies draw the attention to the need for Canadian counsellors-in-training to develop a counselling practice inclusive and knowledgeable of the religious and spiritual dimension. At this aim, it is important to understand what a religious/spirituality-informed counselling therapy entails and to comprehend different models, theories and practices of religious/spiritually-oriented therapies. In the present thesis, I explored these questions using published articles, reviews and books as principal basis of my research. I gathered my data through the use of the web search engine Google Scholar and a research data-based EBSCOhost focused on Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO. The purpose of the thesis was to:

- define a comprehensive framework about religious/spiritually-informed or oriented therapies;

- acquire knowledge about theories, models, practices about religious/spiritually-informed or oriented therapies;

- gather information about different religious/spiritual interventions that can be used in therapy with different theoretical models;

- discuss about specific religious/spiritually-associated issues such as when clients are facing a spiritual crisis or when religion/spirituality are part of the client's issue;

- understand how to promote spiritual development;

- explore different approaches promoting spirituality that could be potentially used in counselling.

It is important to note that this thesis is not an exhaustive list of all the religious/spiritual interventions, theories, models or practices existing in counselling. Only the most prominent and the ones I found personally interesting were reviewed and reported. In order to avoid confusion, in the following chapters, I used the word Divine to refer to "God", the "Lord", the "Creator", the "Atman", the "Brahman", the "Source", the "Higher Power"...

The next chapter consists in defining religion and spirituality and the meaning of being a spiritually-informed therapist. These definitions are the basic foundation to explore the different religious/spiritual interventions, and religion/spiritually-oriented counselling practices, models and theories presented in Chapter III. Chapter IV describes different approaches promoting spirituality that could be integrated in counselling and finally the last chapter is a summary and conclusion.

Chapter II: Spirituality and the spiritually-informed therapist

In order to explore the diverse spiritual approaches in the therapeutic setting in counselling, it is important to frame religion/spirituality and the expectations of a spiritually-informed counsellor. This chapter presents the different definition of religiousness/spirituality in the literature followed by my own description of spirituality. I then explained why spirituality is important as a dimension of human life and I presented the spirituality as part of human development using a model defined by Wilber (2000) and Rowan (2005). Finally, I reviewed the literature to establish a coherent picture of what it means to be a spiritually-informed counsellor.

Definition of religiousness/spirituality

Different definitions in the literature. Spirituality and religiousness have received very different definitions in the literature (Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999; p892-893). Many authors differentiate religion from spirituality (Elkins et al., 1988; Shafranske & Sperry, 2005). The principal differences stem on the institutionalization of beliefs, practices, cosmology and moral teachings that have been codified by a community of members as a religious organization. However, personal spiritual experiences and beliefs are very subjective and "transcend" the institutionalization. In the inner core of both religion and spirituality lies the experience of the Sacred. I will use spirituality as the term encompassing religious affiliation and other spiritual beliefs and practices.

Spirituality in psychology has been the subject of attention since beginning 19th century with pioneers such as William James (1936). Father of the collective unconscious, Jung (1933) was the first one asserting that religion was important in the human psychology as the lack of it could induce spiritual distress leading to psychopathology. Spirituality was for Jung (1966) "the attitude peculiar to a consciousness which has been altered by the experience of the numinosum"

(p.6). Maslow (1970) referred to it through his description of peak experiences and "mystic" experiences. Moreover, his later works included the notion of transcendence (Maslow, 1969) and self-transcendence was described later on as a level above self-actualization (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Existentialists depicted another part of the spiritual dimension by explaining the human need to fulfill a meaning and purpose in one's life because "due to the essentially self-transcendent quality of human existence, man is a being reaching out beyond himself" Frankl (1967, p 140).

Elkins et al. (1988) performed research on spirituality by reviewing text from William James, Jung, Maslow, Otto, Dewey, Allport, Eliade, Buber, Fromm and Frankl and by interviewing five persons from different traditional religious traditions. As a result of their research, they gave a humanistic definition of spirituality and defined nine components of spirituality which comprised a) a transcendent dimension, b) meaning and purpose in life, c) a life mission, d) sacredness of all life, e) balancing with material values, f) altruism and compassion for others, g) love for the world and contributing to the betterment of the world, h) awareness of human suffering, pain and death, and i) beneficial effect of spiritual practice on one's own life.

> Spirituality, which comes from Latin *spiritus,* meaning "breath of life", is a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate. (Elkins et al., 1988, p. 10)

My own definition. It is important to frame my view of spirituality as it influences the content of this paper. Spirituality is what is beyond the individuality of the ego (developmental construct of self in a sociocultural context). It is a connection to the essence of one's Beingness, one's life and a connection to the essence of life, of divinity, of the universe and of others

(interconnectedness). It is beyond what can been seen and comprehend through the mind.

Spirituality is an experience beyond the 6 senses (sight, touch, taste, hearing, smell,

proprioception). Elkins et al (1988) refers to the transcendent dimension of the experience as an

harmonious and beneficial contact with an "unseen" world.   After a spiritual experience, the

mind grasps it and tries to frame it however one needs to experience it to understand it.

This definition embraces the inner discovery of the "true or authentic" self and the

transcendent experience of self into the Sacred.

Why is spirituality so important? First, spirituality is intrinsic to human nature (Elkins

et al., 1988). Benner (1991) stated that "all persons are created as spiritual beings. To describe

someone as spiritual and someone else as not is to describe their differing awareness of and

response to the deep striving for self-transcendence, surrender, integration, and identity" (p. 9).

It corresponds to a yearning, a longing to connect to the divine and to find a place of

belonging (Benner, 1989). It is how humanity views, relates and connects with the world. It is a

quest. Spirituality is "a search for the sacred" (Pargament, 2011, p12) and a search for freedom

from suffering. Spiritual experiences, practices and beliefs bring a wider and deeper perspective

on human issues, values, life, relatedness, death, meaning and purpose. "Spirituality, then,

represents a distinctive resource for living, one particularly well suited to the struggle with

human limitations and finitude" (Pargament, 2011, p12). Spirituality is useful to cope with daily

living, stressful situations and crisis (Fallot, 2001; Pargament 2011). Mental health patients

reported that spirituality facilitated decision-making, sense of self coherence, of "wholeness" and

community-based support (Fallot, 2001).

It also fosters growth, abundance, joy, connection, inner wisdom, genuineness, and self-

expression of core values and the discovery of the "real self". It is a place of hope and

sacredness of life (Fallot, 2001; Pargament 2011). It is not surprising that spiritual practices and experiences have several benefits on mental, psychological and physical health. Spiritual experiences enhance integration on neuropsychological level (Giordano & Engebretson, 2006). Moverover, spirituality has been shown to help coping with mental illness and reduce the severity of symptoms (Tepper et al., 2001). A longitudinal Canadian study shows that regular attendance to religious services has a protective effect against major depression (Balbuena, Baetz, & Bowen, 2013). Additionally, a meta-analysis study shows that spirituality and religion was associated positively with better physical health for cancer patients (Jim et al., 2015). These researches highlight the interconnection between the physical, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual dimension in humans.

While recognizing the overall importance of spirituality in human nature, the following section of this chapter emphasizes the intrinsic spiritual nature of human development (Rowan, 2005; Wilber 2000).

Spiritual dimension of human development

The spiritual dimension is an integral part of the inherent human growth process and is now included in the human development models (Rowan 2005). Rowan (2005) who revised Wilber's model (2000), identified different developmental levels of consciousness (from the unsconscious pleroma to the universal and ultimate consciousness Atman) and stages of growth. This revised model is represented in Figure 1.

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Figure 1 diagram labels:

Personal
'NORMALITY'

Development as outlined by Maslow, Kohlberg, Loevinger, Alderfer, etc.

Psychology prefers this area and feels uneasy about exploring beyond it.

MENTAL EGO   MATURE EGO

EGO BANDS   BIOSOCIAL BANDS

Prepersonal / Transpersonal

Adolescence
CHILDHOOD
(inc. pre-verbal)
BIRTH BANDS

CENTAUR
Real self,
existential self,
body-mind self, etc.
TRANSPERSONAL

Separation, etc.
Grof, Lake, Mott, etc.
WOMB STATES
Implantation
Conception
PLEROMA

BANDS
SUBTLE
Symbolic Psychic
CAUSAL
Divine
ULTIMATE Atman

Figure 1. Ken Wilber's map. Revised and consolidated by John Rowan in April 1982 and approved by Ken Wilber in May 1982. Source: Rowan (2005)

Rowan (2005) divided the human growth in three major phases: pre-personal, personal and trans-personal. Each phase contains several stages of development. In Fig. 1, some of the stages are divided by bands which is a series of experiences occurring during a short time period which leads to a complete change of perspective and a letting go of previous identity and preconceptions. This process facilitates the transition to the creation of a higher level of consciousness and sense of self (Rowan, 2005).

The pre-personal phase corresponds to the unconscious stage which comprises the pleroma (ignorant emptiness before conception) and the uroboric (intrauterine stage). According to Rowan (2005), the birth is so traumatic that it leads to the development of the ego. During the body ego stage, the infant has a body-oriented view and primary emotions. In the next stage, the

membership self, the child ego is driving to being part of a system such as the immediate family, peers or any social group.

The next phase is the personal which is a more conscious-driven phase. During this phase the ego moves from a social role-defining self-identity towards a more individualistic view of self. In the mental ego stage, the personality is developed and the self is differentiated from others.

The third phase, the transpersonal corresponds to the superconscious phase. In the centaur stage, the self breaks the structure of the mental ego in a search of wholeness and authenticity. This stage corresponds of an integration of what has been repressed and the emergence of the "authentic" self. The individuals take responsibility of their own self and create their own worldview. Rowan (2005) mentioned that peak experiences may occur at this stage. The following stage, subtle stage, is a period of surrendering one's own intentionality, self-definition, autonomy and own life meaning to a higher or deeper influence (The Divine or higher self). Bliss occurs often at this stage and compassion is highly developed and expressed. There is also a contact with the soul which expressed itself through symbols, images and archetype. The causal stage corresponds to the dissolution of self into the infinite formless consciousness of the Divine. The final stage, the ultimate Atman consists of absolute consciousness and of a non-dual state of being nothingness and everything.

This brief review of this stage of development model can also be useful to identify at what level the clients is in their spiritual development. The Wilber's model (2000) of human development and spiritual stages, states and line of development will be described in more details in Chapter III. It is important to note that the emotional, cognitive, physical and spiritual levels of development of an individual are growing independently and therefore they can be at

different stages of phases (Wilber, 2000). Consequently, a client who is spiritually developed can be at a pre-personal level emotionally, personal level physically and cognitively. The counsellor needs to assess the whole biopsychosocial and spiritual level of the client to use the therapeutic approaches fit to the client.

Spirituality is also embedded into a socio-cultural context (Wilber, 2000) and sensitivity to multiculturalism and pluralism is essential in an ethical counselling practice. After reviewing the literature, I described below the current opinions about the attributes of a spiritually-informed therapist.

Counsellor as a spiritually-informed therapist

I have identified several attributes that are important for a spiritually-informed or competent counsellor using different resources. I have reviewed the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counselling (ASERVIC) which promotes more spiritual- and religious-oriented counselling, and I gathered information from ethically-informed and spiritual-oriented approaches studies (Cashwell & Watts, 2010; Hathaway, 2011; Pargament, 2011; Plante, 2009). Combining all the data, the spiritually-informed or competent counsellors are:

- self-aware of their own spirituality, beliefs, practices, values and how it affects their worldview and engagement with the clients' spirituality;
- constantly monitoring the influence of their own belief on the therapeutic process and actively avoid spiritual stereotype/ biases/ imposition own their clients;
- open, non-judgmental, respectful, sensitive and accept the diversity of spiritual beliefs and practices;
- knowledgeable about different religious and spiritual practices and how it affects the psychological, social, emotional and physical dimension of their clients;

- knowledgeable about different spiritually-based therapeutic theories, models, research and approaches;

- ready to seek more information, knowledge or professional spiritual consultation if needed for the benefit of their therapeutic work with the clients;

- assuming that spirituality is part of human experience and promote a space encouraging expression of spiritual beliefs, values, attitudes, practices, experiences and sacred truths;

- using spiritual approaches, tools and concepts that are appropriate, relevant and acceptable to the clients' own beliefs and practices;

- able to identify religious/spiritual themes and what the clients hold as sacred and can apply theory and practice of theories and research in support of their clients' spiritual beliefs or practices;

- able to identify spiritual issues and recognize when spirituality is part of the problem or the solution or part of the therapeutic relationship;

- not spiritual leaders and should abstain to give spiritual advice, consultation or direction to the clients. They are keeping professional boundaries.

Rowan (2005) stated that transpersonal therapists need to have reached a high level of spiritual development in order to facilitate the spiritual growth of their clients into the higher transpersonal states (subtle, causal and non-dual). The counsellor had taking time and effort to go through psychotherapy work or through spiritual training.

Conclusion

Spirituality is a critical part of life and the therapist's knowledge and openness to the spiritual dimension can determine the therapeutic success of this holistic approach. Pargament (2011) stated that "The spiritual dimension of life is fully interwoven with other life domains,

such that efforts to create change along one dimension are likely to affect the other dimensions as well" (p 15). Creating change in clients is one of the primary therapeutic goals and in the next chapter, I will address the different spiritual-oriented approaches and spiritual tools used in counselling.

Chapter III. Counselling approaches and spirituality

Sprirituality is embedded into the culture and is influenced by family history and personal development. Spirituality changes over the life time and is in tune with the inner world of the individuals and follows their growth and development. Spirituality is very personal and individual. Spirituality is as diverse, as there are persons existing in this world. It is important for the therapist to have an openness to the client's spirituality and a curiosity to understand the underpinning of the spiritual beliefs and values, the resultant of spirituality on the client's view of the world, life, others and themselves and the influence of spirituality on the biopsychosocial dimensions of the client.

In this chapter, I presented first some spiritual interventions that can be used in conjunction with different theoretical counselling practices. Then, I discussed some spiritually-oriented counselling approaches and I finished by discussing how to deal with some spirituality-associated issues in counselling.

Spiritual-oriented interventions or techniques

Spiritual-oriented interventions or techniques are spiritual components that can be used in support of the biopsychosocial dimension of the therapeutic approach.

Meditation, contemplation and spiritual imagery. In every religion, there exists a form of contemplative practices and meditation (Goleman, 1988; Walsh, 1999). There are different types of meditation which have different focus and goals (Rowan, 2005,p 212-217). Kristeller (2011) grouped meditation into three categories: contemplative, mindfulness and guided. The integration of these meditation into therapeutic approach will depend on the client's preference, culture, spirituality and the intended goal. Meditation has shown to reduce stress, foster acceptance of self and others, improve coping and cognition, promote interpersonal

relatedness and has beneficial effect on physical health (Andresen, 2000; Kabat-Zinn, 1990,1994, 2003; Linehan, 1993; Shapiro & Walsh,2007; Walsh, 1999). Meditation fosters spiritual growth and spiritual emergence (Rowan, 2005; Kristeller, 2011).

Mindfulness. Originated in the Buddhism, mindfulness can be defined as "the nonjudgmental observation of the ongoing stream of internal and external stimuli as they arise" (Baer, 2003, p. 125). Mindfulness has been largely used in therapy and a lot of third wave of CBT approaches integrated it in their practice (Baer, 2003) such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR, Kabat-Zinn, 1982) which was developed for clients who have chronic pain and stress-related issues; Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT, Teasdale, Segal, and Williams, 1995) which was developed for clients who have recurrent depression; Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT, Linehan, 1993) which is an effective treatment of borderline personality disorder ; Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999) which has incorporated acceptance as fully embracing the experience (feelings, thoughts and sensations) in the here and now; and Relapse prevention (Marlatt & Gordon, 1985) developed to prevent relapse of substance abuse.

By being an observer, the individuals can dis-identify the self from their thoughts, feelings, sensations and memories which are constantly changing. Hayes (2004) mentioned that individuals realize that "there is an unchanging transcendent sense of self (not self as an object but one that is no-thing)" (p.656) which provides safety and a sense of continuity for the client.

Mindfulness can be used to bring awareness on body sensations, feelings, thoughts, content, process or on awareness itself (Siegel, 2002; 2007). Siegel mentioned that it creates different "streams of awareness" (Siegel, 2007).

The 'witnessing self' may reveal a core stream of observation independent from both

narrative and primary sensing. Yet another stream of awareness may exist beyond

sensing the moment, observing ourselves and the constructed categories and concepts of

our explanatory narrative selves. This stream is described by mindfulness practitioners as

a non-conceptual awareness, a kind of 'knowing' before and beyond constructions,

observations and even sensations. (Siegel, 2007, p 262)

It is important to develop this knowing and unchanging transcendent sense of self

referred as the Observer because it facilitates trans-egoic states and the integration of higher state

of spiritual development (Vaughan, 1985).

Overall, mindfulness increases well-being by promoting integration of bottom-up

information, decreasing the control of the top-down (narrative), fostering neuroplasticity and

increasing complexity (Siegel, 2007).

Loving-kindness meditation (metta). Stemmed in Buddhist, loving-kindness meditation

has shown to have very beneficial effects and to increase personal and social resources

(Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008). Loving-kindness meditation increases

positive feelings towards strangers and the desire to connect (Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross,

2008). It increases empathy and compassion towards self and others and the sense of

interconnectiveness (Lutz, Greischar, Perlman, & Davidson, 2009).

Spiritual imagery or relaxation. Richards & Bergin (2005) mentioned that vizualizing

the Divine, a sacred religious or spiritual figure can be very relaxing. It also fosters a sense of

connection to the Divine.

Prayers. Prayers consist of an internal or external expression to communicate with the

Divine. It can take a variety of forms such as adoration, gratitude, asking favors for oneself or

others, confession or a discussion (Richards & Bergin, 2005, Plante 2009; Walker & Moon, 2011). It can be said in silence, loudly, sung, danced or ritualized. .Encouraging clients to pray on behalf of themselves, others or the world can be beneficial because of the connection with something greater than themselves, the trust in the divine, the hope and the action of relinquishing a part of control in their life. It gives a sense of being part of the world and being supported. It is a resource that helps with coping and/or healing (Richards & Bergin, 2005). It improves psychological functioning, promotes well-being and reduces stress (Krause,2003, 2004; Masters, 2007; Plante 2009). Richards & Bergin (2005) indicated that sometimes the therapists pray for their clients inside or outside the session. Richards & Bergin (2005) mentioned the higher risk of transference and blurred boundaries when the therapist prays with the client during the therapeutic session.

Sacred bibliotherapy. The therapist uses religious scripture or spiritual/ sacred text (Cook, Dixon & Fukuyama, 2011; Plante 2009; Richards & Bergin, 2005). The therapists can use quotes or references, link their discussion with some scriptures, recommend reading or studying the sacred texts, support the client to memorize some passage, interpret with the collaboration of the client some scripture which can be of benefit for the spiritual well-being of the client or even use the scriptures in support of questionning some dysfunctional belief (Richards & Bergin, 2005).

Attending community services and rituals. Religious and spiritual communities are a source of social support and a place of social networking. Moreover, in a lot of religious and spiritual practices, there is music and singing in community. They also offer a lot of services such as social activities and support services for members (Plante, 2009).   Additionally, rituals are important to cope with life crisis and transitions (Cole, 2003).

Volunteerism, charity and social justice. Religious institutions promote helping those in need which can foster meaning and purpose, compassion, sense of belonging, inspiration, deeper connection to the Divine, community and distraction from life stressors (Plante, 2009). Moreover, it can be helpful with life crisis such as death, stress, disease and trauma (Pargament, 1996). Furthermore, volunteering can be the bridge which bonds the social action with the spiritual values and beliefs (Richards & Bergin, 2005).

Learning from spiritual models or spiritual history. The clients can nurture the qualities represented by a spiritual model and incorporate them in their life (Plante, 2009; Schlosser & Safran, 2009).

Spiritual-toned therapeutic approaches. Some therapeutic interventions can be used as spiritual techniques such as:

1. Using a spiritual language and metaphor during the session (Schlosser & Safran, 2009)

2. Doing a spiritual genogram (Schlosser & Safran, 2009)

3. Dream interpretation using spiritual elements (Richards & Bergin, 2005).

4. Spiritual assessment (Richards & Bergin, 2005; Schlosser & Safran, 2009).

5. Spiritual journaling (Schlosser & Safran, 2009; Wiggins, 2011)

6. Referral for blessing or for spiritual direction (Richards & Bergin, 2005)

Ethical values and behavior. Religion and spirituality offer guidance and advice about morals, values and principles about how to live (Plante, 2009). The therapist can help the client with clarifying spiritual values or nurturing some of them. Most of religions/spiritualities promote values such as respect of others, altruism, forgiveness, integrity, responsibility, caring about others, justice, compassion, honesty and wisdom.

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Forgiveness, gratitude, and kindness. These three values encompass almost all religious/spiritual practices (Plante, 2009). Forgiveness is a spiritual and emotional process that takes time and should not be rushed. Richard & Bergin (2005) explained the different phases that the clients go through before reaching truthful forgiveness. Forgiveness has been shown to have several benefits on emotional well-being, physical and mental health, sense of personal power and connection (Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005)

Acceptance of self and others. Accepting what is induces more peace (Plante, 2009). The serenity prayer which is used in Alcoholics Anonymous groups is an example of using a sacred text which fosters acceptance in therapeutic setting: "God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other" (Plante, 2009, p.98).

Meaning, purpose, and calling in life. Spirituality can give a framework where a client's unique skills, abilities, strengths and motivation are explored and meaning, purpose and calling can be discovered (Plante, 2009, 2011).

Being part of something larger than oneself. This view gives another deeper perspective on life and can be useful in time of stress (Plante, 2009, 2011). Moreover, it could promote the connection with communities or groups sharing the same interest (Plante, 2011).

Appreciating the sacredness of life. The idea that the Divine dwells in each person fosters more respect, connection and compassion between individuals (Plante, 2009).

Systemic constellation. The systemic or family constellation developed by Bert Hellinger (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998) is a phenomenological approach derived from systemic family therapy and influenced by the Zulus cultural view on the interdependence

between the living and their ancestors (Cohen, 2006; Stones, 2006). Systemic constellation is

usually done in a group and aimed at uncovering hidden dynamic patterns of a system,

disentangling interrelational patterns and finding a healthy and healing resolution (Cohen, 2006;

Stiefel, Harris & Zollman, 2002; Welford, 2014). The client is asked a few questions about

his/her intentions and a little about the background story. The client then chooses some

representative among the group to represent each member of the constellation (it can be family

members, emotions, resources, spiritual entities, different brain structures, etc...) and places them

in the space. The facilitator is in a state of "not knowing" and leaves the spontaneous unfolding

to the representatives by checking regularly their sensations, thoughts and spontaneous

movements. The space where the unfolding happens has been named the "knowing field" by

Hellinger (as cited in Vos & Mooren, 2010, p 74) because the representatives without any prior

knowledge of the person they represent will feel, move or talk like the person they are

representing. Many different explanations were given to understand this phenomenon but

derived from my personal experience as a representative and facilitator of family constellations,

representatives got in touch with the collective unconscious and rendered it conscious through

this process (Mayer & Viviers, 2015). Hellinger (2002) talked about the "soul" of the family.

Hellinger (2002) discussed the idea of interconnectedness between individuals through the

"soul" as he said that individual are:

> Links in a long chain connecting all those who have lived and will live, and these living
>
> now, as if we were all part of one life and one soul. Therefore soul reaches beyond us into
>
> another space: into our families, into larger groups and into the world as a whole. (p.121)

During this process, the facilitator is looking for a breach into the order of precedence

(honouring the generational hierarchical order of position), the right to belong (any exclusion

will imbalance the system), the balance of giving and taking, the responsiblity of one's one fate, and the group consciousness which has its own rules (each entities of the system work for the benefit of the whole group) (Hellinger, 1998; Hetherington & Hostetler, 2007; Stiefel et al., 2002; Welford, 2014). The therapist uses healing sentences to restore the balance of the order, the flow of love, and the balance of the system. Once the system has reached a certain resolution, the client who was just watching the whole process, steps in the constellation and a healing that fosters connection, forgiveness, and acceptance is then performed.

Systemic constellation can also be used incorporating spiritual entities as resources or it can be done on the relationship between the client and spirituality. Some elements can represent the Divine, angels, natural forces, collectives forces, the soul or even the Higher self. It is possible to perform a systemic constellation in individual counselling using felts, dolls, sandtray or different objects (Peyton, personal communication, 2015; Salters, 2013). In this case, the client and/or counsellor will tune into the resonant field of the different representations.

These spiritual techniques can be integrated in most of the therapeutic theoretical modalities. Few psychological therapies (Rowan, 2005, p.88; Wilber, 2000) include spirituality as a core component of their practice. In the following section, I will present four of these therapeutic practices that I found the most informative and interesting.

Spiritually-oriented therapeutic approaches

In this section, I first present a synthetic description of Wilber's developmental model (2000), then I summarize the main principles and techniques of existential, transpersonal and psychosynthesis therapies.

Integral therapy. Integral psychology has been developed by Ken Wilber (2000) who integrated the knowledge of pre-modernism, modernism and postmodernism into a

comprehensible theory of psychological human development. I was interested in this model

because the spiritual dimension of human beings is described as part of the inherent human

nature and as part of normal human development. Wilber (2000, 2005) developed the integral

model, AQAL (all quadrant, all levels) which was drawn upon the commonalities between the

different developmental theories, models and religion/spirituality that exist all over the world and

at different time periods. I have schematically summarized this model in Figure 2.
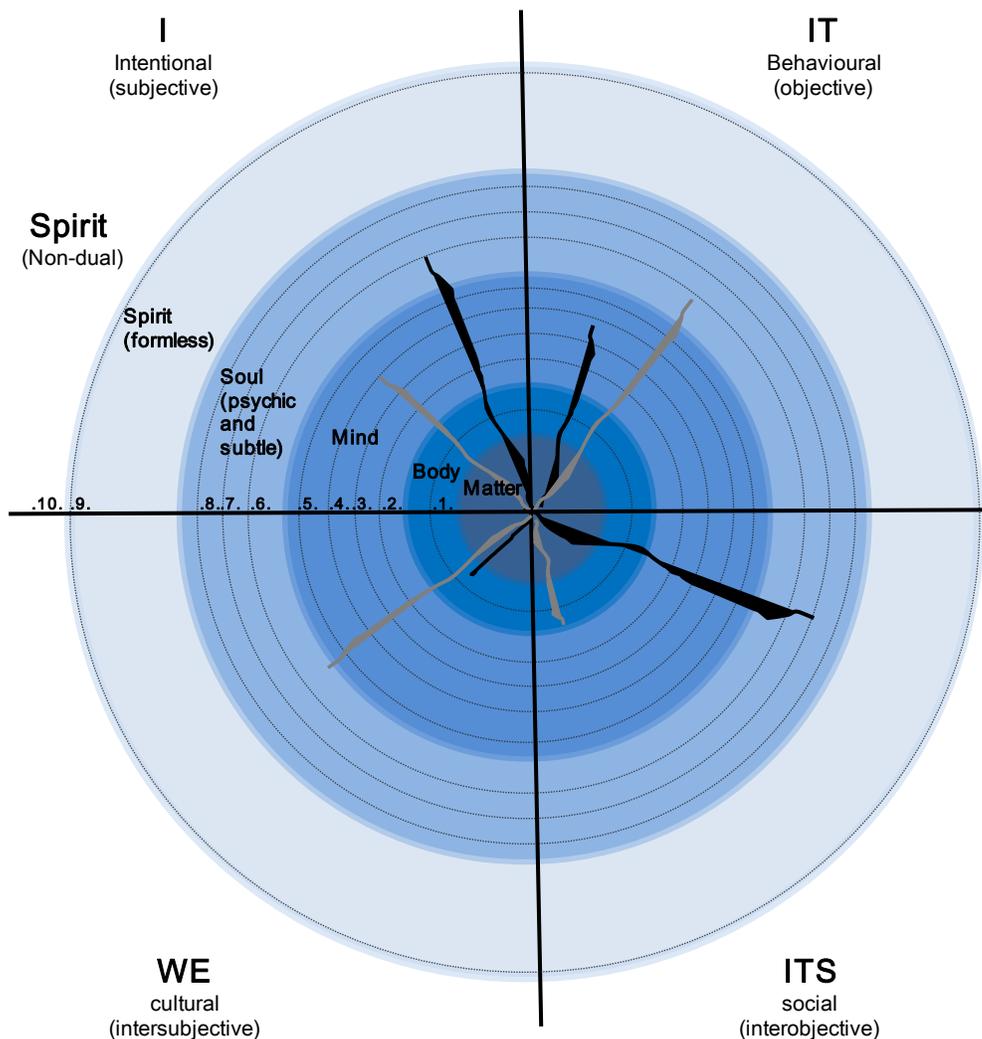
Figure 2. Adaptation of Wilber's figures: Representation of the Holarchy with the

quadrants and the Streams. Source: Wilber, 2000

In a nutshell, the morphogenetic field of development consists in different structural levels organized in holarchy (from matter to Spirit), which are grounded on the non-dual immanent Spirit (Wilber, 2000, 2003, 2005). Wilber (2000, p. 6) called the holarchy the "Great Nest of Being and Knowing". Each level is separated by fluid boundaries. In each person, different streams or lines of development (represented in black and grey lines in Figure 2) such as morals, worldviews, cognition, affects, self-identity, empathy, gender identity and spiritual will developed independently of each other following the holarchical morphogenetic field of development(Wilber, 2000; 2003; 2005). An individual can therefore have different levels of development for different streams.

The Self which consists of three different senses of self (self as a subject (I), as an object (me) and as an observer (I-I)) interprets, balances and integrates every stream, state and level of development (Wilber, 2000, 2003). According to Wilber (2000, p. 35), the self as a subject goes through the holarchical development, by identifying itself with the level, then transcending it by dis-identifying itself from it to identify itself with another level. As each level of development is an holon, a higher level of development includes the lowest levels and the self can move freely between levels that have already been transcended. Each transition from one level to another is accompanied with the death of the previous sense of identity until it reaches the ultimate level where there is no "I" anymore but only the Divine (Atman or God). Wilber (2000) described the following 10 general basic levels of consciousness. The levels 1-4 corresponds to pre-personal, 5 to personal and 6 to 10 to transpersonal levels mentioned in Figure 1.

1. Sensorimotor : it corresponds to the bodily self

2. Phantasmic-emotional or emotional-sexual: it is a phase where instinctual emotions, impulsivity and magical thinking are added to the the bodily self.

3. Representational mind: the self is egocentric and develops self-concept

4. Rule/role mind: the identity-self focuses on rules and roles in the society, developing a persona. The view of self is sociocentric.

5. Formal-reflexive mind: it is a stage of development of rationality, relativism, pluralism and individualistic ego. The ego matures.

6. Vision-logic: this phase corresponds to the Centaur stage, to the discovery of the authentic self. The identity-self is worldcentric, mature and has an integrated mind-body view. It also has an holistic and systemic perspective.

7. Psychic : the identity-self is shamanic-like, where it experiences an intense sense of union with the entire material world. It is also called the nature mysticism.

8. Subtle: in this stage, the self experiences union with deities and archetypal figures. The self is bodhisattvic-like.

9. Causal: in this phase, the self experiences pure emptiness. It is also called the formless mysticism.

10. Non-dual: the self is Buddhic-like. It is everything and no-thing. It is the ground and immanence spirit of all that exist in the manifested and unmanifested.

The spiritual levels which are divided into psychic, subtle and causal are according to Wilber (2000, p. 12), existing potential and are not "fully actualized realities" because in the tapestry of the "Kosmos", the lower levels have been manifested in the world by humanity for a long time whereas few persons through the ages attained the stage of spiritual "awakening".

Wilber (2000, 2005, 2006) added the four quadrants on the holigarchy of Being and Knowing. They represent :

- in the upper left, the subjective individual (internal processes);

- in the upper right, the objective individual (what can be measured: behaviour, neurons, structures, etc...).

Wilber recognized that each individual is embedded into a socio-cultural context that influences the internal processes and even the biological functioning of the individual.

- The lower left quadrant represents the cultural intersubjective such as cultural norms, ethics, values, meaning and worldviews.

- The lower right quadrant represents the material objective of the society such as social institution and geopolitical formation.

Each stream which goes through the levels of development is divided in the four quadrants and can be at different stages in the different quadrants. The level of development in each quadrant for each stream influences each other. For instance, the growth of the individual consciousness can be limited by the lack of acceptance or acknowledgment of the higher spiritual state by the socio-cultural environment which is at a lower level of development (Walsh, 1992). Consequently, according to Wilber (2000), the therapy should aim at every quadrants of the development.

In this model, the spiritual takes different forms. First, the Spirit (non-dual) is interwoven in the fabric of the holarchy and therefore permeates all levels. It also permeates the natural and material world which is the manifested Divine. The Spiritual is also the higher levels of the holigarchy (psychic, subtle, causal and non-dual) which can be attained by the different individual streams, the self and by the "overall self" (sum of the lines of development). Spirituality is also a separate stream or for some people. It is constituted of different attribute line such as care, openness, altruism, moral, religious faith and meditative stages (Wilber, 2000).

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Spiritual dimension can be experienced in different states (peak experiences, altered states of consciousness and during sleep) (Wilber, 2000, 2003, 2005). According to Wilber (2000, p. 14) every human being has access to the subtle realm during their dream and the causal spiritual level during deep sleep. Walsh (1993) mentioned that some religious practitioners could attain higher levels of consciousness by becoming aware during their dreams and practicing their contemplative training during their lucid dreams. They can subsequently reflect during their waking state on what they have learned from their dreams. Some practitioners aim to stay aware 24 hrs /day even during deep sleep, it is called the "Great Realization" (Laberge, 1985; Walsh, 1993). The transcendental spiritual states (psychic, subtle, causal or nondual) can also be experienced temporarily during peak experiences (Wilber, 2000, 2003, 2005). According to Wilber (2000, 2003, 2005), peak experiences can happen at any stage of development and will be perceived and interpreted differently accordingly to the framework of the general developmental stage of the individual. For instance, a person who believes in Christ and has a subtle experience of the Divine light, will interpret that (Wilber, 2006, p. 92):

1) Christ came as a savior for oneself and can transform anything and fulfill one's own desire (magic worldview of stage of development (level 2-3 on Figure 2));

2) Christ came to save only the one who believes in one's own religious faith and one believes litterally what is written in the sacred text (mythic worldview of stage of development (mostly level 4 on Figure 2));

 3) Christ is more human even though he is still divine and is a "teacher of universal love" (rational mind (level 5 on Figure 2));

 4) The experience of Christ is one of experience of universal love among others (pluralistic worldview (level 6 on Figure 2)).

States are temporary. Regular contemplative and meditative practices as well as regular contact with higher states facilitate the attainment to permanent stage of spiritual development (Rowan, 2005; Walsh, 1993; Wilber, 2000, 2005). These practices also facilitate a quicker transition between stages for the lower levels of development (Wilber, 2005, 2006). Religion is part of the cultural and social institutions that influence and shape the lines of consciousness of spirituality (Wilber, 2000, 2006). Certain religions (such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sufism) have developed contemplative and meditative practices that promote the spiritual development and more specifically the growth of consciousness into the transpersonal stage (Walsh, 1993; Wilber, 2000). Interestingly, some religious texts are written in different states of consciousness (subtle, causal or non-dual) and are accessible to the understanding when the readers have experienced these states (Walsh, 1992, 1993). In presence of a client who adheres to a specific religion/ spirituality, it is important to acquire the knowledge of the different spiritual practices and sacred texts and encourage the client to experiment with the practices that facilitate the growth into the subtle, causal and non-dual realms. It is also important to ensure that the client has enough knowledge of these dimensions and to foster the development of their streams of consciousness, worldview, morals, and cognition into the centaur stages in order for the clients to integrate the spiritual experiences in a healthy and constructive way and move forwards in their spiritual development. However an individual is constituted of several streams with a main identity and a multitude of subpersonalities that can be stuck at lower stages of development. In order to attain the higher spiritual realms, these stuck subpersonalities should be processed by bringing awareness to them and using the therapeutic approaches that are appropriate for the developmental level of the stuck personalities.

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  Integral therapy practices. Informed by his theory on integral psychology, Wilber (2006, p 202-205) proposed therapeutic approaches targeting simultaneously: a) the body on the physical level (diet and fitness), subtle and causal levels (such as Tai Chi, and Qigong); b) the mind by focusing on acquiring knowledge, a wider worldview, multiple perspectives and healthy beliefs; c) the spirit using for instance zen approaches, meditation, prayer and compassion; d) the shadow using different therapies like gestalt, cognitive therapy and psychoanalysis in order to integrate the repressed parts of personality into the main personality consciousness. He also designed other modules which are directed towards ethics, sex (sexual yoga), emotions, relationship, work (professional training, relational work and institutional behaviour) and volunteering. This integral approach aims at the four quadrants (Wilber, 2000, 2006). The methods centered on the body and ethics are located in the upper right and upper left quadrants. The approaches focused on the mind, shadow, spirit, emotions and sexual yoga are in the upper left quadrant. The lower right quadrant is processed in the work/volunteering module and the lower left quadrant is targeted mainly in the relationship and sex modules.

  Most of the "traditional" therapies are located in the upper left quadrant. The three therapies that I am going to discuss below, the existential/humanistic, transpersonal therapies and psychosynthesis are working principally in the upper left and sometimes in the lower right quadrants. They mainly promote the development of consciousness in centaur and higher spiritual stages.

  Existential/humanist therapy. The existential-humanist therapy focuses on the vision-logic stage promoting the development of an integrated self (Wilber, 2000). In this therapy, the client is facing his own individuality and confronts existential realities such as death, isolation, freedom, love, meaning, purpose, intentionality, will, suffering and ontological anxiety (Frankl,

1984; Jacobsen, 2008; May, 1960, 1965, 1983; Yalom, 1980). The clients contemplate these existential dilemmas, reflect on the attitudes and beliefs in this life moment, peeling off the conditioned social norms from the deeper authentic self. This therapy is fostering integrity, commitment to moral values, responsibility for one's own life, choices, meaning, sense of agency and the opening of the sense of self to the universality of human condition (Elkins, 2005; Frankl, 1984 ; May, 1983; Yalom, 1980).

The existential-humanist therapists use a phenomenological approach and focus on the present (Elkins, 2005; Jacobsen, 2008; Yalom, 1980). More specifically as stated by Yalom (1980, p. 11) "the future-becoming-present is the primary tense of existential therapy". The aim of the therapy is to enrich a person's life by uncovering their potentiality, broadening their perspective, widening their consciousness, acknowledging and expressing their authentic self and acknowledging the interrelation with others and the world. These approaches emphasize the importance of relationship and interconnection (May, 1983; Jacobsen, 2008; Yalom, 1980). As stated by Jacobsen (2008, p.5), "Human beings are always in relationships – we live in them and through them. We are nurtured by them and produce through them; everything that a human being gives and receives, from birth until death, evolves through relationships."

In the therapeutic setting, the relationship between therapist and client holds the power of healing and is emphasized more than a specific set of techniques (Elkins, 2005; Frankl, 1967; Yalom, 1980). The therapist aims are to foster client's awareness and convert it into consciousness according to May (1960, p 693) and to "de-repress" and uncover what has been forgotten by the client according to Yalom (1980, p. 16).

These approaches take the spiritual endeavor of uncovering and understanding one's unique nature in interconnectedness with others and the world and to live in alignment with

one's own potential, values and intention, transcending the social norms of being. Maslow

(1943) called this process self-actualization and described also a need for self-transcendence

(Koltko-Rivera, 2006; Maslow, 1969). Frankl (1984) emphasized the intrinsic search for

meaning, purpose and life mission, encouraging creativity, social participation and contribution.

Elkins (2005) shared his perspective on working with the spiritual dimension in a

therapeutic setting using a humanistic approach. According to him, some clients present a

symptomatology associated with a "suffering from the soul". He defined the soul as the deep

core of being characterized by a certain quality of experiencing beyond conceptual definition.

He stated that the soul needs to connect regularly with the sacred to be nurtured. The therapy

aims to discover what nurtures the client's soul (art, poetry, music, nature, prayer, rituals,

relationship, play, creativity...) and setting up a regular practice of nurturing activities. One

healing factor is the relationship between therapist and client. The therapist by showing genuine

care, interest, honesty, empathy, acceptance and "therapeutic love" to the client fosters a

supportive environment where the soul can be heard and "cured" (Elkins, 2005; p. 142).

Moreover, Elkins (2005) strongly emphasized that the therapists who are in contact with the

spiritual dimension of their own being will foster deeper contact with the spiritual core of the

clients. Elkins (2005) gave some examples of exercises that he prescribes for his clients such as

reflecting on past activities and experiences of nurturing the clients' soul, completing a sheet

with different activities that people find nourishing, using a relaxing imaginal reflection on the

present spiritual needs, writing a journal of soul nurturing activities and experiences and writing

a program with regular practice of these activities to incorporate them in daily life.

The humanistic-existential therapy encourages the clients to connect with the deep core

of their being. According to Vaughan (1985), the existential self is the integration of the persona

and the shadow. Once the authentic self has been affirmed, dis-identification is necessary to grow to the next stage of spiritual development and go into the transpersonal (Vaughan, 1985; Wilber, 2000).

Transpersonal therapy. Transpersonal therapy is a developmental psychospiritual model focused on the consciousness beyond the personal identification of the self (Rowan, 2005; Vaughan, 1979). Each individual has inner wisdom and self-healing abilities that lead to natural growth in all dimensions (physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual) (Vaughan, 1979). The principal aim of the therapy is to foster the growth of the clients by empowering them to utilize their inner resources, to trust their inner intuition and wisdom and remove obstacles to this process by dis-identifying with limiting beliefs, values and personification associated to the ego and expanding their awareness (Rowan, 2005; Vaughan, 1979, 1985). "In transpersonal therapy, consciousness itself is both the object and the instrument of change" (Vaughan, 1979, p. 103). Spiritual growth comes with the transcendence of limiting views, images, beliefs and perception associated with the identity-ego to more extended levels of consciousness leading to the awakening of the transpersonal consciousness which transcends the duality subject/object to be the unity of what is (Hammer, 1974 ; Vaughan, 1979, 1985). The transpersonal therapists and the clients question in depth values, beliefs, assumptions, thoughts, feelings, meaning and purpose. The "transpersonal content also includes the mythical, archetypal and symbolic realms of inner experience that can come into awareness through imagery and dreams" (Vaughan, 1979, p 104). Transpersonal therapy promotes the development of the "observer-awareness" which witnesses with detachment (without labeling or judging) and acceptance all internal and external experiences and states of mind. The transpersonal process consists of a process of self-identification and integration, followed by dis-identification to identify with a higher more

complex concept of self (from role-defined ego, existential self, observer-self, subtle self to no-self (pure awareness)) (Vaughan, 1979, 1985). Growth is an interplay between creative drive and letting go. The subtle self is the identification with archetypes or symbols (nature, deity) (Rowan, 2005). The transpersonal self is a higher state of awareness. It is present in the moment of each experience and is holistic, viewing different perspectives at the same time. It is the "embodiment of higher values" and has "a sense of being connected to everyone and everything as an integral part of a larger whole." (Vaughan, 1985, p.28). It is characterized by wisdom, compassion, understanding, forgiveness, wholeness, peacefulness, acceptance, gratefulness as well as being non-controlling, non-judgemental and non-attached. The transpersonal self is linked with higher 'intuitivity" and is "being fully aware of the interdependent unity of organism and environment" (Vaughan, 1985, p18). "The self as an open living system is continually in flux. Seeing the psyche as a mirror of the universe implies that boundaries imposed on the self are purely arbitrary" (Vaughan, 1985, p. 21). The self is a dynamic process of creativity and reactivity in constant interconnection with others, the environment and all that exists (Vaughan, 1985).

A positive result of successful therapy is an extended self-concept which participates with detachment and acceptance to life experiences, a shift towards service and contribution to others, a new sense of meaning, an inner peace and an increased sense of relatedness and interconnectedness (Vaughan, 1979).

In transpersonal therapy, the therapist's level of openness, consciousness, self-awareness, inner depth, inner knowledge, self-identity, spiritual and transpersonal experiences as well as the therapist's ability to enter the stages of psychic and subtle spiritual levels will influence the client's work in the transpersonal and will promote and enhance the healing

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potential and inner resources of the client and facilitate the development and growth of the client

into higher spiritual stages (Rowan, 2005; Vaughan, 1979). According to Rowan (2005),

working in the transpersonal is mostly working in the psychic and subtle realms, however he

recognizes that the therapist can work in the causal (formless) stage in which the client's

problems are transcended.

In the subtle realm, most of the therapist's work is about contacting. The therapist is

connected to the client and the therapist's sense of self is extended and includes the client. This

connection is called linking and according to Rowan (2005), the therapist "merges"

consciousness with the clients and feels their body sensations, emotions , thoughts and

unconscious mind. This connection is very healing for the client. The therapist's work is mostly

intuitive and comes from the space of "not knowing". It is a very creative process (Rowan,

2005). According to Clark (1977) , it is important that the transpersonal therapist has a spiritual

development and is not affiliated to any particular religion or specific spirituality in order to give

the client the free choice to his/her own path of transpersonal practices and development.

Moreover, it is necessary for the therapists to be open to new learning even in their session with

the clients. The therapists are holding the space that allow the client's transpersonal experiences

to unfold and therefore they do not interpret these experiences (Rowan, 2005). The therapists

need to have a regular contemplative/meditative practice and have a deep experiential knowledge

of the transpersonal in order to understand and facilitate his/her client's work in the

transpersonal (Rowan, 2005; Walsh, 1992). Rowan (2005) even advised shamanic journeying

and tantric works. Moreover, with practice and experience, the therapist can voluntary go into

the psychic, subtle or even causal realm and meet the client's consciousness there (Rowan,

2005). It is important that the therapist knows the difference between the transpersonal and the

magical/mythic experiences of the pre-personal (Rowan, 2005). Moreover the transpersonal

therapists can meet the shadow of subpersonalities that they need to differentiate from the

transpersonal shadow which is the shadow part of humanity in the spiritual realm (Rowan, 2005).

In their studies of religious practices, Walsh and Vaughan (1993) discerned six principal

elements that are important in transpersonal growth : (a) ethical behaviours; (b) attentional

training to direct it according to one's own will; (c) emotional transformation with emotional

awareness and cultivation of positive emotions and equanimity; (d) focusing and redirecting

motivation; (e) present-centered awareness accompanied with refined perception of the inner and

outer world; (f) access to deeper wisdom and full acceptance of what is.

In the following section, I will describe some techniques that have been used by

transpersonal therapists:

1. The two chairs approach can be used with a subpersonality, an archetype or the higher

self (Rowan, 2005).

2. The active imagination corresponds to a dialogue between a personified image which

is created by the unconscious and brought to consciousness by letting the imagination

unfold when focusing on one point, image or content. It is important that the client let

the imagination flow without controlling it and is actively engaged in the discussion so

that he/she could discover the underlying message of the unconscious image and creates a

meaning (Johnson, 1986; Rowan, 2005).

3. There are different types of symbolic visualization which have been summarized by

Rowan (2005, p. 144-147) :

1. In the controlled visualizations, the clients are focusing:

- on a static symbol such as a flower, a mandala, a representation of harmonious human's relation, a representation of masculinity, femininity, or affective states;

- on dynamic symbolization such as transformation, renewal or growth;

- on a symbol of a scene such as the attritutes of "ideal" or wanted personality or the symbolization of reconstructing, of a relationship or of finding a centre. It can be used to foster desirable qualities.

2. In spontaneous symbolization, the clients may start with an image and let go of the process. It can be a visualization of somatic or emotional states. The visualization can also start by using the pictures of projective techniques such as the Thematic Apperception Test or Rorschach pictures or by using content, thoughts or dreams or by simply exploring the silence.

3. In the guided fantasy, the client is hearing about scenes invoking ascent (spiritual nature) or descent (personal unconscious) like climbing a mountain, or diving deep in the ocean. Guided fantasy can be used to discover the wise man, inner goddess, inner creative place, or human potentials.

4. The symbolic representations may also be used in an inner dialogue with a subpersonality.

4. Dreams are full of symbols from subtle realms. In the session, the client may identify with a symbol in the dream and talk as if he/she was this symbol or archetype.

5. Symbol systems such as I Ching, tarot, astrology or runes can be used as a tool for self-awareness and a gate to the intuitive higher self (Rowan, 2005).

6. Meditation can complement the therapeutic session either by being used at the beginning of the session or between sessions (Rowan, 2005; Vaughan, 1979; Walsh, 1992; Wilber, 2006). There is a diversity in meditative and contemplative practices such as mindfulness meditation, surrendering meditation to the Divine, dancing, chanting or meditating on a mantra, a symbol, an affirmation, an object or the breath. Rowan (2005, p 210) pointed out that prayers can be useful too and more particularly the "prayer of openness" which opens the person to the Divine. Walsh (1992) highlighted the benefits of doing meditation which incurs a lot of changes in client's perception, compassion and ability to cope with stress.

Most of these techniques are also used in psychosysnthesis which I will describe in the next section. Psychosynthesis also integrates the spiritual development of the client in the therapeutic dimension. Psychosynthesis therapists consider that spirituality is a natural intrinsic impulse which when repressed can induce symptoms of sickness in a client (Gerard, 1964).

Psychosynthesis. Psychosynthesis has been developed by Roberto Assagioli (Assagioli, 1965). "Psychosynthesis refers to the integration and harmonious expression of the totality of our human nature—physical, emotional, mental and spiritual" (Gerard, 1964, p. 1). I will briefly describe the main principles of psychosynthesis in the following section.

Assagioli (1959) assumed that the human psyche is divided in different parts (Figure 3).

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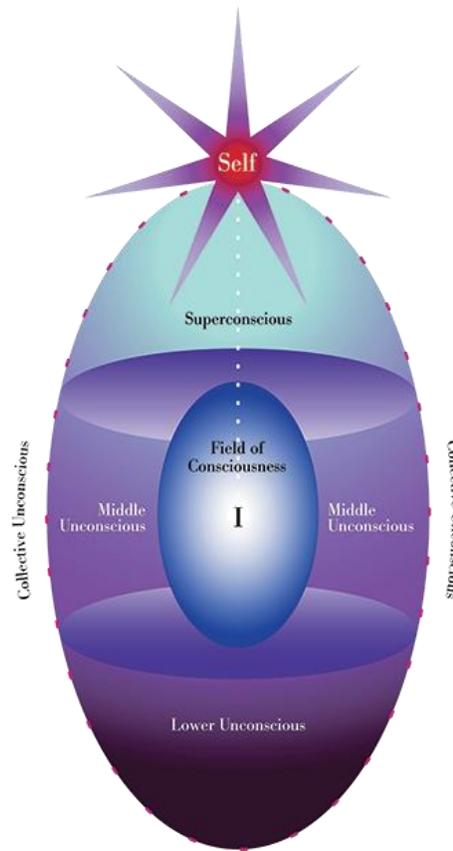
Figure 3. Egg diagram (Originally from Assagioli (1959) and adapted by the synthesis center)

(www.synthesiscenter.org)

The lower unconscious is the seat of basic drives, biological functions and intense

emotionally-charged complexes. The middle unconscious is the pre-conscious state of normal

waking state and contains many of the subpersonalities of a person (Firman & Russel, 1992).

The superconscious or higher unconscious is the source of bliss, higher spiritual energy or states,

characterized by altruism, empathy, love, wisdom, intuition, creative inspiration and "urges to

humanitarian and heroic action" (Assagioli, 1959, p. 5). The personal or conscious self

described as 'I" is a mere reflection in the conscious field of personality, of the Higher Self or

spiritual Self (Assagioli, 1959, 1961). The "I" has "awareness and will" (Firman & Russel,

1992, p. 18). The spiritual Self is an integrative center which encompasses the personal

unconscious, the conscious and has access to the collective unconscious, thereby being "in

contact with the transcendent reality" (Assagiali, 1976, p. 16). The aim of psychosynthesis is to

attain personal growth, integration (personal psychosynthesis) and spiritual development through

Self-realization (spiritual psychosynthesis), which means realizing that the inner self is just a

projection and discovering the Higher Self and re-centering one's personality in harmony with

the Higher Self and moving towards unification with the Higher/ Spiritual Self. According to

Gerard (1964, p. 13), "the experience of the spiritual Self combines a keen sense of identity (of

individuality, of being one's self, of discovering one's true self), and the sense of universality, of

oneness, of unity with the cosmos.

The therapeutic process contains mainly four stages (Assagioli, 1959):

1. The clients gain a thorough understanding and awareness of the forces, energies, and

repressed elements that are in play in their personality by exploring the conscious and

unconscious (middle and lower) dimension of their being.

2. The clients then use objectification, analysis, discrimination, awareness and different

exercises to control different elements of personality. The clients learn to dis-identify the

Self with the body, the emotions, the thoughts, the bodily sensory experiences, and even

the conscious waking self which disappears during sleep, hypnosis and anesthesia. "We

are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate

and control everything from which we dis-identify ourselves" (Assagioli, 1959, p. 8).

3. "Then who am I? I am a Self. I am a point of pure self-awareness" (Gerard, 1964, p.

5)". The following stage leads to the realization of the "true or real" Self and the

identification with the Higher Self. The clients expand their awareness to the higher level

of unconsciousness (superconscious). They experience the Higher Self or can use "ideal

models" of personality to be in alignment with their own growth and natural abilities

(Assagioli, 1959, p13).

4. The last phase is to reconstruct a new personality around the new unifying center ("I")

which is in harmony with the Higher Self and closer to the Spiritual Self. This is mainly

an active process of creation but some people prefer to use a passive process by letting

the inner Spirit or the Divine being their guide. Assagioli (1959) advised that it is

preferable to use a mix of both. In this stage the client learns to use different energies,

resources and transformational forces, to foster the development of some

"underdeveloped" functions such as the will and the intuition and to balance sensing,

thinking, feeling and intuition (Gerard, 1964). As spiritual development progresses, the

new integrated personality centered around the "I" will go closer to the Spiritual Self,

acquiring a broader perspective, an extension of consciousness, a better understanding

and acceptance (Crampton, 1977). Assagioli (1976) reported that clients will have

experiences of psychic, subtle and even causal spiritual nature when the consciousness of

the "I" is moving along towards the Spiritual Self and the non-dual space. As the "I" can

go higher, it can also go lower and unravel deeper materials from the lower unconscious

(Crampton, 1977).

The therapist recognizes that the inner spiritual Self of the client is a better and wiser

guide for the client than the mind of the therapist and therefore the therapist's main work is to

facilitate the client's awareness and knowledge on how to use the "higher energies" for the

rebuilding of the new center of personality (Gerard, 1964, p. 3).

Psychosysnthesis therapists use different techniques such as journaling, role-playing and the multiple seat technique in which the client can act as each subpersonality and take also the role of the center as an observer (Crampton, 1977). Moreover, they use imagery, meditation and symbolic visualizations as described in the transpersonal section. During the session, the symbols of underlying unconscious processes can be evoked and changed which allow the client to gain a certain control of the unconscious dynamics (Gerard, 1964). In psychosynthesis, the spontaneous visualizations can be used to reach the depths of the unconscious and transform it through the highest qualities or aspirations (Gerard, 1964; Crampton, 1977). For spiritual psychosynthesis, Gerard(1964, p. 14) used specifically "guided daydreams" where the symbols of ascent and descent are used, vizualisation of a light which the client can identify with inner guidance/wisdom/spiritual self or inner dialogue with a personified higher Self. Assagioli (1969) grouped the symbols used in guided imagery into 14 groups : 1) introversion; 2) descent; 3) ascent; 4) expansion ; 5) awakening; 6) light; 7) fire; 8) development; 9) intensification; 10) love; 11) pilgrimage; 12) transmutation; 13) rebirth-regeneration and 14) liberation. A lot of resources and techniques are available at http://www.synthesiscenter.org.

Dealing with spiritual issues

Psychosynthesis, transpersonal, existential and integral therapies include spirituality as a core component of the therapeutic dimension. It is important to note that dealing with spirituality is not always smooth sailing and for some clients, the storm is in the spiritual ocean. This current section will highlight some possible issues that the therapist may encounter during their spiritualy-oriented practice.

Spirituality can become a resource in therapy or can be part of the issue.

Spiritual wound or religious abuse. Some people have experienced a deep wound in the sacredness of their spirituality (in conjunction with deleterious physical, mental, emotional and interpersonal effects) when abuse,violence or oppression has been perpetrated by a representative of a particular religion or happened in relation to religion/spiritual faith (Novsak, Mandelj & Simonic, 2012; Pargament, Murray-Swank & Mahoney, 2008). It is important to disentangle the act of abuse/violence/oppression from the spirituality and the sacred. For this aim, a need may arise to transform and change the client's own understanding, practices, relationship and experience of religion/spirituality (Pargament et al., 2008). In the case of clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse, Pargament et al. (2008) discussed the deleterious effect of sexual abuse on the spiritual relationship to God, to the practice, to the spiritual community, to the church and to what is sacred. They proposed three stages to spiritual healing. The first stage is to engage the clients into a spiritual dialogue about God and about the effect of abuse on their spirituality. It is important that the clients express emotions such as anger and betrayal towards God and talk about their current relationship with spirituality. The second phase is to recognize the spiritual resources that are still accessible to the clients. In the final stage, the client is addressing the spiritual problems and is redefining new spiritual belief, practices, rituals and narratives.

Pargament et al. (2008) mentioned an intervention tailored for clients who have been sexually abused by the clergy. In this intervention, they use different techniques such as asking the clients to reflect on their spiritual journey, having a discussion about the masculine and feminine image of God, using visualization of different form of God/Divinity, and asking the clients to express feelings of abandonment, anger, spiritual disengagement or disconnection. They also address the clients' spiritual struggles, ask the clients to have a conversation with

God/Divine using two-way journaling and discuss different ways to connect to the presence of the Divine. They use spiritual imagery exercises, loving kindness meditation and spiritual affirmations. They talk with the clients about shame and distorted cognition/beliefs as resultant of the abuse, about the physical and emotional effects of sexual assault and the effect on sexuality. They use cognitive restructuring as well as rituals about tearing up shame and being spiritually beautiful. They finish the sessions with a spiritual ritual on celebrating the clients' strength and resilience and their spiritual transformation.

Spiritual crisis. Spiritual doubt and dis-engagement happen often during life transitions when there is a shift in perspective and after a negative life event which shakes the belief in a "all loving" Divine (Pargament, 2011). It is a process of grief, of revisiting previous beliefs and assumptions, finding peace and reconnecting with the Divine by finding new meaning, redefining and transforming the representation of the Divine and the"sacred".

Spirituality as a part of the problem. Spirituality is part of the problem when the clients belong to a spiritual organization that condemns a part of their way of being or living, for instance, some faiths condemn homosexuality, divorces, abortion or marrying someone who does not belong to the same faith (Plante, 2011). In this case, the therapist may help the clients redefine some of their beliefs and practices, shifting constructively their representation of the Divine and sometimes exchanging their spiritual organization for one which is more accepting and embracing of differences. In parallel, the clients will undergo a process of letting go of old habits, beliefs and community which could be very difficult but sometimes very necessary for the whole well-being of the client.

Spiritual rigidity. Spiritual rigidity corresponds to when a person's spiritual beliefs are so rigid that it can affect intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship (Plante, 2011). Plante (2011)

recommended having a consultation with the spiritual leader and forging a collaborative approach which can provide clarification, understanding and constructive transformation for destructive or maladaptive spiritual beliefs and practices. The therapist may also make references to the appropriate sacred text, recommend the practice of acceptance and of altruism through volunteering. The other spirituals tools described at the beginning of this chapter could be very useful as well.

      Spiritual emergency. Spiritual emergency has been defined by Grof & Grof (1989) as the spontaneous intense and sometime overwhelming experience of a spiritual state which takes over all the sensory perceptions and is often accompanied byunusual emotions and a radical shift in thoughts. It could also be accompanied by a surge in energy which may induce shaking and involuntary movements. These experiences are very diverse. It can be experiences of one-ness with the universe and sense of unity or as described by Grof (1998; p.54), it can be a "phenomena as shattering sequences of psychospiritual death and rebirth, encounters with archetypal beings, visits to mythological realms, past life sequences from other cultures, or visions of flying saucers and alien abduction experiences." These experiences for the unprepared individual can produce a lot of anxiety, confusion and fear and be destabilizing. The duration of the experiences is variable and may last for a few months but it is usually temporary.

      These mystical experiences can be confounded with psychotic crisis and Lukoff (1985; Lukoff, Lu, & Turner, 1998) proposed a differential diagnosis between psychosis and psychospiritual crises criteria:

    1. good functioning, before the episode;

    2. an acute occurrence of symptoms within a period of three months;

    3. the presence of a stressful precipitant that can account for the acute symptoms;

4. a positive exploratory attitude toward the experience.

Ego inflation could happen when a person has an experience of intuitive wisdom or numinous presence and falsely identifies it with the ego. Some transpersonal experiences can be so overwhelming that people develop defenses mechanism to reinforce their ego boundaries that can look like symptoms of mental illness such as paranoia (Kasprow & Scotton, 1999).

It is important to differentiate pre-personal and transpersonal content of the spiritual experiences (Lukoff et al., 1998). The pre-personal content shows a regression in the psychological development which is a psychotic state. Reinforcing the ego is usually recommended at this point.

In the case of spiritual emergency, it is necessary to normalize and educate the clients about transpersonal states. In the session, the therapist helps the clients reflect and integrate their experiences (Lukoff et al., 1998). It is also recommended that the clients do a lot of grounding exercises (gardening, jogging, walking and expressive art) and eat grounding food (red meat) (Grof & Grof, 1989; Lukoff et al., 1998). Integrating these experiences helps the person to grow and constructively transform their life.

In this section, I gave examples of some spiritual issues that the spiritually-oriented therapist can encounter. This is not an exhaustive list of all possible spiritual issues, therefore it is important that the therapists get acquainted with the literature on this subject as well as seeking supervision from an experienced spiritually-oriented therapist.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described some spiritually-oriented techniques that can be used with different theoretical therapeutic approaches and I have summarized the main principles of four therapies which incorporate the spiritual dimension as core of their practices. These four

therapies promote the clients' integration of their different parts (shadow, persona, subpersonalities, repressed emotions and beliefs), and foster the process of dis-identification with the personality-ego in order to identify with a deeper and more integrated self (more "authentic" or higher on the transpersonal level). These therapies are highly collaborative and organic. They emphasize the need for the therapist to have personal spiritual experiences and a knowledge and understanding of spiritual dimensions. In the transpersonal realm,they use a lot of imaginal techniques such as visualizations and promote meditative and contemplative approaches. According to Chandler, Holden & Kolander (1992), along the path of spiritual development, the client can oscillate between spiritual repression (denial or defiance against their natural inclination towards spirituality) and spiritual emergency (excessive preoccupation with a spiritual experience). The therapist will use in this case, techniques for "sacrilization/ resacrilization" or grounding/integration techniques (Chandler et al., 1992, p. 170). It is important that the clients are open to spirituality and that their spiritual experiences are integrated to foster a balanced spiritual wellness and growth. In the next chapter, I will present different approaches promoting spirituality that could be integrated in counselling.

Chapter IV: Other approaches promoting spirituality

In this chapter, I described three approaches that promote spiritual experiences that could be potentially integrated in counselling sessions. I was interested in these approaches because they emphasize attributes of our human condition that are not often used in therapeutic settings. The first practice focuses on the embodied spirit and the connection to the spiritual dimension of our being through rhythms, waves and dance. The second technique highlights the social aspect of the individual and the importance of contact and two-way communication in the cycle of identification/dis-identification of the mind. Finally, the third approach emphasizes that humans are an open system in constant relationship with their environment and specifically with this spiritually-embedded natural world.

Five rhythms-based ecstatic dancing

Dancing has been part of the healing process and spiritual rituals for thousands of years. Dance is a natural medium of communication, interaction, and expression that human beings have displayed since being infants. Our feelings, memories, perceptions, inspirations, expressions are embodied and dance/movement gives us access to embodied knowledge and wisdom (Snowber, 2012). Research shows that dancing increases perceived physical, emotional, social and spiritual benefits and improves self-esteem and copying strategies (Quiroga Murcia, Kreutz, Clift, & Bongard, 2010). Dance or movement has been used as healing therapeutic modality in an embodied experiential therapy, the dance and movement therapy (DMT) (Levy, 1988). In DMT, authentic movement (AM) is one of the practices that can promote transpersonal content (Stromsted, 2009). AM therapists are a container and hold the space as a witness of the somatic expression of the client who uses 'active imagination' with movements to express unconscious content, affect, imagery and archetypes (Wyman-McGinty, 1998). During

these sessions, emotional, cognitive, physiological and spiritual contents can be experienced, expressed and integrated (Stromsted, 2009). However, this practice is mostly used to process deep repressed emotional and cognitive content or early childhood experiences.

Another type of dancing which fosters spiritual experiences is the five rhythms-based ecstatic dancing (Roth, 1997; Roth & Loudon, 1998). Ecstatic dancing is a non-facilitated, non-verbal and conscious free-form dance. Individuals usually meet to dance their own unicity and experience at the present moment. During the dance, the emotional, mental, physical contents are being brought to awareness, expressed and processed through dancing. The surrendering of the mind to the rhythms let the space for the expression of the soul and the spirit (Roth, 1997; Roth & Loudon, 1998). "Ecstasy is an egoless, timeless state of being. It's a state of total alignment and unity. Unity of body, heart, mind, soul and spirit" (Roth & Loudon, 1998, p.2). In the five rhythms-based ecstatic dancing, the music is following the five rhythms defined by Gabrielle Roth, a dancer and choreographer who taught movement therapy at the demand of Fritz Perls in Esalem (Roth, 1997, p. xxvi; Roth& Loudon, 1998, p.16). From her experience, life is a wave of rhythms. There are mainly 5 rhythms: flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical and stillness. According to her, "Rhythm is our mother tongue. […] Energy moves in waves. Waves move in patterns. Patterns move in rhythms. A human being is just that, energy, waves, patterns, rhythms. Nothing more. Nothing less. A dance" (Roth, 1997, p. xxvii). Dancing these 5 rhythms fosters an alignment body, heart, mind, soul and spirit. "Movement isn't only meditation; it's also medicine that heals the split between our minds and hearts, bodies and soul" (Roth& Loudon, 1998, p.2). Roth considered that "Each rhythm was a state of being" (Roth, 1997, p. 37). I summarized in the following paragraph my understanding of Roth's definition of each rhythm (Roth, 1997; Roth & Loudon, 1998).

1. Flowing. Dancing the flowing rhythm is slow, circular, wavy and elegant. It is connected with the feminine and intuitive awareness. Connecting to the flow is being grounded in harmony with rhythms and cycles, connected to our unique flow of energy and energy of the earth. Flowing is being in the body. This rhythm is linked with the earth element. It is taking in and being.

2. Staccato. The movements in staccato rhythm are sharp, edgy, defined and in repetitive pattern. The patterns can change abruptly and are primal. Roth associated this rhythm the heart, and the expression of feelings and needs. This rhythm is connected with the masculine, focus, direction and action. It is linked with the fire element. It is feeling, expressing and organizing our energy.

3. Chaos. Dancing the chaos rhythm is like a tribal dance with a lot of energy into the feet. It corresponds to the union of feminine and masculine. It is a release, a surrendering of the rational mind leading to creating space for the fluid intuitive mind. It is linked to the water element. It is a place of surrender, intuition and creativity, a place for the archetypal artist.

4. Lyrical. The movements in lyrical rhythm are airy, graceful and light. It is connected with freedom, choice, possibilities, maturity and responsibilities for creating one's own life. It is the "rhythm of self-realization" (Roth, 1977, p.43) and the "embodiment of the universal dynamic of change" (Roth, 1997, p. 40). In lyrical, there is a detachment and fluidity. It is connected with the soul. It is associated with imagination and the shapeshifter archetype.

5. Stillness. This rhythm corresponds to 'dynamic stillness'. The movements are vibrant of the energy of just being in the present, in the stillness between each motion, in the

space between each being. It is connected to wisdom, compassion and inspiration (from Higher Self). "In stillness, we contemplate the mystery that infuses every aspect of the universe-including the deepest recesses of our own soul" (Roth, 1997, p.43). It is connected to space and the alchemist archetype. "Each of us is a vast field of energy that is constantly in motion. But at our core is a still point"(Roth, 1998, p. xix).

These five rhythms create a wave. "The Wave of the rhythms is the key to the entire creative process" (Roth, 1997,p. 194).

In flowing you discover yourself. In staccato you define yourself. Chaos helps you dissolve yourself, so you don't end up fixed and rigid in their self you discovered and defined. Lyrical inspires you to devote yourself to digging deep into the unique expression of your energy. And stillness allows you to disappear in the big energy that holds us all so you can start the whole process over again." (p.194-195)

In order to align the body, heart, mind, soul and spirit, Roth described a map to reach 'ecstasy' dancing the five rhythms (Roth & Loudon, 1998). According to her, the disconnection between body, heart, mind leads to contradiction between each part and hinder our connection to the soul/spirit. In a safe place/container, Roth advised to consciously explore being fully embodied, feel and express with spontaneity, authenticity, flexibility, fluidity and wisdom emotions present in the moment. It is important in the process of dancing to reconnect with resistant and repressed parts of ourselves and to express them in their full capacity. She also recommended to distinguish the patterns and different role plays of the mind, and to dis-identify with them in order to empty the mind to reach a deeper knowing coming from intuitive wisdom and 'awaken' the soul. In this process, she sometimes dances an exaggerated expression of the different actors of the mind (which have their own rhythms). "Living from the soul, rather than

the ego" (Roth & Loudon, 1998, p. 141) means living from the authentic self, a creative place of

flexibility responsive to the present moment and not from a structured fixed conditioned role

created by the ego reactive to the environment because of the past. Finally, she mentioned to be

the embodied spirit. "Freeing the spirit means fanning that spark of infinity into a consuming

fire, channeling the ultimate into the now, embodying the infinite in our finite lives" (Roth &

Loudon, 1998, p. 176). It is a place of inspiration and spontaneous effortless creativity. It is also

a place of stillness, being every-thing and no-thing, just beingness.

During the practice of five rhythm-based ecstatic dancing, the awareness is brought to the

inner experiential embodied moments and follows the inner dance impulse into full expression

(Roth, 1997; Roth & Loudon, 1998). During the dance, the individual can have different

experiences. It can be only physical, emotional, mental, imaginal, relational, spiritual or it can

be a mix. Roth mentioned that some individuals experience resistance towards certain rhythms

and easiness in others (Roth, 1997; Roth & Loudon, 1998). It is important to know and re-

discover all the inner rhythms which could have been repressed or forgotten and re-claim the

whole range of experience at all levels.

The whole practice of 5 rhythms touches all dimensions of human being and Roth stated

that "People practicing the rhythms regularly experience dramatic improvements in well-being"

(Roth & Loudon, 1998, p. 38-39). A research study (Cook & Ledger, 2004) revealed that

women who danced the 5 rhythms also reported cathartic, integrative, and transformative effects

such as getting 'unstuck', integrating part of themselves and discharging strong emotions. This

practise can be very useful in counselling to integrate and process experiences. In addition, the

rhythms facilitate the surrendering of the mind which allows connection with the spiritual

dimension of being. In this practice, Roth (Roth & Loudon, 1998) is also talking about dis-

identification with the role plays by the actors of the mind, a factor common with the spiritually-oriented counselling approaches described in the previous chapter. The connection to the higher spiritual states is experienced grounded in the body through the dance revealing an embodied form of expression unique for each individual.

In the counselling context, five rhythms-based ecstatic dancing can be performed at home as a regular practice, during individual counselling session with the counsellor and/or in group setting. It is important that the clients communicate their experiences to the therapist in order to process and integrate them. They can practice the whole wave or just a particular rhythm if the client encounters resistance. In order to promote spiritual growth, a regular practice is necessary as the individuals will learn to surrender more and more to the rhythms and go deeper in their experiences. According to Roth (Roth & Loudon, 1998, p. 86), "life itself, through its stages of development, is the path to enlightenment"; "life is a mysterious game: the only way to win is to surrender."

The dyad technique in enlightenment intensive

The following approach has been developed by Charles Berner in the late 1970's to create an environment favorable for having an 'enlightenment' experience (Berner & Sosna, 2005). Spiritual awakening or enlightenment is spontaneous and cannot be induced (Vaughan, 1979) but developing a practice to be in an optimum state to receive this experience is possible. Charles Berner studied different techniques and finally developed the enlightenment intensive (EI) format (Berner & Sosna, 2005). According to him, thirty to forty percent of individuals have an enlightenment experience after three days. This enlightenment experience is transitory but has a great effect on the individual. During the EI, a group of individual gathers and immerses themselves in doing the EI technique for three, seven or fourteen days in a row. This

EI technique aims at emptying the mind and intending to directly experience the 'truth' by contemplating, surrendering to what is present, fully experiencing the object of inquiry and communicating the experience to a dyad partner. According to Charles Berner (Berner & Sosna, 2005; Whieldon, 2015), the mind has been created because of missed or repressed communication between individuals. These missed communication and not fully integrated experience stayed in the mind, piled up, clogged it and the mind had to develop structures, attitudes, beliefs, and states in order to try to communicate indirectly what has not been communicated. An individual is then experiencing life through the senses and perception, interpretation, analyzes and filters of the mind. Berner's technique is a way to dissolve or bypass the mind to directly experience the object of inquiry (Berner & Sosna, 2005). According to him, an individual can only directly experience oneself so he defined enlightenment as "a conscious state of direct knowledge of yourself as you truly are" (Berner & Sosna, 2005, p 1). "In the state of enlightenment there is no separation between the one who has the conscious, direct knowledge and the one who is known. The knower and the known are in union" (Berner & Sosna, 2005, p .8). The object of inquiry or enlightenment is usually the self but some people use also life, another or love. There is different depth in the enlightenment experiences. According to my own experience and other's communication about their enlightenment experiences during an EI, individual can have a wide range of spiritual experiences that can be categorized in the psychic, subtle, causal and non-dual dimensions (Wilber, 2000).

During the EI, individuals are paired up in dyads (Berner & Sosna, 2005). Each dyad lasts 38-40 min. The dyad partners alternate between being the one listening and the one contemplating, experiencing and communicating. Each turn is either at every 4:38 -5 min or when the communication is complete. The listening partner begins the exchange by making

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contact with the dyad partner by focusing his/her full attention on the dyad partner and giving the

following instruction: 'Tell me who/what you are' (or 'Tell me what life/another/love is'). The

dyad partner then receive the instruction, and begin the contemplation by having the intent to

directly experience the object of inquiry and by being open to whatever occurs. The dyad

partner contemplates and then communicate fully (with no filters) to the listener who was in

contact the full time, about the result of the contemplation. At the end of the turn, the listener

acknowledges the communication by thanking his/her partner and receives the instruction from

his/her partner who became the listener. It is important in this process that the communication is

directly fully given and that the listener understands the communication. The level of contact

and connection between dyad partners affect the depth of the process and the openness of the one

who is contemplating. During the dyad process, the individuals usually identify themselves with

an idea, a personality trait or a concept and then by trying to directly experiencing it and

communicating, they dis-identify with it and move on (Berner & Sosna, 2005). The content of

the mind that has been communicated dissolves. During this process, there are short moments

when the mind has more space and is empty. Enlightenment experiences happen often during

these moments.

      This technique teaches the individual to let go. At the end of each turn, the individuals

need to let go of what was present in them to focus on their dyad partner. This technique is also

a balance between surrendering to what is present in the moment and the focused willfulness of

the intention to experience directly the object of inquiry. I think that these two factors along with

the successful communication and the genuine attentive contact are the keys to go through the

rapid cycle of identification, dis-identification and being open to higher states of consciousness.

Berner (Berner & Sosna, 2005) mentioned the resistance of the mind and the ego to dissolution therefore the intensity of the EI is necessary to overcome these barriers. However, people who have already had spiritual experiences can more easily enter in contact with spiritual dimensions through dyads outside of an EI. In the context of counselling, this technique can be directly used to foster spiritual development with people having already experienced higher spiritual states. During dyads, content of the mind (idea, concept, emotionally charged memories, trauma, feelings and belief) get cleared and deep seated contents emerge that would need other counselling techniques to be processed. This technique can therefore be used in combination with other counselling tools in counselling session. From my experience, doing this technique dyad promotes also mindfulness and higher awareness. This technique can be used in individual counselling session (the dyad partner would be the therapist), in group setting and/or as a regular practice at home like a meditative practice. In individual session, the therapists are recommended to be in higher state of consciousness to contact the clients in order to facilitate the client's connection with his/her spiritual state and to not bring their own unprocessed content into the session. It is also interesting to do this technique with different persons, as each person induces different content of the mind to show up and be cleared. It is also important to note that originally, the aim of this technique was not to clear the mind but to have enlightenment experiences. Berner (Whieldon, 2015) had developed a technique uniquely focused on the communication cycle to clear the mind.

Contact with Nature

In the previous section, Berner (Berner & Sosna, 2005) stressed the importance of controlling the environment of the EI so that the participants can be totally immersed and focused on the EI techniques and on the contemplation of the object of inquiry. In the following

section, I am presenting the possibility of using an environment which by itself promote spiritual experiences. Contact with nature or wilderness has been shown to induce spiritual experiences or inspirations (Fredrickson,& Anderson, 1999; Heintzman, 2003, 2009; McDonald, Wearing, & Ponting, 2009; Williams, & Harvey, 2001). Several studies and reports reveal that natural settings present different qualities/attributes that fosters spirituality such as diversity, beauty, grandeur, peacefulness and solitude however it is challenging to isolate the conceptualized attributes that really deepen a person's connection with their spiritual dimension (Moore, 2007; Heintzman, 2003, 2009; McDonald et al., 2009; Williams, & Harvey, 2001). Nature/wilderness elicits a sense of peace, solitude, awe, humility, sacredness, interconnectedness, union and belonging in individuals (Fredrickson, & Anderson, 1999; Heintzman, 2003, 2009; McDonald et al., 2009). Importantly, the state of beingness and stillness of nature and the solitude generates a peacefulness and serenity that encourage self-reflection and inner contemplation (Fredrickson, & Anderson, 1999; Heintzman, 2003). These experiences happened in the different natural setting such as forest, lake, sea, desert, canyon and mountains (Heintzman, 2003). Personally, most of my enlightenment experiences happened in contact with forest and water (sea or streams) and I noticed that each individual seems to have a preference for a certain natural element. Some feel more connected to rocks or water, others to trees. However, I think the most important factor is to be open to receive the gift that nature has to share.

In the context of counselling in daily life where people cannot be immersed in natural settings for days, the therapists need to use activities that promote an openness and a state of surrendering to the natural setting. In order for the clients to benefits from natural setting, a level of openness and surrendering to the connection with nature is required. In wilderness such as Grand Canyon, mountains, and old forest, the grandiosity, majesty and beauty of Nature is such

that it naturally occurs but in natural environment present in urban area, these qualities are more subtle and the preoccupation of the mind can hinder them. The therapist can combine meditative and mindfulness practice with a client in a natural setting. The therapist can integrate any spiritual-oriented techniques and nature such as doing visualization, imagery, dyads, 5 rhythms based dancing in natural environment. In the middle of the session, the therapist can do a meditation and then ask the clients to reflect or contemplate during a walk in the park close to the office for few minutes and then debrief with them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described some approaches that promote connection with the spiritual dimension of human being. These approaches can present some challenges regarding timing and structure of a session, location and space and the therapists need to ensure that they always follow the ethics guideline. Interestingly, in the 5 rhythms-based ecstatic dancing, the dyad technique and the contact with nature, a common theme of openness, letting go and surrendering emerge, which is crucial to be connected with what is present at the moment. This present connection is an open gateway to our spiritual being. In the next chapter, I will present the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter V: Conclusion

In the present thesis, I investigated the different elements involved in developing a counselling practice inclusive and knowledgeable of the spiritual dimension. For this purpose, I explored the definition and meaning of spirituality in human development, defined the attributes of a spiritually-informed therapist, described some spiritually-oriented interventions, counselling theories and techniques, discussed few spiritually-associated issues and examined some other approaches promoting spirituality that can be used in counselling. In the following section, I presented and discussed the principal highlights of this thesis.

At the beginning of this thesis, I explained that the spiritual dimension is embedded in the fabric of human nature and is an integral part of human development (Rowan, 2005; Wilber, 2000). According to Wilber (2000; 2003), there are different stages of development that are structured to encompass lower stages. The highest levels correspond to the spiritual or transcendental levels which comprise the psychic, subtle, causal and non-dual stages. Each individual has different streams corresponding to different attributes which can be at different levels of development. Effective spiritually-informed therapists have a thorough understanding of spirituality, spiritual-oriented therapeutic models and approaches, their own spirituality and their client's spirituality (Cashwell & Watts, 2010; Hathaway, 2011; Pargament, 2011; Plante, 2009). They are culturally-sensitive. Additionally, it is important that they can recognize the stage of development of the principal streams of their clients to choose the appropriate techniques. In order to have a holistic therapeutic practice which embraces all dimensions of a human being, I consider that it is necessary for the therapist to use an eclectic set of techniques belonging to different theoretical approaches therefore I listed, in chapter III, different spirituals interventions that can be used in any counselling sessions. The four spiritually-oriented

counselling practices described in this paper, the integral therapy, the humanist/existential

approach, the transpersonal therapy and psychosynthesis share some common elements

(Assagioli, 1959; Gerard, 1964; Maslow, 1969; May, 1960; Rowan, 2005; Vaughan, 1979;

Yalom, 1980). The clients grow spiritually when they go through a process of:

- dis-identification (or transcendence) with the 'personality-ego' and identification with a self more integrated and on a higher level of development;

- expansion or increased consciousness;

- integration of repressed or 'underdeveloped' parts of self.

The approaches promoting spirituality described in chapter IV share the common theme

of openness and surrendering. In surrendering, there is a dissolution of the structures of the mind

which lead to a dis-identification with the 'personality-ego'. In this moment of spaciousness, the

consciousness has the possibility to 'jump' to a higher spiritual stage generating a spiritual state

or experience. This state is temporary and stops when the structures of the mind 'come back

online', and try to grasp the experience by analyzing, identifying and categorizing it (Wilber,

2000). Wilber (2005, 2006) mentioned that spiritual experiences fasten the spiritual growth

towards higher stages. It is important to combine the approaches in chapter IV with counselling

techniques that unfold, process and integrate the different part of the mind or self. In some

spiritual practices, the mind is viewed as just being an illusion and is therefore ignored, bypassed

or dissolved to reach enlightenment (Berner & Sosna, 2005), however, a repressed part of self

will show up in a distorted way even if the individual is 'enlightened' (Rowan, 2005; Wilber,

2000). Therapeutic psychological work combined with a regular meditative practice and a

spiritual practice that induces spiritual experiences is recommended in order to reach faster the

higher permanent stage of spiritual development (Wilber, 2005). The spiritually-oriented

therapist needs to have reached a high level of spiritual development in order to facilitate the

spiritual growth of their clients (Rowan, 2005). Moreover, the therapist knowledge of these

spiritual stages is necessary to guide the clients during their spiritual experiences, to differentiate

between spiritual states and psychotic crisis and to respond appropriately to any spiritually-

associated issues.

In this thesis, even though a significant part of the Canadian population is aboriginal, I

did not include the aboriginal spirituality because of their cultural diversity. Indeed, the

government of Canada (2016) reported the presence of 50 cultural groups among First Nations,

which indicates a wide diversity of spiritual practices. Moreover, I find it challenging as a non-

aboriginal to write about their own sacred practices.

As I stated in the introduction, this thesis presented the spiritual interventions, theories,

models or practices that were prominent and that I found personally interesting. This topic and

the exploration of approaches promoting spirituality that can be used in counselling need a lot

more attention in the literature and in the counselling field and can be further investigated.

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