

Unity Through Duality

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Science and religion have always been at odds when it comes to how people in the society should be helped. This paper will demonstrate balancing these two has been an issue since the start of our species and consequently is the source of all our problems. It is integral to the process of change. Contemplative psychotherapy addresses this issue by combining religion and science while still maintaining healthy boundaries. It utilizes theoretical integration to combine the best aspects of the existential-humanistic force, polyvagal therapy, and CBT to be able to help any client. Spirituality means different things to different people and a counselor needs to accept that if they truly want to help their clients and the world, no matter what their spiritual beliefs are.

Nature of People

One of the core aspects of the human species will always be the ability to have spiritual or religious experiences. Andrew Newberg (Perry, 2018) makes it clear at the beginning of his talk the evidence is undeniable now from brain scan studies. Some take a mystical approach, some take a metaphysical approach, and some combine both. Leucippus and Democritus (ca. 435 B.C.E./2016) are an example of an attempt to understand the universe from early history from a metaphysical approach: "He holds that the substances are so small that they escape our senses. They have all kinds of forms and shapes and differences in size. Out of these as elements, he generates and forms visible and perceptible bodies". Calvert-Minor (2017) offers a much more spiritual definition of reality when analyzing the link between truth and consciousness. Nature is something humans will always need because it gives us invaluable lessons to understand how to handle the nuance of reality. Animals are living miracles and the human species should not forget the benefits we get from interacting with them (Fine, 2010).

Nature of Problems

Spirituality and religion are one of our greatest weaknesses because we will always be connected to this plane of existence in some way unless there is some major innovation. The result has been that how spirituality and religion have been interpreted has varied drastically between people throughout time (Perry, 2018). This has caused problems between people on a micro and macro scale. Haidt firmly believes science and religion need each other if humans want to successfully make their way in the world, especially in our modern age (Haidt, 2006). There is also the unfortunate matter of the realities of history. The realities are the combination of what is simply lost over time and how those with power have manipulated matters. The result is some practices from cultures have not been properly portrayed when presented to the general public. They are portrayed in a manner that makes them seem as if there is no validity in examining them through multiple disciplines. Birth (2006) points out it is becoming clearer and clearer that this needs to change fully and properly utilize the technology we have now.

Process of Change

Someone may want to change just themselves or the world, but eventually one will have to do both (Haidt, 2006). There is a great deal of uncertainty while this process is happening, and self-concept clarity is a significant factor as well (Leite & Kuiper, 2008). A third important factor that feeds into the first two is technology and the spread of information. As it gets better people can have access to more information, depending on where they live. There are also generational intelligence shifts in the general population. This just creates more complications for the client (Haidt, 2006). Impactful and lasting change requires one to fully accept the light and dark in themselves while trying to comprehend the true nature of reality and accepting uncertainty at the same time. Philosophy tackles everything previously mentioned in this paper, which is why it helps anyone trying to understand the process of change (van Deurzen, 2014).

Contemplative Psychotherapy in Practice

The most important technique for the contemplative psychotherapist is to embody that balance of having your view of spirituality while accepting others' viewpoints (Strong, 2021). By doing this they combine science and religion. Fine's (2010) admiration of Einstein is just one of many examples of 21st-century scientists calling for society to take heed of 20th-century scientists' advice that empiricism is not always necessary. While contemplative psychotherapy was heavily influenced by Buddhism, contemplative practices can include things beyond conventional conceptions of mindfulness practices. The interplay between intention and how it affects awareness is what matters (Zastavker and Venkatesh, 2020). Sanders also noticed similar results from her study (Sanders, 2013).

If the client is not looking for the therapist to be directive, then a technique or intervention from the existential-humanistic force could be used. Role-play is one of the most well-recognized techniques from this force. The combination of interaction and experiential learning is what makes this technique and other existential-humanistic interventions effective (Mabusela & Adams, 2016). If for whatever reason the client prefers solutions and or coping skills, then the contemplative psychotherapist would use something from cognitive behavioral therapy. The more structured approach still works in a contemplative psychotherapist framework because it utilizes cognitive schemas that can be found in many people (Becerra, 2004). The desire contemplative psychotherapists have for more polyvagal therapy and somatic work in the profession is not always about using techniques from them. The ability of the therapist to properly determine when to switch from existential-humanistic to CBT and stay present can be greatly enhanced by how deeply they examine the polyvagal and somatic aspects of their practice or practices. There is an increasing call by researchers in the profession of counseling and

psychotherapy to invest in more research to better understand how to give all counselors a foundational understanding when they start their careers (Deits-Lebehn et al., 2020).

For a therapist utilizing this framework, any assessment would follow the intervention or technique used based on what that client needed. Sometimes it might be done in-session, other times outside the session, or even both. The therapist would utilize things such as the ABCDE model, ORS, and homework assignments if they were going the cognitive behavioral route. They would utilize things such as phenomenological inquiry if they were going with existential-humanistic.

Multiculturalism: Strengths and Limitations

Cultural appropriation is a danger since a counselor could succumb to that by having a teacher who is not multiculturally competent and then has a client who is from that culture. Hilert and Tirado (2019) point out how someone properly embodying the tenets of contemplative psychotherapy would repeatedly utilize increasing self-awareness from their practices to prevent this. There is also a danger when it comes to somatic work and utilizing ancient practices. Contemplative psychotherapists do believe society can value ancient teachers' abilities as psychologists in this area while also not bringing all their ideas into the realm of public health (Haidt, 2006). As the reader could probably surmise from what has been written so far, a person who chooses contemplative psychotherapy is drawn to it because it combines helping others with continuing their life journey through another lens. Truth is two sides of the same coin for them. On one side, there is the search for meaning that all humans share. As Rasco (1991) states: "The drive to transcend obstacles to personal wholeness cuts across all cultural differences". The other side is the differentiation phenomenology creates from one person to the next. For van Deurzen (2014) it was one of the best parts of being a counselor. The contemplative practices portion will

be different from one counselor to the next. It has been demonstrated the positive effects just one practice done with some measure of consistency can have. Hence, the more the counselor does the more they can bring into the therapeutic relationship. I have done contemplative practices since I was a child and I have no intention of stopping. I share the excitement others have around expanding spirituality in the realm of public health by properly integrating more ideas from ancient indigenous practitioners (Viviers, 2014). A family friend of mine who passed away close to a year ago always said the same thing when I would ask what the best goal to achieve is throughout our time in this plane of existence: “Just do the next right thing”.

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