

for his accreditation and from what I know of licensing examinations. He focuses upon the individual's or family's personal characteristics, behavior, and relations with who and what surround him or them—the world they live in. That world may be mundane or transcendental; his client—person or family—may or may not be asking ultimate questions and searching for ultimate answers. I do not believe that is within the province of the psychotherapist to attempt to convert a client to or away from a specific religious belief or practice. It is certainly within his province to initiate discussion of such matters, especially if his client has been unwilling or unable to recognize them as relevant through fear or ignorance or any other reason. But I submit that it is emphatically not within his province to impugn to any client the legitimacy and importance of transcendental questions or the search for transcendence, even if his own viewpoint be exclusively mundane.

The therapist is not necessarily excluded from the transcendental. The minister or priest is not necessarily excluded from the mundane. But in practice, we cannot take for granted that either will be competent in the other's domain. Unfortunately, all too often either priest or therapist presumes to a competence he does not have and should not be expected to have, or assimilates what he sees to his own specialty. Thus we find the therapist with no training in spirituality who offers advice on spiritual development, and the minister or priest with no training in psychotherapy who blithely takes on a paranoid schizophrenic, as well as the therapist who interprets spiritual anguish as psychological anxiety, and the priest who fails to recognize psychopathology when it is presented to him in terms of a spiritual orientation.

The solution is not that each should be required to undergo extensive professional education in both domains. That would be impractical for most people. But each needs to know enough about the other's domain that he will humbly confess his personal limits, and needs as well to become sufficiently acquainted with the resources in his community that when he is out of his depth, he will be able to refer a client wisely to other agencies or agents, as a competent family physician can tell that a patient needs a specialist in dermatology or neurology, or a neurologist can tell that the patient needs a dentist. And as the physician may have to know his patient well and expend considerable time in order to make his differential diagnosis, likewise the priest or psychotherapist may discern the person's central need only after careful and prolonged investigation.

IV

Many religious traditions have taken the mundane and the transcendental worlds to be necessarily in conflict, and the experience of many centuries has shown that indeed, a satisfactory adjustment to the mundane world can inhibit spiritual development; likewise, growth in spirituality can disrupt our relations with the mundane. The reasons are clear: at stake are different values, a different range of

knowledge, different attitudes and interests and styles and embodied performances. The domains themselves are not incompatible as, for instance, political parties or religious factions can be. But people whose primary devotion is given to one or the other do sometimes come into conflict, and that conflict, when it occurs, can be bitter. The mundanes tend to distrust or resent the exotics in their midst; the spirituals become impatient with the earth-bound. (For a closer look at them both, and the relations between them, see Søren Kierkegaard's fable of the wild and the tame geese [Lowrie, 1962, pp. 360–362].) True, once in a while one will say to the other, "I am glad that you have what I do not. I give you balance and stability; you give me wings." Blessed are they who so respond to each other, but such generosity of spirit is not common.

My assertion that the mundane and the transcendental worlds are not incompatible, however, is based not on empirical observation but on the Descriptive Psychology definition of the real world, already quoted, as "the state of affairs which includes all other states of affairs." Thus the real world is a totality, is ultimately all that is, and there being nothing outside or beyond it reflects a boundary condition. It includes smaller domains, some of which are mutually incompatible, like those I mentioned earlier: fashion, football, science, and spirituality. But no domain can be—*logically* can be—incompatible with the whole of which it is a part, of which all domains are parts. One domain can exclude or contravene or engulf another, but such exclusions and contraventions and absorptions can occur without violating the framework within which they occur. The real world has places for all these disparate domains.

Logically, therefore, the mundane world cannot conflict with the real world within which it has a place, and since the real world, as the limiting case, corresponds to the transcendental world, necessarily they are compatible, as any part must be compatible with the whole within which it has a place. Questions relating to the whole, however, may be irrelevant to a particular part. Sanctity, for instance, does not automatically confer mastery of chess or relieve all physical and psychological ills. For that matter, neither is sanctity conjoined necessarily with competence in spiritual direction. Domain problems must be resolved within that domain, whether it be chess, cooking, psychology, or spirituality. And any transcendental ramifications or implications which a domain or a domain-problem has must be dealt with transcendently, although in practice, such extensions are often so remote, or of so little concern to the persons involved, that they can be ignored, and the matter be dealt with satisfactorily on the mundane level.

This is not a new portrayal of the relation of psychology and spirituality, merely a new formulation of an old one, but historically it has been overshadowed by the Western devotion to dualistic distinctions that were then reified, so that now we tend to think in terms of "a mind" rather than "mental activities", "a body" rather than "an embodied person" (or nonperson), and "a spirit"—a thing—rather than "spirituality", a characteristic way of living, con-

cepts so embedded in our language as now to be almost ineradicable. “What is ‘spirit’?” we ask, as if it could be pinned down like a butterfly, and as if “spirituality” were incomprehensible unless we have specified what that thing, “spirit,” however immaterial, might be. But spirituality, as a class of ways of living, can be compared to the hedonic, prudential, ethical, and aesthetic value orientations, and who has tried to reify pleasure or prudence or righteousness or fittingness as we and unnumbered predecessors have reified “spirit”?

Taking spirituality as a class of ways of living, on what grounds can we appraise a way of life, our own or anyone else’s? When it comes to our own, a good many of us say with St. Paul, “The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. 7:19). We know how we fall short of, or diverge from, living the way we most want to live. When it comes to appraising others’ ways of living, our first concern should be to identify the viewpoint from which we are observing them, with the clear recognition that there is not, and cannot be, one unconditionally “right” viewpoint—unless one is a crusader and, as you may have gathered, I am not very much interested in crusaders in this connection. But as a cardiologist and an orthopedist will look at a patient from different viewpoints, so the spiritual adviser and the psychotherapist will see the person who comes to them from their respective positions, and a friend will see him from a still different one. It is, of course, legitimate to shift from one viewpoint or position to another; it is inexcusable to confuse them, not to know what one is doing.

From my own viewpoint, any way of living is defective to the degree that it fails to meet the theological criteria of coherence, inclusiveness, and elegance, which can also be formulated as personal integrity, community, and—for lack of a better word—joy (which is not to be mistaken for mere happiness), in contrast to inconsistency or fragmentation, isolation, and apathy. I invite you to propose your own.

Keeping in mind the last of the Descriptive Psychology maxims for behavior description, “Given the relevant competence, behavior goes right if it does not go wrong in one of the ways that it can go wrong” (Ossorio, 1969/1981, pp. 34–35), it may be useful to indicate here some of the more common ways in which spirituality—life *sub specie aeternitatis*—can go wrong to the point where the person’s ability to live that way is significantly restricted.

There appear to be five principal ways in which spirituality can go wrong: deficits or defects in our knowledge, our values, our abilities, our dispositions, and our performances—our bodily acts—any of which can result in our not living fully and consistently in the light of ultimacy, totality, and boundary conditions, and so being imperfectly spiritual. Let us consider them one by one.

Defects in knowledge come in two main varieties, factual and conceptual. A nice example of a factual defect is the widespread belief that only the Eastern religions have well-developed techniques for learning to meditate and for practicing meditation, an error that could be corrected by a little attention to the facts of

Western history. Not even to know what the Western methods are, in fact, constitutes a restriction upon behavior potential that could be removed fairly easily. Conceptual deficits are likely to be more difficult to remedy, as anyone can tell you who has tried to work through and with the concept of eternity not as unending time, but as that state which is sometimes called “infinite contemporaneity,” in which time and space do not limit action or knowledge or communication. Unless we have acquired the necessary concepts—made the necessary distinctions that notion of eternity will be not just nonsense, but utterly, opaquely unintelligible.

What we most value can restrict us spiritually: “I’m only looking out for Number One,” for instance, or the victory of a cause or a country, when we set them up as the highest good to which we subordinate all other goods—love and beauty and wisdom and holiness. Is victory or Number One all that is worth living for? Moral philosophers have propounded more inclusive values: the greatest good of the greatest number, the golden mean, and the golden rule, among many others. But what place do these moral values have for such a value judgement as obedience to God regardless of the foreseeable social and personal consequences? What is the practical or social value of the mystical vision, of the contemplative life, of sacraments as means for infusing the holy into the mundane? Many people, including some priests and some therapists, will say there is none. And if there be none, there is no point in exploring the realm of transcendence at all, or building on our peak experiences, or venerating whatever or whoever opens to us the vastness of the transcendental domain. If there be no value, moral or otherwise, in living *sub specie aeternitatis*, our behavior potential is sorely limited. But let us note that the behavior potential of those unworldly souls who despise the mundane values of utilitarianism and the like is also significantly restricted.

Briefly to illustrate defective abilities, we can take the inability to imagine beyond the mundane, which can sometimes be traced to conceptual poverty. On a more practical level are such defects as the inability to concentrate. Concentration can be learned, and let no one underestimate its importance for spiritual development.

It should go without saying that certain dispositions, such as the trait of hard-heartedness, or the attitude of cynicism about anything religious, will close a person off from the domain of transcendence. So can simple lack of interest. But these represent more nearly impediments to any form of spiritual life than ways in which spirituality itself can go wrong.

Some religious traditions teach that the very fact of embodiment is a hindrance to spirituality, that inevitably the letter (so to speak) cramps or distorts the spirit. Others refer in one way or another to “the spirit waiting for the letter, without which it cannot perfectly be” (Williams, 1950, p. 166): spirit without body is incomplete. All the masters of the spiritual life that I know of, however, have taught that not to give physical expression to what one has learned will

eventually, if not immediately, arrest spiritual development. The bodily performance need not be a perfect or completely adequate expression, but some fitting action must ensue upon every increase in knowledge or ability, and every change of values or attitudes.

V

By redescribing spirituality in terms of the transcendental concepts—ultimacy, totality, and boundary condition, with special emphasis on ultimate significance—we acquire formal access to a domain which for the most part has been treated either as essentially closed to all but a few, or else has been reduced to some mundane description that deprives it of its essential characteristics. Be it noted that “formal access” is not the same as “experiential access”: the outsider who has had no spiritual experience is still outside. But with these resources, both priest and psychotherapist can identify what the person’s special needs are as—to return to the earlier illustration—the physician can tell whether to refer his patient to a surgeon or to a physical therapist.

Moreover, this redescription can guide us more precisely than heretofore in our choices when to use mundane or transcendental concepts in our own lives and in relation to others. If we are alert, what another person says and how he says it will clue us in before long as to whether he is tormented by a mundane purposelessness or a transcendental meaninglessness, by a need for immediate satisfactions or by the passion toward ultimate consummation.

Thus what matters most as the waves and the billows pour over us is not so much whether we seek out a minister or priest or a psychotherapist, as whether the one we choose to work with has at least formal access to the domain of transcendence, and whether he is primarily a crusader or an emancipator. The crusader will direct his efforts toward replacing our previous errors with what he takes to be The Truth. His aim is to restrict our behavior potential—and hence our responsibility—to save us from falling into whatever he sees as pathology or sin. The emancipator will be concerned to remove whatever is preventing us from achieving what we want to achieve, and will thrust upon us the responsibility for what we do when the constraints upon our knowledge, values, dispositions, and embodiments have been reduced, and our behavior potential is correspondingly increased.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am extremely grateful to Peter G. Ossorio not only for his penetrating critiques of this paper, but also for his continuing work with me on the transcendental concepts. Thomas O. Mitchell, Keith E. Davis, Jan Vanderburg, and Doris Webster Havice have also given me invaluable criticism and encouragement, and I wish to thank them as well. Address: 501 Sky Trail Road, Jamestown Star Route, Boulder, CO 80302.

REFERENCE NOTE

1. Ossorio, Peter G. *Religion without doctrine*. Presented at the First Unitarian Fellowship of Boulder, November 5, 1978.

REFERENCES

- Browne, Dik. Hagar the Horrible. *The Boulder Camera*, May 8, 1980.
- Lowrie, Walter. *Kierkegaard* (Vol. 2). New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962 (1938).
- Morgan, Charles. *The voyage*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940.
- Ossorio, Peter G. "What actually happens". Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1978. (Originally published in an earlier version in 1971 as LRI Report No. 10a. Whittier, Calif. and Boulder, Colo.: Linguistic Research Institute.)
- Ossorio, Peter G. Notes on behavior description. In K. E. Davis (Ed.), *Advances in Descriptive Psychology* (Vol. 1). Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1981. (Originally published in 1969 as LRI Report No. 4b. Los Angeles and Boulder: Linguistic Research Institute.)
- Williams, Charles. The forgiveness of sins. In *He Came Down from Heaven*. London: Faber & Faber, 1950.