

The Relationship of Psychotherapy to Sacred Traditions



Features in Both Traditions That Are Similar

Human's Perception Is Clouded and Distorted

- Samsara: Buddhist :false world of appearances
- Shadows: Plato's cave
- Defenses: psychoanalysis
- Veils: Islam & Sufism
- Blind and deaf: Christianity

Humans Are Divided Inside

- Sub-personalities: psychotherapy
- Small 'I's': Gurdjieff, the Fourth Way
- Story characters: Sufi teaching stories
- Fragmentation and the failure to take responsibility for oneself

Self Knowledge Is the Key to Becoming Whole Again

- Finding lost parts of oneself
- Re-integrating the disowned elements, the shadow of one's self
- Healing the division between the 'I' and the 'not-I'

Accepting the Whole Self ...

- Making the unconscious conscious is painful
- Psychotherapy: a systematic exposure of self-defeating ways of thinking-feeling-behaving; learning how to label-tolerate-express emotions
- Sacred: the confession of sins
- Sacred: accepting *WHATEVER* arises in meditation
- Prayer: the inner voice of conscience

Humans Possess Inner Resources


- Psychology: advanced states of functioning (thinking, feeling, behaving)
- Sacred traditions:
 - The essence
 - Connecting with the Divine
 - Capacities of perception
 - Immortal life

Much Human Suffering-pain Is Unnecessary

- Product of ignorance and blindness
- Confusions resulting from inner divisions and the deceits attempting to appear coherent ('ego, intellectualization, persona')
- Product of significant habitual behavior

Teacher: Regular Personal Contact

- Teacher
- Priest
- Guide
- Guru
- Therapist
- Leader
- Similar experiences
- Seen, understood, accepted AT LEAST SOME aspects of self
- Escaped from some fragmentations, distortions
- Can perceive the searcher objectively & help him/her to be more objective about him/herself



Features in Sacred Tradition & Psychotherapy that are Different

Sacred Traditions Begin From These Ideas...

- An ordered intelligent universe
- Hierarchy
- Levels are reciprocally dependent
- Humans are low down on the scale of being
- Humans serve purposes beyond themselves

Sacred Traditions & Human's Purpose

- There is Service to God
 - the Truth underlying appearances
 - an inner voice or conscience
 - awaken get free from blindness
- And there is...
- Service to Caesar: the ordinary world of appearances
 - natural appetites and desires
 - illusions of power and freedom
 - our fantasies re: selves & humankind

Human Development

Sacred Tradition

- Awaken
- Fulfill another task
- Submit to a different influence
- Make connection with heaven - living on earth
- A higher energy source becomes available
- Ordinary life is changed toward Sacred service

Psychological Tradition

- Humans are at the center of things
- Ordinary desires taken at face value & basis for action
- No concept of a second purpose
- Becomes an elaboration of the illusion itself

How to Begin Developing

Sacred Tradition

- By recognizing the role of the sacred traditions
- From disillusionment with one's ordinary life & self & knowledge
- Coming to disbelieve (and disidentify) from ordinary thought and emotion
- Opening to a deeper part of oneself (essence)

Psychological Tradition

- By recognizing the validity of psychological practices
- By recognizing the pain of self-defeating behavior
- By strengthening our ordinary self
- By improving the ordinary self according to ideas of the ordinary self

The Knowledge Comes From...

Sacred Tradition

- A manifestation of the higher levels about which they tell us
- Transmitted by a chain of individuals
- Have always existed
- Deteriorate as they spread

Psychological Tradition

- Progressive development since Mesmer, 19th century hypnotists, Janet, Freud, etc.
- The employment of the scientific method regarding human functioning

Relationship: Student & Teacher

- Sacred Tradition

- - Teacher is in some part of his being an actual manifestation of a higher level
- - The hierarchy continues to teacher's teacher, etc.

Psychological Tradition

- Difference in authority between self and client
- The difference changes in the course of the treatment
- Transference is dissipated

Views of Consciousness

- Sacred Tradition

- - Our consciousness is very fluctuating, illusory
- - Extraordinary persistent effort is needed to steady it, let alone increase it
- - Like bike light dynamo

Psychological Tradition

- We already possess consciousness
- Some of our parts need to be found
- The light is burning already



The Last Definitions

Religion

...that which takes you to
God is religion – whatever
stands between you and
God is “the world”

- Sheikh Ibrahim Gazua-Ilah

Worship? Law? Reality?

What is worship?

To realize Reality.

What is the sacred law?

To do no evil.

What is reality?

Selflessness.

- Sheikh Abdullah Answari

Prayer

“Prayer consists,” he said,
“in hearing the complaints
of the aggrieved and
assisting them; in helping
the needy and the
oppressed; in feeding the
people and setting free
the captives from
captivity.”

– Gharib-Nawaz



Love

The possible love relationship between human beings must now include, and even be principally constituted by, the help that one human being can give another toward the aim of inner self-development.

★ To love one's neighbor is to regard him/her as a being containing the spark of divinity... who is, at the same time, in need of help in order to actualize his/her possibility.

– Joseph Needleman

References

- Skynner, A. C. R. (1976). The relationship of psychotherapy to sacred tradition. In J. Needleman & D. Lewis, (Eds.) On the way to self-knowledge. (204-241). New York, NY: Knopf.

