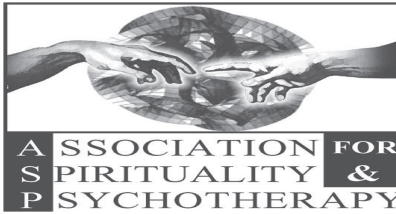


# PsychoSpiritual Dialogue

"The integrated pathway of spirituality and healing in psychotherapy"



250 West 57<sup>th</sup> St Suite 501

New York N Y 10019

Questions: 516 829-5027

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WINTER 2012

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***Our 2012 ASP Membership Drive is on now. Remember, we depend on Membership dues to keep this important work going. For a registration form and to pay visit our website and click on the Membership link.***

**Please note that our Abbreviated Professional Directory appears in every Issue and can be viewed at the Newsletter Archive Link**

The Subject of this Issue of the Newsletter is  
"Is Energy Psychology Primarily Physical or Spiritual?"  
See Pages 6 through 8 for several articles on this topic.

***Green Initiative: In order to save trees and greenbacks, a PDF copy of all newsletters will reside on the psychospiritualtherapy.org archive web site for viewing and downloading in June and December of each year***

The subject for articles for the next issue is:  
"Is Non-Judgmental Awareness Possible and Desirable?"

**See page 4 to learn about ASP's 2012/13 One-Year Program on**

***Developing A Spiritually Informed Approach to Psychotherapy and Counseling***

*"Going into graduate school has been such an exciting time for me, however, a year into my program I felt a little dissatisfied. Sometimes you get a sense that you are missing something from your education, or from life--you're not sure but it feels like there could be something more. After my first class at the Association for Spirituality and Psychotherapy, I knew exactly what that 'something more' was; I found just what I was looking for, and I could not be happier."  
From a recent student in the One-Year Program*

**To be notified about ASP Network Meetings, Events and to receive our e-Newsletter be sure we have your email and snailmail address. Send it to [ASPSpiritAndPsych@gmail.com](mailto:ASPSpiritAndPsych@gmail.com) or visit our website. Starting in 2012, ASP will publish PsychoSpiritual Dialogue on its web site only, at the Newsletter Archive link. In Addition, ASP will send an e-Newsletter each month, with links to individual articles from our authors.**

## **ASP Board of Directors**

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## **PRESIDENT'S LETTER by Mary Marino Ph.D. MarinoASP@gmail.com**

This last year has been a busy year for ASP. The ASP monthly Network meetings have been met with great interest and success with a variety of offerings presented by ASP professional members. ASP also collaborated with Gina Ogden and Sylvia Rosenfeld to host their sold out event, "Hidden Dynamics of Sexual Desire" (reviewed elsewhere in this news letter issue). This event was attended by a wide range of clinical professionals who address clients with issues in the area of sexuality and relationships. In addition to being a rich subject of discussion, Dr. Ogden shared her long history of expertise in this domain. Not only was it informative, but from a business standpoint it was a financial success for all concerned.

In addition, our membership is increasing this year we feel in part due to new programming efforts to address interests of our clinical membership. As listed on our website, ASP is joining in collaboration with interested members in offering your professional workshop or seminar. By joining forces we are able to offer a greater diversity of topics and through advertising and social networking ASP is able to disseminate information regarding your projects to a wider professional audience. ASP uses Linked-in, Constant Contact and [www.psychospiritualtherapy.org](http://www.psychospiritualtherapy.org)

Event Me, as well as our own email directories as resources for potential interested individuals. Please see our website for more details on how to contact us to collaborate with you. See also on our website a description of our mission and focus on the interface of spirituality and psychotherapy and the requirements for what to include to fit into our scope of work.

ASP is also beginning outreach to other clinical institutes and professional training organizations with an invitation for 'Organizational Membership' in ASP. The benefits of membership at this level allow ASP to offer discounts to the institute that joins, for all of their interested faculty, students and other members. ASP is offering a complimentary free membership for two years to any interested institutes. The benefits of membership include collaboration for presenting any classes, workshops, lectures and the like, and reaching a larger audience for potential clients and students. This becomes an appealing forum for instructors and psychotherapists to share publications, case presentations and other theoretical forums for discussion. As it is for all ASP members, every monthly Network event is free to all institute members who join. Institutional ASP members can also potentially offer evening presentations of their topics of interest at one of our monthly Network meetings. These meetings are a great way to introduce individuals to your area of expertise and stimulate interest in your more in depth course offerings.

We look forward to 2012 with several collaborative programs. ASP will be working with Lisa Fawcett, Jungian Analyst and with Dr. Linda Klau, in two professional programs highlighting their expertise. ASP is also hoping to collaborate with another professional clinical training institute in the fall to address the topic of psychotherapy and spiritual emergence. We look forward to a great year and invite you to become active members in creating an organization that addresses your interests.

This past year two former presidents resigned from our board after many years of dedicated service to ASP: the founder of our organization, Dr. Henry Grayson, and Dr. Kenneth Porter. They have agreed to continue to lend their expertise in their roles as 'Presidents Emeritus' and will serve as members of our new external advisory board. We anticipate an additional past president, Dr. Sam Menahem, will be resigning sometime in the current year. We thank all our past presidents for the legacy that they leave in this wonderful organization. We hope to continue their work in the burgeoning field that is spiritual psychotherapy. To that end the ASP board is looking for members who are interested in serving as consultants to our board. Specifically, we need experts in the financial area, social media and networking. If you have skills and time, please contact us.

May there be peace among all beings.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/ASSOCIATION-FOR-SPIRITUALITY-PSYCHOTHERAPY/247199349320>

For our twitter connection:

[http://twitter.com/ASP\\_NY](http://twitter.com/ASP_NY)

**Summary of ASP Collaborative Event  
with Gina Ogden and Sylvia Rosenfeld  
By Mary Marino, Ph.D.**

ASP collaborated with Gina Ogden and Sylvia Rosenfeld to offer a day long seminar entitled "Hidden Dynamics of Sexual Desire, Transforming Clients' Limiting Beliefs About Intimate Connection, While Integrating Body, Mind and Spirit," on November 12, 2011. It was held at the Cultural Center on 80<sup>th</sup> street and Columbus Avenue. The workshop had a sold out attendance of 40 participants, mostly comprised of professional clinicians (social workers, psychologists, nurses, sex therapists among others).

Gina Ogden, Ph.D, LMFT , is an AASECT-certified sex therapy diplomate and supervisor, shamanic practitioner and master teacher . Dr. Ogden is one of the forerunners in her field research of women's sexuality. Her work has

laid the groundwork for the current knowledge and understanding in this field. She has written: *Women who Love Sex, The Heart and Soul of Sex, and The Return of Desire*. These books and more information can be obtained from her website at: [www.ginaogden.com](http://www.ginaogden.com).

Sylvia Rosenfeld is an Imago-trained AASECT certified Sex Therapist with 30+ years experience with individuals and couples focusing on relationship and sexual issues. Sylvia practices in New York City and offers trainings, tele-seminars and consultation to psychotherapists across the country.

Ms. Rosenfeld and Ms. Ogden alternated in presenting their approaches in working with women and couples in treatment around issues related to sexuality. Ms. Ogden presented her Shamanic orientation, which she depicted in her model called the "ISIS wheel of Sexual Experience." This model takes the form of a medicine wheel and is a template for sexual awareness and growth. It provides a way of organizing and exploring the sexual history and stories that comprise individuals' sexuality and experience. Dr. Ogden guided participants through a series of experiential exercises, demonstrating how one could use the model for exploration with clients, as well as for clinical intervention. She also provided handouts that gave detailed instructions and conceptual explanations for its use.

Sylvia Rosenfeld presented several instruments for exploring client's sexual history and issues. She demonstrated with participants the use of a genogram exercise called the "Family Sexgram" with an accompanying key to gauge and describe relevant sexual history and events. Ms. Rosenfeld also did a demonstration with a participant illustrating the use of "The Lost Sexual Dialogue," which was a series of statements to guide and build awareness of sexual attitudes and experiences, and for clinical intervention.

The seminar provided a rich offering of practical guides and tools for use with clients' specifically for clinicians working in the area of sex therapy.

# **The Association for Spirituality and Psychotherapy (ASP)**

*A Non-Profit (501c3) Corporation at 250 West 57<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 501, NYC 10019*  
**www.psychospiritualtherapy.org email: aspspiritandpsych@gmail.com**

## **ANNOUNCES The 2012/13 Course:**

### **Developing a Spiritually Informed Approach to Psychotherapy and Counseling**

THE MONDAY NIGHT Year Long CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION PROGRAM

Offers an in-depth exposure to psycho-spiritual theory and method. In addition, the process/project class provides a coherent structure intended to help each student develop a personal perspective regarding spiritually informed therapy.

<b>Course Faculty</b>	<i>ASP therapists experienced in a variety of spiritually-informed orientations</i>
<b>Monday Nights Sept. to June 7:30 to 9:30 PM</b>	<i>Throughout the year 6 different Modules meet Monday nights for 4 weeks each for 2 hours a night: A process/project class meets after the conclusion of each module. All Classes take place in NYC at 250 West 57<sup>th</sup> St., suite 501</i>
<b>Tuition</b>	<i>\$1,800 –71 contact hours - 10% OFF FOR ASP MEMBERS</i>
<b>NASWNY CEU's</b>	<i>If Approved receive NASWNY CEU credits and a certificate of completion.</i>

*Developing a Spiritually Informed Approach to Psychotherapy and Counseling offers the participant a unique program for personal and professional growth in a community of experienced teachers and like-minded fellow students.*

#### **Teaching Philosophy:**

The Association's teaching philosophy is based on the belief that spirituality is necessary for psychological healing. ASP is dedicated to deepening our students' inner spiritual awareness to enable healing to take place for both themselves and the patients they work with. We believe that a spiritually informed therapy, while working with common presenting problems, can be maximally beneficial for the individuals who seek our help. ASP is committed to helping students work in a more effective, fulfilling way with individuals, couples, families and groups.

#### **Who should take this Course?**

We invite analysts, psychotherapists, counselors, and other psycho dynamically oriented healing arts practitioners and ministers as well as individuals who have a spiritual and psychodynamic orientation to register for these programs.

#### **General Learning Objectives:**

- Provide a spiritual perspective on working with psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, addiction, somatic problems and relationships, as well as casting "spiritual light" upon them.
- Develop "spiritually-informed therapists" by providing sound theoretical bases and learning experiences that will broaden perspective and increase skills in diagnosis, treatment, therapeutic presence and listening.
- Provide opportunity for psycho-spiritual growth as it relates to personal and professional development
- Offer a professional community.

#### **Teaching methods will include**

- Relevant meditations
- Relevant Supportive Psycho-spiritual Readings
- Didactic presentation of theory, method and technique
- Case discussions
- Experiential exercises including practice therapy sessions
- Process papers including the development of personal perspectives on spiritually informed therapy.
- Project and Class Presentation.

**To View the Current Year's Curriculum, Visit**

**<http://psychospiritualtherapy.org/2011-2012%20NewOneYearProgram.pdf>**

**Or Call Dr. Kelly Murphy Mason Curriculum Co-Chair at 347-497-3741**

# WHEN OUR EARLIEST CHILDHOOD PATTERNING SHAPES OUR RELATIONSHIPS IN WAYS WE DON'T UNDERSTAND:

## Trauma, Attachment, and Embracing Essence

An Experiential Training with Dr. Diane Poole Heller, Ph. D.

**Dr. Diane Poole Heller**, a senior teacher from **Peter Levine's Somatic Experiencing Training Institute**, will be leading an upcoming retreat at Guest House, a new retreat center in the Connecticut River Valley. The training will take place **February 1 - 7, 2012**, in two parts: a trauma workshop where **participants can work one-on-one with experienced trauma therapists**, followed by a **practicum class designed for healing arts professionals**, such as psychologists, therapists, and spiritual teachers. CEUs and scholarship assistance available.

### About the Teacher:

**People who attend Diane's workshops experience powerful transformation: "The exercises were great! The specific clinical SE ways of working with the different types of attachment were revealing and transformative. There were very clear explanations of attachment styles and dynamics of what happens as the person separates from the wound pattern. What wonderful work you are bringing to the world!" - A. Morris**

**Diane Poole Heller, Ph.D.**, is a well-known expert in the fields of **trauma resolution** and **integrative healing techniques**. She began her work in 1989 with **Peter Levine**, founder of the **Foundation for Human Enrichment (FHE)** and the **"Somatic Experiencing" (SE)** method of trauma resolution. She is a senior faculty member for FHE, teaching internationally. She is also a longtime student in the Diamond Approach®.

### Course Description:

How does our earliest childhood affect our adult relationships? How can understanding our early-childhood environment help us alleviate our chronic emotional, physical and psychological suffering? In this workshop we will approach these questions in an experiential way, **working to heal the trauma of early childhood development and focusing on how we can attain deeper connection, meaning and passion in our adult relationships**. We will help **address your clients' recovery needs and tap into the natural and vast potential for healing and growth by:**

- **Excavating and revealing one's natural healthy attachment system**
- **Exploring specific examples of how early childhood patterns develop within families and individuals which obscure our innate ability to bond**
- **Examining how these blockages have been stored in the body and work to release and relax the energy**

**To register, and for more information:**

**Michael Levien: [Michael@GuestHouseCenter.org](mailto:Michael@GuestHouseCenter.org) (860) 322 – 5770 ext 157**

**Guest House Retreat & Conference Center, [www.GuestHouseCenter.org](http://www.GuestHouseCenter.org)**

The following section is dedicated to this issue's dialogue on "Is Energy Psychology Primarily Physical or Spiritual?" As usual, we invite all readers to offer their responses, which may appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

### **Is Energy Psychology Primarily Physical or Spiritual?**

**By Sam Menahem Ph.D.**

My introduction to energy psychology came about due to a very physical event. On Nov, 4, 2002, I had a sudden massive heart attack. My doctors saved my life in the emergency room by using the paddles and then providing angioplasty and stents. My recovery was gradual on the physical level.

My psycho-spiritual recovery took even longer and was aided by my introduction to EFT. My friend and office partner, Dr. Art Joseph, noticed how depressed and anxious I was and suggested that I give EFT a try. He showed me the tapping points and suggested that I tap these points twice a day, while repeating an affirmation. My affirmation was, "Even though I had a heart attack, I deeply and completely love and accept myself. " Even by just saying the affirmations, I felt a little better. I persisted with the tapping because I felt I had nothing to lose. The question I am trying to answer nine years later is: "How much did the physical tapping have to do with my recovery?" I wish the answer was simple. But this is not empirical research, only an intuitive exploration.

I believe in energy. I believe we are made up of energy, the energy of God. We are the energy of God. However, at the physical level, the body can be damaged and even die if this energy is blocked. The blockages are due to guilt, anger, fear and self-hate.

I believe that at the time of my heart incident, I was loaded with fear and anger at my fate. I had done everything "right:" good vegetarian diet, daily exercise, meditation and what did I get? — a heart attack! I will never know for sure, but I think the tapping of the energetic points helped the affirmation release the

energy blockages of anxiety, anger and fear of physical death.

Thus, my conclusion is that the physical process of tapping enabled the spiritual affirmation to restore my mental as well as physical health! Mental health is truly psycho-spiritual.

### **Is Energy Psychology mostly a physical or spiritual discipline?**

**By Lynda Klau, Ph.D.**

The question itself presupposes a classical Newtonian paradigm, where we live in a world of separate objects, with clear boundaries between the spiritual, the physical, and the mental.

In our everyday world, most of us still think in terms Newtonian physics. But how would Einstein's Quantum Physics answer the question?

Starting in the 17th century, there was a heated debate in the world of physics that provides an interesting parallel to our question: is light a wave or a particle? In response to this inquiry, Quantum Physics revolutionized the field by determining that light is both a wave and particle.

Just as the duality about the nature of light unifies in this perspective, Quantum Physics would answer our question by saying that Energy Psychology is neither physical nor spiritual, but both. All is ultimately energy manifesting in different forms: the spiritual *is* physical and, in turn, the physical *is* spiritual. There is no inherent divide.

## **SPIRITUALITY AND ENERGY PSYCHOLOGY**

**Henry Grayson, Ph.D.**

**henrygrayson.com**

On the surface it might seem as though spirituality and energy psychology would be antithetical to each other. But we need to consider what each is, especially in light of much world wide spiritual thought as well as the new science of Quantum Physics. In the old Newtonian world view of over 300 years ago, the only thing that was considered real was that which you can observe with the five senses and measure. Other things did not exist. It was even hard for the brilliant Isaac Newton to believe that there was such a thing as magnetism. He thought it would be a sign of a highly distorted mind to believe that one object could be affected by another without some kind of more direct physical connection. But then, he gradually changed his mind and became the one who outlined the laws of gravity.

Still, largely in the Newtonian world view, things are viewed in a linear fashion, so that if we know enough about the past we can pretty well predict the future. There is little space for free will, conscious choice, and especially for things that are out of the ordinary, such as what people call miracles or “spontaneous remissions.” We are cogs in a machine, doomed to make the future a repeat of the past.

On the other hand, in the spiritual world view, there are infinite potentialities that go beyond the predictable linear framework. When I was a boy, I witnessed something I shall never forget that has influenced my world view. My religious parents would sometimes get phone calls from friends or relatives around the country telling them of a very negative medical prognosis someone had just been given—often one where doctors thought healing was not possible and that one should prepare for dying. I then remember them on the phone calling a number of people to pray for such a person. The next thing I would overhear was that the person had healed, with the doctors referring to such incidents as miracles. Growing up in a culture where such experiences were somewhat commonplace meant that I did not grow up in an environment in which such things were not considered to be possible. Hence I wouldn't doubt such possibilities. In that spiritual world view, it was an external flat earth sky God who was doing this healing, a concept that I soon came to reject when I

really understood that the earth was not flat along with all the implications of that worldview. What remained, however, was the knowledge that when people believed something could happen, joined their minds to focus on it (for them it was prayer), then unusual, unpredictable and miraculous things happened.

In the Quantum Physics world view, we see a great similarity with spiritual thought. Here, everything in the universe is just consciousness and energy. There is just one unified field, which could be what most religions have called God. From this perspective, molecules are popping in and out of existence constantly. In fact, they never quite exist, but are just “tendencies to exist.” They pop out of existence just before fully becoming what we call matter; then another pops into existence to replace it. We learn that the minute we observe something we have influenced it. And a mind boggling question was posed by the renown physicist, John Wheeler, when he was at Princeton: “Could it be that we bring the whole universe into existence by our consciousness?” In this world view Consciousness plays the major role. We also learn that no matter exists! In the spiritual perspective, this realm has been called maya, illusion, a dream state, and other designations. In the quantum world, they crush an atom and find that what they originally thought was matter (electrons, protons, neutrons) are just sparks of energy. Even our bodies are 99.999% empty space! So as Edgar Allen Poe put it, “whatever it may seem, life is just a dream within a dream within a dream,” sounding much like what we might read in “A Course in Miracles.”

It seems to me, therefore, that to use consciousness to affect energy is just our recognizing that we are all just energy and consciousness. And it is consciousness that rules and determines the outcome of energy. We are all part of the unified field; we are all part of what we have called God. It is no wonder that Jesus was quoted in the Christian Bible as saying: “If you have faith so much as a grain of mustard seed, you can say to the mountain, ‘be moved into the sea,’ and it will be so.” I used to think of this as a metaphor until I began to understand the nature of the Quantum world.

In energy psychology, we are simply using consciousness, breath work, focusing, chakra or meridian stimulation to affect energy. It is a way of

harnessing energy by exercising our intrinsic divine nature. Mostly we deny our True Self identity as one who is part of the greatest Power of the universe. When we believe that is who we are—a part of it, not apart from it, we are united with unlimited power and potential. But, most of us humans are frightened to embrace this Power, of which we are a part. We get attached to our false identity of littleness, separateness, and powerlessness. Yet, even Einstein noted that it is “an optical illusion that we are separate.”

From my perspective, having studied a lot of Eastern and Western spiritual thought as well as Quantum physics for several decades, energy psychology and spirituality are integrally and infinitely intertwined. We can use consciousness to focus our energy to aid in our spiritual growth, remembering more of who we truly are. We can therefore make miracles the natural order of the universe instead of something that is only rarely possible. We can use consciousness and various energy psychology methods to release many of the egoic mind barriers that cause our suffering, keep us feeling like victims, and interfere with our happiness and health. As we release these barriers we can begin to own more of our True Self, as part and parcel of Spirit.

**Jewish views of the Afterlife**  
**By Simcha Paul Raphael**  
**Book Review by Sam Menahem Ph.D.**

This book review is not exactly what I had originally intended it to be. Several months ago I had been contacted by Dr. Raphael and asked to write a review. I gladly accepted the offer, having read his first edition many years ago. My favorable appreciation of the first edition is even exceeded by the second edition. I had been slowly reading and assimilating this terrific guide to the afterlife, preparing to review it. Then, my own life intruded. My mother died, leading to this very personal review.

To be more accurate, my mom passed into the spiritual dimension. This dimension, so beautifully described by Dr. Raphael, is a state of mind or consciousness. As I went through the traditional Jewish funeral, burial and shivah period. I found myself often thinking of what

her soul was experiencing at each stage. I contacted Dr. Raphael and he suggested I focus on Chapter 11—not the financial one-but chapter 11 of this book. I did so and was very grateful for its reappearance in my life. Chapter 11 guides the reader through the mourning period. I have long believed in afterlife and reincarnation—but I have never found a better guide through the stages leading to them. Chapter 11 assumes that the contents are helping not only the mourner but the departed soul itself. A brief backtrack into Chapter 10, “A contemporary psychological model of the afterlife,” is in order here.

Rabbi Raphael guides us through the dying process—the clear light, the angelic spirits, the life review, the dissolution of elements and the severing of the life cord. He then guides us through the separation from the body, the emotional purification of Gehenna, the final completion of the personality in the lower Garden of Eden and the heavenly repose of the soul in the higher Garden of Eden. This psychological model is based upon careful research of Jewish Sources like Kabbalah and Hasidic tales, as well as other sources like Tibetan Buddhism. I find it the best single description of the afterlife journey in any book I have ever read on the topic.

When I received a call from the nursing home that my mom was near the end, I raced up there and was joined by my wife, daughter and son-in-law. Although she was not responsive, I described where she was going and told her it was OK. I emphasized the part about meeting the dead relatives as I thought it would be most helpful to her. Though my son-in-law does not know of this philosophy, he greatly aided the process by singing her the Sh'mah—which was written on a pillow in her room. We finally left at 11PM and she passed over at 2AM.

We all went through the shock of the passing and shifted into high gear the next morning to arrange the funeral. With the aid of a compassionate funeral director we quickly arranged for the funeral and burial the next day—a Friday. The turnout for the funeral was

large, especially for a 92 year old woman. I kept in mind Rabbi Raphael's idea that her spirit was still hovering around the body. I thought of it as I identified the body, knowing she was near- by in some form and would hear my eulogy. I gave a eulogy that I thought honored her long and good life. I emphasized her "joie de vivre," love of music, dancing and even her love of positive thinking books ranging from Norman Vincent Peale to Deepak Chopra and Wayne Dyer. She was the first distant healer in our family, steadfastly maintaining that, "sending the waves" could help heal others. I finished with 2 songs, one that I wrote for her and her personal favorite, "When you're smiling." There was a very spiritual feeling after the traditional prayers, the singing and the final eulogy by Rabbi Simon Glustrom, a good friend. I felt as if we were helping her to let go of her body and realize she needed to move on in the afterlife process.

Shivah was quite unusual, due to the freak October snowstorm that cut off our electric power. Dr. Raphael correctly points out that shivah is both for the mourners AND for the departed soul. As we chanted the mourner's kaddish, in the dark, there was almost a palpable presence of my dear departed mother. After the last shivah night's mourner's kaddish I felt that the proper ending for this person, was another rendition of, "When you're smiling." Many joined in, creating closure for we the living and mom, the departed soul. I really felt she was on the way for her emotional purification in Gehenna. Last night I had a dream about mom. It was no ordinary dream. I had just finished reading Chapter 11 before going to bed. Rabbi Raphael suggested that we can keep in communication with the departed through prayers and dreams. Obviously, my unconscious mind was ready to communicate with her. I apologized to her for my uncompassionate behavior as a young man and she accepted the apology. This was helpful to both of us. I was relieved of guilt and she felt loved and understood. It was part of her emotional purification, described in part three of Chapter Ten. The process will continue for both of us. I will continue to read

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and ponder, both to heal myself and her departed soul.

My personal experience with this book was that it was extremely helpful. It can help any reader both understand and accept the ideas that there is an afterlife and what to expect when you or a loved one goes there. Contrary to the rampant scientific materialist viewpoints of death (You are dead and that is it!). This book goes through multiple Jewish sources in a scholarly manner, concluding that there is ample evidence from Jewish and non-Jewish sources that there is some form of consciousness after death. If this is true, then we need a guide to help us. This book is that wonderful guide!

The following article was inadvertently omitted from our Summer 2011 issue that discussed various aspects of our 2010 Conference on Spirituality and Sexuality.

**Further Thoughts on Sexuality and Spirituality**  
**Robert M. Dreyfus, M.D.**

I hesitated to write on this subject because much time has elapsed since the landmark conference in October of 2010. This was the conference that had trouble finding a venue because no academic institution wanted to host a potentially controversial conference that had spirituality in the title; and no church that was approached wanted to be associated with a conference with sexuality in the title. Amazing! And profoundly instructive about the split that exists in our Judeo-Christian heritage, which is in our collective unconscious, even for those who are non-observant or non-believers.

We are continually bombarded with sexual stimulation and titillating news of sexual misconduct - and we are also aware - if only subliminally, of what organized religion and conventional morality has to say. "Not until you're married, not with your own sex, not with yourself, only for procreation" -and other

precepts which can be subsumed under "don't."

I was impressed by there only being one sex and spirituality article in the immediately following newsletter, that being Jeffrey Gurian's provocative piece that extolled joyous sex as having the potential to unite us with G-d, He suggested as well that sex practiced daily (I suspect he's under 50) has the potential to keep us happy, as well as to eliminate war and hatred. He did bemoan the problem of access - for unattached individuals. Unfortunately we no longer have the High Priestesses and sacred prostitutes of ancient cultures - and consequently we have numbers of people who are frustrated and do bad things. This took courage to write and I was impressed by the exuberance and broad scope of his essay. I would like to add some balance to the thoughts about the joy of sex by focusing on the challenges to achieving full, non-conflicted, loving sexual expression.

A starting point is Freud, demolisher of Victorian prudishness and hypocrisy. Though many regard him as quaint and outdated, he had penetrating insights into the nature of the sexual drive and the inevitability of sexual conflict. Regarding the sexual drive (the "id"), he postulated the infant as having a totally self-centered lust for pleasure. This required other psychic structures ("ego" and "superego") to civilize and trammel the demands of this drive. This civilizing process necessarily involves conflict - unbridled gratification OR civilized behavior.

One can ignore theoretical issues such as the Oedipal conflict and merely focus on the imperatives of primal urges driven by our hormones and limbic lobe - opposed by the ethical considerations imparted by parents, teachers and religious teachings. A key assertion is that any intrapsychic conflict has an expression in the sexual arena. No exceptions! Issues of guilt, low self esteem, anger, vengefulness, jealousy, insecurity - none can be excluded from one's dream and fantasy life. The veneer of civilization may

prevent the physical expression of these distortions - but at the price of truncating our energy and creativity. Energy instead of being available for robust expression, is short-circuited into defensive suppression.

Other theorists have stressed the issues of mastery, competence and the dynamic of dominance and submissiveness in the sexual arena. Harville Hendrix, who developed "Imago Therapy," a widely used couple counseling format for resolving conflict, talks of the inevitable power struggle that follows the honeymoon phase of romance. Who gets to say when, how and how much? The one who cares less, wants less, is less needy, is paradoxically in control.

A major personal influence has been the analyst Robert Stoller, one of a small number of theorists who have done extensive field work (rather than mere speculations from behind the couch) to elucidate how fantasies shape sexual behavior. He observes the truism that normal sexual excitement experienced in a loving committed relationship is obviously pleasurable. However, the addictive excitement that is experienced by an individual who is using sex to enact themes of abandonment, cruelty, danger, dominance or submission, revenge, jealousy, guilt/ punishment, or humiliation, inevitably does so with remarkable dramatic intensity.

"Normal" sexual excitement simply pales by comparison. Stoller admits to possible bias from his work with sexually aberrant individuals. But, aware of this, he is still led to conclude:

*"it is hostility-the desire, overt or hidden, to harm another person-that generates and enhances sexual excitement....The hostility of eroticism is an attempt, repeated over and over, to undo childhood traumas and frustrations that threatened the development of one's masculinity or femininity. The same dynamics, though in different mixes and degrees, are found in almost everyone, those labeled perverse and those not so labeled.*

Stoller also states that “perversion is the erotic form of hatred”, and that it is an extraordinarily evolved individual who lacks at least some traces of perverse elements in his or her fantasy life. I find his use of such words as hostility, harm and hatred as extreme - unless understood as the conscious or unconscious attempt to use the other according to the dictates of fantasies that could charitably be characterized as unloving. (He does not address the intense bliss of conscious, enlightened sex such as tantric sex.)

Paralleling Stoller’s astute observations, my clinical experience of nearly forty years has consistently revealed the prevalence of both sexes treating their partners, in varying degrees, as objects to be used for their private agendas. This is a truism - how young males are expected to use women sexually, with only secondary concern over commitment or of a heart connection; and how young women learn to use male lust to their advantage. We are quite aware of the phenomenon of “heart-genital disconnection” and how, particularly for males, it is culturally sanctioned. At the same time most of us expect youth to hopefully grow out of the sowing of wild oats stage and to subsume sexual urges in a context of love and commitment.

This task is made unnecessarily difficult by the widespread erotic focus in movies, TV and all the media, that is so widespread that sexual preoccupation, “Don Juan” promiscuity and the use of pornography are considered acceptable by many. (A study of nearly two thousand grade 7 to 12 students by the American Association of University Women, published November 7<sup>th</sup> of this year, showed that 56% of the girls had been sexually harassed, 32% to the point where they didn’t want to return to school.)

The concept that spirituality should enter into the coital act is an anomaly entertained by those who have either stumbled onto certain forms of yoga or onto an enlightened spiritual approach. (Where a seeker might look for a group that teaches such an enlightened

spiritual approach, is a question that many therapists would have difficulty answering - despite vigorous traditions like the “Pathwork” created by Eva and Jon Pierrakos, and some tantric and sexual enhancement workshops.) Jeffrey Gurian’s idea that sex, by virtue of the experience of deep union with the other, will bring one closer to God (demonstrated by the involuntary tendency of many to exclaim “Oh God” during orgasm), does not fit with my experience.

I have found it distressingly common for people to find spirit and the body in opposition to each other or - less in conflict - a one or the other experience. Now lust, and now, the sacred, but not both at the same time. Many couples are content to just have sex be a loving blissful union without bringing spirituality into the picture.

However the experience of sexual union being a metaphor and motivation for ecstatic union with the divine, a union at a higher octave so to speak recurs in sacred literature. It is exemplified in the biblical Song of Solomon and in much of Rumi’s 13<sup>th</sup> century poetry, but I doubt that these are widely read or that the concept is understood.

The explicitly erotic Song of Solomon is confusing to many and was totally ignored in my church-going experience. One interpretation is that it contrasts the nobility of monogamous love with the debased nature of promiscuous love, and suggests that the book is actually a veiled criticism of Solomon, who, according to 1 Kings 11:3, had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.

Rumi, on the other hand, is more accessible. For example:

I would love to kiss you.  
*The price of kissing is your life.*

Now my loving is running towards my life shouting,  
*What a bargain, let’s buy it.*

Or again:

Love is reckless; not reason.  
Reason seeks a profit.  
Love comes on strong,  
Consuming itself, unabashed.

Yet, in the midst of suffering,  
Love proceeds like a millstone,  
Hard surfaced and straightforward.

Having died of self-interest,  
she risks everything and asks for nothing.  
Love gambles away every gift God bestows.

Without cause God gave us Being;  
without cause, give it back again.

Another major influence for me is the inspired material in the Christ-centered meditation course "A Course in Miracles" (ACIM) which I have been alternately inspired by and challenged by for thirty years. This material, which was channeled in 1976, was followed by further material entitled "Psychotherapy; Principles and Practice," which though it doesn't refer explicitly to sexuality as the course does, has been a fertile source of wisdom for the integration of spirituality into my therapy.

The central theme of ACIM is that the world we perceive is conditioned by our ego preferences and by judgment. (The amount of distortion involved approaches delusional proportions - similar to Plato's depiction of the cave allegory.)

The ego is defined as the self that considers itself separate from God and whose essential nature is self-centered and doesn't seek true union with another. The ego's vision of the world uses the body's eyes -and this is opposed to what spirit would have us see, and what spirit would have us be motivated by - which is true loving union with another.

The body is seen as neutral, and one is admonished to not value it other than as a "teaching device." Further, the body is seen as the linchpin of the "ego's" thought system, with sex being its most powerful anchor. Accordingly, from the "ego" standpoint, sex is

engaged in for selfish reasons; rather than as an expression of an unadulterated love that, because of its pure intent, can maintain us in connection with the divine. ACIM (like numerous other spiritual traditions) is uncompromising in its position about identification with the body, and in its warnings about the seductions of "ego" consciousness.

In my lengthy group experience of ACIM, I've been impressed by how where I felt strongly personally challenged by the high standards set for sexual behavior (and I might add for behavior generally)- similar to the biblical "*whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*" - no-one else seemed to feel challenged by it. This puzzled me for years- was I a sexual neurotic - or were they in denial. This standard of thought and behavior appeared to be demanding, even ascetic. Perhaps Christ was speaking rhetorically here; also when he suggested that the rich man should sell all of his goods and give them to the poor.

Yet ACIM is pervaded by a spirit of intense - actually palpable - love and recognition that spiritual advance is difficult and usually gradual. One is cautioned to not force one self to go beyond one's willingness; as this will only engender unconscious resistance and actually slow one's progress. One is warned against guilt, fear and false teachings being foisted on us by clergy, therapists or even biblical passages that are capable of causing much harm.

What can one conclude from all of this? I suggest that it is hazardous to approach either one's personal issues of spirituality, and the subordinate issues of one's physical expression of the life-force without a guide; and that more open discussion such as was inaugurated last October needs to take place. It seems ironic that colleges have curricula on "Queer Studies" and anthropological, psychological and biological studies of sexuality - but if a curriculum on spirituality and

sexuality exists in academia, its presence has been kept well hidden.

#### FURTHER THOUGHTS - November, 2011

A personal guiding paradigm has been that of the noble ideals of chivalry. The knight earns the lady's favor by demonstrating valor and honor. The lady is entitled to a knight by her skills at the lute, needlework and her refined sensibilities. The emphasis is on something deserved by virtue of effort and striving towards noble qualities.

By contrast, contemporary media portray romance as something youth (and those beyond) are all entitled to, and that doesn't require achievements, but rather a good image, (the right lingo, clothes and hairdos, and familiarity with the right rock groups and electronic devices). Not to be coupled is to be understandably lonely and deviant.

Transformative sex is work, just like becoming mature, is work. Sex will be somewhat mediocre if we are unable to go out of our comfort zone and make I-Thou contact with the other - linked with the full force of passion that has been refined by inner work. Some good questions might include:

- how important do I want sex to be in my life?
- how is imperious need sublimated. How does one go about it?
- in the absence of a bed partner, is there such a thing as "an erotic approach to life"?
- how do I reconcile my values with what my religion, culture, and even my therapy orientation prescribe?
- how can I simultaneously honor my needs and those of my partner?
- how do I deal with differences in desire or preferences?

An amusing thought: We have no judgments towards an individual who is not good at dancing or singing or can't draw a credible circle let alone the human form. If that is us, we probably don't experience shame. Sex is also a skill and there are outliers who have unusual talent (some are highly paid prostitutes) - and

others at the other extreme who couldn't find the clitoris if their life depended on it. Yet this area has enormous capacity for inducing shame, unmerited pride, inadequacy feelings, competitiveness, etc. (The capacity for unconditional love is also unevenly distributed.)

To dissect sexuality, aside from the broader context of love, seems artificial. As there is sex that ennobles and is relatively uncontaminated by narcissism, hostility and the various pathologies of sexual expression, so with love. Joyous, full sexual expression that isn't confined to the genitals, is not a given, but requires an integration of our cave man self with our heart and soul self. Accordingly, what passes for love may be contaminated with shadow qualities.

For example, dependency issues can be subtle and carefully concealed. Dependency may be fueled by unresolved issues of shame or self-rejection, so that the individual maintains psychic equilibrium by using another's love to keep these feelings at bay.

Other areas of immaturity can include difficulties with trust, unwillingness or inability to communicate one's hopes, joys and sorrows; and barter arrangements where one "gives to get". (Some sex authorities actually promote this!) But then, how is one to avoid computing the benefits to see who's getting the better deal?

True emotional maturity and healthy independence are desiderata, achieved only with courage and sustained effort. At this level, psychological growth, spiritual growth and enlightened love and sex become one.

#### AUTHOR NOTE

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**Spiritual Psychology and psychotherapy:  
Theoretical and empirical support  
George Steinfeld**

The paper is presented as a follow up to an earlier paper on this topic (Steinfeld, 2000), and provides further support for the basis for a spiritually oriented psychology and psychotherapy. In this context it is offered as “Old wine in new bottles.”

In the aforementioned paper the writer presented some theoretical ideas for one spiritually based principle, namely constructivism. This refers to the idea that we construct our perception of reality, including the belief in a higher power, however defined. Constructivism forms the basis for cognitively oriented psychotherapy since most cognitive approaches start with the belief that cognitions create emotions and by altering these cognitions we can change the way we feel and thereby how we cope with life's challenges. Buddhist and other spiritual perspectives have constructivism at their core, and various psychotherapies accept this premise as their foundations (Wilber, 1968; Von Foerster, 1981, Mahoney and Niemeyer, 1988a, 1988b, 1993, 1995, and even Piaget's work, just to name a few). More specifically, from psychotherapy, we have the Personal Construct approach of Kelly (1955, and even Ellis (1975) would call himself a constructivist, though that has been debated (Wessler, 1992). Others from more spiritual approaches are, in addition the Buddha (Byron, Dhammapada), Dalai Lama (1998), teachings of Avatar, The Course in Miracles, and from the west, we have Byron Katie, whose “Work” takes us to a spiritual place, and the discoveries of John Lilly, who after immersing himself in an isolation tank, under the influence of LSD, claims: “In the mind of man, whatever you believe to be true, is true, or we will make it become true; these are the limits that need to be transcended” (as difficult as that is). We who are involved in the helping professions know this quite well, since self fulfilling prophecies are the beliefs patients resist over coming. So our therapeutic challenge with patients is to help them over come their resistance to change since: If you continue to believe that you always believed, you will continue to think what you always thought, and you will continue to feel what you always felt, and you will always do what you always did, and you will always get what you always got, which will reinforce what you always believed. And you will continue to suffer.

We know change is difficult, especially those changes which we associate with our basic beliefs, values, and sense of identity, regarding who we think we are, who others are, and what we believe about the world (Dowd and Guidano have addressed this problem, see references). The ego is hard to overcome; yet to gain a spiritual perspective, this is what is needed.

The question that has concerned this writer, ever since he became disillusioned with psychoanalytic therapy as an ethical practice (effective and efficient, Haley, 1965) has been whether there is any empirical support for these ideas that the person “constructs” his reality, whether he believes in a higher power, or does not, and if so, what is the basis for these beliefs, and the mechanism by which this occurs. The earlier paper (2000) which investigated this issue describes this early research on the nature of perception, and a theory to account for the findings (1967). Recent discoveries in the field of neuroscience tend, according to the writer, to support these findings and speculations, by discussing how memories are formed and how they influence our brain and our thinking and how we perceive reality.

**Concepts of set and availability in relation to  
the perception of “reality”**

Given the above discussion of the relationships between constructive meta-theory, cognitive psychology and therapy, and spiritual concepts, the writer needs to present research and a theory which is consistent with the above ideas so as to ground them and allow them to be the basis for a clinical model and therapy that flows from them. It is to this that the following research is summarized and its implications discussed.

Some of this research goes back more than 45 years ago. What is new is that current neuroscience has discovered the underlying basis which supports, to the writer at least, what he discovered so many years ago. I will begin with the early research and then show its connection to recent discoveries about the brain and how memory appears to operate.

I can only summarize my earlier, rather theoretically complicated, paper in my effort to relate it to cognitive meta-theory and spiritual concepts. Some of perceptual theory's concepts were used to

underpin RET in the paper mentioned above (1975).

One of the major problems with experiments reporting the effects of motivation, expectancy and "set" on perception, and the general theories and data which emerged from experiments on the "new look" in perception during the 1940-1960 period was their failure to distinguish the concept of Perception from related processes. These related processes included "recognition" of the visual stimulus, its identifiability, how the stimulus was interpreted, as well as processes involved in guessing and judging. Cognitive psychologists, coming from the German Gestalt traditions (Kohler, Kofka, Wallach and later, (Zuckerman & Rock, 1957), as well as others during this period (Haber, 1966; Saugstad, 1966), made these finer distinctions, hoping that by doing so we can understand these processes more clearly. Rock (1966), for example, defined perception as involving the "way things look", how they appear in our phenomenal experience. When we discuss perception of reality, given this definition, we are discussing how "reality" is experienced, and the mechanisms underlying this perception. How form (reality) appears is not necessarily a function of the form's "objective" characteristics, or how it falls on the sensory apparatus of the retina. Even Mach (1897), a century ago, pointed out that a "square" becomes a "diamond" when it is disoriented 45 degrees. Tilting one's head will not make an environmentally upright square a diamond even though the retinal image is a diamond. This kind of observation led to a series of experiments and theoretical discussions in which retinal and phenomenal aspects of form perception were investigated (Rock, 1956; Steinfeld, 1970).

In other words, whereas two figures may have the same "objective", structural characteristics, why they look different is a function of many factors, including their phenomenal orientation in space, e.g., which parts of the figure are seen as top, bottom and sides. This is independent of how it is oriented on the retina. The organism "projects" (constructs) an orientation onto the figure, thereby determining (creating) how it "appears". How this occurs is a different question from the fact that it does occur, and can easily be demonstrated. The writer's (Steinfeld, 1967) paper wanted to investigate these phenomena further, while attempting to demonstrate that past experience (learning, motivation, expectancy, set) can affect

the perception of form (reality) and not merely the related processes of **Recognition**: a (feeling of familiarity (when exposed to forms; **Identifiability (discriminability)**: the distinctiveness of certain forms which occur with repeated exposure (e.g., twins, different racial groups, animals, etc); **Interpretation**: If form perception is the experience of a segregated object of a particular shape in a visual field, interpretation refers to the "meaning" which the visual form has for the person.

Meaning is not the result of the present stimulus pattern, but consists of those qualities and properties acquired through learning. We tend to overlook this distinction because, on the phenomenal level, we usually perceive meaningful objects. But we can distinguish meaning (interpretation) from perception theoretically, experimentally and logically.

Our work attempted to maintain Gestalt psychology's concept of perception, yet broaden that factors might affect this experience, adding a cognitive component. Cognitive constructivist psychology and treatment focuses on what experiences mean to clients, whereas my question was more fundamental. Not only were we interested in the meaning issue, (what experiences mean personally, emotionally, psychologically), but we wanted to zero in on the essence of constructivist meta-theory by trying to understand how "reality" looks, or appears, as a phenomenal experience (a combination of basic perception as well as the meaning it is given).

This formed the basis for the writer's RET paper, but he was not then familiar with constructivist meta-theory or spiritual concepts.

Finally, we also needed to separate perception from how experiences are responded to internally (self talk, interpretations and related cognitive events like expectancy, attribution, imagery, etc), as well as externally (labeling, overt responses, bodily changes). The "New look" experiments frequently failed to take these matters into consideration, so that our work had a number of motivational interests. The writer's application of this work to RET and more recently to constructivist and spiritual matters was not his intention when we first started. This work is presented as "old wine in new bottles."

From the above, we can see that although meaning and interpretation are always the result of past experience, the perception of form need not be. When the perception of reality (form) is a function of past experience, we needed to describe how that could come about. Therefore, there is a need to be conceptually clear and to devise experiments that could make the case for the processes and develop a theory to account for all of then current data. Clinically, for example, Rorschach responses can be viewed as a test of perception (the inkblot looks like the thing described) as well as interpretation (how the perception is named and elaborated). Frequently, in Rorschach testing, the S offers responses that the Examiner cannot at first "see". As the S articulates it further, the blot comes to look like the thing described. It is experienced as a perceptual change. The same processes appear to be similar to what happens with Street figures (1931), first described in Leeper's work (1935). We called this process, whereby a previously meaningless set of dots is suddenly reorganized into a meaningful object, (recognition-perception). This process demonstrates the effects of past experience (recognition) on the perception of form. The mechanism underlying this process was based on memory trace theory and the Hoffding function of trace arousal and availability (Rock, 1962). The research to be described attempted to evaluate the hypothesis that memory traces could be made more "available", and that these more available traces (memories, associations, cognitions, thoughts) could serve to facilitate a perceptual reorganization, whereby a previous meaningless array (stimulus) would suddenly change its phenomenal appearance and look like a "real" object. Availability could be facilitated by any number of processes, including recency, frequency, "sets", and other motivational (drive) states. As we will see, it can also be facilitated by something called "implicit memory" which primes an associative network. (Siegal, 2010)

Essentially, then, the experiments were attempts to investigate the effects of "set," however defined, on recognition-perception, a change in the phenomenal appearance of stimuli from a meaningless array of dots to the object represented. We hoped to provide support for the idea that making memory traces more available would facilitate a perceptual change (in "reality"), rather than just effect recognition, identifiability, interpretation (meaning) or response processes.

In Experiment I, three groups were employed: Group A: Experimental subjects were read a story about the sinking of a ocean liner, and then presented with a fragmented figure of a Ship. This was the Relevant information group since the information provided was conceptually relevant to the subsequent stimulus. Latency measures were the dependent variable.

Two Control groups: Group B read an irrelevant story, and Group C, a baseline group that was not read a story, were compared to the Experimental group (A) on latency measures. Experiment I, and a replication (Experiment II, with better matching for initial ability to recognize fragmented figures, along with more qualitative data elicited) yielded similar results.

### **Results**

Experimental Group (A- Relevant) took significantly less times to recognize stimulus than Groups B and C.

Control Group (B- Irrelevant) took more time than Groups A and C

Control Group (C- No information) took less time than Group B but more time than Group A to recognize the figures

In both experiments, the Experimental group (A) (read relevant information) took significantly less time to re-organize the Street figures than Groups B (Irrelevant) and C (no prior information provided). Groups C did better than Groups B.

### **Implications**

All results were in the predicted direction, and supported the hypothesis that providing prior verbal information increases trace availability of material related to the subsequent stimulus ("Ship"), and these more highly available associations (memories, cognitions, conscious or not), can facilitate subsequent perceptual experiences. Prior information (sets) can also hinder abilities (e.g., Groups B did worse than Groups C, who were given no prior information).

The implications of these findings and the conceptualization of the "availability process" were discussed and were able to integrate previous hypotheses on the effects of set on perception, related to "tuning" and "priming" notions. In connection with the latter concept of priming

(Schwartz & Rouse, 1961), it was suggested that the information given to the Relevant story group "primed" a network of associations related to the story. And even if Ss were unaware of these primed associations (now made preconscious), these associations (more available memory traces) can facilitate perceptual experiences, changing the experience of "reality" out there. Given the data, and the theory to explain them, made this work relevant to recent advances in constructive meta-theory, whereby "Unconscious" forces (cognitions of which we are unaware) are seen as capable of helping to construct reality and give it personal meaning (Mahoney, 1995). Thus, not only can surface cognitions (self talk, conscious interpretation of stimuli) affect the construction of meaning (including affect which flows from one's interpretation, as suggested by cognitive theory), but deeper (core) structures of the mind (schemata) can also affect how the world appears, including perceptions of the self, others, and the relationship between them. Dowd, as cited above, has come to similar conclusions.

Almost a century after Mach's work, and almost 25 years after the writer investigated the effects of retinal and phenomenal factors in perception, Charles Tart (1991), a leading researcher in the area of Transpersonal psychology, makes a similar point. "...much that is taken as simple perception is indeed construction and interpretation of the neural signals originating at sensory receptors, mistakenly experienced as an automatic, seamless process of apparent simple perception. Personal growth and some meditative disciplines to break down the automatized process, so we can observe the differences between what we actually sense of the physical world around us (within the physical limits of our receptors) and the automatized interpretation presented as apparent simple perception that we normally experience." (p.217)

N.K. Logothetis, Director of the physiology of the cognitive processes division of the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics, after summarizing the results of a series of experiments at MIT, Baylor and the Planck Institute, where perceptual processes were viewed as potential windows into consciousness, concludes that the physiology of seeing is but one aspect of trying to understand the relationship between brain functions and awareness: He states: (The picture of the brain that starts to emerge from these studies is of a system whose processes create states of consciousness in response not only to sensory

inputs but also to internal signals representing expectations based on past experiences. In principle, scientists should be able to trace the networks that support these interactions. The task is huge, but our success identifying neurons that reflect consciousness is a good start.

Again, Mach discovered this over 100 years ago, and the work of Logothetis as well as my experiments, support the view that visual perception of form (how the world appears in phenomenal experience) is a function of a number of variables, including sensory input ( patterns of stimulation in various parts of the brain), and (sets( expectations, etc.), so that past experience leading to surface and core belief systems (cognitions) significantly determine one's perception of reality and one's subsequent emotional and behavioral responses to those meaning systems. This research lends support to the notion that cognitive processes are intimately involved in one's perception of reality and subsequently in a person's spiritual beliefs, and that these beliefs can determine one's reality emotionally and behaviorally (how we think, feel and respond to the concept of God and related spiritual ideas). There is a common expression which states: (I'll believe it when I see it). What cognitive-constructivist meta-theory states, what persons involved in the spiritual traditions discuss, and which is supported by my research, as well as a growing body of empirical data is the reverse, namely, (I'll see (perceive) it when I believe it.) And this goes not only for spiritual experiences, (including the perception and belief in the Existence of a higher power) but appears to have validity in all aspects of living, especially those aspects of reality which are more ambiguous and open to interpretation. This is especially relevant to the interpersonal domain, which we experience daily in our personal and professional lives, where who we think we and the other person is determines how we perceive ourselves, him or her and how we respond to that perception.

How the above discussion fits with recent findings related to how the brain is wired and specifically how different kinds of memory are involved in the perceptual process will be discussed. Most of this will be taken from Siegal's work (2010 How Memories Form and Reappear.)

In the years since my graduate school days (1960s) a great deal of research has given us a framework for understanding memory and treating PTSD. In

fact the treatment of PTSD did not even exist as a clinical entity for which we had a treatment. By the late 1980s, a number of research centers had contributed pieces to the larger puzzle of how memory works in the brain. Those early findings have helped to build the interpersonal neurobiology view of perception, trauma and trauma treatment (Siegal, 2010). It may be too late for me to help the patients I saw at Fairfield Hills hospital, as an intern and staff psychologist, or whom I saw in treatment in the 1970s. We now have tens of thousands of soldiers returning from new wars, not to mention all the abused patients we see in practice, whose minds urgently need healing. And there are even more people whose unintegrated trauma intrudes into their daily activities and relationships, overwhelms their ability to cope, and limits their lives—often without their conscious understanding of what is happening. To understand traumatic memories, it helps to go back to the basics of what memory is and how it is embedded in the brain. Memory is the way an experience at an earlier time influences us at a future time.

As Siegal discussed in "Neuroplasticity in a Nutshell" (Mindsight, 2010) experience for the brain means neural firing. When we have an "experience," clusters of neurons are activated to send electrical signals down their long lengths. The gene activation and protein production triggered by neural firing can create new synapses, strengthen existing ones, alter the packets of neurotransmitters that are released or the receptors that receive their messages, and even stimulate the growth of new neurons. It can also thicken the insulating myelin sheath around connecting fibers, increasing the speed of electrical transmission. Neurons that fire together, wire together (Hebb). In memory terminology, an experience becomes "encoded" (a word not even heard of when I was first exposed to theories of learning and memory (1964-68) by the firing of neurons in groups. The more often these neural clusters, or "neural net profiles," fire, the more likely they are to fire together in the future. The trigger that cues the retrieval of a memory can be an internal event—a sensation, a thought or a feeling—or an external event that the brain associates in some way to a happening in the past. (recognition). The brain acts as an "anticipation machine" that continually prepares itself for the future based on what has happened in the past. Memories shape our current perceptions by creating a filter through which we automatically anticipate what will happen next. In this way the patterns we encode in memory actually bias our

ongoing perceptions and change the way we interact with the world. (my research, published in 1967), which will be discussed later, has priming as a key hypothetical variable to explain perception). Here's a key fact about memory retrieval that has been understood in detail scientifically only for the past twenty-five years: When we retrieve an encoded memory from storage, it does not necessarily enter our awareness as something coming from the past. Take, for example, your memory for riding a bicycle. When you get on your bike, you just ride—you fire off clusters of neurons that let you pedal, balance, and brake. That is one kind of memory: An event in the past (learning to ride) has influenced your behavior in the present (riding the bike), but riding the bike today doesn't feel like a memory of the day you learned to ride. If, on the other hand, I asked you to recall the first time you rode a bicycle, you might pause for a moment, scan your memory storage, and perhaps come up with an image of your father or big sister running beside you, the fear and pain you felt when you fell, or the exhilaration when you made it to the corner. When these retrieval profiles fill your awareness, you know that you are recalling something from the past. This is also memory—but it is different from the memory that enables you to ride your bike. These two kinds of memory processing are interwoven in the normal course of daily life. The kind of memory that enables us to ride the bike is called implicit memory; our ability to recall the day we were taught to ride is explicit memory. I am stressing this distinction because in everyday language we use the term memory to refer to what is technically explicit memory. Identifiability also involves implicit memory. Recent discoveries in the field of brain science allow us to understand the difference between implicit and explicit memory, as well as to grasp how implicit memory can influence our present without our awareness that something from the past is affecting us. Let's start at the beginning, with the implicit memories we lay down even before we are born.

### **Implicit Memory: The Basic Puzzle Pieces of Mental Experience**

When Siegal's wife was pregnant with each of two children, Siegal used to sing to them in the womb. It was an old Russian song that his grandmother had sung to him, a child's song about her love for life and for her mother—"May there always be sunshine, may there always be good times, may there always be Mama, and may there always be me." He sang it—in Russian and in English—during

the last trimester of pregnancy when he knew the auditory system was wired up enough to register sound coming through the amniotic fluid. Then in the first week after each child was born, he invited a colleague over for a "research study." Without revealing the prenatal song, he sang three different songs in turn. No doubt about it—when the babies heard the familiar song, their eyes opened wider and they became more alert, so that his colleague could easily identify the change in their attention level. A perceptual memory had been encoded. We encode implicit memory throughout our lives, and in the first eighteen months many researchers believe we encode only implicitly. An infant encodes the smells and tastes and sounds of home and parents, the sensations in the belly when she's hungry, the bliss of warm milk, the terror of loud and angry voices, the way her mother's body stiffens in response to a certain relative's arrival. Implicit memory encodes our perceptions, our emotions, our bodily sensations, and, as we get older, such behaviors as learning to crawl or walk or talk or ride a bike. Implicit memory also harnesses the brain's capacity to generalize from experience, which is how we construct mental models from repeated events. This is one step beyond associations of neurons that fire together. The brain summarizes and combines similar events into one prototypical representation known as a schema. If a little boy's mother hugs him every evening when she comes home from work, he'll have a model in his mind that his mother's return will be filled with affection and connection. Finally, implicit memory creates something called "priming," in which the brain readies itself to respond in a certain fashion. When his mother arrives home, the boy anticipates a hug. Not only is his internal world primed for perceiving that loving gesture, he'll move his arms in anticipation when he hears her car in the driveway. As we get older, priming continues to operate with more complex behaviors. If you've learned to swim, when you get your bathing suit on your behavioral repertoire for swimming is primed and readied to engage when you jump in the pool. These six domains of implicit memory—perception, emotion, bodily sensation, behavior, mental models, and priming—are like the basic puzzle pieces of the mind that form the foundation for how the past continues to influence us in the present. After an experience is "over" and we move ahead down the river of time, what remains are these synaptic linkages that shape and filter our present experiences and sensations. Drawing on these implicit elements from the past, the brain—our

associational organ and anticipation machine—continually readies us for the future. Here are the three unique features of implicit memory: 1) You don't need to use focal, conscious attention for the creation—the encoding—of implicit memory; 2) When an implicit memory emerges from storage, you do not have the sensation that something is being recalled from the past; and 3) Implicit memory does not require participation of a part of the brain called the hippocampus. Going more deeply into each of these features will lead us into the mystery or if you had been a volunteer in one of the classic studies of divided attention, it would have gone something like this: The researcher gives you a set of headphones that play a different soundtrack into each ear and asks you to pay attention to the left side only. After a minute, she asks what you heard. Someone reciting a list of zoo animals, you say. What gender was the voice? Male, you reply. Fine. And what did you hear in the right ear? Just some vague mumbblings, you say. And could you tell if it was a male or female voice? No, not even that. But then the researcher administers what is called an indirect memory test, which reveals that the information from the right earpiece did indeed enter your mind and influence your memory—your implicit memory. You cannot recall that your right ear picked up a woman's voice reading flower names. But if you are given a set of partial word cues, such as "re," you are more likely to fill in the blanks with the letters o and s to create rose than any other set of letters, even though you don't know why. If you had heard a list of food items, it might have just "come to you" to write in i and c for rice. This is priming at work in your language centers. When your unattended right ear took in the data, your brain registered it in a form of perceptual implicit memory. It does this without passing the information through the hippocampus, the sea horse-shaped cluster of neurons in the limbic region that integrates widely separated areas of the brain. Direct attention harnesses the hippocampus; indirect attention—attention that does not involve your focal, conscious attention—encodes the memory without hippocampal involvement. Again, an implicit-only memory is experienced in consciousness but is not "tagged" or felt as something emerging from the past. This is quite different from the idea of "unconscious memory," which implies something buried, inaccessible, or "repressed" and kept from everyday awareness. A reactivated implicit memory is fully conscious; it just lacks the sensation of recall (recognition of something from the past).

This peculiar qualitative experience of implicit memory can be hard to grasp even for neurology students, let alone the average person and even we therapists. Siegal shares a time-honored story about a nineteenth-century neurologist named Clafard and his unfortunate female patient. It seems that Madame X, the patient, could chat about everyday events with her doctor, but if he left the room and returned a few minutes later, she would not recognize him or remember their conversation. He would have to reintroduce himself formally and begin again. One day, Dr. Clafard hid a pin in his hand, so that when he greeted Madame X and shook her hand, she received a sharp prick that caused her to cry out. At their next meeting, Dr. Clafard introduced himself as usual and then extended his hand. Madame X pulled back and refused to shake it. When asked why, she replied, "Sometimes doctors do things that hurt you." Here is a mental model based on implicit memory: "Sometimes doctors do things that hurt you." It presents itself as a fully conscious belief, but its origins in the past were not accessible to Madame X's awareness.

The implicit mental models that each of us has filter our ongoing perceptions and prejudice our experiences. And yes, they likely contribute to all sorts of attitudes and beliefs we carry around—whether about ourselves or other people. Our implicit models can manifest as a feeling in our bodies, an emotional reaction, a perceptual bias in our mind's eye, or a behavioral pattern of response. We do not realize we are being biased by the past; we may feel with conviction that our beliefs and reactions are based on our present good judgment. If, for example, your parents ignored you when you came home all excited about being on the softball team at school, that sensation of disapproval might generalize to other sports and then return when your own children become interested in athletics. Or perhaps your parents conscientiously avoided overt negative comments about people of other races, religion, or sexual orientation. But you still might have picked up nonverbal signs of irritation, distress, or disgust if you brought home a friend of a different background. Or these implicit memories may influence our belief in God, or lack there of, and may even contribute to our spiritual experiences and our sense of any higher power that reveals itself in every moment of our lives. We may even see "the devil" at work. While these implicit mental models exist in all of us, with mind-sight we can begin to free ourselves from the powerful and insidious ways they create our here-

and-now perceptions and beliefs. Seeing deeply and clearly into the inner world also gives us the opportunity to focus our awareness in a way that promotes the integration of memory. When memory is integrated, these separated implicit puzzle pieces of the past are linked together into the more complex—and flexible and adaptive—form of explicit memory.

The research that I described, and which was done so long ago to investigate something called recognition perception makes more sense given these recent findings and neurological underpinnings. This research was not available at the time the work was done. Given these considerations, and the integration of ideas from cognitive-constructive, and spiritual perspectives, and now supported by research from the areas of perception and neuroscience, on how implicit memory can affect what we perceive, I believe we have a foundation for a truly spiritually oriented psychotherapy. The writer's model has been outlined in the previous paper (2000), and he invites other similar minded clinician to enter into this discussion.

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members of the Association for Spirituality and Psychotherapy. Business telephone numbers were used where they were available. To update your listing, notify [aspspiritandpsych@gmail.com](mailto:aspspiritandpsych@gmail.com). We will be mailing the full Professional Directory with the 2012 membership dues letter. We need your continued support to publish our newsletter, arrange networking meetings, and plan ASP conferences.

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**APPRECIATION and RECOMMENDATION**

**Daniel R. Wotman & Associates, LLC**

The Association wishes to thank Daniel R. Wotman, Esq. and Associates a New York attorney, for his excellent pro bono work in arranging for its incorporation in New York State as a not-for-profit organization. In recognition of his generosity and competence, we highly recommend him for anyone that might need legal services. His areas of practice have been divorce, family law, mediation and civil litigation for 21 years. Located at 1010 Northern Blvd Suite 208, Great Neck, NY 11021 Phone: 516-466-0300 Fax: 516-466-3999 or by email: wotmand@drwlaw.net

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<i>Issue</i>	<i>Copy Deadline</i>	<i>Mail Date</i>
Winter	November 1	Dec 15th
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Contributions to this Newsletter are welcomed. Please submit articles, book reviews, letters to the editors, poetry, case studies, presentations, announcements of future events and workshops, or topics of interest to you for future issues. All submissions must be in Microsoft WORD or plain text format, as attachments to e-mail, and sent to both of the editors.

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ASP recognizes that many individuals, representing a diversity of ideas and disciplines, appreciate being included within the spirituality and psychotherapy communities. Hence, we invite submissions from all parties who feel that this newsletter is a good forum in which to communicate. We feel that permitting a wide range of ideas is the best way of encouraging dialogue. The decision to publish rests solely with the editorial committee. Submitted documents and media remain the property of the Association for Spirituality and Psychotherapy.

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