

Journal of Transpersonal Research

Investigación Transpersonal

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Transpersonally Informed Educational Projects for an Emerging Authentic Integral Consciousness

Proyectos Educativos de Espectro Transpersonal, para una Auténtica Consciencia Integral Emergente

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Varese, Italy

Abstract

Introduction: This article discusses transpersonally-informed education for an emerging new consciousness found in so-called Indigos, as well as other multi-labeled youth, the New Generations, who appear to manifest Indigo-like characteristics (intuitive tendencies, sustainability consciousness and inner locus of control, among others). **Objective:** The study aimed to investigate any potential contributions that the latest trends found in psychosynthesis-based educational projects might offer both holistic and mainstream education. **Methodology:** Both the New Generations and psychosynthesis-based educational projects were the focus of two inter-related studies, the second of which, based on multiple case study research, is detailed in the present article. **Results:** Results indicate that psychosynthesis in education, particularly through the emerging field of psychoenergetics, has the potential to meet the needs highlighted by traits and tendencies found in the New Generations. The aims of psychoenergetics also appear to be in line with the needs and trends highlighted by educational futures research. **Conclusion:** The study results inform holistic and mainstream education, as well as policy makers, hence potentially making transpersonal education more readily available to dissatisfied youth and parents needing an alternative to mainstream education.

Keywords: indigos, integral consciousness, new generations, psychoenergetics, psychosynthesis

Resumen

Introducción: Este artículo trata sobre la educación transpersonal para la emergencia de una nueva consciencia, encontrada en los llamados “índigo” así como las denominadas juventudes de las nuevas generaciones, quienes muestran características de los “índigo”, como capacidades intuitivas, la consciencia de la sostenibilidad o el locus de control interno entre otras. **Objetivo:** Este estudio trata de investigar las potenciales contribuciones que las últimas tendencias en proyectos educativos con base en la psicosisíntesis, pueden ofrecer tanto a la educación holística como a la convencional. **Metodología:** Tanto los proyectos educativos basados en psicosisíntesis, como los basados en las nuevas generaciones, fueron el foco de dos estudios inter-relacionados, el segundo de los cuales basado en investigación de casos múltiples. **Resultados:** Los resultados indican que la psicosisíntesis en educación, particularmente a través del emergente campo de la psicoenergética, tiene la capacidad de hallar las necesidades más destacadas, por los rasgos y tendencias encontradas en las nuevas generaciones. El objetivo de la psicoenergética también parece estar en consonancia con las necesidades y tendencias de las futuras investigaciones en educación. **Conclusión:** Los resultados revelan la necesidad de una educación transpersonal, alternativa a la convencional, destinada a padres e hijos descontentos. Es decir, una llamada a la educación holística a la vez que a la tradicional, así como a los creadores de leyes educativas.

Palabras clave: indigos, consciencia integral, nuevas generaciones, psicoenergetica, psicosisíntesis

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Introduction

This study attempts to ascertain the potential contributions that psychosynthesis-based educational projects might make to mainstream education, particularly in educating the New Generations. The label 'New Generations' was derived from a previous study that started by investigating the Indigo phenomenon.

The label 'Indigo' is often assigned to individuals (allegedly born in greater numbers since the 1980s, hence the Millennial generation) who appear to be non conformist, rebellious, often confrontational, sustainability conscious, creative, intuitive, highly energized and independent, driven by an inner locus of control; they are often labeled spiritually gifted and/or diagnosed with attention deficit disorders (ADD/ADHD) and they are also said to be Promethean figures, here to challenge the current system in order to introduce an emerging consciousness and a new collective way of being (Carroll & Tober, 1999, 2001, 2009; Masters, 2008). The scantily-researched phenomenon has been criticized for being an expanding 'money-making venture' for self-identified 'New Age' educational experts increasingly offering new courses (Anderson, 2003; Carroll, 2009), and for providing an excuse for parents of hyperactive children to choose to think that their offspring are special, rather than deficient in some way (Witts, 2009). It could be argued, however, that dismissing the Indigo phenomenon altogether without further exploration might represent a missed opportunity to advance understanding of human potential and what might be emerging on a collective level.

After an initial qualitative investigation focusing on Indigos, their characteristics and educational needs, as observed and reported by European educators with experience in this line of work, I elected to explore further afield, in order to ascertain whether and to what extent Indigos were indeed gifted, deficient or could be part of a wider, possibly archetypal phenomenon. My research went on to analyze and compare existing multi-disciplinary research by experts in the following, apparently related areas: the Indigo phenomenon and their characteristics (Masters, 2008), the 'Millennial' generation (Elmore, 2010; Strauss & Howe, 2000), as well as the so-called Spiritually-Gifted (Lovecky, 1998; Piechowski, 2000, 2003, 2009) and ADHD-diagnosed children (Armstrong, 2010; Lovecky, 2004).

Given the commonalities found among all these multi-labeled youth, including ADHD diagnoses and prescriptions that have been increasing to an alarming level (Olfson et al., 2012), it is postulated that the Indigo phenomenon and characteristics would appear to be much more widespread and relevant to a higher number of youth than previously theorized.

This extended number of multi-labeled youth with so-called Indigo characteristics is clustered and henceforth referred to as the New Generations. In essence, the study comparing existing research in the areas stated showed that the characteristics the youth in question appear to have in common seem to be:

- a) strong personalities
- b) a sense of purpose/pre-destination
- c) 'overexcitability' and restlessness
- d) independence
- e) resistance to conformity
- f) very individualized personalities with inner guidance and an inner locus of control
- g) a certain degree of personal sensitivity
- h) strong intuitive abilities
- i) social justice and ecological/sustainability concerns
- j) intolerance towards ambiguities or what they perceive as hypocritical behaviors

It is interesting to note that just over a decade ago, sociologist Paul Ray and psychologist Sherry Ruth Anderson (2001) identified a movement which they called Cultural Creatives; the two researchers claim to have found over 50 million adult Americans and an estimated 80-90 million Europeans (at the time of their research) who appeared to be environmentally sensitive, altruistic, idealistic and spiritual, and who had been creating new social inventions and institutions, worldviews, and lifestyles. According to Ray & Andersons' research, having moved beyond traditionalism, these individuals appear to be characterized by a strong inner locus of control, independence, self-actualizing tendencies and a drive towards initiating social change. Their core values can be summarized as:

- 1) authenticity (consistency between speech and action)
- 2) self-actualization (wholeness of self and cultivation of one's potential), hence the need to find and express one's talents and passions to contribute to the wellbeing of self and others
- 3) appreciation of the emergence of feminine values
- 4) deep-ecology awareness and activism to protect and nurture the planet

Given the striking similarities between characteristics found in the multi-labeled New Generations listed above and those of the Cultural Creatives, it would be tempting to conclude that the former are likely to have been raised by Cultural Creatives parents, except for the observations of psychotherapist Remi Thivierge (2011) among others, according to whom Indigo-like children and youth are found in many 'normal', conformist families who seem to have scant interest in the values stated; furthermore, the rising presence of Indigos in 'typical' families who do not know how to cope with them appears to be challenging, making life more difficult for all concerned.

At the same time, educational consultants have also been reporting a change in youth, having noted new, emerging characteristics. Giftedness expert and consultant Annemarie Roeper, for example, observed 'the arrival of a new kind of child...so bright, so knowledgeable, so naturally spiritual and intuitive' (Roeper, 2007, p.75), while clinical psychologist Linda Silverman (2005) notes that the changes observed in recent generations (especially characterized by whole-brain learning and thinking) are remarkable when compared to characteristics found in the past five decades, even in the gifted; both experts seem convinced that the explanation for such changes is the *evolution of the human species*, which, they claim, often tends to become apparent first in the gifted.

Research seems to indicate that the motivational needs of the 'New Generations' appear to reflect the last two stages of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, namely self-actualization and self-transcendence, which they seem to share with the Cultural Creatives (Trotta, 2012). In other words, an increasing number of adults and youth would appear to be driven by a need to manifest and express creatively their full potential, but not in a self-serving way – rather, with a seemingly expanded consciousness and a *sense of self that is embedded in the totality*, which implies a wish for justice and interest in finding ways to improve the quality of life for all life forms on planet Earth (including the environment).

According to Masters' quantitative research (2008), based in part on Jenny Wade's holonomic theory of the evolution of consciousness (Wade, 1996), self-identified Indigos would appear to have moved beyond a Conformist level of consciousness, increasingly manifesting what Wade calls an Authentic Consciousness, which, she explains, describes the first stage in which 'selfhood is undistorted by ego [and it is] characterized by major changes in psychological integration' (Wade, 1996, p.161). According to Wade's research, some of the characteristics which more clearly seem to identify individuals who manifest an Authentic Consciousness are: whole-brain

thinking with an ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated things, the tendency to think outside of conventional thought, the lack of dependence on social approval and the acceptance of full responsibility for one's own choices (Wade, 1996).

Integralist Ken Wilber (2000) has found Wade's research so valuable that he has integrated it in his book on integral psychology; he interprets Wade's Authentic Consciousness as equivalent to his own theorized Integral Consciousness and Centaur stage, therefore as the next stage of human development, and describes it as a revolutionary and *empowering shift in consciousness* that moves from fragmentation to wholeness, from an external to an internal locus of control. Interestingly, the previous and still mainstream stage of development, Wade's Conformist level, which most schools of psychology describe as enabling a reliable interpretation of 'reality', is seen differently by transpersonal psychology. Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli, creator of the psychosynthetic model of self-awareness and integration of the psyche, and one of the founding fathers of transpersonal psychology, for example, maintained that accurate perceptions of reality can be achieved at higher levels than the mainstream Conformist stage (Assagioli, 1993).

It is also noteworthy that futures research, both in educational and general global trends, shows that spirituality appears to be among young adults' and childrens' unmet needs. British psychology of education expert and futures researcher Guy Claxton, among others, reports that students appear to be increasingly unhappy about an education that seems to fail to equip them with a spiritual dimension, with the ability for lifelong learning and not just for exams; they also appear to be dissatisfied with a world they see as 'unfair, unsustainable, uncaring and corrupt' (Claxton, 2008, p.94). It is particularly significant that Claxton's concern focuses on school curricula which, he observes, are not only shaped according to assumptions about the future and about what constitutes personal fulfillment based on obsolete ways of viewing the world, but also by potentially limited assumptions regarding what the human mind is really capable of (Claxton, 2011). He has emphasized the need to integrate intuitive learning in school curricula (Claxton, 1997) and laments that more attention and research be dedicated to finding what the mind's true potential really is (Lucas & Claxton, 2010). He is not alone. Several other researchers have been devising and supporting forms of education that emphasize intuitive thinking as a way of learning and the development of wisdom (e.g. Adams, 2011; Anthony, 2005, 2008; Gidley & Hampson, 2008; Hart, 2009; Lombardo, 2011).

British futurist and expert in business studies Adrian Done (2012) discusses and analyzes the 12 global trends that seem to be changing the world and suggests how such challenges can be faced with greater confidence and sense of purpose. Done's book argues for a return of a kind of knowledge and education characterized by *wisdom*. It is also emphasized that the tendency to live in denial of current and emerging challenges condemns humanity to repetition of mistakes, a risk Done blames on the current excessively fast lifestyles of constant noise and distractions which drastically reduce time available to dedicate to, and really understand, profound issues at hand. In other words, Done seems to be encouraging the development of transpersonal practices, such as reflection and times for withdrawal and mindfulness, which are deemed to stimulate insight to face problems with more wisdom (Done, 2012).

Lastly, research by educational psychologist and futures researcher Jennifer Gidley and colleague Sohail Inayatullah (2002) has led them to conclude that 'there is a cultural seachange (paradigm shift) occurring, namely popular disenchantment with the dominant materialist worldview that grounds Western culture. Youth are part of this desire to see ethical and spiritual values become central to policy and action in all spheres of life' (Gidley & Inayatullah, 2002, p.243).

In essence, findings from the first doctoral study mentioned above and the implications highlighted in futures research pointed to the need to investigate further the potential validity of a transpersonally-informed educational model applied to mainstream education – could it make a valid contribution to mainstream education, considering that it seems to be congruent with the characteristics of the New Generations found in the first study? This question was what the second study tried to answer by investigating three different psychosynthesis-based educational projects currently being offered in Europe and America.

An interesting observation about psychosynthesis which motivated this study was that, despite having been comparatively recognized and for a few decades even used in primary (Fugitt, 2001; Murdock, 1987; Waters, 2004), higher and gifted education specialist courses (Crampton, 1975; Piechowski, 2009; Whitmore, 1990) and post graduate studies (Hulnick & Hulnick, 2011), the contribution that psychosynthesis might make to education did not appear to be researched in mainstream schools, nor was research on transpersonally-informed education being updated, hence this study's attempts to fill the gap.

To conclude and summarize, the study presented in this article investigates whether and to what extent characteristics and elements of the latest trends

in psychosynthesis-based educational work, as obtained from three experts' descriptions and perceptions (derived from their interviews and previously published material available) might potentially:

- a) contribute to holistic education
- b) inform future developments in mainstream education so that the New Generations might potentially be served better.

Method

For this exploratory qualitative study, a *multiple case study methodology* (Stake, 1995; Yin 2009) was chosen to enable a comparison of results from different cases and to have data besides interviews, in that consent was also obtained to use all previously published material authored by the three participants (kept anonymous in this article), specifically books, journal articles, videos and previous interviews found on the Internet. This has enabled triangulation of data and offered a multiple perspective on the unit of analysis (i.e. the fundamental issue to be studied that defines the cases under investigation). Data reports and interpretations were also reviewed by participants, to ensure their viewpoints had been adequately represented. Any researcher biases which might influence results obtained were noted and revealed throughout the research process.

The main screening criterion used to select the final three case studies to be analyzed was interviewees' extensive experience as psychosynthesis educators who also had 'insider knowledge', that is experience teaching in mainstream education or working with/training children, young adults, parents and/or mainstream educators. The three highly trained individuals interviewed were two American and one Italian, pioneers in their chosen psychosynthesis-based area of work, which they offered internationally. Interviews were chosen as a data collection method because words people use in telling their stories can be seen as a microcosm of their consciousness, and it is via interviewing that behavior is put in context and an understanding of individuals' actions is facilitated (Seidman, 2006). The semi-structured interview protocol created was loosely followed to make space for interviewees' spontaneous contributions. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

Thematic content analysis (Anderson, 2007) was used to analyze data; themes found from the interviews and other available material for each case study allowed a 'within-case' analysis for each case study report and facilitated a preliminary theory generation. However, *it was the cross-case analysis*

(cross-case pattern search found when comparing themes from the three case studies) *that allowed me, the researcher, to refine initial impressions, to see evidence through various lenses* (outlined in the results section below) *and to let underlying concepts emerge*, which formed a holistic picture eventually derived from a combination of logical and intuitive processes of incubation of data (Anderson & Braud, 2011).

Results

The research question for the present study was:

How are the latest trends in the general psychosynthesis-based educational model contributing to holistic education, according to experienced educators, and how might contributions inform mainstream education?

In answer to the research question above, an examination of common characteristics identified in all three psychosynthesis-based educational projects under investigation appears to highlight that the latest trends in the transpersonally-informed, psychosynthesis model applied to education focus on:

a) *Learning by experiencing*, in which learning and knowing is encouraged to be derived from direct experience, which enables creative, independent learning that empowers learners to draw their own conclusions, rather than having to accept preexisting ones;

b) *Cultivating multiple ways of knowing* and learning, via intuition, the senses, the body and an interaction of body, emotions and mind to galvanize and open up to deep learning, acquiring potential information available from one's inner and outer worlds and senses;

c) *Finding one's purpose in life* by creative exploration of one's preferred activities, subjects, innate talents, with the support of self-aware parents and educators, who, ideally, act as role models and provide unconditional support without an agenda. This would help sustain a passion for learning because it would entail exploring and learning about oneself;

d) *Transcendent actualization*, namely expansion of consciousness to achieve not only self-awareness, but what Maslow called self-transcendence, a form of Integral/Authentic Consciousness that perceives the self embedded in the totality and leads to ethical behaviors, concern and care for all that lives, for the creation of a sustainable future.

e) *Awareness-based education*, with the contribution of *psychoenergetics* – the perception of energy underlying everything. This model holds that increased awareness of one's ability to get to know oneself and especially the effects of one's thoughts, attitudes and emotions on relationships, consciousness and matter (including the body) is highlighted and taught experientially (mainly through direct perceptions and self-observation). This is done to *encourage a more responsible and ethical use of one's mental and psychic energy in dealing with fellow humans, animals and the natural world*.

f) *Embodiment of transpersonal energies* via multisensory awareness. Through this kind of awareness, information from the Self is received through intuition, emotions and the body in everyday life; cultivating reliance on a dependable inner source of guidance for the development of self-responsibility and an inner locus of control is encouraged.

g) *Education for being*, not just for doing and knowing, which can lead to the development of wisdom in facing life transitions, daily life and decisions regarding the future.

A close examination of the potential contributions that the projects under investigation appear to have in common, listed above, reveals that some of them were not new to holistic education, in that they seem to be an integral part of the holistic education agenda in general (informed by humanistic and transpersonal psychologies, as discussed in the next section).

Potential contributions to both holistic and mainstream education might be the following three points:

1) teachings related to *awareness of energy underlying all*, which includes increased awareness of the impact that one's thoughts, attitudes and emotions appear to have on consciousness, matter and relationships (referred to above as awareness-based education, facilitated by *psychoenergetics*)

2) a focus on *transcendent actualization*, which is about expansion of consciousness to include dimensions of life that go beyond the self (self-transcendence also known as transcendent actualization). It also seems to be about educating human beings to engage in the world with a *sustainability* (Integral/Authentic) consciousness, aided by

3) the *embodiment* of transpersonal energies achieved via the engagement of multisensory awareness – of *different ways of knowing*, in other words.

Such contributions also appear to address research needs in educational futures and global trends (discussed in the introduction) as being relevant for

the future of education and of civilization. Also previously mentioned, curricula that emphasize *education for being* and *for wisdom* are being developed by other educators and researchers in more recent educational models which, however, unlike transpersonally-informed psychosynthesis, cannot count on a sound psychological developmental model tried, tested and applied for decades. Ultimately however, one might argue that all three contributions just listed could be grouped into *one*, namely *psychoenergetics*, in terms of awareness-based education.

As detailed in the section below, further findings resulting from the present study revealed to what extent transpersonal psychology, psychosynthesis and hence transpersonal education still appear to be academically marginalized and only partially available to the New Generations due not only to some of their objective shortcomings, but also to long-standing academic prejudices against the discipline per se.

In conclusion, and in answer to the research question, one interpretation of this study's result is that the potential main contribution of the latest trends in psychosynthesis-based educational model - to both holistic and mainstream education - might be represented by psychoenergetics, discussed in the next section. A suggested definition of psychoenergetics is as follows:

'Psychoenergetics is any discipline or technique that helps develop awareness of how the energy behind thoughts, emotions and attitudes affects consciousness, matter (including body) and relationships'. It implies, at least according to interviewed participants, that once awareness of the energetic component of all that exists is cultivated and developed (by *embracing different ways of knowing*), interconnectivity is claimed to be automatically felt, giving rise to self transcendence, hence to a *sustainability consciousness* and sense of service, due to a developed empathic, unitive awareness of all.

Discussion

Interestingly, psychoenergetics still seems to be a developing discipline. It was introduced decades ago by Assagioli, who envisioned the birth of a Fifth force in psychology called psychoenergetics, which "would emerge once humanity's sensitivity to subtle energies started to show signs of increasing" (Crampton, 2006). Assagioli wrote:

Psychoenergetics derives from advances in modern physics and it has solid scientific basis, following Einstein's conclusions that matter is energy. As a new direction and dimension in

psychology, the Fifth Force focuses on studying all forces existing in the universe and their inter-relationships:

- 1) Physical energies, from the subatomic to the astronomical, galactic level
- 2) Biological energies, which organize all that lives
- 3) Psychic energies of all kinds and from all levels
- 4) Spiritual, transpersonal and transcendent energies

(Assagioli, 1973, p.3, personal translation from Italian).

There appear to be several applications of psychoenergetics. For example, psychotherapist Martha Crampton has pioneered the use of psychoenergetics in conjunction with psychosynthesis for therapeutic purposes (Crampton, 2006).

Used in education, the interviewed experts see the application of psychoenergetics as a way to promote self-awareness, self-actualization and self-transcendence. Outside the realm of psychosynthesis, the discipline of psychoenergetics has been studied and developed by Stanford physicist William Tiller, who has been researching consciousness, subtle energies and the physical effects of mind and intention on matter (Tiller, 1997, 2007).

Interestingly, psychotherapist and psychosynthesis trainer Douglas Russell (1981) maintains that psychosynthesis has always conceived of the human being as an energy system and seems to be naturally closely aligned with the Third, Fourth and Fifth forces in psychology (humanistic, transpersonal, psychoenergetics, respectively). What the present study has highlighted is psychosynthesis, expressed through the Fifth force in psychology, with a *focus on attitudes and different ways of knowing*, which promotes awareness of subtle energies and of the effect of one's beliefs, thoughts and emotions/attitudes on relationships and matter.

The present study also revealed that the underlying and perhaps less obvious purpose behind psychoenergetics is to *encourage people to explore their unexplored potential*. Power, as history teaches, has been a central concern for humanity for millennia. As discussed in the introduction, in the emerging Integral/Authentic consciousness (envisaged by Wade and Wilber, among others), power still seems to be a central concern, but with an important difference – this time, it seems that *power needs to be developed from within (power over oneself)*, instead of being in the hands of few who rule many (power over others), so that each individual can govern themselves, develop an inner locus of control, and be self-responsible.

While this process seems to be experiential, emphasizing learning by direct experiencing, psychoenergetics itself also seems to be about learning to *merge the conscious and unconscious minds (i.e. different ways of knowing)*.

In essence, psychoenergetics seems to be based on Hermetic principles, especially two of them, namely:

1) *As above, so below* (i.e. being able to observe to what extent the macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm of one's life and consciousness).

2) *As within, so without* (i.e. being able to observe to what extent one's life can change according to one's inner attitudes and ability to transform them).

Religious studies expert Kocku Von Stuckrad (2005) points out that the image of the human being who can choose to emancipate him/herself through seeking the Divine in him/herself without a mediator is what characterizes both modern esotericism and transpersonal psychology's anthropological assumptions. Jung perhaps contributed by sacralizing 'the psyche and simultaneously psychologising the sacred', mirroring Neoplatonic teachings (Von Stuckrad, 2005, p.137). In a similar way, Assagioli's psychosynthesis (1993) clearly reflects and contains esoteric, theosophical teachings, promoting the Self as the connection between the Soul and one's personality.

Psychoenergetics, interestingly, appears to incorporate both transpersonal and esoteric elements, in that, besides being based on transpersonal psychology teachings, it seems to contain Hermetic (and Neoplatonic) principles. It also appears to be relevant to the consciousness and emerging paradigm that the New Generations are manifesting, as discussed in the Introduction section. Interestingly, spiritual forms of education have now become part of holistic education models, or so claims John Miller (2007), Professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). An inclusion of spirituality in the curriculum, Miller argues, entails creating a stronger connection with the cosmos and stimulating a seemingly lost sense of wonder and awe in students (Miller, 2007).

Tobin Hart (2009), Professor of Psychology specializing in transpersonal psychology and education, likewise advocates a form of education that is as much about inner knowing and personal transformation as it is about information acquisition; he actively *promotes educating for a developing Integral consciousness*, especially via the integration of wisdom in education. It would appear that there is much overlap between current holistic and transpersonal forms of

education and that *both appear to address needs reflected by the characteristics found in the New Generations*, as well as trends highlighted as desirable by futures research, as discussed in the Introduction.

However, criticism of holistic education addresses the difficulty of implementing in mainstream schools holistic values, which, some argue, appear hardly relevant in today's competitive world. Critics also call into question the academic rigor of holistic institutions, in that ethical values, personal or spiritual development cannot be measured or tested, with the consequent risk of holistic education being marginalized for lack of credibility and for potentially creating collaborators, rather than future leaders. It is also argued that students graduating from holistic institutions may find it hard to adjust to mainstream university education or to find employment (Crawford & Grossiter, 1993).

Psychology and its various forces, from behavioral to transpersonal, have always, directly or indirectly, influenced mainstream education (Roberts, 1975). Yet, despite the fact that transpersonal psychology has been developed for decades, transpersonally-informed educational projects (from elementary to graduate courses) have not found a specific place in mainstream education so far. Hence, the relevant question is: what is truly preventing transpersonal educational models from reaching mainstream acceptance?

Professor of Psychology and researcher Paul Cunningham (2007), among others, laments that, after 40 years of its inception, there seems to be a tendency to marginalize transpersonal psychology. He argues that because many transpersonal concepts tend to run counter to what is considered 'official' or perhaps 'acceptable' in mainstream orthodox Western psychology, it tends to attract fierce mainstream opposition for being 'unscientific' and too metaphysical, for neglecting evil and the shadow side. On the other hand, Cunningham also criticizes transpersonal psychology's fragmentation of paradigm, lack of a comprehensive textbook, which represents all areas of research within the field, lack of cohesion and agreement among practitioners in many areas, including research methods, 'acceptable' research areas and the education of its students (Cunningham, 2007). Having said that, however, Cunningham observes that conventional psychology appears to manifest a prejudiced perception of humanity's psycho-spiritual nature and potential and that there still might be a (mainstream) bias against addressing or taking seriously the full potential and spiritual nature of human beings (op. cit.).

The problem is that, limitations of transpersonal psychology notwithstanding, the currently held worldview inevitably influences educational choices

by policy makers and so does psychological research, which, itself, seems to be influenced by the potential limitations/biases of the prevalent paradigm – a vicious cycle that is potentially dangerous and harmful, especially to the New Generations.

Another confirmation of mainstream academic bias against spirituality is highlighted by scientist and social critic Mark Koltko-Rivera (2006), who, having researched self-transcendence, highlights the fact that institutional psychology seems largely unwilling to recognize the existence and need for inclusion of transpersonal, spiritual dimensions in mainstream psychological research. Koltko-Rivera has found that the more complete version of Maslow's popular hierarchy of needs theory, which includes self-transcendence as a motivational step beyond self-actualization, has been almost completely left out of psychology texts for over three decades. With very few notable exceptions, emphasizes Koltko-Rivera, such texts have been presenting an inaccurate, incomplete version of the theory, leaving out the transcendent aspects. Yet, wider recognition of self-transcendence as part of Maslow's hierarchy of motivational needs, Koltko-Rivera argues, could have important consequences for theory and research, potentially providing:

- (a) a more comprehensive understanding of worldviews regarding the meaning of life;
- (b) broader understanding of the motivational roots of altruism, social progress, and wisdom;
- (c) a deeper understanding of religious violence;
- (d) integration of the psychology of religion and spirituality into the mainstream of psychology and
- (e) a more multiculturally integrated approach to psychological theory (Koltko-Rivera, 2006, p.302).

It seems clear that ignoring the transcendent aspect of the human psyche also *limits information-made available to policy makers*, which, in turn, limits their policies and decisions, as well as parents' and youth's choices. Existing research in the field about what motivates individuals, what motivates learning, how the mind works, human potential, etc., does or *should inform educational practices*, as Lucas & Claxton (2010), cited above, also argue.

Recent research by educator and transpersonal researcher Scott Buckler (2012) focused on analyzing hermeneutically all information found on transperson-

al education and revealed that scant recent resources can be found in this area; in fact, the main writings appear to date back to the early 1970s and 1980s, which confirms that there seems to be a gap or omission in investigating transpersonally-informed educational models. Psychosynthesis research in education (or lack thereof) appears to align very closely with Buckler's findings, most of which were again inspired by humanistic psychologists and early transpersonal researchers and educators. The present investigation, in conclusion, appears to confirm previous trends in transpersonal education, which focuses on transformation, evolving consciousness that leads to agency, self-reliance and self-actualization, and the cultivation of human potential.

Psychosynthesis, particularly through the developing discipline of psychoenergetics, as revealed by the present multiple case study investigation, would seem to have contributions to make which:

- a) are fully aligned with the early and the more current visions pertaining to transpersonal, transformative education and
- b) make a new contribution to education for the New Generations' needs, especially via the developing discipline of psychoenergetics.

Furthermore, as mentioned, the contributions to mainstream education from the investigated psychosynthesis-based educational projects *appear to be in line with the needs and trends highlighted as desirable by educational futures research* as well, discussed in the Introduction section above.

Conclusions

The three psychosynthesis-based educational projects under investigation appear to be in line with past and current holistic and transpersonal education. Interestingly, they also seem to be aligned with the first study's findings, in that the psychosynthetic model potentially seems to meet Indigos' educational needs, which the interviewed educators in the first study had identified. More to the point, new trends revealed by investigating the three transpersonal educational projects in the present study seem to be relevant to a changing world, in that they seem to address the need to develop wisdom, creative thinking, self-actualizing/transcending tendencies and sustainability consciousness in future leaders, which recent research in education and other fields seems to indicate as desirable in the future.

Unlike other holistic models, the educational projects investigated are based, and can count on psy-

chosynthesis and transpersonal education, which have been established and active in research and practice for four decades. As discussed, psychosynthesis has been internationally applied in education and, due to successes reported, it has even earned grants and public funds (Whitmore, 2008). Yet, it has not 'crossed the divide' to mainstream education due to both the shortcomings of transpersonal psychology and psychosynthesis research and application gaps and to academic biases against them, which might impede or delay their full integration in mainstream channels.

The ongoing, general mainstream tendency to ignore individuals' spiritual dimension and to leave out research on human potential (revealing what the mind is capable of) based on cultural anthropology, positive psychology, transpersonal psychology and consciousness and even parapsychology research implies that:

- a) policy makers have less complete information than is, in fact, available,
- b) holistic forms of education are confined to private, expensive schools and
- c) parents', educators' and students' choices are consequently seriously limited.

Mainstream attempts to preserve the status quo by not evolving education policies and schools curricula seem to force a type of conformity that might feed a dangerous tendency to misdiagnose or drug the young, which inevitably contributes to alienating parents and the New Generations from mainstream education. At the same time, elitist attitudes often found in psychosynthesis circles (Robertson, 1998) also need to be addressed, as does the fragmentation found in the discipline of transpersonal psychology (Cunningham, 2007).

I hope that my own exploratory investigation, despite not offering any definitive answers, might symbolize a first step in both raising awareness of the various phenomena here investigated and in heeding Indigos' call for adults to *listen* and to provide guidance to them (Carroll & Tober, 2009), ideally through a form of 'Education for Integral/Authentic Consciousness'. An educational model for the development of this theorized emerging consciousness would necessarily explore more fully our unexplored human potential, the desire for which many representatives of the New Generations already seem to manifest. Whether adolescents would still rebel and reject this futuristic form of education or welcome it, remains at this stage unknown.

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O Discurso Narrativo do Idoso na Arteterapia: Experiências Transpessoais

Narrative Speech of the Elderly in Art Therapy: Transpersonal Experiences

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Resumo

Introdução: Arteterapia é o processo terapêutico, em que o profissional utiliza as diferentes expressões artísticas – o desenho, a pintura, a escultura, a música, o teatro, a contação de histórias, entre outras, a fim de auxiliar o cliente no desenvolvimento biopsicossocial. Nesta perspectiva, o objetivo, aqui, é observar os conteúdos verbalizados no discurso narrativo, a partir da leitura de imagens. **Metodologia:** O método constituiu-se em solicitar a produção de uma história, a partir do desenho feito por três mulheres, entre 75 a 82 anos de idade, residentes de uma instituição particular de idosos, durante uma sessão arteterapêutica. **Resultados:** Os resultados mostram que as imagens desenhadas contribuem para o desenrolar narrativo, indicando os caminhos que o indivíduo escolhe a fim de alcançar o autoconhecimento e a “autorrealização”. **Conclusões:** Por meio das narrativas, as idosas verbalizam emoções e sentimentos ressignificados, transcendendo a relação corpo, mente e espírito, na construção da consciência cotidiana.

Palavras-chave: arteterapia, desenho, narrativa, psicologia transpessoal

Abstract

Introduction: Art therapy is a therapeutic process in which the professional uses different artistic expressions – drawing, painting, sculpture, music, theater, storytelling (among others), to assist the client in bio-psycho-social development. For this particular project, the goal is to observe the contents of oral narratives, via reading of images. **Methodology:** The method consisted of requesting the creation of a story based on drawings made by three women, between 75 to 82 years old, residents of a particular institution, during one Art therapy session. **Results:** The results show that the drawn images contribute to the development narrative, indicating some of the paths that the individual chooses to achieve self-knowledge and 'self-realization'. **Conclusions:** Through the narratives, the elders reinterpreted emotions and feelings, transcending the relationship between body, mind and spirit, related to construction of everyday consciousness.

Keywords: art therapy, drawing, narrative, transpersonal psychology

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Introdução

Antes de iniciarmos a abordagem sobre Arteterapia com idosos, faz-se necessário, uma justificativa da escolha da referida população. Por que idosos? Considerando que o idoso passa por diversos tipos de perdas, tais como emprego, devido à aposentadoria, perda da massa muscular e, conseqüentemente, ausência de equilíbrio físico, perda da memória de curto e, às vezes, da memória de longo prazo, entre outras, torna-se necessária a realização de atividades que estimulem o prazer em viver. Além disso, eles, também, podem apresentar complicações em quase todas as partes do corpo, como, por exemplo, no sistema cardiovascular, respiratório, urinário e imunológico, dificultando as tarefas diárias. Por isso é imprescindível a presença familiar e a necessidade de terapias complementares para que a os referidos sujeitos possam ter uma melhor qualidade de vida.

Vale lembrar, também, que outros indivíduos acima de sessenta anos de idade, por diferentes razões, passam a morar em instituições ou residências de idosos. Neste contexto, o idoso, ao ser conduzido para um outro lar, diferente do meio conhecido e familiar, muitas vezes, perde a identidade e o contato com a realidade, tendo de se adaptar a uma nova vida, modificando suas relações interpessoais. Nestas circunstâncias alguns adquirem a depressão e problemas de saúde em geral. Então, como resolver ou pelo menos amenizar os desafios que os idosos enfrentam no dia a dia?

Uma possível resposta para questão é estimular o desenvolvimento da criatividade, por meio da arte, para que através dela os referidos indivíduos possam ressignificar suas emoções e sentimentos, aprendendo a lidar melhor com os obstáculos que surgem, para, posteriormente, alcançarem o autoconhecimento e a autorrealização.

De acordo com Maslow (1962), a autorrealização se caracteriza por experiências transcendentais ou “culminantes” como os estados místicos espontâneos. Logo, com base nas divergências das duas forças da Psicologia, dominantes do Sec.XX, o Behaviorismo (primeira força) e a Psicanálise (segunda força), o referido autor chegou à Psicologia Humanista, considerada a terceira força da Psicologia, a qual ressalta sobre as experiências além do corpo e da mente. O Behaviorismo foi criticado, pelo estudioso, por ser impossível entender ou modificar comportamentos complexos como culpa, alterações de humor, idealismo e outros, tipicamente humanos e que não

encontramos em animais; e a Psicanálise por enfatizar a doença como explicação para os transtornos da psique, conforme as análises freudianas, e, segundo Maslow,

[...] basear-se no estudo da doença ou no que existe de pior nos seres humanos forçosamente conduziria a uma visão distorcida da natureza humana. Embora absolutamente não negasse as conclusões de Freud, pois conforme Maslow: “Freud forneceu-nos a metade doente da psicologia e devemos agora preencher a metade saudável” (1962, p. 5).

Assim, ele conclui que as experiências culminantes indicam um estado de consciência superior, que ultrapassa o *Self*, definido, até então, como o núcleo organizador da psique. Tal ideia de um núcleo organizador na psique distancia a Psicologia Humanista da Psicanálise e a aproxima das ideias de Jung, que foram importantes no desenvolvimento da Psicologia Transpessoal, considerada a quarta força da Psicologia.

Criatividade e desenho: experiências transpessoais

Em 1969, a partir do encontro de Maslow, Stanislav Grof e outros importantes estudiosos que realizaram pesquisas para entender a mente humana para além do corpo físico e do intelecto, surgiu a Psicologia Transpessoal, que busca integrar à Psicologia as vivências espirituais e as experiências chamadas “transpessoais”, caracterizadas por um estado de consciência superior, que contém todas as experiências anteriores do indivíduo e prossegue no sentido de conduzir o ser humano em direção à transcendência. Nesta perspectiva, Grof afirma que:

[...] um fato importante nessa época foi o meu encontro com Abraham Maslow e Anthony Sutich (...). Abe tinha feito extensas pesquisas sobre os estados místicos espontâneos (...) e chegou a conclusões muito parecidas com as minhas. Independentemente de nossas reuniões, surgiu a ideia de lançar uma nova disciplina que combinaria ciência e espiritualidade, incluindo a Sabedoria Perene, além de considerar vários níveis de consciência (1985, p. 34).

E partindo do pressuposto que a arte, especificamente aqui, o desenho e as histórias narradas, durante o processo terapêutico, podem contribuir para a transcendência dos idosos, na medida em que as cores, as formas e os traços utilizados nas imagens construídas revelam os sentimentos e emoções que são ressignificados e verbalizados nas narrativas, os sujeitos participantes podem alcançar o autoconhecimento e a autorrealização. Portanto, consideramos, aqui, o cuidado com o corpo físico – a matéria; a mente – o intelecto; e o espírito – algo que confere sentido à vida humana (Jung, 1982).

Nesta perspectiva, ressaltamos a relação entre arte em terapia e Psicologia Transpessoal, pois conforme Descamps (2003), o mundo é uma estrutura energética fluida como o nosso corpo, portanto há uma unidade subjacente entre o homem e o universo, consequentemente as terapias transpessoais permitem acessar a dimensão interior do indivíduo – a dimensão do sagrado, a experiência mística a fim de realizar a viagem ao interior mais profundo do ser, pois percebemos que tudo está interligado e o homem não está mais só e perdido, pois a alienação reside na oposição espírito e matéria. E a arte, no processo terapêutico, torna-se o passaporte para acessarmos os conteúdos conscientes e inconscientes dos indivíduos que estão abertos ao diálogo com o outro e com si mesmo.

Então, Maslow (1979) enfatiza que por meio da criatividade o homem pode realizar a si próprio, e que as experiências artísticas fazem parte de um processo de individuação e de crescimento pessoal, resultando na autorrealização.

Nesta perspectiva, uma das funções da Arte, especificamente aqui o desenho, é mostrar a realidade de forma estética, agradável e prazerosa e, consequentemente, ela pode auxiliar no aprimoramento cognitivo, linguístico e discursivo, na medida em que são oferecidos os lápis de cores e as folhas de papel, onde os indivíduos, em qualquer faixa etária, ressaltando a terceira idade – idosos, os quais necessitam de diferentes atividades cotidianas que lhes forneçam um sentido para a vida, podem expressar o que estão sentindo na construção da imagem e nas produções narrativas.

Diante do exposto, o objetivo, aqui, é apresentar a aplicação de uma das expressões artísticas – o desenho, como apoio para a contação de história, a fim de observar os conteúdos do universo interior dos idosos, durante a narração. E a partir de então, refletir sobre as seguintes questões: as imagens contribuem para o desenrolar narrativo? As cores utilizadas nos desenhos têm

relação com as histórias narradas? Os símbolos imagéticos revelam as emoções e/ou sentimentos dos idosos? É possível transcender, entrar num estado superior de consciência, a partir dos desenhos e histórias narradas?

O que é Arteterapia?

Arteterapia corresponde ao processo terapêutico em que o profissional utiliza as diferentes formas artísticas – o desenho, a pintura, a escultura, a música, o teatro, a contação de histórias, entre outras, a fim de auxiliar os sujeitos no desenvolvimento biopsicossocial. Vale lembrar que o uso terapêutico das artes remonta às civilizações mais antigas.

Margareth Naumburg (1890-1983) artista plástica, educadora e psicóloga americana, ficou conhecida como a “mãe” da Arteterapia, por ter sido a primeira a diferenciá-la, claramente, como um campo específico, estabelecendo os fundamentos teóricos sólidos para seu desenvolvimento (Altman, 2015). No entanto, ela não foi a primeira a utilizar o termo. Para a referida psicóloga sempre ficou evidente a importância da atividade criativa e expressiva para o progresso pleno de cada ser humano.

A educadora e psicóloga interessou-se pelas pontes entre o trabalho desenvolvido na escola, onde utilizava o método Montessori e o campo da Psiquiatria e da Psicoterapia. Em 1969, foi oficialmente fundada a Associação Americana de Arteterapia (AATA).

No Brasil, a Arteterapia surge com Osório César, em 1923, e Nise da Silveira, em 1946, ambos psiquiatras. O primeiro trabalhou com arte no hospital do Juqueri, em São Paulo, sob a influência da Psicanálise, enquanto Nise da Silveira desenvolveu um trabalho no Centro Psiquiátrico Dom Pedro II, no Rio de Janeiro sob a influência junguiana, procurando compreender as imagens produzidas pelos pacientes. Nise da Silveira exerceu papel principal na militância em defesa dos doentes mentais, ao longo de toda sua vida.

Porém, só em meados do século XX a Arteterapia se delineia com efetiva atuação, motivada pela crise da modernidade, em meio às mudanças que marcaram essa época. No percurso sócio-histórico, com as duas guerras mundiais, houve alterações na crença de que a razão e a ciência poderiam responder a tudo. Então, no período pós-guerra, desenvolve-se na Europa uma arte gestual, não somente como uma reação à onda crescente de materialismo, mas contra a arte formalista, hegemônica na época; contra a criação

plástica dominada pela estética cubista e suas derivações.

Diante do exposto, verificamos que a Arteterapia fornece o passaporte para o ato criativo, possibilitando a ampliação da mente no processo terapêutico. Ciornai (2004) afirma que a terapia com a arte facilita o entrar em contato com o poder criador de cada um; e, ao criar o belo, a pessoa entra em contato com o belo em si.

Carl Rogers (1961) na perspectiva Humanista, também ressalta sobre a capacidade criativa, quando afirma que “a causa principal da criatividade parece ser a mesma tendência que descobrimos a um nível profundo como a força criativa da psicoterapia – a tendência do homem para realizar a si próprio” (p. 11), ou seja, a criatividade está relacionada à saúde do indivíduo.

Na concepção de Carvalho (1995, p. 60-61),

uma vida plena e saudável é uma vida criativa e o viver artístico não é algo extraordinário, restrito a algumas pessoas socialmente reconhecidas como artistas, mas um aspecto intrínseco da humanidade [...]. Acrescenta ainda que a criatividade e a sensibilidade são inatas ao ser humano e que podem ser desenvolvidas nas vivências e encontros que a vida proporciona. Tanto na arte como nos processos terapêuticos se manifesta a capacidade humana de perceber, figurar e reconfigurar suas relações consigo, com os outros e com o mundo.

Dessa forma, o convite do fazer artístico possibilita a abertura do “eu” interior para o exterior, não só por meio da verbalização, mas, principalmente, pelos gestos, danças, pintura, escultura, música, teatro e contação de histórias, as quais abordamos, a seguir, a partir da leitura de imagens.

Imagem e narrativa

A maioria dos indivíduos na infância começa a comunicar-se graficamente por meio do desenho, independentemente de raça, sexo ou nacionalidade. Pois a referida prática encanta e parece satisfazer os desejos inconscientes, na medida em que o indivíduo mergulha no universo fantástico das imagens. Se todas as pessoas continuassem o processo de desenvolvimento gráfico, passando por todas as etapas, com certeza

saberiam se expressar a partir de manifestações artísticas.

O desenho pode ser um importante meio de comunicação e representação da criança, do adolescente, do adulto e do idoso, apresentando-se como uma atividade fundamental, pois identificamos os múltiplos caminhos para registrar percepções, conhecimentos, emoções, vontade, imaginação, memória no desenvolvimento de uma forma de interação social, apropriada às condições físicas, psíquicas, históricas e culturais de cada um.

Além dos traços nas imagens realizadas pelo idoso, também observamos as cores utilizadas, se são frias ou quentes, entre outros elementos simbólicos e singulares que cada um traz de acordo com suas experiências. Nesta perspectiva, o desenho dialoga com elementos oriundos do domínio da observação sensível do real e da capacidade de imaginar e projetar vontades, confrontando o real, o percebido e o imaginário. A observação, a memória e a imaginação são os personagens que flagram essa zona de incerteza: o território entre o visível e o invisível.

Logo, diante de um desenho, podemos construir histórias reais/ou fictícias ou ambas, ao mesmo tempo. Aumont (1993) afirma que a imagem é representativa, portanto ela costuma ser uma imagem narrativa. Nesta perspectiva, toda imagem pode ser narrável, sendo ela estática – uma fotografia, um desenho ou imagens em movimento – cinema. Conforme o autor, observamos que a imagem contribui para a organização das informações verbalizadas, por meio da narrativa oral.

Assim, corroboramos com François (2009, p. 44):

Por que narrar? Certamente, podemos narrar por muitas razões: por exemplo, para nos divertir, ou porque alguém nos pede. Mas a oposição livre escolha/obrigação é válida para quase toda atividade. Talvez, mais especificamente, porque no narrar, da criança ao idoso, somos surpreendidos no tempo, e nenhum discurso teórico dá conta dessa dimensão de repetição/novidade, esperado/surpresa, que é a vida para cada um de nós. Narrar é, seguramente, um jogo. Talvez, seja o jogo mais sério.

Diante do exposto, observamos que a narrativa é inerente à cultura e, através dela, podemos conhecer e desvendar os mistérios que envolvem o ser humano, portanto, ela torna-se

indispensável ao estudo do discurso do idoso. Desse modo, não podemos ignorar o poder da narrativa e sua importância em todas as sociedades, que pela diversidade de suas formas e funções, às vezes, sagradas não podem ser estudadas dissociadas da experiência humana. Seu estudo tem sido ampliado desde o início do século XX pelas diversas disciplinas tradicionais – Literatura, Linguística, Antropologia, Psicologia, Sociologia, e constitui, hoje, um campo em sua totalidade: a Narratologia (Fiorindo, 2005).

Vale lembrar que embora existam diversos estudos para tentar conceituar o que é uma narrativa, não há ainda uma definição categórica que consiga assumir tal papel, pois ela depende de uma série de elementos que a caracterizam, de acordo com o objetivo a ser atingido. É válido observarmos que são inúmeras as óticas sob as quais é possível definir o conceito de narrativa. Então, podemos dizer que a própria dificuldade de encontrar uma única definição já se configura como uma de suas principais características.

No entanto, constatamos algumas peculiaridades inerentes ao discurso narrativo, tais como a presença da temporalidade, da subjetividade, da ideologia, da imitação e da busca do si-mesmo, ou seja, do autoconhecimento e da autorrealização. Assim, toda narrativa, oral ou escrita, é subjetiva e ideológica, por exemplo, uma narrativa de final feliz e outra que termina em morte do herói abrem perspectivas diferentes sobre a existência humana. É por isso que investigar a mente humana a partir de histórias narradas com base na leitura de imagens e/ou desenhos feitos pelos próprios sujeitos, torna-se um instrumento rico de conteúdos emocionais e sentimentais que são resgatados das memórias.

Metodologia

Aqui, apresentamos, o espaço, local onde foi realizada a sessão de Arteterapia, bem como a seleção dos sujeitos, os materiais utilizados e as etapas durante o processo terapêutico.

Contextualizando o espaço

A residência dos idosos, Abrigo do Salvador, foi fundada em 1933, mas a sede atual foi inaugurada em 1944, pelo seu idealizador, Rafael Levy Miranda, na cidade de Salvador/BA. O espaço de convivência é amplo e agradável, onde há um refeitório geral e um refeitório da pousada, sala de leitura, sala de jogos, pista de

caminhada e/ou corrida, piscina para hidroterapia e centro médico. Há uma equipe multiprofissional, composta de fisioterapeuta, psicólogo, médico, acupunturista, assistente social, nutricionista, dentista, entre outros profissionais que contribuem para o bem-estar dos residentes. A sala onde foi realizada a atividade é bem arejada com ventiladores e janelas, há uma mesa grande e cadeiras. A título de ilustração seguem algumas imagens do Abrigo do Salvador, nas Figuras 1, 2 e 3:

Figura 1. *Entrada principal*



Figura 2. *Capela*



Figura 3. *Espaço utilizado para sessões de Arteterapia*



Sujeitos

A escolha do público alvo se deve ao fato do acúmulo de experiências vividas pelos sujeitos e da possibilidade, através da arte em terapia, de transcender o sentido da existência de cada um. Os sujeitos participantes foram três mulheres, entre 75 e 82 anos de idade, residentes do referido abrigo, que frequentaram a sessão de Arteterapia com desenhos e narrativas. Vale ressaltar que o grupo é aberto, em que outros idosos poderiam participar, mas que no dia não puderam estar presentes. A fim

de mantermos o sigilo dos sujeitos envolvidos, consideramos as iniciais do alfabeto para representar as falas das idosas e P para representar a arteterapeuta.

Materiais

Para atividade foram utilizados papel ofício, na cor branca, giz de cera colorido, lápis preto nº 2 HB, cola colorida e o CD da música celta instrumental, conforme as ilustrações:

Figura 4. *Papel ofício*



Figura 5. *Giz de cera*



Figura 6. *Lápis preto nº 2 HB*



Figura 7. *Cola colorida*



Figura 8. *Música intrrumental*



Procedimento

A metodologia consistiu em solicitar às participantes que fizessem um desenho livre. Elas tiveram 25 minutos para fazer a imagem. Durante a produção do desenho havia um som da música celta instrumental do grupo *Palanco Cia dos Ícones*. Após esta etapa a terapeuta solicitou que, individualmente, elas narrassem o que a imagem representava. O objetivo foi observar os conteúdos emocionais trazidos pela narrativa, por meio dos símbolos imagéticos e verificar as experiências transpessoais durante a sessão arteterapêutica.

Resultados

Aqui, abordamos as imagens – os desenhos, seguidos de narrativas, com os respectivos comentários com base na Arteterapia e nas experiências transpessoais.

Figura 9. *N, mulher, 77 anos*



Narrativa 1 (N, mulher, 77 anos)

N: *Eu quis expressar meu coração antes de vir para cá, que eu estava numa fase difícil, de não superar a perda de meu marido. E quando tive a idéia de vir pra cá estava ansiosa, como está aqui no desenho, eu tinha angústia, ansiedade, ele (o coração) estava saudosos, e tinha dor, estava em depressão. Sou viúva há três anos. Mas quando cheguei aqui fiquei alegre. Quando comecei a conviver aqui a alegria voltou. Antes de eu vir pra cá eu participava junto com meu marido de um grupo da terceira idade, éramos muito felizes, mas quando ele morreu, fiquei sem chão, em depressão. E quando decidi vir pra cá, voltei a ser feliz. Tenho dois filhos casados, um menino e uma menina. Antes de vir pra cá morei seis meses com meu filho, minha nora e meu neto, que hoje tem quatorze anos. Depois minha filha que morava no interior, largou o emprego, para vir morar comigo, mas fiquei com ela só dois meses e aí decidi vir para o Abrigo. Eu tenho um*

apartamento, que ganhei no dia dos namorados de meu marido, ele está fechado, não tenho vontade nenhuma de ir para lá. Acho que vou alugar. Passou o período da saudade e agora estou bem.

Comentário

A participante relatou seu percurso de chegada ao Abrigo, lugar onde ela mora hoje, ressaltando a situação de perda, luto, devido à morte do marido. A imagem do coração, na cor vermelha, revela que, mesmo diante dos acontecimentos inevitáveis, ela reconhece os sentimentos de dor, de angústia, de ansiedade e de saudade surgidos como uma ponte para a entrada em uma nova fase de sua vida, a constituição de sua própria felicidade, por meio dos novos vínculos de amizade, como N ressalta – “*Quando comecei a conviver aqui a alegria voltou*”.

Além disso, aprender a lidar com a ausência do outro, marido, serviu como uma forma de aprender a lidar consigo mesma, enfrentando os momentos de solidão, às vezes de apoio dos filhos, mas mesmo assim, como a idosa enfatiza, que morou seis meses com o filho e depois mais dois meses com a filha, não foram suficientes para ela se sentir como se estivesse em sua própria casa. Esta foi uma das razões que a motivou a procurar uma residência de idosos, onde ela pudesse fazer o que quisesse sem precisar incomodar os filhos.

Nesta perspectiva, observamos que o passo para decidir mudar, ou seja, sair da zona de conforto – conviver com os filhos na mesma casa – só podia ser de N, pois ela sentiu a necessidade de independência emocional e para isso precisou caminhar sozinha. Conforme Jung (2011), a sabedoria só tem validade na medida em que conseguimos aplicá-la em toda sua plenitude, pois convivemos com enigmas a todo momento, mas por alguma razão nos recusamos a ir ao encontro do desconhecido, nos prendemos aos padrões, esquecendo-nos de que somos nós os produtores do que nos rodeia, isto é, seres questionadores e interpretadores de símbolos.

Os dizeres, na imagem do coração, no sentido horário, indicam o processo cíclico da vida, onde sempre há um começo, um meio e um fim, este relatado como uma superação de que o período de sofrimento passou e, agora, ela está bem, ou seja, ela ressignificou as emoções – angústia, ansiedade e dor, transformando em sentimentos de saudade e alegria.

Diante da imagem e da narrativa, além da música celta – que tocava durante a sessão, verificamos o quanto o desenho do coração converge com o relato da idosa, deixando claro,

que por meio do sofrimento, luto, é possível atribuir um novo sentido à vida, ou seja, transcender os limites do corpo físico, no caso a ausência do marido, ressignificando a relação corpo, mente e espírito.

Figura 10. DI, mulher, 75 anos



Narrativa 2 (DI, mulher 75 anos)

D: Eu vivia uma vida cheia de nuvens com minha avó que era índia. Aqui eu vivo como eu vivia antes, feliz da vida. Eu quero este tempo que eu morava lá, na aldeia, tomava banho de rio, pulava, subia em pé de árvore para colher frutas, sem cair da árvore, porque as meninas não conseguiam subir como eu subia. Só alegria, alegria, alegria. Ontem, você não sabe, tava chovendo, né, eu cheguei toda molhada assoviando e muito feliz, aí o segurança começou a procurar quem era que estava assoviando, eu disse que não era eu (dava muito risada ao contar). Eu tive uma vida muito boa, alegre e tenho até hoje. E quem não tem o coração bom, fico bem do mesmo jeito, não tô nem aí. Até que uma hora aquela pessoa que não sorri, de tanto eu sorri, ela vai acabar sorrindo.

Comentário

DI representou a realidade de seu relato em duas fases; a primeira, na parte superior da folha – a vivência com a avó, índia, resgatando da memória de longo prazo a saudade do carinho da avó. Embora o desenho, na parte superior, pareça estar acima da concretização, pois foi algo que já aconteceu, há um chão, a sustentação de que a realidade vivida, ainda está presente, na memória da idosa.

A seguir, a participante fez a representação do contexto atual, onde ela mora – o Abrigo, trazendo, também, as flores, ou seja, o contato com a natureza, que a cultura indígena preserva e cultua como algo sagrado que deve ser respeitado. Paralelamente, DI fez a imagem de uma casa, agora um pouco menor, mas onde há conforto e partilha com as colegas que fez amizade no novo lar.

E, lembrando as brincadeiras de criança, ressalta em seu relato uma atitude infantil e prazerosa: assoviar. Depois que ela contou sobre o banho de chuva, o contato direto com o fenômeno da natureza realizou sua vontade e mostrou que sabia assoviar e bem alto. Nesta perspectiva, verificamos como a imagem que DI fez traz elementos significativos que completam o sentido de seu discurso.

As cores dos personagens em amarelo revelam a felicidade do viver que é relatada no discurso da idosa. O vermelho, o azul, o rosa e o verde contribuem para o colorir da vida, equilibrando as emoções verbalizadas durante a narrativa. Os símbolos trazidos na imagem e mencionados durante a narração confirmam o quanto o desenho pode indicar os diferentes caminhos a serem trilhados pelo sujeito. Verificamos que a idosa decidiu ser feliz, lembrando a infância com saudade e seu vínculo afetivo com a avó, memórias que puderam ser revividas pelo relato a partir das imagens.

Diante do exposto, constatamos o quanto as cores, as formas, os traços utilizados no desenho, bem como a música instrumental celta, possibilitam, por meio da história narrada, um estado de catarse, ou seja, uma experiência transpessoal, na medida em que há o resgate dos momentos felizes, nas memórias do passado, que convergem com o momento presente, mostrando a escolha que a idosa fez – ser feliz, portanto, identificamos aqui a autorrealização (Maslow, 1962).

Figura 11. L, mulher, 82 anos



Narrativa 3 (L, mulher, 82 anos)

L: *Essa é a igreja de São Francisco, é muito bonita.*

P: E o que ela representa para você?

L: *A fé, a crença... não quero falar mais nada, porque perdi uma filha e um neto.*

Comentário

L resgatou, na imagem produzida, a fé e a crença que pareciam estar perdidas, diante do

breve relato da perda de uma filha e de um neto. Vale ressaltar que a participante chegou, para fazer a atividade, reclamando de pressão alta, que estava tomando o remédio, mas que não sabia a razão do referido medicamento não estar funcionando.

Após fazer o desenho, L ficou admirando-o antes de iniciar a narrativa. Logo, em seguida, fez o comentário sobre a imagem que era muito bonita por ser a igreja de São Francisco. Aqui a idosa trouxe para o mundo imaginário a realidade vivenciada por ela, de ser católica e semanalmente frequentar a capela do Abrigo. Vale ressaltar que L é uma mulher muito educada, um pouco tímida, fala pouco e observa muito. Por meio do desenho foi possível estimular a fala e o posicionamento dela, que foi interrompido quando se deparou com algo que incomodava – perda da filha e do neto. Embora ela tenha mencionado a crença e a fé em seu discurso, que está representada pela igreja, não foi possível dar prosseguimento ao discurso, pois a idosa encontrava-se emocionalmente fragilizada pelo ocorrido. Aqui, observamos que ela tem consciência do luto e reconhece a necessidade de não estar em grupo, justamente para não se abrir com os outros.

As cores utilizadas na imagem, o verde predominante pode indicar a esperança de dias melhores e o azul expresso na cruz mostra a busca da tranquilidade e da paz, concretizadas pela fé e religião. A cor marrom, no teto da igreja, revela o contato com a terra, ou seja, a necessidade de estar presente, no aqui e agora, mas que por enquanto isso está sendo difícil, pois a igreja encontra-se no ar, na parte superior da folha de papel. A cor vermelha, nas pétalas da flor pode indicar a força que ela deve encontrar para superar a situação.

Assim, por meio das cores, das formas e dos traços utilizados no desenho, bem como a sonoridade musical celta e o relato da idosa, observamos a transcendência da relação corpo, mente e espírito. A preocupação com corpo físico – pois ela tem que estar saudável para continuar vivendo, por isso o questionamento sobre a pressão estar alta, mesmo tomando o medicamento; a mente que revela a consciência dos fatos ocorridos – perda da filha e do neto, que gerou a dor, e, paralelamente, conforme Jung (2011), a presença do espírito – pela crença na fé e na religião, que indicam um sentido maior para o viver.

Conclusões

Os resultados mostram que as imagens desenhadas contribuem para o desenrolar narrativo, indicando os múltiplos caminhos que o indivíduo escolhe a fim de alcançar o autoconhecimento e a

autorrealização. Os símbolos trazidos nas imagens, bem como as cores utilizadas convergem com os conteúdos emocionais e sentimentais trazidos do universo interior das idosas.

Observamos que as duas idosas, N (77 anos) e L (82 anos), revelaram o contexto atual de luto, em que a primeira parece estar bem, considerando as mudanças realizadas por ela mesma e pelo fato do falecimento do marido ter ocorrido há três anos, enquanto L ainda se encontra bastante fragilizada pela perda da filha e do neto, mas mesmo assim mantém a fé que ela encontra na religião católica. Já a idosa, DI (75 anos), revelou em sua produção imagética e narrativa a decisão de ser feliz, lembrando a infância e o vínculo afetuosos com a avó.

Por meio das narrativas, as idosas verbalizam emoções e sentimentos ressignificados na construção da consciência cotidiana. A estratégia de trabalhar com narrativas orais a partir da leitura de imagens, feitas pelos próprios narradores, resgata os símbolos presentes nas produções de cada uma, que servem como pontes para a entrada no universo lúdico e criativo, e através dele as idosas trazem conteúdos conscientes e submersos para a narração.

As produções imagéticas revelam a criatividade de cada participante, ao mesmo tempo em que mostra o objetivo do indivíduo de realizar a si mesmo (Rogers, 1961). Paralelamente, os discursos narrativos por apresentarem sincronicidade com os desenhos feitos pelas idosas, possibilitam o autoconhecimento e a autorrealização, na medida em que revelam os desejos, as vontades, as dores, nas experiências transpessoais. E a partir de então constatamos o quanto a arte em terapia possibilita o reencontro do ser com ele mesmo, de forma prazerosa e edificante, a fim de conduzir o paciente/cliente ao processo de individuação (Jung, 2011), ou seja, o processo de amadurecimento intelectual, emocional, físico e espiritual, que ocorre durante o percurso da vida.

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Mandalas and Guided Imagery: Improving the Life Quality of Elders

Mandalas y Visualización Creativa: Mejorando la Calidad de Vida de los Ancianos

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of guided imagery and mandala drawing on depression and psychological well-being. **Methodology:** The participants involved in the study, people aged 65 – 85, were randomly assigned to one of the two groups: the control group (n=20) with the age mean 69.2, which was not exposed to the intervention, and the experimental group (n=20) with the age mean 76.2, which was involved in the intervention (comprising guided imagery and mandala art). The sessions took place once a week, for four weeks. All the participants completed the questionnaires: Beck Depression Inventory and the Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire. The data were analyzed using ANCOVA. **Results:** The results report a significant difference between the groups regarding depression and psychological well-being. **Conclusion:** This study supports the practical capacity of guided imagery and mandala drawing in improving the quality of life.

Keywords: mandala, guided imagery, psychological well-being, depression, elders

Resumen

Objetivo: Este trabajo pretende evaluar los beneficios que la visualización creativa y del dibujo de mandalas, tiene en la depresión y el bienestar psicológico. **Metodología:** Los participantes del estudio tenían entre 65 y 85 años, y fueron elegidos al azar para formar parte de uno de estos grupos: grupo de control (n=20) con una media de edad 69.2 años, que no fue sometido a intervenciones sino tan sólo a un test (compuesto por un pre-test y un post-test); y el grupo experimental (n=20) con una media de edad de 76.2 años, sometido a una intervención compuesta por ejercicios de visualización guiada y dibujos de mandalas. Las reuniones se llevaron a cabo una vez por semana durante cuatro semanas. Todos los participantes rellenaron el Inventario de Depresión Beck y el Cuestionario de Bienestar Psicológico de Ryff. Los datos fueron analizados usando ANCOVA. **Resultados:** Los resultados demuestran una diferencia estadísticamente significativa en cuanto a la depresión y el bienestar psicológico entre los dos grupos. **Conclusión:** Este estudio demuestra el valor práctico de la visualización creativa y del dibujo de mandalas como método para mejorar la calidad de la vida.

Palabras clave: mandala, visualización guiada, bienestar psicológico, depresión, vejez

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Introduction

The society today is facing a problem in offering special care to a growing number of elderly people. The growing number of elders in the world proves that the quality of life has risen over recent decades, but this fact calls for increasing the professional caregivers' attention concerning this age group, in order to support their needs and to better understand the psychological and physiological processes of aging. As Jung says, "the second half of life is marked by one's reorientation towards the inner life, the purpose of this stage of life being that of passing from the relativity of "I", from the point of view of experience, to the relation with the Self, respectively, the reunion of "I" and the Self." This process implies a deeper self-awareness, a profounder knowledge of people and is necessary to bring into consciousness the unconscious features, in order to get to an internal and external reference to the earthly and cosmically structure of the universe.

The purpose of this research is to observe the effects of guided imagery and mandala drawing on psychological well-being and depression on the elderly. The results can offer support in using these simple and adaptable techniques aiming to facilitate and sustain the humans' natural tendency of growing and personal development.

Conceptual clarifications

The process of personal development influences the individual as a whole. Individuation is a process of development, of fulfilling the human potential through the union of contraries. Throughout individuation mandalas may appear to represent the primary order of the complete psyche. Jung had studied the mandalas for fourteen years before introducing them into his theory and practice. Mandalas are the previous sketches of the successful union between the mental pairs of opposites existing in the psyche; they are more or less successful preliminary stages of completion and wholeness (Jacoby, 2012). They show up, sustaining the self-regulating tendency of the psyche, when there is confusion within the psyche.

Recently, researchers find out more and more about the way images can influence emotions, thoughts, well-being, and the way the body and the brain react to drawing, painting, or other artistic activities, clarifying for us the manner art therapy can be helpful for a wide range of

people. Lusebrink (1990) observed that images are a bridge between body and mind, between the conscious levels of information process and the physiological changes that occur in the body. Guided imagery, an experiential technique due to which the person is directed towards a state of relaxation and then guided towards specific images through suggestions, was used to reduce symptoms, to change the mood and to reinforce the healing capacities of the human body.

Jung used in his therapy the special qualities of arts. He used art as a method of self-analysis, being inspired by his personal experiences that became the foundation for understanding the importance of using imagery in analysis. The development of art therapy was strongly influenced both by Freud's psychoanalysis and by Jung's analytical theory. Jung's theory was incorporated in the methodology specific to art therapies. Jung believed that symbols have the capacity to unite the oppositions, as a natural attempt of the psyche to resolve inner conflicts and as a method to individuation.

Mandalas

Mandala means "magic circle" in Sanskrit. It is known from ancient times in the East, but it can also be found in the world's cultures, having a universal spread dating from Paleolithic (The Rhodesian drawings on rock) (Gardner, cited in Miller, 2005). It belongs to the oldest religious symbols of the world. Being seen by the Buddhist monks as a representation of the individual's spiritual path (Marshall, cited in Greening, & Portemier, 2012), Jung introduced it in therapy as representing the state of the Self. For Jung it represents a cryptogram regarding the state of Self. Jung (1980) says that "the true mandala is an inner image that is gradually built through active imagination, namely when there is a disturbance of balance in a soul or when a thought cannot be found and it has to be searched for, because it is not contained in the sacred doctrine." Jung (in Greening & Portmeir, 2012) argues that mandalas symbolize the "center of personality, a central point within the psyche, to which all are related and arranged, and which itself is a source of energy".

Nowadays, mandalas are used in different types of psychotherapies, for example Stanislav Grof uses mandalas to help in integrating the experience gained during a Holotropic Breathing session. Its aim in psychotherapy is to become a

tool for personal expression, to increase self-awareness, to resolve conflicts and heal (Henderson, 2007). In art therapy, mandalas refer to any kind of art realized in a circular context. Jung (1934) noticed the calming and healing effect of mandala drawing upon its creator, is facilitating the psychic integration and finding the life personal purpose. Mandala, according to its effects, can lead to solving various psychological complications and it releases the personality from emotional and ideational confusions, producing a personal unity that can be considered as a rebirth state on transcendent level (Jacobi, 2012). All these contribute directly to the quality of life perceived by a person.

Regarding treatment, Jung's ideas started from his belief that, in order to obtain psychical balance, the person should establish a communication between conscious and unconscious mind. He thought that a good method to get to this state of balance is using the transcendental qualities of symbols, as those that appear in dreams and art. Jung considered symbols as a unifying element of opposites, as an attempt of the psyche to reconcile internal conflicts, and as a way to get individuation. Jung worked with the patients' images, trying to discover hidden possibilities and helping a person to find meaning and wholeness in his/her life (Malchiodi, 2003). To the same effect, Jung understood from his own experience and from others' that the artistic creation is a useful method for accessing the healing properties of archetypes. Jung's analytical psychology is substantially overlapping transpersonal psychology. Both approaches focus on the fact that psychological development has to include high levels of consciousness, as well as on the fact that the transcendental is inside us and it is available to anyone. As Scotton says (in Miller, 2005) these approaches integrate different traditional knowledge in their theory and practice, and the importance of addressing both to personal and transpersonal issues is noticed.

Recently, transpersonal approaches of art therapy integrated Jung's philosophy, transpersonal psychology and spiritual practices (Malchiodi, 2003). Jung is considered the first practitioner of transpersonal approach in art therapy, because he believed that the process of individuation requires exploring and integrating the spiritual dimension expressed through images that appear in dreams and art (Jung, 1964). Joan Kellogg (1978) highlighted the value of the artistic expression in accessing the transpersonal aspects

of the Self through mandala drawing. The techniques that address both body and mind reflect the current thinking that sees imagery as a form of treatment (Achterberg, cited in Malchiodi, 2003) and physical symptoms as an expression of transpersonal aspects of Self. The artistic expression is seen as a method to explore what is beyond Self, and as a process due to which modified states of consciousness are accessed.

Kellogg (1978) explored mandala drawing in relationship with Jung's theory regarding the collective unconscious. These approaches underline the central role of imagery in psychotherapy, and the archetypal material revealed by artistic expression and by dreams are seen as having the potential of transforming the psyche.

Mandalas are based on a religious experience, and are constructions through which the universe and the human being - mind and matter - are connected. Mandalas serve as a medium that allows both the creator and the observer to experience a sacred world.

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery is a technique which uses the capacities of human mind to create mental representations of objects, places, situations which will be perceived through the person's senses (Post-White, 2002). It implies the use of imagination in order to provoke one or more senses. In a session of guided imagery, the therapist leads the client using a script or an imagery technique. As Achterberg says (in Roffe, Schmidt & Ernst, 2005): "guided imagery involves directing the person inside his/her mind through experience, in order to reach the physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions and influence the body's changes." This method can be applied either to a group or to a person.

These techniques are frequently used to reduce anxiety and physical pain and for bringing a state of calmness (Lang & Patt, cited in Roffe, Schmidt & Ernst, 2005). Likewise, it has been proved that guided imagery encourages responsiveness to treatment and facilitates the recovery process (Simonton, cited in Roffe, Schmidt & Ernst, 2005). Psychoneuro-immunology's theories claim that through the psychological response to guided imagery, these techniques can reduce stress, increase immunological functioning and bring a state of well-being (Post-White, 1998).

Kaplan (2000) underlines the importance of neurosciences in art therapy and the value of mind-body unity concerning the guided imagery and the artistic activities. Camic (1999) conducted a research in which he used visual art and other kinds of art along with cognitive-behavioral techniques, meditations and guided imagery, in order to reduce chronic pain among adults. Sloman (2002) investigated the effect of guided imagery on quality of life, anxiety and depression in patients with advanced cancer. The results show that this intervention has significant effects in the case of depression and life quality. The data show that guided imagery can be used as a psycho-supportive adjuvant in therapy. It can be used along with artistic expression in order to facilitate self-expression, get insights and reduce stress. Psychotherapists use guided imagery to encourage relaxation, stimulate creativity and increase concentration (Camic, 1999).

Relevant researches

The focus on the relationship between physical well-being and emotional state has increased in the last decade. Practitioners from various fields explored the complex relations between illness, healing and the unconscious messages that give us a sense of being in the world. For example, DeLue (1999) studied the physiological response of school children when they were drawing mandalas. Using biofeedback techniques, the researcher concluded that just drawing within a circle produces a physiological relaxation response.

Artistic expression and guided imagery have been studied together (Lusebrink, 1990), as methods to reduce stress and to increase relaxation (DeLue, 1999). As a form of healing, imagination is an ancient practice, but recent research show that images have an essential role in healing and well-being (Achterburg, cited from Malchiodi, 2003).

There are few research studies regarding the effects of mandala drawing. Most of the studies concerning mandala as a therapeutic tool are, in general, case studies and clinical observations (Henderson, 2007). They use mandalas in various populations and contexts, such as: schizophrenia (Minulescu, 2001), psychotic disorders, posttraumatic stress and dissociative disorders (Cox & Cohen, 2000), ADHD (Smitherman, Brown & Church, cited in Henderson, 2012), and dementia (Couch, cited in Henderson, 2012).

Mandala drawing helps to purify the mind (Erricker, cited in Greening & Portmier, 2012), and as Huh says (Greening & Portmier, 2012) it may represent a high level of spirituality. Another study led by Henderson and collaborators (2007) found that mandala drawing has positive effects on people suffering from posttraumatic stress syndrome. Those in the experimental group subjected to intervention (mandala drawing) achieved statistically significant decreases of severity of PTSD symptoms than the control group. Mandala drawing can provide cognitive integration and organization of complex emotional experiences.

Methodology

This research is testing, in a control manner, the benefits of mandala drawing on psychological health. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of guided imagery and mandala drawing on psychological well-being and depression, in the case of elderly. Mandala drawing can be a therapeutic tool, generating long term positive emotions that can be used to build and increase psychological well-being.

The objective of this paper is to evaluate the benefits of guided imagery and mandala drawing in terms of psychological well-being and depression. These are the hypotheses we want to study:

1. There are, statistically, significant differences between the experimental group and the control group regarding psychological well-being.
2. There are, statistically, significant differences between the experimental and the control group regarding depression.

Subjects

For this study, a group of 40 participants aged 65-85 was analyzed; it was divided into two: a control group comprising 20 subjects (out of which 8 men and 12 women), and an experimental group, also comprising 20 subjects (out of which 9 men and 11 women). The participants were members of "Sf. Arhangheli Mihail si Gavril" day center, and they volunteered in this study. Most of participants were rural dwellers, only few participants being city dwellers. The level of

education differed, most of them having attended high school or a vocational school. They were randomized to one of the two groups: the control group, which was not exposed to intervention, and the experimental group subjected to intervention, which consisted of an exercise of guided imagery and mandala drawing. The experimental group took part in four sessions (meeting once a week), where guided imagery exercises were conducted, followed by mandala drawing.

Instruments

All of the participants completed the self-assessed questionnaires: Beck Depression Inventory and the Psychological Well-being Questionnaire, both at the beginning of the research (pre-test) and at the end (post-test), after four weeks. The chosen questionnaires measure the level of depression and psychological well-being.

Beck Depression Inventory

It was developed by Beck and his collaborators (1961) and it was meant to evaluate the severity of the depression symptoms. It comprises 21 symptoms (items), each of them having four levels of severity, from 0 - absent to 3 - highly severe, each level having, in its turn, a question; the person has to choose the question that fits best his condition. The 21 symptoms were chosen from the most common symptoms of the depressive disorders and from the psychiatric literature: depressive mood, pessimism, sense of failure, dissatisfaction, feelings of guilt, feelings of punishment, self-loathing, self-accusation, self-punitive desires, crying, irritability, social isolation, indecision, self-image change, work difficulties, sleep disorders, fatigue, appetite loss, weight loss, somatic concerns, and libido loss.

Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire

It was developed by Ryff (1989). It contains the following components: self-acceptance (a positive attitude toward oneself and his/her past), positive relations with others (qualitative and satisfying relations with others), autonomy (the sense of independence, freedom and self-determination), purpose in life (the belief that life has its meaning and value), environment mastery (the ability to manage his/her own life and

environment), personal development (open-mindedness to new experiences and continuous personal development). The answers are evaluated on a Likert scale, from 1 (strong disagreement) to 6 (strong agreement).

Procedure

All of the participants filled in the questionnaires at the pre-test level and, then, they were randomized in one of the two groups. The control group was not subjected to the intervention; it was tested at the beginning and at the end of the study, four weeks after having taken the first test. The experimental group was also tested at the beginning and at the end of the study, after having been subjected to the intervention comprising a weekly fifty-minute session, in which there was a guided imagery exercise, a different one for every week, followed by the mandala drawing moment; at the end of each session they were asked questions about the drawing they had created. The first session theme was "The Favorite Place", the second session theme was "The Dissolution of Resentment" (that exercise was developed by Emmet Fox), the third session theme was focused on "Inner Beauty" and the last session theme was "The Tree and the Light" developed by Iolanda Mitrofan (2008). At the end of the study all the participants filled in the post-test questionnaires.

At the beginning of the first session the participants received the informed consent form and the questionnaires. After filling in the forms, the people belonging to the experimental group started the exercise of guided imagery, then they received a blank sheet with a drawn circle on it and a box of crayons. Then they had to follow the instructions and draw in the circle what they feel that best represent their emotions, feelings, disposition they have. They could use any colors, shapes, symbols, forms, but couldn't use words. They were allowed to draw for 20 minutes. At the end of the session they were asked to answer several questions related to the drawing made by them:

1. Imagine that you are inside the mandala, how do you feel there?
2. What associations do you have for the colors you used (eg. words, feelings, emotions, thoughts, memories)?

3. What associations do you have for the shapes that you drew (eg. words, feelings, emotions, thoughts, memories)?
4. Give a title to the drawing, based on your reflections.
5. How is the mandala representative to your current life situation? (How much does your mandala illustrate who you are, and your current situation in life?)
6. What feelings, memories, and thoughts does your drawing convey?

Results

The questionnaires were administered individually, every subject following the same procedure. For the statistical processing of data, the SPSS program was used. For the verification of formulated hypotheses a one-way ANCOVA was conducted to determine, statistically, the significant difference between intervention and non-intervention conditions on depression and psychological well-being control, for the pre-test scores.

The distribution of the data is symmetric, being in the -2 - +2 intervals, for both Skewness and Kurtosis. The internal consistency (Alpha Cronbach) was calculated for each test. The values obtained vary between $\alpha=.77$ for the Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire and $\alpha=.90$ for BDI.

First hypothesis

The necessary conditions for using ANCOVA were followed, there is a linear correlation between the covariate (the scores from pretest) and the dependent variable (posttest scores). This aspect was verified using r correlation coefficient and the scatter plot resulted from the association of those two variables. The values obtained are: $r(40)=.743$, $p<.001$. The data sustain the assumption of homogeneous regression slopes for the various groups. The value of F is: $F(1.36)=0.759$, $p=.38$, which means the null hypothesis was not rejected. Levene's test for equality of variances was performed, the results are not statistically significant, the assumption of homogeneity of groups is sustained. The assumptions for ANCOVA are met.

For the first hypothesis we have the following results:

As shown in Table 1.1 the ANCOVA for experimental group versus control group on post-test depression scores control for pre-test scores was found to have statistically significant main effects, $F(1.37) = 6.75$, $p<.001$. The effect size was calculated: $r^2 = 0.94$, which indicates a strong effect.

The adjusted mean and standard deviation (Table 1.2) taking in account the pre-test score show that the control group's mean has increased from 15.25 to 18.71, and for the experimental group it has decreased from 13.5 to 10.03. A high score on depression scale indicates a high level of depression.

Table 1.1

ANCOVA for depression. Test of Between-Subjects Effect. Dependent variable: depression post-test

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Depression pre-test	3212.350	1	3212.350	82.288	.000	.690
Group	655.253	1	655.253	16.785	.000	.312
Error	1444.400	37	39.038			
Total	12953.000	40				
Corrected total	4687.375	39				

Table 1.2.*Adjusted mean and standard deviation*

Group	N	Post-test depression		Post-test depression		95% Confidence interval	
		Observed Mean	Observed SD	Adjusted Mean	Adjusted ES	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control group	20	15.25	10.47	18.71	1.44	15.78	21.64
Experimental group	20	13.50	11.63	10.03	1.44	7.10	12.97

Data resulting from the tests confirm the first hypothesis; there is, statistically, a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group regarding depression. The intervention has a strong effect on the depression level; those in the experimental group experienced a decrease in depression.

Second hypothesis

ANCOVA was conducted to determine, statistically, significant differences between intervention and non-intervention conditions on psychological well-being control for the pre-test scores. The assumptions for using ANCOVA were tested. The correlation coefficient was calculated: $r(40) = 0.665$, $p < .01$, meaning that there is a positive correlation between the covariate (the scores from pretest) and the dependent variable (posttest scores). Also the scatter plot indicates a linear relation between the variables. The value of F is: $F(1.36)=0.634$, $p=.43$, which means the data sustain the assumption of homogeneous regression slopes for the various groups. Levene's Test for equality of variances was performed, statistically the results are not significant, and the assumption of homogeneity of groups is sustained.

Table 2.1

ANCOVA for psychological well-being. Test of Between-Subjects Effect. Dependent variable: psychological well-being post-test

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pre-test pwb	10289.680	1	10289.680	59.784	.000	.618
Group	3918.810	1	3918.810	22.769	.000	.381
Error	6368.220	37	172.114			
Total	1268076.000	40				
Corected total	18453.500	39				

In Table 2.1 we can see that there is, statistically, a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group regarding the psychological well-being control for pretest scores. F value is: $F(1.37)=22.79$, $p < .001$. The effect size was calculated: $r^2 = 0.95$ which suggest a strong effect. The results confirm the second hypothesis.

The Table 2.2 shows the observed and adjusted mean for psychological well-being. A high score obtained at this questionnaire indicates a high level of psychological well-being.

The results confirm the hypothesis; there is, statistically, a significant difference between the groups regarding the psychological well-being. The intervention had a strong effect on people's psychological well-being, those from the experimental group experiencing an increased level of well-being traits.

Data analysis suggests that there are, statistically, significant differences on the scales of environment control and the purpose in life. In the case of environment control, an $F(1.37) = 85.1$, $p < .001$, and a strong effect $r^2 = 0.97$ was obtained.

Table 2.2*Adjusted mean and standard deviation for psychological well-being*

Group	N	Psychological Well-being post-test		Psychological Well-being post-test		95% Confidence Interval	
		Observed mean	SD observed	Adjusted mean	ES adjusted	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control group	20	170.05	16.00	166.62	2.96	160.61	172.64
Experimental group	20	183.50	24.90	186.87	2.96	180.85	192.88

Table 2.3*Pre-test-Post-test means and standard deviation for environmental mastery*

Group	N	Environmental mastery pret-test		Environmental mastery post-test	
		M	SD	M	SD
Control Group	20	32.9	4.63	28.85	4.09
Experimental Group	20	29.45	6.62	33.75	5.9
Total	40	31.17	5.9	31.3	5.59

Table 2.4*Pre-test-Post-test means and standard deviation for life purpose*

Group	N	Life purpose pre-test		Life purpose post-test	
		M	SD	M	SD
Control group	20	29.15	5.55	26.4	5.26
Experimental group	20	24.7	5.93	26.75	5.78
Total	40	26.92	6.10	26.57	5.46

In the Table 2.3 the pre-test and post-test mean and standard deviation of the environmental control scale are presented. The table contains the pre-test and post-test means and standard deviations of the purpose in life scale.

The results obtained for the life purpose scale are: $F(1.37) = 12.58$, $p < .001$, and a strong effect, $r^2 = 0.91$. The intervention had a positive impact on people's psychological well-being, in general, and particularly on their life purpose and environmental control.

Discussion

The statistical data analysis confirmed the hypotheses of the study. The objective of this research was to investigate the effects of the intervention, mandala drawing and guided imagery exercises on elderly people regarding depression,

psychological well-being and the concept of personal Self.

First hypothesis

The first hypothesis of this study investigated the effects of guided imagery and mandala drawing on depression, especially if that kind of intervention could reduce depression. As expected, the intervention has reduced depression. This result was in accordance with the results of other studies that had found out that guided imagery had a positive effect on life quality and depression in the case of patients suffering from cancer (Sloman, 2002). Like meditation, guided imagery encourages people to free their minds from interfering thoughts, to release the worries of everyday life and be absorbed by the session (Post-White, 1998). The scenarios used in this study were designed to address some particular

emotions; these exercises offered a person the possibility of living new experiences, which could activate a person's ability to get out of negative and inflexible thinking patterns, help him/her release negative emotions and discover his/her own inner beauty. Images can influence emotions, Damasio (Malchiodi, 2003) shows the way the body responds to mental images as if they were real. Thus, guided imagery can be used to change the affectivity of a person. Regarding the mandala drawing, Jung (1934) found out that mandala drawing has a calming and healing effect on its creator, and also facilitates mental integration; this directly affects depression.

Mandala, through its effects, can lead to solving various psychological complications and can free the personality from the emotional and ideational tangles, producing a unity of being which can be regarded as a rebirth of man at the transcendental level (Jacobi, 2012). Artistic expression has the capacity to assist the process of becoming aware of things that underlie discomfort and suffering. This awareness can produce an increase in the quality of life, especially in transitory periods. Also, creative activity reduces depression and increases self-esteem (Zausner, cited in Greening & Portemier, 2012). As Esdes and Ager say (in Greening & Portemier, 2012) this type of expression has a positive impact on health, and it can produce feelings of well-being that facilitate the process of healing.

Due to the ability of integrating the contradictory aspects that exist in every person, mandala drawing can influence self-knowledge and self-acceptance, and these, in turn, can decrease depression. Intrapsychic tensions are expressed through mandala drawings because they have the ability to represent order and at the same time to produce it. Mandala drawings can provide cognitive integration and help the organization of complex emotional experiences. Through drawings, the unconscious content can be brought closer to the understanding of the person. Jung thought that, through symbols, the psyche manifests its natural attempt to reconcile internal conflicts. Artistic expression can help a person to bring distress into the field of consciousness and, through this expression, understand and solve his/her suffering (Brederode, cited in Greening & Portemier, 2012).

The themes of guided imagery exercises were focused on positive emotions, on discovering inner beauty and light, dissolving resentment (because negative emotions kept inside, such as anger, resentment, etc., affect persons as a whole,

and can lead to disease), and discovering peace, tranquility, relaxation within themselves. These exercises have the purpose to help the participants to access and realize their inner beauty, to release negative emotions that affect their lives, to find inner peace and, this way, to increase their psychological well-being and reduce depression. Depressed people have a low self-esteem and low levels of self-acceptance, so the purpose of these exercises was to bring into consciousness the inner beauty of the person.

Because of the psychological and physiological decline, the elderly are facing various diseases that can augment depression. Artistic expression is a way to express painful, confusing and contradictory experiences of the disease, which are difficult or sometimes even impossible to express only in words. Depression involves three components: somatic, cognitive and behavioral. Artistic expression, addressing both mind and body can significantly influence depression. An inner emptiness feeling may be influenced by a person's divine nature experience and by transcendence through mandala; inner restlessness is reduced by the capacity of mandala to help the individual to find his/her psychological balance, and the gray perceptual content can be changed by using guided imagery, in this case by experiencing the inner beauty and peace, towards which the exercises were oriented.

Depression is accompanied by somatic symptoms and a sad mood; also, the diseases that come with old age create difficulties for a person, both physical and psychological ones. In this respect, guided imagery is used to reduce symptoms, change the mood of the person and strengthen the healing ability of the body. Feelings of guilt or worthlessness existing in depression may be changed by discovering the inner beauty, acceptance of negative and positive aspects that lie in each person, through self-acceptance, finding out the purpose and meaning in life through the manifestation of the Self in the mandala drawing. Artistic expression has the effect of increasing the capacity of concentration, influencing the inability to concentrate that exists in depression. Because of the loss of meaning of life or of the desire to escape from the inner suffering, depression is accompanied by the persistence of morbid thoughts and suicidal ideation. Mandala drawing can be helpful because it has the capacity to reveal the deepest aspirations of connecting with the whole universe and recognize the universe in the individual, thus exceeding the limited condition of the human being.

Depression in elderly people is expressed through fear of death and nostalgia for the past. Finding a meaning of life can help the person to free himself/herself from the past and stop living in it. Fear of death is influenced by the discovery of divinity, so mandala being a symbol of God and of eternity can affect this fear. The circle is “a symbolic pattern of the Universe, a field in which the macro-cosmos and the micro-cosmos (the human being) interact” (Huh, cited in Greening & Portemier, 2012). “The circle is a symbol of God and eternity” (Edinger, cited in Greening & Portemier, 2012). Finding the transcendental meaning of life helps people alleviate the fear of death, especially in the case of elderly people who are facing the final stages of life. The loss of life purpose, the fear of death and the reduction of a person’s abilities directly affects depression, thereby mandala drawing, as a symbol of divinity, can help a person to establish a connection with his immortal spiritual dimension existing in every being.

Second hypothesis

According to the second hypothesis, the obtained results indicate the existence of meaningful differences between groups as far as concerns the psychological well-being. Also, the results show a difference between the groups in the case of life purpose and the environmental control. Empirical researches have been generally focused on examining Jung’s assertion that mandala drawing is, in itself, good for the person’s mental health and well-being, because it has a calming and relaxing effect (Jung, 1934). In this regard Slegelis (1987) observed people who draw in a circle experience more positive affects than those who draw within a square. Mandala drawing is seen as a tool that facilitates psychological well-being (Pisarik & Larson, 2011). Furth (1988) and Bach (1990) emphasize the ability of spontaneous artistic expression to access psychic intuition and the internal healing potential of the individual. In addition, it offers access to the unconscious material. Like Jung, the authors observed that the spontaneous artistic expression contains repressed emotions, but it is also a source of transformation. The integration of opposites leads to the acceptance of qualities and imperfections, the positive aspects, but also the negative ones in each person, influencing the psychological well-being.

Regarding guided imagery, contemporary research indicates that images have a key role in

healing and well-being (Achterburg, cited in Malchiodi, 2003). Images can create feelings of pleasure, fear, anxiety, calm, etc. There is evidence showing that images can change the mood of a person and even induce a state of well-being (Malchiodi, 2003). Guided imagery techniques help the person to feel a connection between mind and body, and facilitate the feeling of empowerment that helps a person to manage different difficulties that appear in his/her life. In this respect, these techniques can change the way in which a person understands and relates to the problems in his/her life, helping him/her to look at things from another perspective and find different solutions to a certain situation.

Mandala functions as a symbolic representation of the emotional load and of the conflict material, providing order and integration to this material. This way the person can get psychological well-being. Mandala drawing is connected to the innate ability of knowing the divine (Henderson, 2007) and finding the transcendental meaning of life.

Mandala serves as an organized symbolic representation of the Self, which normally remains disorganized in the unconscious. Creating and interpreting mandalas is a process through which a person brings into consciousness, displays and objectively processes motives, feelings, desires and relevant thoughts. As Rogers says (in Pisarik & Larson, 2011) raising awareness of his/her authentic Self and reflecting on it helps the person to integrate and organize thoughts about himself/herself, which in the end leads to healthy functioning and psychological well-being.

Experiencing the Self is an inspiring, numinous encounter, which brings light and sacredness, captivating the individual. In the case of an unstable, weak and poorly structured “I”, the Self becomes a symbol that can help the psyche to achieve the necessary order. This way, the person may come into contact and experience his divine nature, managing to overcome the limits imposed by the human condition, to find his/her purpose and meaning of life. In this respect, the mandala becomes a symbolic drawing that expresses the Self, having a periphery and a center, and inside it containing the opposites. For Jung, the Self is the center of the unknown, divine, superordinate psyche, the psyche that we need to explore throughout our life.

The results show a significant difference between the groups in the case of environmental mastery. The mere act of drawing, through the freedom of choosing the colors, the shapes, the

theme, offers to the person a sense of power and control, which is in contrast with the loss of control that can accompany illness and old age. Under these circumstances, the artistic expression can help people to regain a sense of control in their lives by providing an active process which involves the freedom of choosing the materials, style and theme, allows free play with colors, lines, shapes, and encourages the ability to create what the person wants to create. This element of choice can contribute to feelings of autonomy and dignity when other aspects of life seem out of control. This way, the artistic creation can provide a sense of normalcy and personal power, even if it occurs only during the creative activity. The results also indicate, statistically, significant differences between the two groups regarding the life purpose scale. Mandala drawing facilitates finding the personal meaning of life, which is an essential part of psychological well-being. The research suggests that spirituality has a positive effect on psychological well-being (Wills, cited in Greening & Portemier, 2012). Spirituality has a positive influence on all dimensions of psychological well-being, including life purpose and self-acceptance (Greenfield, cited in Greening & Portmeier, 2012). Mandala drawing, as a symbol of divinity, facilitates the experience of the spiritual dimension of the person, by offering a transcendent sense of life. The transpersonal approach of art therapy reinforces the idea that what is beyond self is essential to the welfare of a person. Artistic expression is seen as a desire to find meaning and to reinforce the person's ability to find well-being throughout the creative exploration.

From Jungian perspective, the content displayed in mandalas represents, symbolically, aspects of the Self that arise from the unconscious zone. Furthermore, mandala provides order and consistency to this unconscious material (Henderson, 2007). The process of creating the mandala helps the person to obtain a higher level of awareness and development of the authentic Self; these are associated with a greater psychological well-being (Harter, cited in Pisarik & Larson, 2011). Because drawing is a sensory activity, involving tactile, visual, kinesthetic and other senses, it is naturally soothing and it involves repetitive activities that may induce relaxation and wellbeing.

The elderly are in a period of initiation in their interior reality, the moment they refold inside requiring a deeper knowledge of self and a reflection of the characteristic features that had remained or had become unconscious. This way,

the artistic expression may support the process of self-discovery, of accessing and integrating the information from the unconscious, helping the person to develop and activate his/her healing potential, because life means a permanent self-development, both in early youth and in hoary old age.

Limits and future research

This study presents some limits like the small number of participants. Another limit of this study is that the testing was done using only self-report methods, creating the risk of biases because of the tendency of desirability of answers. In addition, it would have been useful to have another group subjected to only one of the used techniques, for example, only to guided imagery or mandala drawing, so that to better observe the effects of each technique separately. The length of the intervention was relatively short. Finally, the reduced possibility of generalizing results, the efficacy of these techniques may vary depending on population.

A possible future research direction could study only the effects of one technique, mandala drawing or guided imagery, to observe the efficacy of each technique taken separately. One can study the benefits of this kind of intervention on other group ages, investigating the manner it facilitates the process of individuation. To observe the long term effect of this type of intervention the participants can be tested one month after the research completion.

Jung's theories were widely criticized as being too vague, complex and difficult to understand, thus, leaving it up to the religious or artistic domain (Slegelis, 1987). The Jungian theory failed to gain respect in the field of science due to the lack of scientific research. The results of this study support Jung's theory, including the healing potential of the mandala. Future research could try to create a bridge between the realm of arts and sciences, in order to increase the understanding of the healing techniques resulting from Jung's theory and art therapy.

Conclusion

The elderly usually go through a period of change, restriction of physical and mental capacity. They may face various diseases, depression or even lose their life meaning. The Jungian theory

suggests that mandala drawing has a healing effect on its creator, being at the same time, a symbol of Self, of divinity, facilitating the integration of the opposites and producing order and psychological equilibrium. Mandala drawing is used in therapy to restore the previously existing order. It helps the person to shape things that haven't been created before. Although mandala drawing has been frequently used as a technique to increase self-awareness and psychological well-being under different circumstances, there are few empirical studies that have investigated the efficacy of this technique. The result of this study provides support in using these exercises, in order to improve the elders' quality of life. These results are consistent with the Jungian and humanistic principles.

We conclude that the use of mandalas facilitates one's self-development because it accesses the person's healing potential.

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The Role of Triggers in Inducing Hypnotic Altered States: Perceptions of Transpersonal Hypnotherapists

El Sentido de los Desencadenantes en la Inducción de Estados Hipnóticos: Percepciones de Hipnoterapeutas Transpersonales

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Abstract

Objective: The use of triggers to induce altered states of consciousness (ASC) may be key in identifying an ease of entry into and exit from anomalous realms of consciousness. **Methodology:** Transpersonal hypnotherapists were interviewed to obtain their perceptions of levels of effectiveness for various triggers and techniques used to achieve these states. **Results:** The trigger seems to serve as a mental switch that tells the brain to “enter into” or “perform” a change in conscious states. **Conclusions:** Existing neuroplastic elements associated with trigger training may permit subjects to access various altered states without the hypnotherapist once a new layer of consciousness is obtained, experienced, and appropriately conditioned.

Keywords: altered states, transpersonal hypnotherapy, hypnosis, trance

Resumen

Objetivo: El uso de desencadenantes para inducir estados alterados de consciencia (EAC) puede ser clave en la identificación de una facilidad de entrada y salida de los estados anómalos de la consciencia. **Metodología :** Se entrevistó a hipnoterapeutas transpersonales que fueron entrevistados para conocer su percepción de los niveles de eficacia de diversos factores desencadenantes y técnicas utilizadas para lograr estos estados . **Resultados:** El desencadenante parece servir como un mecanismo mental que induce al cerebro a "entrar en " o "llevar a cabo" un cambio en el estado de consciencia. **Conclusiones:** Existen elementos cerebrales asociados a un entrenamiento de un tipo de desencadenantes para acceder a estados alterados de consciencia, que permiten a los sujetos acceder a los mismos sin el hipnoterapeutas, una vez se ha obtenido un nuevo estado de consciencia, suficientemente experimentado y debidamente adaptado.

Palabras clave: estados alterados, hipnoterapia transpersonal, hipnosis, trance

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Introduction

Throughout the course of human history, people have reported experiences that defy logical explanation. The field of psychology has a persistent interest in consciousness in all of its forms, ranging from practical clinical treatment approaches to the mysteries of the subconscious and unconscious human mind. The literature of our discipline aptly describes this interest, from psychologies roots in philosophy, to Freud's exploration of the subconscious through hypnosis, and to current modes of inquiry from holotropic breathwork to near-death experiences. The fields of anthropology (Bourguignon & Evascu, 1977; Pekala & Cardena, 2000) and neuroscience (Doidge, 2007, 2015; Ramachandran, 2011) have dramatically improved our understanding and knowledge of consciousness and altered states.

Neuroscience, and the phenomenon of neuroplasticity, has perhaps contributed one of the deepest insights into what happens on a material level during hypnosis. Despite the rigidity of many human behaviors, the brain itself, we now know, is plastic (Doidge, 2007; Rossi, 2002), that is, it is malleable and flexible, given to establishing neural and dendritic pathways (Doidge, 2007; Narvaez, 2014; Ramachandran, 2011), and an eager ally in transforming behaviors and transcending what we previously thought was a fixed state. The compatriot of plasticity, neurogenesis, shows that not only can the brain reprogram itself it also generates new neurons (Rossi, 2003). Our potential for new pathways, and therefore new behaviors, are evident as the brain enters those neuroplastic states during trance practices, such as hypnosis and meditation (Doidge, 2007, 2015; Landry & Raz, 2015; Rossi, 2002, 2005; Rossi & Rossi, 2007). Our knowledge of the human brain is rapidly shifting, and along with it our understanding of the depths of consciousness.

Hypnosis in its more contemporary form has been used for more than 200 years (Braid, 1842/1960; Mesmer, 1779/1997; Spiegel, 2013). Interest in hypnosis has continued into the 20th century and advancements in neuroscience now exist by which to measure hypnotic susceptibility (Hilgard, 1965; Landry & Raz, 2015; Rossi & Rossi, 2007) and identify the frontal lobe fluency evident in those subjects with high hypnotic susceptibility (Kallio & Revonsuo, 2005; Yapko, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this study was to examine which triggers transpersonal hypnotherapists identified as most commonly used to induce ASC in participants. The focus was not on the effectiveness of transpersonal hypnotherapy as a means of clinical treatment. Client perceptions of transpersonal hypnotherapy's efficacy were also not examined. The sole aim of this study was to gain insight into what transpersonal hypnotherapists perceived as the most effective triggers for their style of practice.

The point of induction, or the trigger influence, has been described as the process of doing whatever necessary to enter the individual into a hypnotic trance (Pekala & Kumar, 2000; Rossi & Rossi, 2007). Whether the trigger relies upon sensory effect, such as smell, sound, sight; whether it relies upon pre-conditioning the mental state prior to the event (i.e. educating or suggesting to the participant the possible effects of the trance state); whether it is largely environmental, such as the preparation and state of the room in which the induction takes place, most practices that occur prior to the formal induction may compose the collection of triggers employed by the hypnotherapist.

Method

Participants

The participants selected for this study were licensed psychologists, licensed social workers, and licensed counselors in the Northern Virginia/Washington, DC metropolitan area. All participants had prior exposure to transpersonal hypnotherapy and offered it as a treatment method within their professional practice.

Eight participants were selected for the sample as opposed to a larger array due to the qualitative nature of the study. More than eight participants may have detracted from the intent of obtaining detailed and specific narratives relayed by the participant (Creswell, 1998; Creswell & Clark, 2007).

Procedure

The interview format chosen was semi-structured with both open and closed-ended questions (see Appendix). This format allowed for

both succinct and narrative responses from participants, and offered the advantage of permitting the researcher to insert relevant unscripted questions into the session. Structured interview aspects were employed, however, as they offered a degree of organization that complimented the generic qualitative paradigm. Reflexivity played a significant role in data collection and was given consideration in the recording and analysis phases.

The data analysis was performed using the inductive thematic analysis methodology. Because this study drew largely from theme identification via meaning unit excerpts, a recursive thematic process was employed.

Results

To identify themes, the researcher reviewed the interview-derived transcripts, identified clustered units and collapsed them into sets of major and minor themes. The collapse yielded five major themed categories. Major themes were those that appeared in at least 75 percent of participants. Minor themes did appear, but were regarded as sub-themes or supporting themes to the major ones.

The five major themed categories were as follows: Induction, Mind-Body Duality, Concentrated Consciousness, Practitioner as Guide, and Tandem Altered States. The following section provides a review of the five primary themes that emerged from the participants' statements. Table 1 provides samples of hypnotherapist narrative and illustrates the manner in which they spoke about their perceptions. From those narratives, statements were examined and themes were identified and clustered as previously discussed.

Theme 1. Induction

All eight participants discussed some characteristic of induction. This coincides with the extant literature reflecting a type of induction action prior to entering into altered states of consciousness (Wagstaff, 2014). The inductions vary between types of altered states, but the entrance *into* an altered state is typically preceded by some preparatory actions (Frischholz et al., 2015; Martin, 2005; Pearson, 2003; Whitehouse, 2004; Yapko, 2014). Each participant described the intake session as a fundamental part of the initiatory process. The intake session involved actions such as identifying client ethnographic, geographic, and vocational data, and was conducted while ascer-

taining the reason why the client sought transpersonal hypnotherapy. It is important to distinguish between the act of gathering client identifying data and the process of formulating an intention question. Hypnotherapists described the creation of an intention question as a separate process that immediately preceded the formal hypnosis session.

During the intake portion, the therapist educated the client on the history and practice of hypnosis, along with an overview of therapist qualifications.

Six out of the eight participants worked with the client to develop an intention question. The process of forming an intention question may also have served as an initial subconscious trigger. Further, it served as an expectation building exercise that was used to prepare the client for hypnosis. All practitioners were adamant that the client was in complete control of the process from induction to hypnosis to conclusion. The client's control dynamic, according to the participants, hinged upon the act of question formulation.

Theme 2. Mind-Body Duality

Mind-body duality was cited in terms of "progressive relaxation" and "the need to deal with the body before the mind"; this was ultimately indicative of two separate but interconnected factions. Mind, for the purpose of this article, was described as synonymous with consciousness. In each case, the therapist identified a duality and recognized the mind and body as separate entities that required different forms of attention and handling. In all cases, the therapist addressed the body first, claiming that it was imperative to relax the corporeal before adequate work could be performed on the mental element. The impetus in this instance comes from calming the mind through breathwork and progressive relaxation to enable a calmer landscape for consciousness exploration. This idea aligns with Tart's (2008) proposition that therapist-practitioners must push the client's psychological system into a new pattern.

Stanislav Grof (2006) claims focused breathing practices are essential to entering into an ASC; indeed his holotropic breathwork technique is a trigger for ASC. Distractions from the external world often prevent subjects from turning inward, hence the need for an initial body calming. The breathwork applied during the initial body calming serves as a tool through which pathways to deeper consciousness exploration is made available.

Theme 3. Suspension of Consciousness/Time

All participants addressed the suspension aspect with clients as part of induction; specifically, they provided insight into what happens during hypnosis and how hypnosis is clinically defined. "Hypnosis is not sleep," said one practitioner, "it is focused concentration."

The sense of suspension was identified as requisite to the process. The participants described what they perceived as a client suspension, in addition to experiencing a suspension sensation of their own. All participants stated that their clients claimed that time "seemed to stop or slow down" during hypnosis and identified that an overall sense of timelessness infused their sessions.

Theme 4. Practitioner as Guide

All practitioners described themselves in language suggestive of a guiding function. All practitioners discussed equal importance in being guided back from the altered state into a waking conscious awareness. The transpersonal hypnotherapists appear to see themselves as having a dual role in the process. First, the therapist serves as the person who guides the client into the altered state. Additionally, the therapist views herself as a co-participant in the altered state experience, as discussed in Theme 5.

Six of the therapists claimed they require a client to articulate what it is. She wants to "work on", "accomplish," or "learn" during the session. While this can be considered part of the intention question, it also serves the purpose of informing

the therapist of where, precisely, she might guide the client.

Theme 5. Tandem Altered States

The tandem altered state concept was the most unique emergent theme. All eight participants described some type of "being pulled into", "dropping into", "aligning with", or "experiencing" a synchronous altered state while guiding the client. Six out of eight participants said they had a sense of what the client would say before it was spoken. The practitioners attributed this tandem state to intuition and a "tapping into the collective unconscious" as a result of the hypnotic process.

Although therapists described themselves as a type of Virgilian guide that accompanied their client through his altered state journey, they were adamant that they in no way influenced the client's experience. Therapists further claimed that typically clients are unable to access altered states on their own, hence the need for a guide. It is important here to distinguish between *guide* and *influencer*. A guide is an accompanied presence, whereas an influencer actually leads one toward experiences that satisfy an agenda. All therapists identified themselves as guides, but were adamant that they in no way influenced client narrative, client experiences, or the client's perception of the altered state event.

Table 1

Emergent Themes

Theme Code	Clustered Meaning Exemplars
Mind – body connection	<p>"It is much better to have the conscious and unconscious mind working together so there can be some processing." (Participant 1)</p> <p>"My goal in therapy is two things and one is to get your consciousness to understand what it is that's affecting you. Two is your engaging your mind so you can focus on the interim just by the process." (Participant 3)</p> <p>"Transpersonal work, to me, is that which goes beyond this physical body and this physical dimension moving to understanding energy fields and the spirit." (Participant 4)</p> <p>"Usually I work with the body first. It's very difficult to relax the mind if the body is tense." (Participant 2)</p>
Question as Intention	<p>"The process...all of that is focused concentration. When you are in the conscious state you are distracted by everything. That's the beauty of the question; it focuses right in, honing right in on what it is you're looking for." (Participant 3)</p>

Table 1 (continued)*Emergent Themes*

Theme Code	Clustered Meaning Exemplars
Question as Intention (continued)	<p>"We always talk about the intention beforehand to ensure we discuss what they would like to talk about. They will usually have one or two intentions." (Participant 3)</p> <p>"They must formulate a specific question and know what it is they wish to explore during the session. Otherwise, it is chaotic and yields little benefit. Without the question the session can be like wondering aimlessly in Costco without a list. It's really big with lots of stuff to view, but a massive waste of time." (Participant 2)</p> <p>"And so they will go through a process where they will envision a safe space. They will usually have one or two intentions. One intention is an exit point that is what they want. For instance, 'to better understand compassionate diplomacy.'" (Participant 5)</p> <p>"I work with them on forming the question to make sure it is clear and concise." (Participant 2)</p>
Focused concentration	<p>"Hypnosis is not sleep; it's focused concentration. You're very wide awake when you're hypnotized, just focused on what it is the hypnotist is saying." (Participant 3)</p> <p>"It's where we put our attention. All the lives are being lived simultaneously. It's just how we remember them and how we experience them" (Participant 8)</p> <p>"It's focusing on this life and staying with it and that's what we have to do in order to have our mental health." (Participant 6)</p> <p>"The simple relaxation technique for hypnosis is mild. I don't want you to go deep. I want you to disengage from the problems you have." (Participant 4)</p> <p>"You've got the individual focused and they're already partially there constructing that script. A synchronicity for me is the unconscious mind working in the non-local realm to solve a problem." (Participant 7)</p> <p>"You don't need formal induction at all. There's a group called the Dutch group that uses no formal induction...it's just focus. For instance, if you were to come to me and say 'I want to work on this stomach pain today', I would tell you 'okay focus on that feeling and intensify it'." (Participant 1)</p>
Induction process	<p>"I let them set their own induction process. It is their process so they should set it." (Participant 4)</p> <p>"For some people I will use something like a progressive relaxation. For some people I'll do more of an Eriksonian narrative, floating through time and space kind of thing. Very often I will do something like progressive relaxation, or some other relaxation, and then go into the going into time and space deepening. Because the first thing they have to do is relax. I don't care if they're here to quit smoking or deal with past lives or anything else. The first thing they have to do is take a deep breath and relax." (Participant 6)</p> <p>"As far as induction, as I'm talking to them I try to become aware of their primary learning style. Are they visual, auditory, or kinesthetic? For people where I'm not sure I'll throw everything in." (Participant 3)</p> <p>"I feel like it prepares the conscious mind to feel safe enough to let this [hypnosis] occur [so] I do a series of inductions to be sure they are really deep and that the conscious mind is an uninvolved as possible." (Participant 5)</p>

Table 1 (continued)*Emergent Themes*

Theme Code	Clustered Meaning Exemplars
Induction process (continued)	<p>"I do a fairly standard induction and have them close their eyes and roll their eye-balls up to test if they're listening to me. It isn't really an induction but a susceptibility test." (Participant 3)</p> <p>"For the induction I might use favorite places. Usually I used what's called a mixed induction. I'll take from a few different types." (Participant 2)</p>
Practitioner as Guide	<p>"It's theirs. Their process. Their session. I'm only the guide." (Participant 4)</p> <p>"What happens next is <i>we</i> go down 20 stairs...I'll have you count down...you're moving the client to the non-local mind." (Participant 1)</p> <p>"Usually people aren't able to go into trance on their own. Most people need someone to guide them through it although there are people who get [trance memories/experiences] in their dreams which is a very unconscious kind of process." (Participant 5)</p> <p>"Most people prefer for me to guide them in. I create a space for you to reach altered consciousness; it's something that you do. I just create a mode...a form. Hypnosis is one model to experience or to go into altered states of consciousness." (Participant 6)</p> <p>"I'm talking with them through the process saying, 'what do you see?', 'what do you hear?', 'what do you feel?' When they step off the stepping off point I have them look down at their feet and ask what they see." (Participant 6)</p> <p>"With regression therapy I try to take them to the root cause of the issue. If that means into their childhood memories or perhaps even beginning in the womb, that is a possibility." (Participant 1)</p>
Breathing	<p>"The focus on breathing gets them into the trance. There are different ways to have a person breathe, but the final result is the physical body becomes more relaxed. The focus on breathing begins to get them into the trance" (Participant 1)</p> <p>"The body-focus part, the portion in the induction where the client is asked to focus his attention on the body and relax it. Without focusing on this and relaxing the body the altered state will not come" (Participant 4)</p>
Suspension	<p>"I encourage them to let themselves be just in the experience at the time and afterward they can do all the left brain evaluating they want to do." (Participant 3)</p> <p>"There's many ways you can leave your body to go into these other places." (Participant 2)</p> <p>"The person seems to get into a collective unconscious experience that's very archetypal and whether it's an actual past life their soul has experienced or whether it's coming from an ancestral memory or simply an energetically connected memory of an experience that human species has really doesn't matter. Because all of those experiences are healing experiences; you're getting into the real central core of what it is to have a human consciousness." (Participant 6)</p>
Intake as pre-induction	<p>"I have a lot of those left-brain types. I talk about that and tell them to leave that outside because this is a right brain activity and they need to refrain from analyzing it and just let it happen and that's the best I can do. We will analyze it later. I help them understand why." (Participant 3)</p>

Table 1 (continued)*Emergent Themes*

Theme Code	Clustered Meaning Exemplars
Intake as pre-induction (continued)	<p>"I first do an intake session and get a sense of their energy and readiness to do the work that we do. I explain the process which I consider very important to their success. I usually have them come back from the regression which usually takes about two hours. Explanation is so important because a lot of people have some misconceptions about hypnosis." (Participant 4)</p> <p>"In the intake form I ask questions like 'what's the problem?', 'what's the reason for your visit?', 'what would you like to have happen?'. That's a way of getting their conscious to begin to look at what's there and begin to prepare for the session. That's all happening subconsciously but I think it enhances the session when people do that." (Participant 3)</p>
Tandem Altered State	<p>"I think I do drop into that relaxed state with the client when I lead them there. I have intuition. I think much of my knowledge comes from trance and intuition." (Participant 3)</p> <p>"I am still very grounded during the process, but still I am in a different state of mind." (Participant 2)</p> <p>"I enter into a more relaxed, but more focused state myself during these sessions. I guide the client because I have a sense of what they're experiencing." (Participant 8)</p>

Discussion

Implications

The trigger seems to serve as a mental switch that tells the brain to "enter into" or "perform" a change in conscious states. Perhaps the undeniable attachment to the physiological functions of brain necessitates a transition for movement from one type of consciousness to another. Neuroscience shows that neural pathways are established (e.g. OCD, phantom limbs) and recreated thereby confirming the plasticity of the physical brain (Gruzelier, 2005; Landry & Raz, 2015; Ramachandran, 2011). This serves to bind normal consciousness and its ability to actualize events in the three-dimensional world (i.e., to the material realm of the tangible brain). If biopsychologists are correct (Gruzelier & Warren, 1993; Doidge, 2007; Ginot, 2015; Narvaez, 2014) about the brain serving as the central repository of thought, perhaps it is not consciousness itself that requires the concentrated sensory triggers, it may be the physiological casing of the brain that needs a trigger (Hasegawa & Jamieson, 2002) in order to engage consciousness on a higher level. Trance states are "shells" that help us change our minds and may be defined as processes through which we develop "plasticity within the organic system that is us" (Hope & Sugarman, 2015, p. 214).

Evidence exists that shows default mode network (DMN) activity during hypnosis that differs from activity during non-hypnotic states (Lipari et al., 2012). The DMN is considered a critical network of the brain that encompasses self-mentation, daydreaming, and perhaps even empathy (Wickramasekera, 2015). Our unconscious mind systems tend to automatically enact what they already know (Bartocci, 2004; Ginot, 2015). However, the plasticity of the human brain enables us to create new patterns, albeit through the aide of mindful conditioning and exposure to environmental enrichment practices (e.g. hypnosis, meditation) that promotes neural generation (Baroncelli et al., 2010). From a biopsychological perspective, triggers may serve as a signal to allow the brain to behave in a manner consistent with what consciousness desires (Appel, 2014; Grof, 1998; Tart, 2004) and represent a fundamental neurocognitive element of hypnosis (Egner & Raz, 2007). The trigger seems necessary in achieving an altered state (Bartocci, 2004; Mazzoni et al., McGeown et al., 2012; Raz et al., 2006; Tart 2008): it is the green light permitting the brain-body to move from one level of consciousness to another.

By stimulating the physical brain with sensory triggers to achieve altered states we accept and reinforce the self-imposed physical requirements used to attain those states (Vaitl et al., 2005; Yapko, 2014). Consciousness may rely too heavily

ly upon the sensory trigger and thereby prevent experience of a pure transition to an altered state. The physical reliance upon the sensory trigger is the barbed fence that holds consciousness back from experiencing reality in a remarkably different way. It may be difficult to achieve altered states without acknowledging the physical and thereby finding some way to appease or quiet it while exploring otherness (Boorstein, 2000; Cardena, Lynn & Krippner, 2000; Winkelman, 1986).

Indeed, the physical body may serve as the receiver/transmitter: the radio tower that allows consciousness to explore altered states and then share those experiences, ultimately providing insight into the complexities and mysteries of the holistic human existences (Cavanna, Trimble, Cinti & Monaco, 2007; Churchland, 1995; Hilgard & Hilgard, 1983). The experiencer is free to use the tools at his disposal whether the instrument of choice is hypnosis, meditation, shamanic drumming, and so on. The experiencer can learn to train and synchronize his body-brain to achieve various conscious states through the use of trigger conditioning (Marquis & Wilber, 2008; Martin, 2005; Pekala & Kumar, 2000).

Limitations

Choices made by the researcher influenced limitations of the study; specific to the limitations were the participant sample size and tools used for data collection. Only two out of the eight were male, while the remainder was female. Had a more gender-dispersed sampling been achieved, perhaps a more marked difference in responses would have resulted. While the sample size of eight participants is acceptable for the purpose of a qualitative study, the researcher was unable to generalize the findings to the entire transpersonal hypnotherapeutic population.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview format with both open and closed-ended questions. Each interview was unique in that the researcher encouraged the participant to explore concepts that appeared relevant to the research question. As a result, not all participants explored the same areas, and not all participants were asked identical questions. While this is permissible in qualitative collection for the purpose of achieving rich data, it may have been more standardized to ask each participant a set of identical questions. Subsequent interviews may also have promoted a richer understanding of participant experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, several areas should be considered. While the exploration of participant perceived triggers to altered states is valuable, an in-depth study should be conducted with statistical regression analyses for triggers related to different altered states. This particular study focused upon the hypnotic ASC, but examination of triggers specific for meditative, sensory deprivation and other ASCs may prove equally beneficial. An analysis of prominent triggers and what appears to make those triggers effective across ASC experiences would provide insight into how individuals approach consciousness exploration.

Another recommended avenue for future research is to conduct a similar study and focus upon client rather than clinician perceptions. Not only would this broaden the scope of understanding triggers used to induce hypnotic altered consciousness, it would provide the actual experiencer an opportunity to describe the process in his/her own language.

It is further recommended that client brain waves be monitored through use of fMRI and PET scan devices during the transpersonal hypnotic process from induction to recovery. Visual depictions and analysis of fMRI and PET scan during this type of altered state experience would yield a quantitative basis to supplement the qualitative findings. In addition, results from the measures may provide unique insight for the researcher to actually see, in tangible form, the effect of the transpersonal hypnotic process.

Conclusion

This researcher believes the use of triggers to induce ASC is fundamental for entry into, and exit from, anomalous realms of consciousness. The act of the hypnotherapist serving as a virgilian guide to the client is typical in accessing hypnotic altered states. It has been said that "all hypnosis is really self-hypnosis" (Spiegel, 2013, p. 343) and if this is the case, then it becomes even more important for hypnotherapists to not only be keenly attuned to signs of trace, but also highly proficient in those methods most effective in triggering the altered state.

It is a daunting task to define any type of consciousness and reach agreement. For the sake of exploration in this paper it was assumed that consciousness is multilayered, pliable, and a separate function apart from the physical shell of the brain. Rather than identifying one state as altered

and another as subconscious, unconscious and so on, it is more appropriate to talk about various states relative to their functions in the life-world. This is not to suggest that the physical world is the sole driver for all layers of consciousness, but it does present the dominant stimuli for how we experience and come to describe our perceptions both of the physical world and of the mental world. Our collection of experiences and the subsequent perceptions developed about the physical world permit production of a priori fundamentals that enable deeper exploration of the multilayered consciousness.

Through a deeper understanding of those triggers that serve as precursors of movement from one mental state to the next, we may refine our ability to experience and explore the multilayered consciousness.

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Appendix

Interview

1. What certification/licensure do you hold and where did you obtain transpersonal hypnotherapy training?
2. Describe a typical session where you perform transpersonal hypnosis.
3. Which induction technique do you use most often? Why?
4. Which trigger do you perceive as the most effective for inducing hypnotic trance?
5. Why do you believe those triggers are most effective for achieving trance?
6. What other triggers have you found to be effective in inducing trance?
7. What makes a particular trigger/induction technique effective for a particular client?
8. How do you determine which trigger mechanism to use for each session?
9. What relationship, if any, have you noticed between the induction phase, trigger use, and the depth of the trance?

God and the Ego: A Theory of the Origins of Theism

Dios y el Ego: Una Teoría acerca de los Orígenes del Teísmo

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Abstract

This paper examines the question of why human beings have always had such a strong need to believe that gods are overlooking and protecting them. The characteristics of ‘indigenous spirituality’ and the historical origins of theism are discussed, and linked to the development of a stronger ‘ego structure’ amongst certain human groups. Monotheism (and theism itself) is seen as an inevitable consequence of the painful sense of separation and incompleteness which strongly egoic consciousness brings.

Keywords: gods, religion, indigenous peoples, ego, spirituality

Resumen

Este artículo examina por qué los seres humanos siempre han tenido una fuerte necesidad de creer que los dioses les vigilan y protegen. En él se discuten las características de un tipo de espiritualidad indígena y los orígenes históricos del teísmo, relacionándolo con el desarrollo de una estructura egoica cada vez más fuerte entre ciertos grupos humanos. De este modo el monoteísmo (y el teísmo en sí mismo), es visto como una consecuencia inevitable de la dolorosa sensación de separación y falta de unidad que produce el tipo de consciencia egoica.

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Until recent times, the existence of God, or gods, seems to have been taken for granted by the great majority of human beings. 'He' was – or they were, if we're speaking of polytheistic religions – a powerful psychological reality to most of the world's population. Wherever human beings have lived, gods seem to have naturally sprung from their psyche.

In my opinion, the amazing prevalence of this belief has never been explained satisfactorily. Many of the explanations for God and religion tend towards an 'intellectualist' or a 'consolationist' approach. The 'intellectualist' approach suggests that human beings invented gods and the religions associated with them in order to explain the world around them. On the one hand, religion explains strange natural phenomena. When the sun moves across the sky, when the thunder roars, when crops die, or when a person dies for no apparent reason – all of this can be explained in terms of the actions of gods or spirits. Religions can also explain how the world came into being (God created it) and why life is full of evil and suffering (it's because of the Devil, or else it's a test God has set us, and He will punish or reward us when we die) (Boyer, 2002).

Generally, the consolationist approach maintains that religion consoles human beings against our mortality and the sheer hardship and suffering which fills our lives (Boyer, 2002). Both Marx and Freud, for example, were proponents of the 'consolationist' view. To Marx religion was the 'universal ground for consolation' or, in his famous phrase, the 'opium of the people' (Hamilton, 1995) while for Freud belief in God was a neurotic regression to childhood, with God representing an omnipotent father figure. But at the same time for Freud, religion's task was 'to even out the defects and evils of civilisation, to attend to the sufferings which men inflict on one another in their life together' (in Hamilton, 1995, p. 58).

On the other hand, from the perspective of transpersonal psychology, we might take the Jungian view that God is not exactly a physically real being – as Christians or Muslims believe – but is nevertheless psychically real. For Jung (e.g. 1969) the collective world of archetypes is as real as the physical world, and God is one of the most powerful archetypes – hence the omnipresence of belief. Ken Wilber takes a slightly different approach, suggesting that the concept of the monotheistic God is an intuition of Spirit, conditioned and filtered through the archetypal realms. According to him (Wilber, 1981), monotheism is an evolutionary step forward from the 'magical' religion and

polytheism of 'primitive' cultures. Particularly when what he calls the 'incipient egoic-rational' phase began at around 500 BCE, more and more human beings began to access the subtle levels, and the development of monotheism was the result. Wilber's view suggests that the 'God concept' was so widespread simply because some human groups evolved to a point where the subtle levels – even if they were not their normal state of consciousness – became more accessible. At the subtle levels, and within the cultural context of the pre-scientific world, God was a reality.

Indigenous Spirituality

However, it is important to remember that not all human groups have concepts of gods. Indigenous tribal peoples like the Native Americans, the Australian aborigines and traditional pre-colonial Africans, were generally not, and are generally not (although the picture changed somewhat after they were exposed to monotheistic cultures), theistic.

For peoples such as these, there are usually no deities who preside over certain localities or certain aspects of life. In fact to them the concept of 'God' or 'gods' has either no, or very limited, significance. It's true that some indigenous peoples have a concept of a creator God, but these are usually very remote and detached figures. They seem to have been developed purely as a way of explaining how the world came into being. After creating the world, this 'God' steps aside and has very little influence (Eliade, 1967). The Azande of Africa, for example, have a concept of a supreme being called Mbori. However, according to the anthropologist Evans-Pritchard (1967), there was only one rarely performed public ceremony associated with him, and individuals never prayed to him or even mentioned his name. Similarly, the Fang people of Cameroon believe the natural world was created by a god called Mebeghe, and that the 'cultural world' – of tools, houses, hunting, farming etc. – was created by another God called Nzame. However, as Pascal Boyer (2002) notes, 'these gods do not seem to matter that much. There are no cults or rituals specifically directed at Mebeghe or Nzame...they are in fact rarely mentioned (p.160).' According to Lenski & Nolan's statistics (1995), only 4% of hunter-gatherer societies and only 10% of simple horticultural societies have a concept of a 'creator god concerned with the moral conduct of humans' (p. 88).

There are two main elements of the spirituality of most indigenous peoples, neither of

which involve gods in the sense that we think of them. One of these is their awareness of an animating force which pervades the whole of the phenomenal world. Many indigenous peoples have a term for this 'spirit-force'. In America, the Hopi called it *maasaau*, the Lakota called it *wakan-tanka*, and the Pawnee called it *tirawa*, while the Ufaina (of the Amazon Rain Forest) call it *fufaka* (Heinberg, 1989; Eliade, 1967). The Ainu of Japan called it *ramut* (translated by the anthropologist Monro [1962] as 'spirit-energy'), while in parts of New Guinea it was called *imunu* (translated by early anthropologist J.H. Holmes as 'universal soul' [in Levy-Bruhl, 1965]). In Africa the Nuer call it *kwoth* and the Mbuti call it *pepo*. These concepts are strikingly similar to the universal spirit-force which spiritual and mystical traditions speak of – for example, the Vedantic concept of *brahman*.

The second common element of indigenous religions is belief in spirits (in the plural). The world teems with spirits – both the spirits of dead human beings and 'natural' spirits which have always existed incorporeally. As E.B. Idowu writes of traditional African religion, 'there is no area of the earth, no object or creature, which has not a spirit of its own or which cannot be inhabited by a spirit' (1975, p.174). Like the Great Spirit itself, individual spirits are not anthropomorphic beings with personalities, like gods. They are not beings at all. As Idowu writes, 'they are more often than not thought of as powers which are almost abstract, as shades or vapours' (pp. 173-4). And spirits are involved in the world in a way that gods are not. Unlike gods, they are never separate from it, but always moving through it, or living within its rocks, trees and rivers.

Early religious scholars tended to believe that animism was the result of a mistaken generalisation. According to Comte, since they themselves were conscious beings, our early ancestors simply assumed – in the absence of any other evidence – that all things had an inner, subjective life too (Hamilton, 1995). Freud believed that spirits and demons were the 'projection of primitive man's emotional impulses' (1938, p. 146), while more recently, Wilber (1995) has suggested that animism is the result of what he calls 'pre-personal fusion' with the world, the lack of a clear distinction between subject and object. However, these explanations contain the underlying ethnocentric assumption that spirits are an illusion, that they cannot genuinely exist. The idea that spirits may be a genuine objective reality may seem absurd in a

climate of post-modern rationality, but we should at least be open to the possibility. Buddhist philosophy accepts the existence of entities invisible to the human eye (such as the *peta-yoni*, *asura-yoni* and *devas*), and suggests that we become sensitive to them as our consciousness becomes more refined through spiritual practice

However, if we decide that spirits are illusory, it is possible to interpret them in 'intellectualist' terms. It's not such a big step from sensing that all things are alive in a general way – because of the spirit-force which pervades them – to believing that all things are alive in the sense of being autonomous active forces. Spirit became individuated into spirits, and individual spirits were attributed with causative powers. When a wind suddenly arose, for example, this could be explained as the action of a wind-spirit, changes of seasons could be explained in terms of the actions of 'the spirits of the four winds' (as the Plains Indians believed), and illness and death could be explained as the influence of 'evil' spirits or sorcery (as most primal peoples believe). At any rate, whether they are objective realities or not, spirits do have this 'intellectualist' function to many indigenous peoples (Taylor, 2005).

Theistic religions are particularly characteristic of the peoples of the Europe, the Middle East and Asia. It seems to be the case that, before colonial contact from the 16th century onwards, the indigenous peoples of Australia, the Americas and many other parts of the world did not have theistic religions. In Africa the situation is a little more complex, due to earlier European and Arabic influences, but even there theistic religions were a late development, and very rare until recent centuries.

The Birth of Gods

A controversial subject here is the 'Goddess religion' which, according to scholars such as Marija Gimbutas (1974) and Riane Eisler (1987, 1995) was spread throughout Europe and the Middle East during the Neolithic era, from 8000 BCE to around 3000 BCE (e.g. Gimbutas, 1974). However, there is actually very little hard evidence that, during the early part of this period at least, a Goddess was worshipped.

Prehistoric human beings seem to have revered the female form. Judging by the massive numbers of them which have been found, particularly throughout Europe and the Middle East, female figurines seem to have been their major art form. Along with the vagina-shaped shells (which were

placed on and around dead bodies), the large number of depictions of vulvae, and the practice of staining vulva-shaped cavities with red ochre (to represent menstrual blood), they attest to an awe of the female form and her reproductive processes. However, this does not necessarily imply that these groups worshipped a Goddess. As Morris Berman points out, 'The "goddess" in these images is surely in the eye of the beholder; it is not in the images per se' (2000, p. 130). During the latter part of this period, goddesses certainly were worshipped as anthropomorphic deities – for example, the Sumerian goddess Nammu, who gave birth to earth and heaven, the Egyptian goddess Nut, and Cretan goddess Ariadne. But we can see this later phase of obvious goddess worship as a transitional stage between primal spirit-religion and patriarchal theistic religion.

In fairness to these scholars, they do state that Goddess religion was not purely, or even mainly, anthropomorphic. The idea of an all-pervading 'spirit-force' was important too. In fact, some of these scholar's descriptions of Goddess religion make it sound very similar to (if not exactly the same as) the 'spirit-religion' of many indigenous peoples. According to Riane Eisler, for example, goddess religion, 'bespeaks of a view of the world in which everything is spiritual (inhabited by spirits) and the whole world is imbued with the sacred: plants, animals, the sun, the moon, our own human bodies' (1995, p. 57). Descriptions such as these make one wonder, however, whether the concept of a Goddess is actually necessary. A similarly questionable assumption often made is that these cultures - and other prehistoric and indigenous cultures - were 'matriarchal', because they didn't possess characteristics associated with patriarchal societies, such as male dominance, hierarchy and aggression. Although a few societies may have been genuinely matriarchal - in the sense that women held positions of power, and had higher status than men - in most cases it's more accurate to simply say that these societies were *egalitarian* rather than matriarchal, because neither gender dominated the other. Status differences didn't exist, and power was shared equally. It isn't a question of either patriarchy or matriarchy, just as it isn't a question of gods or goddesses. We are dealing with a different category which transcends those binary oppositions (Taylor, 2005).

The first indisputable archaeological evidence of theistic religion appears later, during the 4th millennium BCE, among certain peoples of the Middle East and Central Asia. Peoples like the Ancient Sumerians and Egyptians, the Indo-

Europeans and the Semites developed religions based around the worship of higher, metaphysical beings with anthropomorphic (and occasionally theriomorphic, in the case of the Egyptians) characteristics – i.e. gods. These gods were apart from the world of human beings, observing and controlling its events from a higher realm, presiding over different aspects of life such as war, love, travel, agriculture etc. As Cassirer (1970) writes of the Roman gods, for instance, 'They are, so to speak, administrative gods who have shared among themselves the different provinces of human life' (p. 97). The earliest of these gods that we know of are the gods of Sumer, where An was the supreme sky god, Utu was the god of the sun, Nannar of the moon, Nanshe was the goddess of fish and magic, Ninisina was the goddess of writing, and so on. The most familiar of them to us are the gods of ancient Greece, where Zeus was the king of the gods, Poseidon was the god of the sea, Ares was the god of war, Aphrodite the goddess of desire, and so on. Like many other peoples' gods, the Greek deities were almost laughably anthropomorphic figures, like comic book superheroes. They squabbled with each other, took each other to court, had headaches, and sometimes even had sex with humans (in which case, if they got pregnant, half divine 'heroes' like Hercules were born). And as well as pantheons of 'official' gods, there were a massive number of local gods, of individual towns, mountains and rivers, and even family gods. Like spirits, gods covered every part of the natural world, but in the sense of presiding over – not actually being present in – all natural things.

At first traces of the old spirit-religions blended with the new god-religions. As I have suggested above, the early goddesses may have been a kind of intermediary stage between spirits and male gods, since the female psyche was more closely linked to the nature, and possessed the same nurturing and caring characteristics. As scholars like Gimbutas and Eisler tell us, the Goddess – and goddesses – was a symbol of the one-ness, the fecundity and the benevolence of nature. The idea of spirit-force was not completely forgotten by the early Egyptians either, who referred to Akh and Ba (the former referring to the universal soul, the latter the animating spirit which flows from Akh and pervades the whole of nature). Even in Greece, there was a pre-theistic stage of religion, *Eue theia*, when there existed, in Cassirer's words, 'a natural kinship, a consanguinity that connects man with plants and animals' (1970, p.91). It was only later, when this connection was broken, that gods came into being.

In time, however, these aspects of the old 'spirit religions' faded away. By around 2000 BCE, all prominent deities were male (Eisler, 1987; Baring & Cashford, 1991; DeMeo, 1998) and spirit-force only existed as an esoteric concept. And by this time the ancient sense of participation with nature had been replaced with a desire to dominate the natural world.

These peoples – particularly the Indo-Europeans and Semites – were war-like as well as theistic, and over the following millennia they conquered large parts of the world (see Gimbutas, 1974; Eisler, 1995; DeMeo, 1998). The Indo-Europeans eventually conquered the whole of Europe, parts of the Middle East and India, while the Semites conquered most of the Middle East. Over time they split into different groups. The Indo-Europeans sub-divided into peoples like the Celts, the Greeks, the Romans and the ancient Hindus, while the Semites sub-divided into peoples like the Hebrews, the Philistines, the Arabs and so on. And wherever they went, and whoever they became, their religions retained the same basic polytheistic character.

Monotheism came much later. The world's first ever monotheistic religion was founded by the Egyptian Pharaoh Ikhnaton in the 14th century BCE, who proclaimed that the only God was Aton, the sun God, and that all the old gods were obsolete. There is some evidence that Moses lived in Egypt at this time, where he was the son of a noble family (Moses actually is an Egyptian name), and that he assimilated this concept of one God and took it into the desert with him. This may be how the Jewish religion began, which eventually gave rise to Christianity, and – later still – to Islam.

The development of monotheism was probably not in itself such a significant event, however. The development of theism was the really momentous development, and monotheism can be seen as an extension of polytheism, possibly caused by an intensification of the original processes which produced theism (Taylor, 2005). In Frizzer's terminology, the important shift was from the magical to the religious stage, and the religious includes both polytheism and monotheism. And far from being evidence of an evolutionary advance towards the subtle realms (as Wilber believes) the fact that by the end of the first millennium CE most of Europe and large parts of the Near East and Africa worshipped One God is also largely attributable to accidental historical factors: the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine to Christianity, for example (which meant that Christianity was immediately the official religion

of the whole Roman Empire), and the missionary zeal and military power of early Muslims.

The questions we really need to answer, then, are: why did theistic religion emerge during the 4th millennium BCE? Why was the old spirit-religion replaced by a new religion of gods? And why is it, in the first place, that many indigenous peoples do not have concepts of gods?

The Intensified Sense of Ego

In order to answer these questions, we need to look at the fundamental psychological differences between 'modern' human beings and indigenous non-Eurasian peoples.

According to the early 20th century anthropologist Lucien Levy-Bruhl, the essential characteristic of indigenous peoples was their less 'sharpened' sense of individuality. In his words, 'To the primitive's mind, the limits of the individuality are variable and ill-defined' (1965, p.68). He notes that, rather than existing as self-sufficient individual entities – as we experience ourselves – indigenous peoples' sense of identity is bound up with their community. He cites reports of primal peoples who use the word 'I' when speaking of their group. Similarly, George B. Silberbauer notes that, to the G/wi of the Kalahari, 'identity was more group-referenced than individual. That is, a person would identify herself or himself with reference to kin or some other group' (Silberbauer, 1994, p.131). In other words, such peoples do not just live *in* a group, as a collection of individuals, the community is part of their *being*, an extension of their self.

In the same way, they do not feel that they just live *on* land, but that their land is a part of their very identity, as much as part of their being as their own body. This is one of the reasons why being forcibly 'relocated' by governments is such a tragedy for them. Their attachment to their land is so powerful that they experience this as a kind of death. The Fijian anthropologist A. Ravuva, for example, notes that the Fijian's relationship to their *vanua* or land is 'an extension of the concept of self. To most Fijians the idea of parting with one's *vanua* or land is tantamount to parting with one's life' (1983, p.7).

In general, American-European peoples appear to have what Markus and Kitayama (1991) refer to as 'independent selves', whereas most indigenous peoples have 'interdependent selves'. The fundamental difference between European-Americans and indigenous non-Eurasian peoples

may therefore be that we have a stronger and sharper sense of individuality - or a stronger ego structure - than them.

The Ego Explosion

The stronger ego structure which characterises Eurasian peoples appears to have developed at a particular historical point (Taylor, 2003; 2005). Archaeological evidence for this includes new burial practices which became common from the 4th millennium BCE onwards. In Europe, prior to this, communal burial was the norm, and people were buried without markers and without possessions. People would be buried in shallow temporary graves and then, at a certain time of year, be reburied in a permanent communal site (Griffith, 2001). But during the 4th millennium BCE people were buried as individuals, with identity and property, as if their individuality mattered, and as if they thought it would continue after death. Chieftains were buried with their horses, weapons and wives, as if it was impossible to conceive of such powerful and important people ceasing to exist, and they were bound to return to life at some point. As the Swedish archaeologist Mats Malmer has written, these new burial practices (and the new emphasis on private property linked to them) are part of a 'surprising change [that] occurred in Europe, a new social system...giving greater freedom and rights of personal ownership to the individual.' Referring specifically to the beginning of the third millennium BCE, he calls these new European peoples 'the first individualists' (in Keck, 2000, pp.47-48).

Texts and inscriptions from the fourth millennium BCE also show a greater emphasis upon individuality and personality. For the first time, people's names are mentioned and their speech and their activities are recorded. We learn about who did what, why kings built temples and went into battle, how goddesses and gods fell in love and fought with one another. As Baring and Cashford (1991) write, 'We become aware not only of the personality of man and women but also the individuality of goddesses and gods, whose characters are defined and whose creative acts are named' (p. 154).

Similarly, the new myths which appeared throughout Europe and the Near East during the third millennium BC suggest a new strong sense of individuality. Whereas before myths had been based around the Goddess and nature (or symbols of them), now they became stories of individual heroes pitting their will and strength against fate.

According to Joseph Campbell, these show 'an unprecedented shift from the impersonal to the personal' (quoted in Baring and Cashford, 1991, p.154). In fact many of these heroes actually battle against symbolic representations of the Goddess of the Earth such as serpents, suggesting the new sense of separation and alienation from nature as the ego became more developed. In the Sumerian myth the Enuma Elish, for instance, the Earth goddess Tiamat – represented as a serpent – is killed by the sky god Marduk. Marduk takes her place as the creator of life, and now gods and goddesses – and by extension human beings – are 'outside' nature, detached from their creation rather than an organic part of it. Myths such as this symbolize what Owen Barfield (1957) calls 'a withdrawal of participation'. Whereas earlier human beings – and indigenous peoples – felt deeply interconnected with natural phenomena, now nature is something 'other' to be tamed and exploited.

And I am not, of course, the first person to suggest that these myths contain elements of historical truth. Scholars such as Ernst Cassirer (1953, 1970), L.L. Whyte (1950), Jean Gebser (1985), Julian Jaynes (1976), Joseph Campbell (1964) and Wilber (1981) have all suggested that our strong sense of individuality was not shared by earlier peoples, and emerged at a particular historical time. According to Whyte (1950), this is when the conflict between rational and instinctive behaviour which typifies modern man originated; according to Jaynes, this was when human beings ceased to obey the voices of the gods and started to think and act as individuals; while Campbell shows that at this point the myth of the individual hero pitting his will and strength against fate begins to take precedence over myths based upon the goddess and natural phenomena. According to Cassirer (1953, 1970), early human beings lived in a state of 'cosmic continuity', in which there was no sharp distinction between the individual and the environment. But later human beings developed a subjectivity, and the duality of subjective-objective and outer-inner.

These authors agree that the transition to a stronger sense of individuality specifically involved the human groups I have mentioned above: the Sumerians, Egyptians, the Indo-Europeans and the Semites (amongst others). However, perhaps due to the lack of archaeological evidence available to them, the dates they suggest for the transition are contradictory. Campbell suggests during the 3rd millennium BCE, while Whyte and Jaynes suggest during the 2nd millennium BCE. The researches of James DeMeo (1998), however, sug-

gest that the Ego Explosion – as it might be termed – occurred much earlier, at around 4000 BCE.

Why did this intensification of the ego occur? Perhaps, as Wilber (1981) suggests, it was an evolutionary development, an advance in terms of the development of consciousness but one which had a disastrous ‘shadow side’. Or perhaps, as DeMeo suggests, an environmental catastrophe was the main factor. DeMeo’s *Saharasia* uncovers evidence of a massive environmental transformation which began at around 4000 BCE: the desertification of the large region of the earth which he calls ‘Saharasia’, which until that time had been fertile and widely populated with humans and animals. Parts of Saharasia – particularly central Asia and the Middle East – were the homelands of these groups, and this environmental change affected them massively. On the one hand, they were forced to leave their homelands (which explains the mass migrations of the Indo-Europeans and Semites over the following centuries), and on the other hand, the new living conditions they were forced to endure apparently transformed their psyche. DeMeo’s research strongly suggests that this was the historical point where war became rife, when societies became socially stratified, when patriarchy began, and when human beings began to experience guilt and shame towards bodily processes and sex.

This environmental disaster could also be seen as the ‘trigger’ of a sudden intensification of the ego. Perhaps the sheer hardship of these human groups’ lives when their environment began to change – when their crops began to fail, when the animals they hunted began to die, when their water supplies began to fail and so on – encouraged a spirit of selfishness. At the same time perhaps the new difficulties the groups faced as their environment changed brought a need for a new kind of intelligence, a practical and inventive problem-solving capacity. They were forced to develop powers of self-reflection, to begin to reason and ‘talk’ to themselves inside their heads. In other words, this is perhaps how what Barfield (1957) calls ‘Alpha thinking’ developed. And as he notes, this type of thinking inevitably results in a sense of separation from the environment, and an ‘individual, sharpened, spatially determined consciousness’ (in Wilber, 1981, p.28).

The Origins of Theism

Although its causes are obscure, this ‘Ego Explosion’ appears to be linked to the onset of theism (and with the onset of intensive warfare,

patriarchy and social stratification) (Taylor, 2005; 2012). There is a clear historical link: the groups who exhibit signs of increased individuality – such as the Indo-Europeans and Semitic peoples – were the very same groups who developed theistic religions (and who also became war-like, patriarchal and socially stratified). In James DeMeo’s (1998) terminology, for these peoples, matrist ‘natural religions’ (centred around an awareness of animating and spiritual forces) gave way to patrist ‘high God religions’, characterized by dominating male gods separated from nature, who demand obedience and certain forms of moral behaviour.

The question we need to answer is: how did the new strong ego structure apparently bring an end to indigenous spirit-religion, and give rise to theism?

This transition may have entailed a loss of awareness of the presence of spirit force pervading the world (as appears to have been common amongst indigenous peoples), which can be explained in terms of a redistribution of psychic or mental energy, which began with the Ego Explosion. These individuals’ more powerful egos required more energy in order to function, and this was only possible by sacrificing energy which had previously been used by other functions. And in this case energy which had been devoted to ‘present-centred awareness’ was sacrificed. That energy was diverted to the ego; as a result there was less psychic energy to use perceptually, and the individual no longer perceived the phenomenal world with the same intense, vivid vision. As a result their attention became ‘switched off’ to the presence of spirit-force. And if we accept that spirits are objective realities, this was obviously the point when we ‘switched off’ to their presence around us too (Taylor, 2003; 2005).

This loss of the awareness of Spirit was perhaps part of the reason why gods became necessary. Many indigenous peoples appear to perceive the world as a meaningful and benevolent place, presumably because of their awareness of spirit-force, and their sense of connection to the cosmos. Through losing their awareness of spirit-force, Eurasian peoples seem to have lost this sense of harmony and meaning. Rather than being animate, natural phenomena became soulless objects, and the world became a cold, mechanistic place. In other words, these new strongly ‘egoic’ human beings lost the sense of being ‘at home’ in the world. What Campbell (1964) calls ‘the Great Reversal’ occurred, when the sense of the sacred faded away, the human psyche became riddled

with guilt, and the body became associated with sin.

At the same time, perhaps even more importantly, these peoples began to experience a painful new sense of separateness to the world, and lost the sense of kinship to nature and to other living beings which primal peoples seem to experience (Taylor, 2012). The psychological effects of this were momentous, and partly explain the 'Great Reversal' Campbell describes. This is the terrible 'human condition' which existentialist philosophers and psychologists often describe so dramatically - for example, when Fromm (1995) writes that '[Man's] awareness of his aloneness and separateness...makes his separate, disunited existence an unbearable prison' (p. 7). This sense of aloneness also brings a sense of incompleteness. Individuals become isolated fragments, broken away from the whole, and as a result have a fundamental sense of unfulfilment (in the literal sense), of not being sufficient as they are, a sense of lack.

In my view, theism was a psychological strategy these human beings used to deal with this new state of being. The belief that gods were always present, watching over them, acted as a defence mechanism against their sense of isolation, and also an attempt to assuage the sense of coldness and indifference they experienced from the world. If the gods were there, they were never alone. If gods were controlling events and protecting them, the world was a more benign place.

Another important 'compensatory' factor of theistic religions are their concepts of an afterlife. Many indigenous peoples had (and still have in some cases) fairly mundane conceptions of life after death. The Cheyenne Indians, for example, believe that after death they carry on living in the same way, but as insubstantial spirits, like shadows (Service, 1978). Members of the Lengua tribe of South America told the missionary W.B. Grubb that, 'The aphantak or departed souls of men in the shade world... merely continue their present life, only of course in a disembodied state' (in Levy-Bruhl, 1965, p.314). And for some groups, life after death didn't necessarily mean immortality. As Levy-Bruhl pointed out, 'Everywhere primitives believe in survival, but nowhere do they regard it as unending' (p. 313).

But after the Ego Explosion the afterlife became important as a consolation for the sufferings of life; the psychological suffering which the sharpened sense of ego brings, and the 'social' suffering of war, oppression and poverty (much of which can also be seen as a consequence of the

Ego Explosion). We can assume that the intensified sense of individuality which came with the Ego Explosion brought an intensified fear of death too. After all, if you define your identity purely in terms of your own being, rather than as a part of your community or as a part of the cosmos itself, then the dissolution of your own being is a terrifying prospect. We can therefore see the concept of immortality as a response to this terror of death (Taylor, 2005; 2012).

Perhaps Gods – and God – had a secondary 'intellectualist' function too. Without an awareness of Spirit, these Eurasian groups could not explain the world in terms of the actions of individual spirits. But, of course, anthropomorphic gods took over this role, and became the explanation behind natural events. When the wind rose up, for example, this was not because of the action of 'wind spirits' anymore, but because the god of wind was angry; and when a person died of illness this wasn't because of evil spirits, but because of 'the will of God'.

There is some evidence that, during later millennia, the strong ego structure which these groups developed intensified even further, leading to an intensification of war, patriarchy and antipathy to sex and the body (DeMeo, 1998). And this may have been partly responsible – together with the historical factors I mentioned above – for the transition from polytheism to monotheism. A stronger ego structure brings a more painful sense of separation, and the monotheistic god became necessary to assuage this, since He, we can presume, offers an even greater sense of protection and a greater sense of thereness than assorted polytheistic deities.

The transition from spirit religion to theism was also signalled by a new division between the sacred and the profane. As Service (1978) notes, in 'primitive society generally, conceptions of the sacred, or supernatural, so permeate activities that is difficult to separate religious activity from such activities as music and dance or even from play' (p. 64). Indigenous cultures generally did/do not have special 'places of worship' such as churches or temples, special 'holy days' or 'religious specialists' like priests. The key to this, of course, is the individual's awareness of spirit-force. There cannot be a division between the sacred and the profane because the omnipresence of spirit-force – or spirits – makes everything sacred. Every place is potentially 'holy' and every individual has access to the divine. But now that awareness of spirit-force was lost, a compartmentalisation of religion took place. The divine became contained

within particular places, such as churches and temples, and religious specialists began to act as intermediaries between human beings and gods.

Conclusion

Of course, not everyone conceives of God as a personal being who overlooks the world and controls and intervenes in its events. Christian mystics such as Meister Eckhart and Jakob Boehme used the term 'God' to describe a spiritual force, or the Ground of all Reality, and encountered a great deal of hostility from the church authorities precisely because this was not the same personal 'God' which conventional Christians worshipped. At the same time there are many concepts of God as both personal and spiritual at the same time – i.e. 'God' exists as a spirit-force which pervades the universe, but at the same time can manifest himself as a personal being, or at least have powers of agency and influence. The concept of God of the Bhagavad-Gita, for example, is similar to this. Similarly, Keith Ward (2002) suggests that concepts of God or gods arise when human beings try to grasp ultimate reality. We cannot directly perceive the pure spiritual essence of the universe, and so have to 'image' forms which represent it. These concepts makes sense when we consider that there is a large grey area between complete ego-separateness and one-ness with the cosmos. At any point along this continuum, there will still a degree of existential trauma and therefore a need for consolation, and a consequent need for a personal god – even whilst there is an awareness of Spirit.

The point I am trying to make, then, is that the concept of God is a psychological strategy which only became necessary when certain human groups developed a strong ego structure. The development of theism was not the result (and the indication) of an evolutionary movement advance towards spirit – as Wilber (1981, 1995) believes – but more probably the result of an accidental historical event which caused a movement away from it.

In a sense the born-again Christians who tell us that there is a 'god-shaped hole' inside us are correct. The 'hole' is our fundamental sense of lack and incompleteness, caused by our strong sense of separateness from the cosmos. This is why religious beliefs are so persistent, even with so many apparently rational arguments against them. It's true, however, that particularly in secular western Europe, the 'opium' of religion has become less readily available. Science has taken over religion's

secondary function of explaining the world, and in the process negated its primary function. As a result many people are forced to find other ways of filling the 'god-shaped hole', which might include materialism, power, success, drugs, hedonism, and even supporting soccer clubs.

However, perhaps the best way of dealing with this sense of lack, and the only way which can be truly successful, is not to try to fill it, but to try to remove it – or perhaps more accurately, to transcend it. This is what spiritual traditions such as Vedanta or Buddhism offer us: methods of weakening our ego structure, overcoming our sense of separation and incompleteness, and reconnecting with the cosmos. In a sense they offer us techniques of undoing the negative effects of the Ego Explosion and returning us to the holistic and harmonious experience of the world of many indigenous peoples.

In other words, spiritual or transpersonal development does not help us by giving us a consolation for our 'terrible' human condition, but by enabling us to change the state of being – or psyche – which is responsible for our suffering. When we reach a certain level of transpersonal development, the need for consolations such as religion, drugs or materialism naturally falls away, simply because we have transcended the state of ego-isolation which created that need. We discover that our existence is not an 'unbearable prison' of separateness and aloneness after all, because the whole universe and everything in it, including our own being, is pervaded with the Spirit.

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Estudio sobre “Efectos Adversos” Relacionados con la Meditación

Study about Meditation Related “Side Effects”

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Resumen

Objetivos: Detectar si se dan “efectos adversos” en la meditación y conocer si hay diferencias en estos efectos según edad, sexo, años de práctica, frecuencia de la práctica y tipo de meditación. **Metodología:** Encuesta por internet (n=115) a personas que dicen practicar meditación. **Resultados:** Numerosos participantes refieren “efectos adversos” asociados a la práctica de la meditación, como reacciones psicológicas negativas (como “impaciencia” 24,3%, “ansiedad o nerviosismo” 21,7%, etc.), algunas posibles alteraciones psicopatológicas (como “sensación de estar en un mundo irreal” 9,6%, “sensación de perder la identidad” 7,8%, etc.) y efectos espirituales “negativos” (como “noche oscura” 21,7%, “muerte del ego” 16,5%, etc.). Se encuentran diferencias en algunos de estos efectos según edad, sexo, años de práctica con la meditación, frecuencia de la práctica y tipo de meditación. **Conclusiones:** Se presentan varios “efectos adversos” asociados a la práctica de la meditación, que son diferentes en distintos grupos. Los resultados obtenidos nos indican la necesidad de profundizar más en el estudio de dichos efectos y de tenerlos en cuenta por quienes meditan, para prevenirlos, tratarlos o darles el sentido adecuado.

Palabras Clave: meditación, efectos adversos, encuesta, espiritualidad, psicopatología

Abstract

Objectives: To detect if "adverse effects" occur in meditation and to learn whether there are differences in these effects by age, sex, years of practice, frequency and type of meditation. **Method:** Internet Survey (n = 115) for people who practice meditation. **Results:** Many participants referred to "adverse effects" associated with the practice of meditation: negative psychological reactions (like "impatience" 24,3%, "anxiety or nervousness" 21,7%, etc.), some possible psychopathology (like "feeling of being in an unreal world" 9,6%, "feeling of losing one's identity" 7,8%, etc.) and "negative" spiritual effects (like "dark night" 21,7%, "death of ego" 16,5%, etc.). There are some differences in these effects by age, sex, years of practice, frequency and type of meditation. **Conclusions:** There are some "adverse effects" associated with the practice of meditation, which are different between groups. The results indicate the need to go deeper into their study and to keep the need for further study of adverse effects in mind in order to prevent them from happening, treat them, or help interpret their meaning.

Keywords: meditation, side effects, survey, spirituality, psychopathology

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Introducción

La meditación existe desde tiempos inmemoriales en las diversas tradiciones espirituales de Oriente y Occidente. En Occidente, en el siglo XX, se han desarrollado métodos derivados de métodos tradicionales de meditación, que se han inspirado en técnicas orientales, como es el caso de la *Meditación Transcendental*, el *Mindfulness* o el *Big Mind*, entre otros.

En el mundo de la psicología han sido diversos los autores que se han interesado por estos temas, desde los inicios del siglo XX. El primero que hace alusión a la meditación es William James (1902), en su libro *Las variedades de la experiencia religiosa*. Posteriormente, son muchos los científicos interesados en indagar o en experimentar con la meditación, como Carl Gustav Jung, con su práctica de la “*imaginación activa*”, Erich Fromm con el “*zen*” y, posteriormente, un número creciente de autores dentro de las psicologías transpersonales que integran la meditación al ámbito de la psicoterapia y del crecimiento personal.

En los años 70 nos encontramos con los primeros estudios científicos sobre los efectos psicológicos de la meditación. Desde entonces, y especialmente desde la década de los 90, el número de estudios sobre este tema ha experimentado un aumento exponencial, que ha sido mayor en los últimos 10 años. En la misma década se hace el primer estudio sobre los efectos del *mindfulness*, un método derivado del *Vipassana*, que se ha adaptado para la intervención en salud mental. Los estudios más frecuentes, en los últimos años, se han realizado con el *mindfulness*, cuyo uso se ha generalizado en el ámbito clínico.

Estos trabajos de investigación nos muestran los efectos beneficiosos de la meditación en numerosos trastornos psiquiátricos como los trastornos de ansiedad, la depresión, el TOC, trastornos de personalidad, hiperactividad, trastornos de la conducta alimentaria, insomnio, estrés, adicciones, etc. (McGee, 2008). Los mejores resultados se dan cuando se usa como método complementario de tratamientos psicoterapéuticos (McGee, 2008). También se encuentran efectos positivos en personas que no sufren trastornos mentales, en la calidad de vida, reducción de la agresividad, disminución del estrés, mayor concentración y capacidad de atención, bienestar psicológico, etc. (McGee, 2008; Perez-De-Albeniz y Holmes, 2000). No obstante, también hay críticos sobre estos efectos positivos que ponen de manifiesto que la mayoría de los estudios no son muy rigurosos (Farias y Wikohlm, 2015).

Por otra parte, consideramos importante tener en cuenta que aunque la meditación puede tener muchos efectos positivos, en ciertos casos, se pueden tener experiencias desagradables, producirse riesgos o incluso estar contraindicada. Estos fenómenos no son nuevos, pues las advertencias acerca de los riesgos o dificultades del caminante espiritual están descritas por maestros o místicos de todas las tradiciones. Llama la atención la escasez de los estudios o de alusiones a estos temas en ámbitos científicos, aunque en la práctica clínica cotidiana podemos encontrar a pacientes que acuden a psicólogos o psiquiatras refiriendo problemas relacionados con la práctica de la meditación. Casi todos los autores actuales hablan de la meditación como un método que genera buenas experiencias. Lo que supone el riesgo añadido de que, al no advertirse de las posibilidades de tener experiencias desagradables, es más probable que quien las tiene experimente mayores dificultades o que no sea consciente de que dichos efectos pueden formar parte de un proceso de introspección o de autoconocimiento y que, elaborado adecuadamente, puede llevar a una mayor madurez y consciencia. Pero aún es más grave si alguna persona experimenta alguna alteración psíquica más seria y no es consciente de la necesidad de una ayuda especializada en el ámbito de la salud mental. Parece que la meditación no provoca los mismos efectos en todo el mundo y por ello es importante tomar consciencia de sus beneficios y de sus riesgos (Farias y Wikohlm, 2015).

Además, es importante diferenciar las alteraciones psicológicas y psicopatológicas de otros procesos que podríamos considerar más espirituales, y que forman parte de un proceso global de crecimiento espiritual, como es el caso de la “noche oscura”, la “emergencia de la *kundalini*”, el “*makio*” (en el *Zen*), etc.

También es importante recordar que desde el DSM-IV, en la sección “Problemas adicionales que pueden ser objeto de atención clínica”, hay un apartado específico para “Problema religioso o espiritual”, con el código Z71.8. Lukoff, Lu, y Turner (1998) propusieron dicha inclusión, y consideran que, entre este tipo de problemas, están los derivados de la práctica de la meditación, a los que llaman *meditation related problems*.

Para ordenar los posibles efectos negativos que pueden atribuirse en la práctica de la meditación hemos hecho una clasificación que diferencia dichos efectos en tres grupos (Rodríguez, 2014):

- 1) Efectos psicológicos negativos.
- 2) Alteraciones psicopatológicas.
- 3) Efectos espirituales “negativos”.

A continuación desarrollamos estos tres tipos de posibles “efectos adversos” asociados a la meditación:

Efectos psicológicos negativos

Consisten en reacciones psicológicas que producen malestar en el individuo o en sus relaciones interpersonales, pero que no desencadenan necesariamente problemas psiquiátricos. Por ejemplo Shapiro (1992) encuentra en un estudio aumentos paradójicos en la tensión emocional, aburrimiento, dolor, alteración del sentido de la realidad, confusión y desorientación, ser más juzgador, tener menor motivación por la vida, aumento o aparición de dolor y adicción a la meditación. Epstein (2007) nos habla de una mayor tendencia a la obsesividad, dolores musculares, aumento de la rigidez psicológica y mayor intelectualización, como consecuencia de la práctica de la meditación. En otros casos se han exacerbado rasgos de personalidad obsesivos y esquizoides (McGee, 2008; Nelson, 2000) o se han producido falsos recuerdos (Wilson, Mickes, Stolarz-Fantino, Evrad, & Fantino, 2015).

Walsh y Roche (1979) hacen referencia a disociación y tensión muscular. Parece que la disociación de las emociones puede también dificultar la conexión con las emociones ajenas, perdiéndose como consecuencia empatía hacia los demás. Otros efectos negativos pueden ser una excesiva introversión y aislamiento, ensimismamiento, regresión a etapas más infantiles, o represión de la sexualidad (Chaudhuri, 1994; Nelson, 2000). También se hace referencia a intensas reacciones emocionales (sollozar, gritar, “ponerse histérico”) y a la emergencia de recuerdos infantiles desagradables, o incluso traumáticos (Myers, 1994).

Por otra parte, las reminiscencias narcisistas de etapas infantiles pueden generar sentimientos de superioridad y grandiosidad u otras fantasías, o sentimientos de vacío por no conseguir llegar a la deseada perfección con la meditación (Epstein, 1988). En esta línea, Engler (1984) ha encontrado que algunas personas con estructuras de personalidad narcisista o borderline pueden usar la meditación para llegar a ser “puros”, o para identificar los sentimientos de vacío y fragmentación con la vacuidad o el desapego de la iluminación.

Otros efectos posibles que señala Epstein (1988) son las intensas reacciones de transferencia hacia el maestro que suponen una expectativa de fusión con el mismo. También se ha hablado de una excesiva “fijación emocional” en el gurú, que puede llevar a la sumisión, dependencia emocio-

nal, dinámicas sectarias, etc. (Chaudhuri, 1994). Dinámicas de las que el sujeto no suele ser consciente.

Otro efecto psicológico negativo tiene más que ver con lo que se ha llamado by-pass espiritual (Tart y Deikman, 1991), que consiste en recurrir a la espiritualidad y sus prácticas para evadir los problemas de la vida cotidiana, autoengañarse, o no resolver los conflictos mediante métodos más adecuados (como la psicoterapia).

Alteraciones psicopatológicas

En algunos casos se han detectado alteraciones psicopatológicas desencadenadas o agravadas por la práctica de la meditación, con alteraciones graves hasta en un 7% de los sujetos (Shapiro, 1992). Se han encontrado cuadros de ansiedad y crisis de pánico (Epstein y Lieff, 1981; Farias y Wikohlm, 2015; McGee, 2008; Nelson, 2000; Walsh y Roche, 1979), reacciones de despersonalización, desrealización, disociación, alteraciones perceptivas y agitación (Castillo, 1990; Epstein y Lieff, 1981; Kennedy, 1976; Pérez-De-Albeniz y Holmes, 2000; Walsh y Roche, 1979), intensa angustia por emergencia de recuerdos traumáticos (Myers, 1994), o fuertes emociones negativas que podrían llegar a desencadenar cuadros de intenso estrés (McGee, 2008), exacerbación de síntomas depresivos, con algún intento de suicidio (Epstein y Lieff, 1981; McGee, 2008; Nelson, 2000) o incluso parece ser que ha habido algún caso de suicidio consumado después de un retiro intensivo de meditación, según testimonios de personas que han acudido al mismo¹. También hay datos de recaídas en pacientes esquizofrénicos o personas con antecedentes de psicosis por drogas, al desencadenarse síntomas psicóticos durante una práctica intensiva de meditación (McGee, 2008; Nelson, 2000; Walsh y Roche, 1979).

Llama la atención que en un trabajo sobre Meditación trascendental (Otis, 1984) se hayan encontrado más alteraciones en meditadores expertos que en principiantes. Las alteraciones más frecuentes en los veteranos fueron comportamiento antisocial, frustración, ansiedad, depresión y adicción a la meditación. Este autor señala que la explicación puede estar en que la meditación haga a la gente más consciente de sus problemas o más deseosa de comunicarlos, o bien que los síntomas puedan emerger al reducirse el nivel de estrés y que quizás la meditación ayuda a tomar conciencia de problemas latentes. Según el mismo autor es probable que aparezca material reprimido por darse un estado intermedio entre sueño y vigilia.

Glueck y Stroebe (1984) señalan que en sujetos que no tienen mucha relación con sus procesos inconscientes, se ha observado que la meditación puede liberar recuerdos que han estado previamente reprimidos, generando diversos problemas psíquicos.

También es importante tener en cuenta que las personas con una estructura de personalidad más frágil o con un ego débil pueden ser más susceptibles de sufrir diversas complicaciones por la práctica meditativa (Nelson, 2000). Como dice Engler (1983): “tienes que llegar a ser alguien antes de no ser nadie”, es decir, hay que tener un yo estructurado antes de buscar el vacío o la disolución del yo y, por lo tanto, trabajar previamente en el fortalecimiento del ego (Nelson, 2000, p. 525). Las personas más frágiles tienen más probabilidades de experimentar distrés o de verse sobrepasados por lo que puede emerger en la experiencia de meditación. Así que quienes tienen una estructura de personalidad límite pueden tener más riesgo de complicaciones ante los rigores de una práctica de meditación intensiva (Epstein y Lieff, 1981).

Todos estos datos han llevado a diversos autores a concluir que la meditación puede estar contraindicada en algunos individuos, en los que puede desencadenar problemas psiquiátricos graves (Lazarus, 1976; Shapiro, 1994). Según Shapiro (1994) estaría contraindicada en los siguientes casos: antecedentes de brotes psicóticos, vulnerabilidad a la psicosis, personalidad esquizotípica, personalidad esquizoide, trastornos disociativos y trastornos somatoformes (hipocondriasis y somatización).

Efectos espirituales “negativos”

En todas las tradiciones se habla de los problemas que pueden surgir en el camino espiritual y, más específicamente, en la práctica de la meditación (Kornfield, 1993). Estos efectos espirituales “negativos” nos señalan momentos difíciles o situaciones que provocan o movilizan emociones negativas, en relación con la práctica espiritual, pero que pueden ser parte de un proceso en sí mismo positivo, por ese motivo entrecomillamos la palabra “negativos”.

Tenemos en cuenta este tipo de experiencias en el presente escrito porque conviene considerarlas y diferenciarlas (cuando sea posible) de los problemas psicológicos o psiquiátricos.

Algunos ejemplos en esta línea son: la “noche oscura del alma” a la que se refiere San Juan de la Cruz (Wilber, 1999; Delgado, 2004), la toma de consciencia del mal que hay dentro de

nosotros (como señalan Santa Teresa y otros místicos de diversas tradiciones), “el despertar de la *Kundalini*” (Nelson, 2000, p. 405; Wilber, 1999, p. 98), la soberbia o *inflación psíquica* en la que uno siente que está por encima de otros y donde las experiencias vividas se atribuyen al ego (Wilber, 1999; Delgado, 2004), las visiones (que hay que diferenciar de los fenómenos alucinatorios), el *makio* también llamado *pseudo-nirvana* en el Zen (Wilber, 1999), las crisis de fe, la adicción al trance (que es difícil distinguir entre reacción psicológica o espiritual), la “muerte del ego”, la sensación de vacío, la “glotonería espiritual” (que tiene que ver con la búsqueda compulsiva de experiencias paranormales), etc.

Es importante tener en cuenta que en varias de estas situaciones se sugiere dejar la práctica de la meditación por un tiempo, o bien está indicado pedir ayuda a un guía cualificado (Wilber, 1999).

Objetivos

- Detectar si se dan “efectos adversos” que son atribuidos a la práctica de la meditación.
- Conocer si hay diferencias en estos “efectos adversos” según edad, sexo, años de práctica y frecuencia de la práctica.
- Conocer si hay relación entre algunos “efectos adversos” y tipo de meditación.

Método

Diseño

Estudio descriptivo transversal mediante encuesta que trata de detectar si se dan algunos de los “efectos adversos” descritos o detectados por otros autores.

Participantes

En el estudio participaron 117 personas; se descartan los datos de 2 de ellas por estar incompletos, por lo que en el estudio final contamos con 115 encuestas válidas. De esos 115, el 40% fueron hombres y el 60% mujeres. Con respecto a la edad, un 2,6% de las personas de la muestra tienen 18-25 años, un 26,1% 25-40 años, un 59% 40-60 años y un 12,2% más de 60 años.

Instrumento y variables

Se utilizó una encuesta diseñada *ad hoc* para este trabajo, para recoger información sobre distintas variables:

- Descriptivas: edad (distribuida en 4 grupos de 18-25, 25-40, 40-60 y > de 60 años) y sexo.
- Tipo de práctica meditativa (con opciones de respuesta cerradas y un apartado de otros, para dar opción a una respuesta abierta).
- Duración de la práctica.
- Efectos psicológicos negativos (con opciones de respuesta cerradas y un apartado de “otros”, para dar opción a una respuesta abierta).
- Alteraciones psicopatológicas (con opciones de respuesta cerradas y un apartado de “otros”, para dar opción a una respuesta abierta).
- Efectos espirituales “negativos” (con opciones de respuesta cerradas y un apartado de “otros”, para dar opción a una respuesta abierta).

Procedimiento

Se ha realizado un método no probabilístico por efecto “bola de nieve”, pasando la encuesta por internet, de forma anónima y confidencial, con distribución de la misma entre conocidos, grupos de meditación en redes sociales y asociaciones de meditación.

Análisis estadístico

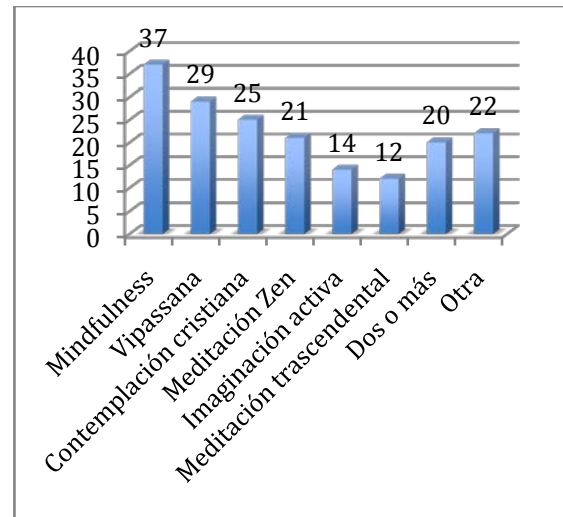
El tratamiento estadístico de los datos se ha realizado con el programa SPSS versión 20, haciéndose un análisis descriptivo de frecuencias de las distintas variables, y para comprobar la relación entre variables seleccionadas se ha utilizado la prueba Chi cuadrado.

Resultados

Los resultados muestran una gran variedad en el “*tipo de técnicas*” de meditación que se practican. El método más utilizado por los encuestados fue el mindfulness (37 personas, 32,2%), seguido del Vipassana (29 personas, 25,2%), la contemplación cristiana (25 personas, 22%), la meditación

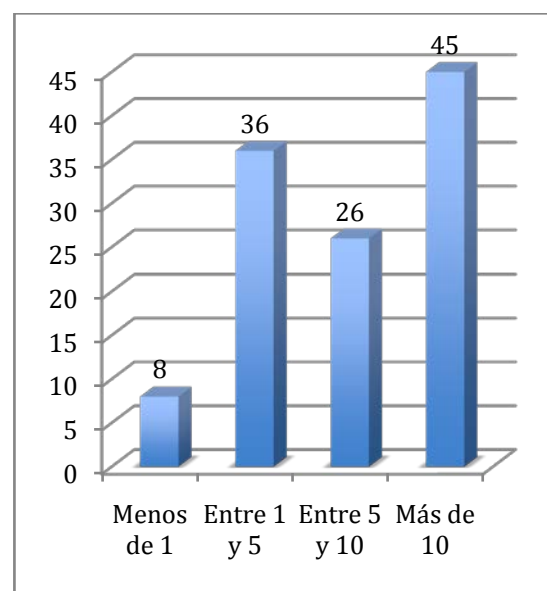
zen (21 personas, 18,2%), la imaginación activa (14 personas, 12,2%) y la meditación trascendental (12 personas, 10,4%). Varios de los participantes (20 personas, 17,4%) practicaban más de un método de meditación y 22 personas (19,1%) hacen referencia a otros métodos que no aparecen en la encuesta como sofrología, Big Mind, Meditación del Sutra del Loto, Siddha Yoga, Shinsokan o Chi kung (Figura 1).

Figura 1.
Tipos de meditación



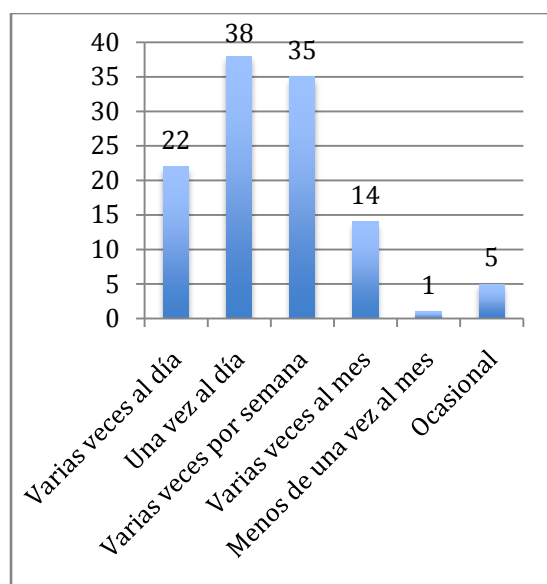
Con respecto a los “*años de práctica*” encontramos que 8 personas llevan menos de un año (7%), 36 (31,3%) llevan 1-5 años, 26 (22,6%) 5-10 años y 45 (39%) llevan más de 10 años (Figura 2).

Figura 2.
Años de práctica



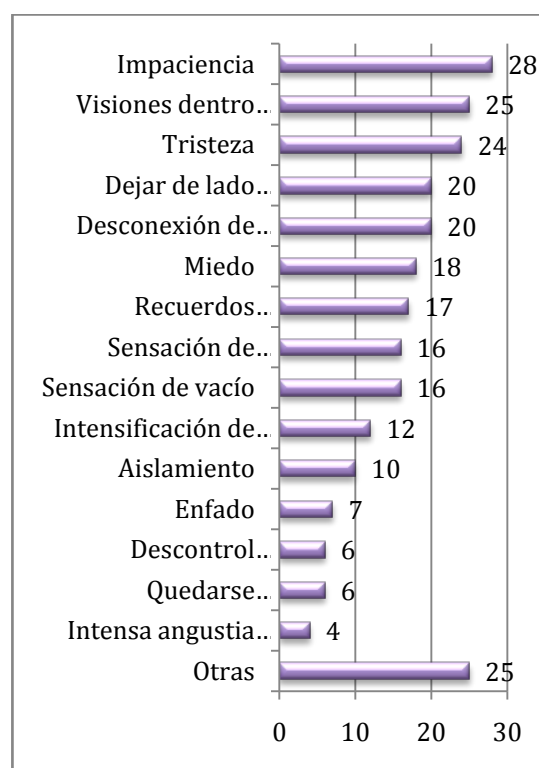
Con respecto a la “frecuencia de la práctica” nos encontramos con que la mayoría tienen una cierta regularidad en la misma. Son 22 personas (19%) quienes meditan varias veces al día, 38 (33%) meditan una vez al día, 35 (30,4%) varias veces por semana, 14 (12,1 %) menos de una vez al mes y 5 (4,3%) personas de forma ocasional (Figura 3).

Figura 3.
Frecuencia de la práctica



En la pregunta sobre las “reacciones psicológicas” nos encontramos con las siguientes respuestas, que de mayor a menor frecuencia son: 28 personas (24,3%) experimentan “impaciencia”, 25 (21,7%) responden que tienen “visiones dentro de la mente”, 24 (20,8%) “tristeza”, 20 (17,4%) “desconexión de las emociones”, 20 (17,4%) “dejar de lado obligaciones y solo querer meditar”, 12 (10,4%) “intensificación de la sensación de soledad”, 18 (15,6%) “miedo”, 17 (14,8%) “recuerdos negativos”, 16 (13,9%) “sensación de vacío”, 16 (14%) “sensación de superioridad”, 10 (8,7%) “aislamiento”, 7 (6%) “enfado”, 6 (5,2%) descontrol emocional, 6 (5,2%) “quedarse atrapados en actitudes infantiles”, 4 (3,4%) “intensa angustia por la aparición de un recuerdo traumático”. Encontramos que 25 personas (21,7%) responden en el apartado “otras”, entre las que están: dormirse, sensación de “desrealización”, “inquietud”, “pereza”, “sensación de perder el tiempo”, “acentuación del dolor físico”, hay quien pone “ninguno” o se hacen alusiones a sensaciones positivas (Figura 4).

Figura 4.
Reacciones psicológicas



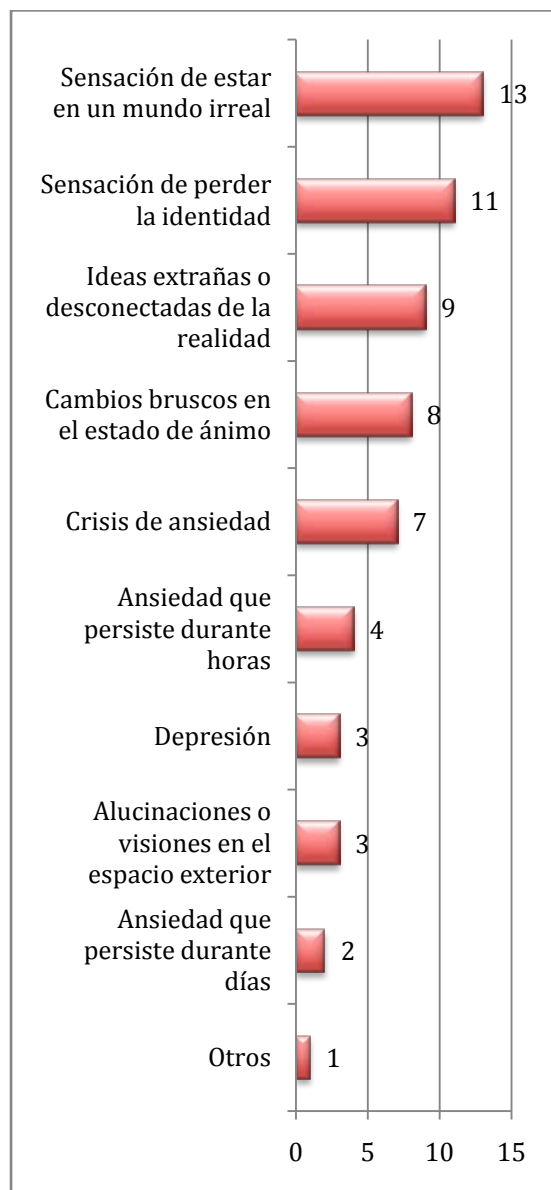
Al preguntar más concretamente sobre “alteraciones psicopatológicas”, encontramos, por orden de frecuencia, que 13 personas (11,3%) refieren “sensación de estar en un mundo irreal”, 11 (9,6%) “sensación de perder la identidad”, 9 (7,8%) “ideas extrañas o desconectadas de la realidad”, 8 (7%) “cambios bruscos en el estado de ánimo”, 7 (6,1%) “crisis de ansiedad”, 4 (3,4%) “ansiedad que persiste durante horas”, 3 (2,6%) “depresión”, 3 (2,6%) “alucinaciones o visiones en el espacio exterior”, 2 (1,7%) “ansiedad que persiste durante días” y 1 persona (0,8%) responde en el apartado “otras” con “parálisis del sueño” (Figura 5). Nadie ha referido haber sufrido un cuadro psicótico o estrés postraumático.

En el caso de los “efectos espirituales negativos” nos encontramos con las siguientes respuestas: 25 personas (21,7%) refieren haber experimentado la “noche oscura del alma”, 19 (16,5%) la “muerte del ego”, 17 (15%) “crisis de fe”, 14 (12,2%) “visiones espirituales dentro de la mente”, 9 (7,8%) “sensación de que todo está mal dentro de uno/a”, 9 (7,8%) “sensación de vacío que persiste durante días”, 7 (6%) “adicción a la meditación”, 6 (5,2%) “sensación de vacío que persiste durante meses”, 5 (4,3%) “crisis de conversión”, 5 (4,3%) “emergencia de la kundalini”, 4 (3,5%) “búsqueda

intensa de experiencias extrañas o paranormales” y 2 (1,8%) han respondido dentro del apartado “otros” refiriendo “estar abducido”, y “vibración celular” (Figura 6).

Figura 5.

Alteraciones psicopatológicas



En el análisis de los datos nos encontramos con que hay diferencias estadísticamente significativas con respecto al sexo, edad, años dedicados a la meditación, frecuencia de la práctica y tipos de meditación, con respecto a algunos tipos de “efectos adversos”.

En los hombres es más frecuente la “intensificación de la sensación de soledad” ($p<0,05$) y la “desconexión de las emociones” (que se acerca a la significación estadística, $p=0,076$). Algunos efectos adversos aparecen solo en mujeres: “vacío que dura meses” (6 casos, $p<0,05$), “intensa angustia al

experimentar un recuerdo traumático” (4 casos, $p=0,096$) y “ansiedad que dura horas” (5 casos, $p=0,062$).

Figura 6.

Efectos espirituales “negativos”



Con respecto a la edad, hemos agrupado la muestra en tres rangos de edad (18-40, 40-60 y >60), por tener el grupo de 18-25 sólo 3 miembros. Con esta clasificación encontramos que el grupo de menores de 40 años experimenta con más frecuencia “impaciencia” ($p<0,05$), “ansiedad que dura horas” ($p<0,01$) y “cambios bruscos en el estado de ánimo” ($p<0,01$). Llama la atención la alta frecuencia de “sensación de vacío” en el grupo entre 40-60 años (9 casos), que se acerca a la significación estadística ($p = 0,086$).

Los meditadores que llevan más años muestran con más frecuencia “desconexión de las emociones”, con una diferencia que se acerca a la significación estadística ($p = 0,064$). La “ansiedad que dura horas” es más frecuente en las personas que llevan menos tiempo meditando ($p<0,05$).

Quienes tienen una práctica más intensiva (varias veces o una vez al día) experimentan con más frecuencia la reacción psicológica “miedo” ($p<0,05$) y la “muerte del ego” ($p<0,05$).

Algunas reacciones psicológicas tienen una frecuencia mayor a la esperable por azar, en algunos tipos de meditación:

- *Vipassana*: “sensación de vacío” ($p<0,05$) y “desconexión de las emociones” que rozan la significación estadística ($p = 0,051$).
- *Mindfulness*: “enfado” ($p<0,05$).
- *Imaginación activa*: “sensación de superioridad” ($p<0,05$).
- Meditación trascendental: “aislamiento” ($p<0,05$), “quedarse atrapado en actitudes infantiles” ($p<0,05$) y “sensación de superioridad” ($p<0,05$).
- *Zen*: “visiones dentro de la mente” ($p<0,05$).

En el caso de las alteraciones psicopatológicas encontramos una frecuencia mayor, con significación estadística, en los siguientes casos:

- *Mindfulness*: “ansiedad que dura días” ($p<0,05$).
- Meditación trascendental: “ideas extrañas o desconectadas de la realidad” ($p<0,05$), “sensación de perder la identidad” ($p<0,01$) y “cambios bruscos en el estado de ánimo” ($p<0,01$).
- *Zen*: “alucinaciones o visiones en el espacio exterior” ($p<0,05$).

Con respecto a los efectos espirituales “negativos” encontramos una frecuencia mayor, con significación estadística, en estos casos:

- *Imaginación activa*: “visiones espirituales dentro de la mente” ($p<0,05$).
- Meditación trascendental: “sensación de que todo el mal está dentro de uno” ($p<0,05$).
- *Zen*: “sensación de vacío que dura meses” ($p<0,05$).
- Contemplación cristiana: “noche oscura” ($p<0,01$) y “crisis de fe” ($p<0,01$).

Discusión

En el presente trabajo hemos encontrado que numerosos participantes señalan varios “efectos adversos” en relación con su práctica de meditación. Resultados que corroboran hallazgos previos (Chaudhuri, 1994; Epstein y Lieff, 1981; Farias y Wikohlm, 2015; McGee, 2008; Myers, 1994; Nelson, 2000; Shapiro, 1992; Walsh y Roche, 1979).

Entre los resultados obtenidos son llamativos algunos de ellos. Por ejemplo, resulta extraña la frecuencia de la reacción paradójica “sensación de ansiedad o nerviosismo”; resultado que concuerda con hallazgos de Shapiro (1992). Las “visiones dentro de la mente” son frecuentes, seguramente porque el hecho de disminuir ruidos internos favorezca la aparición de las mismas. La “tristeza” también aparece con relativa frecuencia y quizás emerja por una mayor autoconsciencia. La reacción “dejar de lado obligaciones y solo querer meditar” nos puede estar señalando el fenómeno del *bypass* espiritual (Tart y Deikman, 1991) y/o de una cierta adicción a la meditación (Shapiro, 1992). La “desconexión de las emociones” podría aumentar la vulnerabilidad a la disociación (Walsh y Roche, 1976). Los “recuerdos negativos” y la “intensa angustia por la aparición de un recuerdo traumático” concuerda con resultados previos (Glueck y Stroebe, 1984; Myers, 1994; Otis, 1984) y pone de manifiesto la posibilidad de vivir momentos de estrés, que pueden aumentar el riesgo de sufrir alguna alteración psicopatológica. La “sensación de superioridad” que aparece en varias personas se puede relacionar con lo que Epstein (1988) señala como “reminiscencias narcisistas de etapas infantiles”, que se pueden reactivar con la meditación, aunque también puede ser un síntoma de la *inflación psíquica* referida por otros autores (Wilber, 1999; Delgado, 2004). En el caso de la “sensación de vacío”, resulta difícil diferenciar el vacío que se presenta en ciertas etapas de la práctica y el vacío que aparece en el narcisismo o en personalidades frágiles (Engler, 1984).

Con respecto a las alteraciones psicopatológicas, encontramos un amplio número de respuestas que podrían relacionarse con ellas, como los “cambios bruscos en el estado de ánimo”, las “crisis de ansiedad”, la “ansiedad que persiste durante horas” o “durante días”. Estos datos son similares a los de hallazgos previos (Epstein y Lieff, 1981; McGee, 2008; Nelson, 2000; Walsh y Roche, 1979). No hemos encontrado referencias previas de estudios en los que se haya encontrado “cambios bruscos en el estado de ánimo”, aunque Nelson (2000) hace referencia a esta posibilidad.

En el caso de la respuesta “depresión”, puede ser difícil saber si las personas participantes la sufren o es una percepción de mayor tristeza, ya que en el lenguaje común es frecuente confundir estar deprimido con estar triste. Estos datos concuerdan con los obtenidos en otros trabajos (Epstein y Lieff; McGee, 2008; Nelson, 2000).

Las respuestas “sensación de estar en un mundo irreal”, “sensación de perder la identidad”, “ideas extrañas o desconectadas de la realidad” o “alucinaciones o visiones en el espacio exterior”, requerirían una evaluación más profunda en quienes las experimentan para averiguar si se trata de síntomas de despersonalización, desrealización, ansiedad o psicosis (Castillo, 1990; Epstein y Lieff, 1981; Kennedy, 1976; Shapiro, 1992 y 1994; McGee, 2008; Nelson 2000; Walsh y Roche, 1979), o bien manifestaciones de estados alterados de consciencia que forman parte de un proceso normal en el recorrido espiritual y en la práctica de la meditación (Kornfield, 1993; Nelson, 2000).

En relación a los resultados obtenidos en los “efectos espirituales negativos”, consideramos importante tener en cuenta que también son frecuentes y que puede ser fácil confundirlos con otros procesos psíquicos, o bien pueden influir en estos al generar malestar, miedo, confusión, etc. (Nelson, 2000).

Sobre las diferencias encontradas entre unos y otros grupos, habría que investigar más acerca de posibles diferencias entre hombres y mujeres, pues los resultados apuntan a ello.

En relación con las diferencias por edad, parece razonable suponer que las personas más jóvenes sean más impacientes, ansiosas y experimenten más oscilaciones en el estado de ánimo, y aunque suene a tópico, es posible que el grupo de 40-60 experimente más sensación de vacío debido a la crisis de la mediana edad.

En los meditadores de más años nos encontramos con una mayor frecuencia de “desconexión de las emociones”, ¿puede esto deberse a que años de meditación suponen más capacidad para distanciarse de ellas? ¿Puede haber algún

problema derivado de ello, como una menor capacidad de tomar consciencia de las emociones, o con una menor capacidad para empatizar con otros? (Epstein, 1988).

Por otra parte, quienes meditan con más frecuencia experimentan más el “miedo” y la “muerte del ego”. Es difícil saber a qué puede deberse esa reacción de “miedo”, quizás se deba a una mayor autoconsciencia. Por otra parte, es interesante ver que una mayor frecuencia de la práctica se asocia con esa experiencia de “muerte del ego”. ¿Será porque una meditación más intensiva la facilita? ¿Se refieren a una misma experiencia quienes han señalado esta respuesta? Es difícil saberlo con los datos de que disponemos.

Podemos ver, por otra parte, las diferencias entre distintos tipos de meditación. Quizás cada tipo de meditación y su contexto influyan en los tipos de experiencias encontradas, aunque resulta difícil explicar por qué en el *mindfulness* se da con más frecuencia el “enfado” (o tal vez la consciencia del mismo) y la “ansiedad que dura días”; en la *Imaginación activa* la “sensación de superioridad” (¿tendrá relación también con una mayor consciencia del mundo interno?); y en la *meditación trascendental* la mayor frecuencia de ciertas alteraciones psicopatológicas, en comparación con otros métodos. Hay estudios previos con la *meditación trascendental* que han encontrado diversas alteraciones en los practicantes de este método (Otis, 1984), pero ¿quiere esto decir que la *meditación trascendental* tiene más riesgos?

Todos estos datos apuntan hacia la necesidad de estudiar a fondo las reacciones adversas asociadas a la meditación. Los datos obtenidos en este estudio son muy limitados y nos dan una aproximación superficial al fenómeno, ya que se trata de un estudio transversal con una encuesta realizada por internet (lo que implica una baja fiabilidad), con un cuestionario no validado. El tamaño muestral es pequeño y es posible que haya más respuestas de quienes presentan más efectos adversos y no de quienes tienen experiencias positivas, lo que puede haber generado un cierto sesgo de autoselección y que la muestra no sea representativa.

Los resultados apuntan a la existencia de una serie de fenómenos que es preciso investigar con más profundidad, especialmente en entornos clínicos en los que la meditación forma parte de las “ofertas” de tratamiento. Para estudiar más a fondo estos fenómenos es conveniente realizar estudios longitudinales, con grupos más numerosos, que practiquen distintos tipos de meditación, con una evaluación previa de la situación psicológica de los sujetos que permita contraindicar los métodos que

puedan resultar más arriesgados o exigentes. Además es importante hacer una evaluación de las diversas experiencias asociadas a la meditación, desde una perspectiva más fenomenológica y cualitativa.

Es importante tener en cuenta que parte de los efectos descritos pueden darse en personas que previamente tienen alteraciones psicopatológicas y que buscan la meditación como un remedio a su malestar, que no se ve aliviado, sino que podría hacerse aún más consciente al meditar.

Por otra parte consideramos importante recordar que la meditación no se ha creado como un método psicoterapéutico, sino como una práctica que se inserta en un camino más amplio de desarrollo o crecimiento espiritual, en contextos diferentes a los de la clínica y con frecuencia dirigida a personas que tienen un entrenamiento y una supervisión previa, a las que se les exige un comportamiento ético y un determinado estilo de vida, con fines muy distintos a los que planteamos actualmente en Occidente (Perez-De-Albeniz y Holmes, 2000; Rowan, 1996).

En los casos en los que la meditación se utiliza para mejorar la salud mental parece importante su conocimiento profundo por parte de quienes la aplican, así como la evaluación previa de los participantes (Pérez-De-Albeniz y Holmes, 2000), con una adecuada supervisión psicológica y/o psiquiátrica a las personas más vulnerables y dentro de un programa de tratamiento más amplio, que la mera aplicación de técnicas de meditación. Además, hay que tener en cuenta los posibles riesgos, para diagnosticarlos, tratarlos y prevenirlos adecuadamente (Rodríguez, 2014). Por ejemplo, Nelson (2000) señala que es importante hacer frente a los contenidos del subconsciente personal (heridas psicológicas enterradas y aspectos de la sombra), antes de llegar a niveles profundos de la práctica, para sufrir menos desequilibrios, pues según él “deshacer el nudo de la represión original surte un efecto radical que no tiene por qué asumir siempre la dirección del crecimiento espiritual” (2000, p. 522), pues la progresión ideal no está garantizada (Nelson, 2000). Por otra parte tenemos a personas con graves trastornos de personalidad que refieren haber experimentado alivio de su sintomatología mediante la práctica del *mindfulness*. Tal es el caso de pacientes con trastorno límite de la personalidad en el contexto de la Terapia Dialéctico-Comportamental de Marsha Lineham (1993). Pero en este caso, se está haciendo simultáneamente un trabajo psicoterapéutico intensivo y el tipo de meditación está adaptada a este tipo de pacientes.

Como vemos, los diversos datos no nos

muestran una respuesta única ante la meditación y nos ponen de manifiesto que existen beneficios, riesgos y contraindicaciones. Como señala acertadamente el psiquiatra McGee (2008), al igual que sucede con la prescripción de un fármaco, la meditación ha de ser prescrita con una especial atención al estado psicológico del paciente. Aunque también existe el riesgo de que se vea como una “píldora” que se puede indicar o autoadministrar para el bienestar (Farias y Wikohlm, 2015).

Finalmente, parece que las cuestiones más importantes tienen que ver con el conocimiento en profundidad de los procesos meditativos (lo que requiere tener una experiencia en primera persona de la meditación), que permita entender, en caso de surgir problemas, si lo que alguien está sufriendo es un síntoma de un trastorno psiquiátrico, o bien es una vicisitud que forma parte del proceso, que tiene un sentido en el mismo y que puede posibilitar una transformación de la personalidad del sujeto a un estado más saludable. El mayor peligro puede estar en un uso inconsciente de las técnicas de meditación, en una cultura adicta al bienestar, que pretende usarlas sin tomar consciencia de que el mirar hacia dentro nos puede enfrentar a dificultades (habituales en cualquier camino de crecimiento personal). La instrumentalización de la meditación, al servicio del ego, quizás sea el riesgo más serio en el mundo actual. Hecho que tal vez pueda aumentar la posibilidad de sufrir diversas complicaciones y no saber manejarlas adecuadamente. Quizás aún nos queda mucho por saber y por conocer en este ámbito y sea preciso recorrer el camino con humildad.

Conclusiones

- 1.- Encontramos numerosos “efectos adversos” asociados con la práctica de la meditación.
- 2.- Se han hallado diferencias entre hombres y mujeres, grupos de edad, años dedicados a la meditación, frecuencia de la práctica y tipos de meditación.
- 3.- Los datos encontrados indican la necesidad de profundizar más en el estudio de los posibles “efectos adversos” asociados a la meditación, para prevenirlos, tratarlos o darles un sentido adecuado.

Notas

- 1.- Como las referencias de las que habla Mary Garden en la revista “TheHumanist.com”, el 22 de agosto de

2007 en su artículo *Can meditation be bad for you?*. URL: <http://thehumanist.com/magazine/september-october-2007/features/can-meditation-be-bad-for-you>

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Effect of Dynamic Meditation on the Realization of Transpersonal Self

Efecto de la Meditación Dinámica en la Formación del Yo Transpersonal

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Abstract

Introduction: Transpersonal self and related concepts have been studied using various forms of meditation. However, there is a paucity of research examining the effect of dynamic meditation on the realization of the transpersonal self. **Objectives:** The present study was aimed at studying the effect of dynamic meditation on the realization of the transpersonal self. **Method:** The total sample of the study comprised 60 subjects, 30 each in experimental and control groups. Subjects in the experimental group received 21 days training in dynamic meditation. Transpersonal experiences were measured before and after dynamic meditation training in both groups with the help of a semi-structured interview schedule. **Results:** Obtained data were analyzed with the help of Chi square and themes were identified qualitatively. In the post test, 73% subjects in the experimental, and none in the control group reported transpersonal experiences. The following six themes of the transpersonal self were identified: experience of being detached from physical body, experience of illuminating blissful and eternally calm self, experience of bliss and calmness which don't have a cause, experience of guardians or higher self in relation to physical and mental existence, perceiving the experience as indescribable, perceiving the experience as transformational. **Conclusions:** Dynamic meditation was effective in realizing the transpersonal self.

Keywords: dynamic meditation, transpersonal self, experimental group, control group

Resumen

Introducción: El yo transpersonal y sus conceptos relacionados han sido estudiados utilizando diferentes formas de meditación. Sin embargo, ha habido una escasa investigación al examinar el efecto de la meditación dinámica en la formación del yo transpersonal. **Objetivos:** Estudiar el efecto de la meditación dinámica en la formación del yo transpersonal. **Método:** La muestra consistió en 60 sujetos, 30 en un grupo experimental y 30 en un grupo control. Los sujetos del grupo experimental recibieron 21 días de entrenamiento en meditación dinámica. La experiencia transpersonal se midió antes y después de dicho entrenamiento en ambos grupos, con la ayuda de una entrevista semi-estructurada. **Resultados:** Los datos fueron analizados mediante Chi cuadrado y análisis temático. Tras el entrenamiento en meditación dinámica, un 73% de los sujetos del grupo experimental informaron haber tenido experiencias transpersonales, mientras que no hubo ninguno con esta experiencia en el grupo control. La experiencia relativa al yo transpersonal se clasificó en los siguientes seis temas: experiencia fuera del cuerpo, felicidad espiritual y paz eterna, éxtasis y calma sin causa, experiencia de guardianes o yo superior más allá de la existencia física y mental, percepción indescriptible de la experiencia, y transformación personal. **Conclusiones:** La meditación dinámica se ha mostrado efectiva en la formación del yo transpersonal.

Palabras clave: meditación dinámica, yo transpersonal, grupo experimental, grupo control

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Introduction

Transpersonal self

Transpersonal has been defined as experiences "in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos" (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). The common denominator of this otherwise rich and ramified group of phenomena is the feeling of the individual that his consciousness expanded beyond the usual ego boundaries and the limitations of time and space (Grof, 1993).

William James (1960) refers to transpersonal or wider self—a higher or spiritual self which is the source of religious experience. This "higher self" of a person to a large degree overlaps with highest selves of others (Maslow, 1973). The higher self (true, spiritual or transpersonal self) features prominently in the *psycho-synthesis model* developed by Assagioli (1991). Descriptions of the notion of transpersonal self can also be found in extensive writings of Aurobindo (1970).

Based on different conceptions, Daniels (2005) suggested aspects of the transpersonal self, or transpersonal identity that may be understood as:

- 1.- The Organismic "inner core" or Real Self
- 2.- Self-identification with highest values
- 3.- The whole psyche-conscious and unconscious
- 4.- The higher unconscious
- 5.- An archetype (inspiring, powerful, integrating, spiritual)
- 6.- The extension or "raising" of consciousness
- 7.- The integration of conscious and unconscious
- 8.- A guiding force or organizing principle
- 9.- An inner unifying centre
- 10.- A permanent centre of Being
- 11.- The reincarnating psychic being
- 12.- A subtle self-stream
- 13.- The individualized divine soul (Atman)
- 14.- The Universal Self (Atman-Brahman)
- 15.- The Transcendent Witness (possibly eternal)
- 16.- No Self or One Taste (anatta)
- 17.- The spiritual transformation of the personality
- 18.- The connected/permeable self
- 19.- The integrated, embodied spiritual life

Many transpersonal psychologists prefer to talk about transpersonal self or transpersonal identity rather than the soul. Unlike the term "soul" which carries all sort of religious metaphysical connotations, "self" and "identity" are essentially

psychological experimental constructs that make no particular metaphysical assumptions (Daniels, 2002).

According to Wilber, there are realms to self – gross/ego, subtle soul and casual/witness. "The ego (frontal self) includes all those self-structure or self stages that serve to orient us to the gross (physical) world. The soul (or deeper psychic) is the self- system that operates the level of subtle reality (pure thought). Finally the witness (or self) is adapted to the casual realm (root attention). They are always simultaneously present although to various degrees, and each develops alongside the other. The self witness is also charged with the role of attempting to integrate the various self-streams, along with other aspects of our experience (such as our cognitive development, world view, moral values)". What could an actual "transpersonal" experience really mean? It is not nearly as mysterious as it sounds. You yourself can be aware of your objective self, you can observe your individual ego or person, you are aware of yourself generally. "But who, then, is doing the observing? What is it that is observing or witnessing your individual self? That therefore transcends your individual self in some important ways? Who or what is that? The observer in you, the witness in you, transcends the isolated person in you" (Wilber, 1998).

Meditation is one way for the conscious development of higher consciousness or for realization of transpersonal self.

Meditation

Neuroscientists and other meditation researchers have used the generic term "meditation" to refer to a wide variety of disparate methods which "inevitably trivializes the practices themselves" (Lutz, Dunne, & Davidson, 2007, p. 500). In addition there has been a tendency to mix-and-match different methods as if they were equivalent which has resulted in an unfortunate conflation of definition (Awasthi, 2013). Presently, there are two popularly used definitions for meditation. One "camp" has defined meditation essentially as a family of mental training techniques (Lutz, Slagter, Dunne, & Davidson, 2008; Raffone & Srinivasan, 2010) —which can be called "method definition." The other "camp" has defined meditation by reference to the enhanced experiential states or altered states of consciousness which arise from the use of these methods e.g., "pure consciousness," "absolute unitary being," and "non-dual awareness"—which can be called the "state definition." Nash

and Newberg (2013) addressed this potentially confusing duality by proposing a model of meditation which is inclusive of both method and state. In this paradigm, method and state are viewed as separate stages in a dynamic process which unfolds over time. The method is considered to be a potentially facilitative tool and the state is the causally-related intended result.

Different meditation traditions also often have very different goals, ranging from physical health and mental well-being to harmony with nature, higher states of consciousness, and experience of God.

Lutz et al. (2008) suggested two categories of meditation practices: focused attention and open monitoring meditation. Travis and Shear (2010) added a third category of meditation practice, automatic self-transcending. Details of these are as follows:

1. **Focused attention meditation:** In focused attention or concentrative styles of meditations, voluntary sustained attention is focused on a given object, and attention is brought back to the object of attention when the mind has wandered (Cahn & Polich, 2006; Raffone & Srinivasan, 2009). The meditator is controlling the contents in the beam of attention.
2. **Open monitoring meditation:** Open monitoring or mindfulness-based meditations, involve the non-reactive monitoring of the content of ongoing experience, primarily as a means to become reflectively aware of the nature of emotional and cognitive patterns (Raffone & Srinivasan, 2010). Open monitoring practices are based on an attentive set characterized by an open presence and a nonjudgmental awareness of sensory, cognitive and affective fields of experience in the present moment and involve a higher-order meta-awareness of ongoing mental processes (Cahn & Polich, 2006). Mindfulness meditation includes a broad range of meditation practices which differ widely (Chiesa & Serretti, 2010; Ivanovski & Malhi, 2007; Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011; Grossman, 2011).
3. **Automatic Self-transcending:** Automatic self-transcending practices involve transcending of the procedures of the meditation. Since cognitive control increases mental activity, self-transcending procedures would need to involve minimal cognitive control- be automatic or effortless.

In addition to the above mentioned categories of meditations, some meditation techniques involve movement and they are known as movement-based contemplative practices. Compared to the extensive body of work on mindfulness-based practices, far fewer scientific studies have examined the mechanisms underlying movement-based embodied contemplative practices (Schmalzl, Crane-Godreau & Payne, 2014). Active/dynamic meditation is one such movement-based contemplative practice:

Active/dynamic Meditation

This refers to any meditation technique which does not have one's body assuming a static posture. Among many such techniques, dynamic meditation introduced by Osho is one of the most popular active mediation techniques. He said that if people are repressed, psychologically are carrying a lot of burden, then they need catharsis. So *dynamic meditation* is just to help them clean the place (Osho, 2003).

There are five stages of this meditation and it takes around 1 hour. Although it can be done alone, in a group it is more powerful. It is an individual experience so you should remain oblivious of others around you and keep your eyes closed throughout, preferably using a blindfold. It is best to have an empty stomach and wear loose, comfortable clothing while doing this meditation.

First Stage: 10 minutes

Breathe chaotically through the nose, concentrating always on exhalation. The body will take care of the inhalation. The breath should move deeply into the lungs. Be as fast as you can in your breathing, making sure the breathing stays deep. Do this as fast and as hard as you possibly can – and then a little harder, until you literally become the breathing. Use your natural body movements to help you to build up your energy. Feel it building up, but don't let go during the first stage.

Second Stage: 10 minutes

Explode! Express everything that needs to be thrown out. Go totally mad. Scream, shout, cry, jump, shake, dance, sing, laugh; throw yourself around. Hold nothing back; keep your whole body moving. A little acting often helps to get you started. Never allow your mind to interfere with what is happening. Be total, be whole hearted.

Third Stage: 10 minutes

With raised arms, jump up and down shouting the mantra, “Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!”, as deeply as possible. Each time you land, on the flats of your feet, let the sound hammer deeply. Give all you have; exhaust yourself totally.

Fourth Stage: 15 minutes

Stop! Freeze wherever you are, in whatever position you find yourself. Don't arrange the body in any way. A cough, a movement – anything will dissipate the energy flow and the effort will be lost. Be a witness to everything that is happening to you.

Fifth Stage: 15 minutes

Celebrate through dance, expressing your gratitude towards the whole. Carry your happiness with you throughout the day.

Dynamic meditation provides the meditator an opportunity for catharsis and to purify his mind and body which according to Osho is essential to gain the meditative state of mind.

Meditation and Transpersonal Self

There is a scarcity of research on meditation and transpersonal experience. Some research has been conducted on transpersonal related constructs such as phenomenological nature of sense of boundries (Ataria, Dor-Ziderman & Berkovich-Ohana, 2015; Ataria, 2014). EEG studies were conducted to identify the neuroelectrical correlates of related experiences such as union with God (Beauregard & Paquette, 2008; Josipovic, 2010; Travis, 2001) and specific neural correlates of meditations (Davis & Vago, 2013).

Some studies revealed meditators' self-reports claim a significantly more positive relationship between their selves and God (Nystul & Garde, 1977) and the link between self-transcendental experiences and self-actualization (Alexander, Rainforth & Gelderloos, 1991). Other studies have investigated the effect of meditation on the perception of the self (Bercovich-Ohana & Glicksohn, 2014; Shapiro, 1983).

Haimmerl and Valentine (2001) found that scores on the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal levels were a positive function of

meditation experience, suggesting that progress in Buddhist meditation leads to significant growth in these components of personality.

These studies were based on yoga and Buddhist meditation. However, research has not been conducted on various dynamic or active forms of meditation and realization of the transpersonal self. As noted by researchers different procedures of meditation might well be expected to produce different results with regard to different variables and thus ought to be evaluated individually (Jonathan, 2006).

In view of the above, the present investigation was planned to study the effect of dynamic meditation on the realization of the transpersonal self.

Method**Sample and Design**

Total sample consisted of 60 subjects, 30 each in experimental and control group with an age range of 18 to 55 years. 11 males and 19 females were in the experimental group, with a mean age of 35.47 years. There were 12 males and 18 females in the control group, with a mean age of 31.27 years. In the experimental group the number of undergraduate, graduate and post graduate subjects was 3, 20, and 7 respectively. In the control group, the number of undergraduate, graduate, and post graduate subjects was 6, 11, and 13 respectively. Subjects who had serious physical or psychological problems were excluded from the study.

The present study was a pretest - posttest control group design.

Data collection

Transpersonal experience is quite a wide concept having a number of categories. There are several scales to measure it, such as Experienced Deviation from Normal State (EDN) questionnaire (Kjellgren), Mystical States Scale (Hood, 1975), Expression of spirituality inventory (MacDonald, 2000). These scales have their merits in measuring dimensions of the transpersonal experiences they are specifically designed to measure. Both of them have their drawbacks being a quantitative measure of a highly abstract concept experience by human consciousness. The subjective experience of transpersonal self cannot yield itself to a quantitative method of assessment as to a qualitative inquiry.

"Many of the most significant and exciting life events and extraordinary experiences - moments of clarity, illumination, and healing - have been systematically excluded from conventional research" (Braud & Anderson, 1998). These existing quantitative tools don't capture the transpersonal self as conceptualized by Wilber (1999). Richness of highly refined and subjective experience like the transpersonal self can be assessed only through a qualitative method. Moreover, these scales were not standardized on Indian settings so it might have given additional bias in measurement. In order to capture the richness of subjective experience of the transpersonal self, a semi-structured interview was designed with open ended questions keeping in mind the abstract nature and dimensions of the transpersonal self.

The operational definition of the transpersonal self was: "Experience of Witnessing Self Detached from Body and Mind" as suggested by Wilber (1998).

Keeping in mind the nature of the concept of the transpersonal self, the following questions were formulated for the purpose of interviewing the subjects of the study:

- Do you think you have ever felt yourself detached from your body and mind?
- When did you have such experience?
- What does your experience mean to you?
- What's your evaluation of your experience?
- How do you account for or explain your transpersonal experience, what do you think is its cause or source?
- Please share your experience in detail.

Procedure

Subjects were contacted individually. Informed consent was taken from all the subjects

after explaining the purpose of the study. They were told that their identity will not be disclosed in any kind of publication of the study without their consent. Experimental group subjects were contacted by Osho Dhyandeep Kendra, (located in Bareilly, India) where they received a 21 day dynamic meditation training under the guidance of Swami Gyan Samarpan, coordinator of Osho Dhyandeep Kendra. The control group was matched in terms of important characteristics with the experimental group and were contacted in different localities of Bareilly city (Uttar Pradesh). Semi-structure interview was administered to the experimental and control groups before and after dynamic meditation training. Post assessment was done after 21 days of dynamic meditation training. Obtained data was analyzed with the help of Chi square and qualitatively themes were identified.

Results

The present study was a pretest-posttest design study which tries to find out the effect of dynamic meditation practices on the realization of the transpersonal self. The results of the study have been presented in Table 1.

In pre-experimental condition 40% subjects of the experimental group and 20% subjects of the control group were having transpersonal experiences. No significant group difference was found in terms of transpersonal experiences in the pre-experimental condition.

Significant difference was found in terms of transpersonal experiences in post-experimental conditions. Subjects of the experimental group (73.3%) were having more transpersonal experiences in comparison to the control group (0%) in post-experimental assessment (after 21 days training).

Table 1.

Transpersonal self experience of subjects

Condition	Group	Subjects not having transpersonal experience	Subjects having transpersonal experience	χ^2	df	p
Pre	Experimental	18 (60.0%)	12 (40.0%)	2.857	1	.158
	Control	24 (80.0%)	6 (20.0%)			
Post	Experimental	8 (26.7%)	22 (73.3%)	34.737	1	.000
	Control	30 (100.0%)	0 (.0%)			

Final comprehensive constituent themes in the transpersonal experience

In analysis of qualitative data we observed that in control group 6 subjects were having transpersonal experiences before meditation and they did not report any such experience after 21 days. Whereas, in the experimental group we found 12 people already having transpersonal experiences prior to the meditation workshop and after the 21 day meditation sessions, 22 subjects reported transpersonal experiences. It shows an increase in transpersonal experiences in the experimental group as compared to control group. Another point worth mentioning is that all the 6 subjects of the control group who reported experiences of the transpersonal in pre-conditions, reported their experiences either generated by some deep trauma or sudden accident. For them, such experiences were momentary and strange. They did not report it to be a great blissful or elating experience. Also, they did not count it as an overwhelming spiritual experience. On the other hand in the experimental group, people recognized it as a spiritual experience and showed their spiritual inclination even before learning of their conscious spiritual interests. This could imply a higher level of evolution in the experimental group subjects. Also considered was the fact that the people who came for the meditation workshop were already having more evolved psychic states and interests in spirituality. Qualitative data have been collected with the help of the semi structured interview and was analyzed with a phenomenological approach by analyzing and identifying themes within the qualitative interview data before and after the meditation. Analysis of data also brings us with 6 important aspects of transpersonal experiences, i.e.:

Experience of being detached from the physical body

These were some of the statements reported by subjects in the experimental group:

“In the step of stop I felt that my body was lying on the floor and I was watching it from the outside... it was amazing I have never had such an experience before. I was calm, composed, and illuminated in that moment... its [tough] to define the feeling actually” (Female, 28yrs old).

“I believe dynamic meditation cleanses the body, mind, and spirit to make us so transparent that we feel light and calm... being done properly it brings great results at every level, mind feels refreshed, body light and spirit liberated... that's how I feel about it [having] had an experience to attend this 21 days(sic) workshop” (Male, 42 yrs old).

“In the beginning, I felt physical exercises to be very exhausting and tiring but slowly during the course of time I felt and I could see different aches and pains of my body more clearly and I felt when kept watching and witnessing these aches and pains goes away slowly and smoothly. It was like as if the door was open and pain gets [out] through it during the witnessing process. I got to have some glimpses of it during meditation that sometimes I felt myself different from the body. Also there were kind of zero state experiences and it was really beautiful and relaxing to have it. I felt sometimes that I don't exist at all, a sort of no-self feeling, it's so elating. I have never had such experience ever before” (Male, 42 yrs old).

Experience of illuminating blissful and eternally calm self

“While sleeping I got up in the middle of the night and saw my body lying on the bed sleeping soundly. I felt myself illuminated, calm, and content along with the experience of a soothing and sharp sound... it was an energizing and mysterious experience. I feel it was the sudden experience of the transpersonal self which made me to work more on this aspect of being and became my aim of being in the world...” (Female, 29 yrs old).

Experience of indescribable bliss and calmness which don't have a cause

“I just felt blessed for no reason. I felt myself in a deep trance which just makes me feel indulged with myself and I was happy for no cause. It was like an unknown wind came from another world and made me refreshed. I enjoyed but I cannot explain it and cannot forget it either...” (Male, 25 yrs old).

Experience of guardians or higher self over the physical and mental existence

“I felt I was watching my body and mind and strangely I was just separate from it. I don’t know what to call this another self watching the previously known ME. I just felt they both were together but not same. I felt my psycho-physical self very much loved and safe in presence of the self, the detached watcher. And then that phrase made sense for me that God is watching everything” (Female, 29 yrs old).

Perceiving the experience as indescribable

“The more I try to give my experience words the more I fall short. I feel it to be the most difficult task to say what this experience was like! But one thing I know for sure even its memory make[s] me indulged in that fragrant experience again and I just feel like keeping mum on what I felt... it’s just too difficult” (Male, 45 yrs old).

“Such an experience cannot be described. And people of wisdom say not to share or discuss such an experience. They should be kept secreted otherwise they lose their effect. So I don’t want to discuss it but treasure in the core of my heart to give me strength in my hard times.... Like a fragrance of the other world” (Female, 52 yrs old).

“The experience of detachment from body and mind is not something [that] can be described in words. This is the most difficult task ever possible. But some difference I can mention here which happened to me after meditation like the quality of taking [a] breath changed significantly after my experiences and practice of meditation. It has become more rhythmic and deep. One more difference I see [is] the constant fight between my thoughts and actions has calmed down and settled to a great extent. Although meditation may be the ground which leads to detachment from body and mind gradually and spontaneously, it is very tough to reach and hard to describe. [A] relaxed mind and healthy body is an important prerequisite for such [an] experience in my opinion” (Male, 45 yrs old).

Perceiving the experience as transformational

This was an important theme found in the present investigation which transformed the person completely.

“It gives me meaning to my life. No matter where I go and what I do. This experience remains constant in my heart as the most mysterious and most valued experience of my life and gives me the blueprint of my life plan. When I move in the direction of that taste of experience my life becomes blissful. But when I move in the direction which neither lead nor fall in accordance I suffer like hell. This single experience holds my hand taking me as little baby and gives me guidance on path of life...” (Female, 29 yrs old).

“I can say I felt a little away from my psycho-physical being and the whole perspective of life changed after such experience. I don’t feel any hatred and enmity from any one with the effect of such an experience. It made me so calm and composed with its wonderful effect... Even now when I feel stressful I feel like doing it again....” (Female, 45 yrs old).

In the above given 6 themes, 5 were found in all the interviews describing transpersonal experience but the experience of guardian or higher self over the physical and mental existence was unique and distinct which was found only in one interview data. This distinctive theme gives an expanding view about the experience of the transpersonal self while the other five themes seem to be definite components of the transpersonal experience.

Discussion

The present study was a pretest-posttest design study consisting of 60 individuals (30 in experimental group and 30 in control group). The study was designed to study the effect of dynamic meditation on the realization of the transpersonal self. The study was done on 60 adults of both sexes, within an age group of 18-55. Data was collected before and after the dynamic meditation workshop from the experimental and control groups. Qualitative data had been collected with the help of semi structured interview by analyzing and identifying themes within qualitative interview data before and after the meditation. Data collected

through qualitative interviews was also treated as quantitative and a Chi-Square test was used to analyze it statistically.

In the control group, 20% of subjects had an experience of the transpersonal self before they were included in the study whereas, after the experimental period no subject of control group had any experience of this kind. In the experimental group, 40% of subjects had experienced the transpersonal self before they were included in the experimental group whereas, after the dynamic meditation practice 73% of subjects had an experience of the transpersonal self.

Also analysis of data brings us to 6 important aspects of the transpersonal experience:

- 1- Experience of being detached from physical body
- 2- Experience of illuminating blissful and eternally calm self
- 3- Experience of bliss and calmness which don't have a cause.
- 4- Experience of guardians or higher self over the physical and mental existence
- 5- Perceiving the experience as indescribable
- 6- Perceiving the experience as transformational

Themes that were established in the study are found to be consistent with the 23 types of transpersonal experiences given by Daniels (2005).

Similar results have been reported by Haimeri and Valentine (2001). They investigated the effect of Buddhist meditation on intrapersonal (self-directedness), interpersonal (cooperativeness), and transpersonal levels of the self-concept. Only the advanced meditators scored higher on the transpersonal than on the intrapersonal subscale. The authors concluded that scores on the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal levels were a positive function of meditation experience, suggesting that progress in Buddhist meditation leads to significant growth in these components of personality. In our studies, we also clearly found that subjects in the experimental group were already advanced on a transpersonal level. Per our findings, 40% of subjects in the experimental group reported transpersonal self experiences prior to the meditation workshop and it increased to 73% after the meditation whereas, in the control group 20% of subjects reported prior transpersonal experiences. After the period of 21 days in which no meditation training was being provided to them, not a single subject reported a transpersonal self experience. This clearly indicates that dynamic

meditation enhances the experience of the transpersonal self.

In summary, dynamic meditation is an effective tool in realizing the transpersonal self.

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Reflections

Transpersonal Inquiry and the Next Generation of Transpersonal Researchers and Scholars¹

Investigación Transpersonal y la Próxima Generación de Investigadores y Académicos Transpersonales

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Abstract

This short essay relays the history of how Rosemarie Anderson and the late William Braud came to the conclusion that the essential dynamic for transpersonal and spiritual research and scholarship is the inquirers' willingness to engage the Sacred in a journey of transformation—a journey that implicates both their understanding of the topic and themselves as human beings. Following this historical overview to transpersonal research methods, the essay explores some of the unique characteristics of transpersonal researchers and scholars and unique risks involved in transpersonal research and scholarship especially projection and narcissism. The essay concludes, with a brief discussion of the role of independent scholarship among the next generation of transpersonal researchers and scholars, their needs for training and networking, and recent progress made to meet some of these needs worldwide.

Keywords: transpersonal psychology, transpersonal research methods, spiritual transformation, William Braud, Rosemarie Anderson

Resumen

Este breve ensayo relata la historia sobre cómo Rosemarie Anderson y el recientemente fallecido William Braud, llegaron a la conclusión de que la dinámica esencial para la investigación y estudio de lo transpersonal, es la voluntad de los investigadores para comprometerse con lo Sagrado, en un viaje de transformación —un viaje que implica tanto la propia comprensión del tema de estudio como a ellos mismos como seres humanos. Siguiendo una visión histórica de los métodos de investigación transpersonal, el ensayo explora algunas de las únicas características de los investigadores y estudiosos transpersonales, así como los riesgos involucrados en la investigación y estudio transpersonal, especialmente la proyección y el narcisismo. El ensayo concluye con una breve reflexión sobre el papel que tiene la formación para la nueva generación de investigadores y académicos transpersonales, sus necesidades de aprendizaje y trabajo en equipo, así como los logros conseguidos hasta ahora para satisfacer estas necesidades en todo el mundo.

Palabras clave: psicología transpersonal, métodos de investigación transpersonal, transformación espiritual, William Braud, Rosemarie Anderson

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The field of transpersonal psychology has changed radically since 1992, when the late William Braud and I joined the Core Faculty at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (ITP), now Sofia University. Not only has transpersonal psychology expanded and diversified as a field but we are no longer the only academic field interested in spiritual and related phenomena. Investigation of topics, such as compassion, forgiveness, altruism, and mindfulness, are now commonplace in mainstream psychology and the health sciences worldwide. The subject matter of human spiritual experience is no longer radical and no longer defines transpersonal psychology as a unique field of study. Therefore, especially in hindsight, what William Braud and I learned about the essential nature of transpersonal research and scholarship in response to our doctoral students' needs in the 1990s and 2000s becomes more relevant now than we could have ever foreseen at the time. When we founded the field of transpersonal research methods with the publication of our first book, *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Honoring Human Experience* (Braud & Anderson, 1998), we could not have imagined that the epistemological perspectives and transpersonal research methods we generated together in those early years would be a crucial element distinguishing transpersonal psychologists from mainstream scholars now investigating spiritual phenomena. My British transpersonal colleague, Les Lancaster, has already expressed similar views in his recent address at the Alubrat Transpersonal Research Colloquium in Brazil in September 2015 (Lancaster, 2015).

In this short essay, I first tell the history of how William Braud and I came to conclusion that the essential dynamic for transpersonal research and scholarship is the inquirers' willingness to engage the Sacred in a journey of transformation—a journey that implicates both their understanding of the topic and themselves as human beings. Second, I reflect on some of unique characteristics of transpersonal researchers and scholars. Third, I discuss some of the risks involved in transpersonal research and scholarship especially projection and narcissism. In conclusion, I discuss the role of independent scholarship among the next generation of transpersonal researchers and scholars, their needs for training and networking, and progress made to meet some of these needs worldwide.

The History of Transpersonal Research Methods as a Unique Discipline

William Braud's and my position on the nature of transpersonal research and scholarship comes from hard-earned experience. Since both of us were trained as experimental psychologists and had conducted and supervised quantitative research for over two decades at mainstream universities before joining the field of transpersonal psychology, we knew the value of experimental design, precise observation, record keeping, and the statistical and analytical procedures of mainstream psychology. We knew the assets and limits of these procedures. When we joined the Core Faculty at the ITP we were prepared to help dissertation students conduct research using the experimental and quantitative research methods we had used ourselves for years. However, we were soon faced with dozens of dissertation students who wanted to study topics, such as internalized racism and healing the pain, the union of body and spirit in female mystics, the spiritual dimensions of chronic pain, running as a path of transformation, healing from childhood sexual abuse, and the feminine culture shadow among women espionage agents—all topics of intimate and passionate concern for each of them and usually grounded in personal experience. In advising them, our conventional training and expertise had not prepared us well to help them study these "farther reaches of human nature" as Abraham Maslow (1971) put it so well. Little we suggested to them by way of experimental or quantitative approaches satisfied them—or us—because they reduced the topics to procedures too narrow for the topics.

Soon, we trained ourselves in phenomenological, heuristic research, grounded theory, and narrative methods of inquiry and taught them to our students. However, soon, even these qualitative methods eventually fell short of the expansive nature of the topics studied unless we modified and expanded them to include the personal transformation of the researcher *as* data. Innovative methodological procedures were needed to tap the researcher's and the research participants' transformation in the course of the study. Our task was a humble one of responding to our students' needs and to create research methods that served the unique needs of transpersonal researchers and scholars. In founding the field of transpersonal research methods with our first book, *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Braud & Anderson, 1998), William Braud and I summarized the matter like so:

In transpersonal psychology—which concerns itself with issue of consciousness, alternative states of consciousness, exceptional experiences, transegoic development, and humanity’s highest potentials and possible transformation—this tension between subject matter and research is strongly felt. Both students and practitioners ask whether it is possible to research the transpersonal without violating, distorting, or trivializing what we are studying. Is it possible to live, appreciate, and honor our transpersonal aspects and our most purposeful human qualities while, at the same time, conducting systematic research into these most significant facets of our being?

We maintain that it is possible to conduct significant and satisfying research on all facets of human experience—even the most sensitive, exceptional, and sacred experiences—but only if we modify our assumptions about research and extend our research methods so that they become as creative and expansive as the subject matter we wish to investigate. (p. 4)

Soon thereafter, we concluded that the essential quality of transpersonal research and scholarship is the inquirers’ encounter with the Sacred, an intention that invites personal transformation of inquirers’ understanding of the topic and of their awareness in general. Whether the methods used are quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, art-based methods, scholarly exposition, hermeneutics, or mix of these modalities, the key to a far-reaching understanding of spiritual and transpersonal topics is the inquirers’ intention to engage the Sacred in the course of a study. Our second book, *Transforming Self and Others Through Research* (Anderson & Braud, 2011) elaborates on the epistemological and methodological stance of transformation of self and others as essential for transpersonal research and scholarship and provide detailed methods and procedures for doing so.

With many mainstream researchers and scholars in psychology and the health sciences studying spiritual and related topics, the unique contribution of transpersonal psychology as a field lies in recognizing that the conduct of transpersonal research and scholarship implicates an encounter with the Sacred, an intention which invites transformation of the researchers’ understanding of the topic and themselves. As a field, we must differentiate ourselves epistemologically and methodologi-

cally as investigating human experience as intimate participants. In agreement with Jorge Ferrer’s (2002) participatory paradigm, we are participants in what it means to be in the world and human in the world. We are intimates in this grand unfolding. In transpersonal research and scholarship we are never truly outside the experiences we study—objectively. Let us be intimates to the topics we study. This we can do well and uniquely so.

Unique Characteristics of Transpersonal Research and Scholarship

Transpersonal research and scholarship needs to be as rigorous and precise in data collection and analysis as researches in other fields. However, in my experience, studying of transpersonal topics thoroughly and well is often more difficult, challenging, and time consuming than the study of the topics studied in mainstream psychology and throughout the human sciences. Not only are the topics themselves expansive but the methods needed to study them require and invite a level of personal engagement unlike more conventional forms of research. That is, engaging in research as the art of transformation requires additional qualities—qualities often found among mainstream researchers—but not necessarily crucial to the successful completion of an inquiry. According to my current understanding, the essential qualities for a transpersonal inquirer to bring to research and scholarship are:

Risking Personal and Professional Transformation

Most of us in transpersonal psychology have been attracted to this field because we have the opportunity to engage a spiritual journey of transformation, to go beyond our current understandings of ourselves and others, and transcend conventional ways of being in the world. We sense or know that there is a grand mystery afoot in the human animal’s participation in the world. Risk attends intimate participation in the Sacred. In my own experience advising several hundred dissertation students in research courses and direct research supervision, the transpersonal researcher’s willingness to change inevitably signals the breadth of transformation that unfolds in the course of a study—and often unfolding for years thereafter. Typically, the greater the personal involvement and passion is, the greater the transformation. Some aspects of the Self you know at the start are

likely to change, perhaps dramatically. Best to know this likelihood ahead of time. Get support. Take breaks when you need them. Be brave.

Choosing a Topic That has Heart and Meaning

There is no better starting point for a transpersonal inquiry project than a topic we love—about which we have passion and enthusiasm. Etymologically from the Greek, enthusiasm means *en-theo*, in God. Let enthusiasm guide. Typically, such a topic is grounded in the researcher's own experience. Trained initially as an experimental social psychologist, I was taught to follow an established line of research published in journals, find the most recent articles, and design a study that comes cogently next, and explore relevant hypotheses. While this traditional strategy works well for mainstream researchers and scholars, transpersonal researchers are more often keen to study topics that are related to personal experience whether there is any literature on the topic or not because transpersonal psychology tends to attract people who are passionate about making a positive difference in the world in arenas that have uniquely touched their own lives.

Incorporating Transformative Ways of Knowing

Unlike what is likely to be encouraged in mainstream research historically, transpersonal researchers and scholars are expected to bring all their personal expertise and skills to the fore in the conduct of a study. That is, being rigorous and precise does not mean casting aside our personal talents, skills, and spiritual training. Intuition and creativity are particularly important. Since intuition and creativity are highly variable person to person, as transpersonal inquirers, we must attend to what we uniquely bring to the conduct of research. There may be as many ways of being intuitive and creative as there are people. Every human being is a "theater" of creative possibilities. Moreover, as I have said elsewhere in relationship to intuitive inquiry (Anderson, 1998, 2011), what we often think of as the fault lines or wounds in our life histories and personalities may turn out to be our greatest resource as soulful researchers and scholars. That is, our unique sensitivities may alert us to what others may not notice or think important about a topic. My colleague, Robert Romanyshyn (2007) has explored the understanding of the "wounded researcher" from the perspective of

Depth Psychology in ways entirely relevant to transpersonal research and scholarship.

Understanding that Data and Knowledge Beyond Personal Awareness is out of Sight and out of Mind

We cannot see, hear, or understand what remains outside or beyond our developmental awareness. Data and knowledge beyond our current level of development is out of sight and out of mind. I also know from my own experience and that of others that "glimpses" of states of high levels of consciousness are easily mistaken for having "arrived" at that stage of development. Beware. Fleeting glimpses may provide what my colleague Hillevi Ruumet calls "coming attractions" but they do not represent steady levels of integrated awareness. Therefore, I urge transpersonal researchers and scholars to acquire knowledge of several models of spiritual development and make an honest effort to be realistic about one's personal level of spiritual integration on the developmental spectrum. Humility is advised. With a realistic evaluation of one's own development level, transpersonal inquirers will have some awareness of the blind spots related to their research topics that exceed their own level of development.

Unique Risks of Transpersonal Research and Scholarship

Containing and Scrutinizing Personal Projections

At every juncture of a study, transpersonal researchers and scholars must be prepared to scrutinize and contain the nearly inevitable projections implicit in all investigations. Such is standard practice throughout science, of course. In experimental and quantitative research, the terms experimental bias and demand characteristics have long acknowledged the limitations embedded in a researcher's biases and projections. However, in transpersonal research and scholarship, the risks are uncannily higher because of the personal involvement of the inquirer in an investigation and subtle and beguiling nature of spiritual projections. Enthusiasm is a great starting point of transpersonal studies but personal enthusiasm must never lead data analysis or interpretation. Allow me an example. Over the last two decades, I have actually had dissertation students send me their first draft, telling me that everything they thought about the topic

was confirmed by their research participants. The first time this happened, I felt almost had to peel myself off the ceiling. The next day I responded by advising my supervisee that the purpose of research is go beyond the researcher's original understanding and that I could easily see in her draft that she had excluded data that disagreed with her own experience of the phenomenon under study. To her credit, she "got" it and reanalyzed and rewrote her draft. The next draft was fabulous, articulating nuances which agreed and disagreed with her original understanding of the topic. That's the point of research from my point of view. Yes, there may be those rare occasions when a specific study affirms the researcher's original understanding. However, this is not the way science usually progresses and particularly unlikely for thesis and dissertation studies.

Self-aggrandizement and narcissism

Anyone who has been involved in religious or spiritual communities knows that from experience and observation that self-aggrandizement and narcissism are common among both leaders and followers. The transpersonal community worldwide is no different, no better, no worse. To their credit, Jorge Ferrer (2002) and Harold Walach (2008) have already addressed the narcissistic tendencies within transpersonal communities.

Having supervised transpersonal researchers for more than twenty years, my own experience leads to me to conclude that self-regard and self-love do not come easily or readily to many drawn to the field of transpersonal psychology at least in the West. Perhaps healing family-of-origin wounds motivate their attraction to the field; I do not know. Whether and I like it or not (and usually I do not), as a supervisor of transpersonal research, I often find myself serving as a make-shift therapist. However, I am not a therapist and research supervision is not therapy. Therefore, all I can do is be compassionate and tell my students the truth of what I see and intuit, namely that they need to scrutinize their motivations, research designs, and interpretation of findings courageously. Knowing that my supervisees are good people who want to do their best, years of coaxing and bulldozing them through narcissistic penchants to the other side have lead me to wonder about positive function of narcissism among individuals attracted to transpersonal psychology. Might narcissistic regression serve transformation as other forms of regression serve personal growth? Perhaps there no other

choice for some transpersonal researchers and scholars other than to regress toward narcissism before they can love themselves enough to be wrong even about their research findings? Sometimes I get so sad about this, I weep.

The Next Generation of Transpersonal Researchers as Independent Scholars

The era of independent transpersonal researchers and scholars is suddenly upon us. About three years ago, the emails began. I am a public name in transpersonal research having authored two books on transpersonal research (Anderson & Braud, 2011; Braud & Anderson, 1998) and many journal articles on the topic. I was surprised at the sudden and steady number of emails I received from prospective transpersonal researchers from all over the world—India, Australia, South Africa, Canada, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States to name only recent solicitations—seeking advice on how to get started on a transpersonal research projects, how to collect data, where to publish studies, and so on. They did not have transpersonal colleagues in their community or at local universities with whom to share their transpersonal research interests. They do not know where to get advice and had no one to talk to about their interests.

These independent researchers and scholars have jobs outside the transpersonal community, make an honest living, have families, and yet dedicate considerable personal time to research and scholarship in transpersonal psychology. Usually, they have doctoral degrees and teach as adjunct faculty at local universities. Typically, they support their research and travels to conferences from their own resources. They want to study topics, such as group dream work, the spiritual dimensions of chronic pain, memoir writing to reclaim a sense of self, spiritual dimensions of end-of-life care, the therapists as a surrealist artist, direct encounters with the wilderness, and mitigating childhood sexual abuse through spiritual-attuned trauma therapy. These researchers are deeply concerned about making a difference. However, they do not have colleagues or communities of transpersonal researchers locally with whom to converse and seek advice.

Training and Networking the Next Generation of Transpersonal Researchers and Scholars

While there will always be solo scholars—like Ken Wilber—capable of writing great books

alone amid stacks of books, the rest of us typically need a community of like-minded researchers and scholars to help us develop ideas, get feedback, and share ideas. I am old enough to remember when university departments in psychology and other fields served as the “heartbeats” for research and scholarly interests. Monthly colloquia were scheduled and well attended. Researchers and scholars from within the university and from the community attended. Over time, these attending created groups and networks related to special interests. Now, aside from prestigious and well-endowed universities, universities do not prioritize research support, faculty development, or research colloquia and most universities are downsizing full-time faculty. Unfortunately, too, the handful of graduate schools with masters and doctoral programs in transpersonal psychology are now under significant financial pressure and several have closed. The few transpersonal degree programs that remain can no longer serve as the physical locale where transpersonal researchers and scholars converge. To serve the needs of transpersonal researchers and scholars at disparate locals worldwide, we must utilize electronic platforms on the internet to bring them together, provide training and resources, and networking opportunities.

After a flurry of emails from transpersonal researchers wanting research support in the summer of 2013, I initiated a post-doctoral training program in transpersonal research to meet some of these needs. Soon thereafter, Pier Luigi Lattuada, Giovanna Calabrese, Regina U. Hess and I co-created The First Transpersonal Research Colloquium (TRC), which immediately followed the EUROTAS annual conference in Milan in June 2015. The First TRC attracted 27 transpersonal researchers from Australia, Europe, North America, and South Africa. Our newly launched website, www.transpersonalresearchnetwork.com, archives the abstracts provided by the TRC presenters and invites transpersonal researchers to network and connect. In September 2015 in Salvador, Brazil, the Alubrat Transpersonal Conference opened with a Transpersonal Research Colloquium in kindred spirit with the Milan TRC in June. The Ibero-American Transpersonal Association (ATI) is trying to add a Research Forum to their website, www.ati-transpersonal.org. The next TRC will be held in the United Kingdom near London in September 2016, immediately preceding the annual conference of the British Psychological Society Transpersonal Section. Good ideas spread. I am gratified by the success of our common efforts to form worldwide communities among transpersonal researchers and scholars. Other networking initia-

tives are needed especially on important research topics, such as inter-religious peacemaking, clinical applications of transpersonal psychology, meeting the psycho-spiritual needs of refugee communities, and in languages other than English and Spanish.

Author's Note and Acknowledgements

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XXX Aniversario de Antonio Blay (1924-1985): Antecesor de la Psicología Transpersonal en España

**Antonio Blay's 30th Anniversary (1924-1985):
Forefather of Transpersonal Psychology in Spain**

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Resumen

En este artículo se presenta a Antonio Blay. Se expone cual fue el punto de partida que impulsó todo su recorrido personal, espiritual y profesional. Se describen sus características como investigador de la consciencia y como maestro espiritual, así como se mencionan brevemente los rasgos más representativos de su aportación a la psicología. Finalmente se señalan algunos puntos que nos permiten entender a Antonio Blay como psicólogo transpersonal, y como antecesor de esta disciplina en España, antes de que surgiese formalmente en EE.UU.

Palabras clave: Antonio Blay, psicología transpersonal

Abstract

This article introduces the work of Antonio Blay. It shows what inspired him to achieve personal, professional and spiritual development, his main characteristics as a consciousness investigator and spiritual master, and briefly describes his most representative contributions to psychology. Further aspects are considered in order to understand Antonio Blay as a transpersonal psychologist and the forefather of this discipline in Spain, before formal origins of the field in the U.S.

Keywords: Antonio Blay, transpersonal psychology

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Introducción

Antonio Blay nació en Barcelona, en 1924. A los 17 años tuvo una experiencia de orden espiritual que determinó totalmente el curso de su vida.

En 1957 se licenció en psicología en la Escuela de Psicología y Psicotecnia de la Universidad de Madrid, y desde muy joven impartió charlas y cursos en distintos lugares de España, transmitiendo su experiencia. Actividad que desarrolló sin interrupción hasta que falleció en agosto de 1985.

Muchos le consideran el antecesor de la psicología transpersonal en España, porque en su aportación integra tanto los aspectos académicos de la psicología de la época como la experiencia trascendente que expresan los místicos de oriente y de occidente. Integra la dimensión concreta del comportamiento, los patrones emocionales de la personalidad y el potencial positivo de crecimiento del ser humano. Así como su dimensión espiritual, esencial o trascendente.

Punto de partida

En su adolescencia, en respuesta a una intensa inquietud por descubrir su identidad, se desveló en él la experiencia de la *realidad esencial*, la *identidad trascendente*. Fue una experiencia definitiva pero que contrastaba radicalmente con la vida y las experiencias que había tenido hasta entonces. Se imponía la necesidad intensa e ineludible de vivir en esa verdad de manera constante, pero las dinámicas de su personalidad se presentaban una y otra vez (con sus limitaciones y carencias), de tal manera que interrumpían parcialmente el establecimiento en la *identidad esencial*. El anhelo por estabilizar la experiencia, le llevó a investigar sus vivencias cotidianas a fin de que cada nivel y aspecto del funcionamiento de la persona estuviera alineada con la verdadera *identidad esencial* que la trasciende y sustenta.

Se dedicó a esta investigación con compromiso y sin interrupción durante el resto de su vida. En su aportación nos describe lo que fue descubriendo, tal como él lo iba descubriendo. Así, lo que nos transmite es, en todo momento, la expresión directa de su investigación personal, la descripción de su recorrido como investigador de la consciencia.

Características de Antonio Blay como un investigador de la consciencia

El foco de su interés se centra en la experiencia de la Identidad Esencial.

Espiritualidad laica. En sus exposiciones solía utilizar palabras y conceptos pertenecientes a distintas doctrinas religiosas (especialmente de la religión cristiana e hinduista), pero siempre manteniéndose al margen de cualquier dogma religioso.

Autodidacta. Desde su experimentación individual se fue abriendo camino, tomando como guía su necesidad de comprensión, de autenticidad y sinceridad.

Riguroso. Era riguroso y estricto, lo que le convertía en extremadamente cuidadoso al exponer lo que se desprendía de la evidencia directa de su trabajo de investigación, diferenciándolo de la transmisión de ideas o interpretaciones puramente intelectuales, o deliberaciones adquiridas desde cualquier fuente por sólida que fuera.

Claro, cercano y pragmático. Transmite su experiencia con un lenguaje sencillo y cercano, desde un enfoque esencialmente práctico, haciéndose accesible para todos.

Orientado hacia un trabajo individual. En su interés por mostrar un camino a ser recorrido, animaba a la exploración individual, sosteniendo que *Esa* experiencia no era suya “sino que nos pertenece a todos”.

Si lo consideramos desde el punto de vista de su aportación conceptual, más que un filósofo o un teórico, lo podemos ver como un **Cartógrafo**, pues en su exposición nos describe el recorrido de su investigación. En este recorrido fue diseñando lo que podemos llamar un “mapa de la consciencia”.

Maestro. Un aspecto incluso más importante que su aportación conceptual, es la calidad viva de su transmisión. Antonio Blay nos transmite “*su experiencia desde la experiencia*”. Es decir, su palabra es una palabra viva, impregnada del perfume/vibración de la trascendencia, de la experiencia desde la que surge. Así, su palabra estimula, facilita el resonar de esa misma vibración en nosotros. Entre los que le conocimos y tratamos, es fácil compartir el hecho de sentirlo como un Maestro Espiritual. Para la mayoría, el primer maestro que iluminó un camino a la experiencia espiritual de un modo claro, cercano, auténtico y vivo. De un modo sincero.

Antonio Blay como psicólogo

Durante un periodo determinado de su práctica profesional ejerció como psicólogo clínico, atendiendo en consulta a nivel individual. Pron-

to dejó de hacerlo pues su interés no estaba en centrarse en las conflictivas y los contenidos estrictamente psíquicos o emocionales. Se desmarcó así del ámbito de la psicología clínica establecida y centró su actividad profesional en la investigación de la conciencia y en la transmisión de lo que experimentaba.

Para designarse a sí mismo nunca utilizó el término “psicólogo transpersonal”. Profesionalmente no se ubicaba, ni se definía a sí mismo como psicólogo. Nunca tuvo interés en crear escuela. En realidad explícitamente, en más de una ocasión se pronunció en contra de ello. Solía animar a quien le escuchara a no dar por ciertas sus palabras, sin antes validarlas por propia experiencia.

Es importante señalar que tal y como se ha señalado más arriba, en su interés por la investigación de la conciencia era ampliamente conocedor de las distintas disciplinas, teorías y escuelas psicológicas, religiosas, filosóficas y místicas. Muchas de ellas las conocía a fondo, pero fue siempre muy cuidadoso y riguroso en sus exposiciones, diferenciando aquello que era la descripción de su experiencia directa, de aquello que conocía a través del estudio o investigación teóricos. Ese rigor y su carácter autodidacta le mantuvieron al margen de las líneas y escuelas estructuradas establecidas.

Su orientación

Toda su investigación y experiencia se centra en la investigación de la *Identidad Esencial*; aquello que hace que “surja en nosotros una noción de sentirse uno mismo”. El objetivo y/o motor fundamental es realizar el ser que somos en sí mismo, más allá de los modos de ser, de los impactos, valoraciones y juicios mentales. Realizar en el sentido de “hacer real” en nuestra conciencia cotidiana.

Esta realización tiene una doble vertiente: realizar el ser que soy en tanto que experiencia real directa (ser el que soy, ahí donde lo soy), y a su vez, sostener la experiencia consciente en la vida y funcionamiento cotidiano.

En su aportación conceptual, quedan considerados y ubicados en un entramado con sentido y significado, los distintos niveles de nuestro psiquismo y funcionamiento: los aspectos mecánicos o automáticos. Las dinámicas psíquicas (emocionales y mentales), y también los aspectos o niveles trascendentes o esenciales en tanto que potencial y en tanto que esencia o identidad fundamental. Por todo ello se le considera antecesor de la psicología transpersonal, en España.

Su orientación práctica, le llevó a plantear diversas propuestas o ejercicios para facilitar la

elaboración de los distintos aspectos en cada uno de los niveles implicados.

La aportación de Antonio Blay

Antonio Blay sostiene que todo lo que existe, toda la manifestación es expresión de una *realidad trascendente*. La realidad trascendente o esencial, que está detrás de todo lo fenoménico, es la que da vida y forma a todo lo que existe. El ser humano, es expresión de esta *realidad esencial* o *conciencia universal*.

La vida es crecimiento. La vida es, en sí misma, una fuerza que tiende hacia su despliegamiento. El crecimiento, el desarrollo, es el despliegamiento progresivo de esta fuerza o potencial. En la medida en que este potencial se hace presente en la existencia fenoménica, en los actos de la manifestación, en esa medida hay crecimiento. Así, el crecimiento implica el desarrollo y concreción de unas estructuras o formas concretas (ya sea a nivel físico, a nivel psíquico o espiritual). Al ser un proceso natural, el crecimiento revierte de manera genuina en una mayor conciencia interna, en una mayor plenitud. Se entiende así la plenitud como una consecuencia natural del crecimiento, del desarrollo o actualización del potencial.

La energía básica de la vida, de la manifestación, esto que Antonio Blay llama “el potencial”, está constituido por tres cualidades básicas: *inteligencia*, *amor* y *energía*; entendidas éstas cualidades en su sustancialidad esencial. Así, cuando se habla de *inteligencia* se hace referencia a la cualidad de la inteligencia-comprensión expresada en los distintos niveles de manifestación y concreción: la percepción, el pensamiento, el juicio, y los aspectos intelectuales de la experiencia. Al hablar de *amor*, se hace referencia a las distintas manifestaciones del amor, felicidad, gozo, paz, en todas las acepciones y niveles que emanan de la conciencia de ser. *Energía* hace referencia a la cualidad del impulso vital, la fuerza de la presencia, la realidad.

La manifestación está en esencia constituida por estas tres cualidades básicas en distintos niveles de expresión y combinación, de manera que todo lo que existe es una expresión de estas tres cualidades básicas. Esto tiene importantes repercusiones prácticas, ya que cuando se entiende que los problemas o defectos tan solo son la menor presencia o el insuficiente desarrollo de tales cualidades esenciales básicas, su resolución se hace viable desde la concienciación, la comprensión y la ejercitación activa. Es decir, a nivel práctico ya no se trata de un enfrentamiento entre cualidades y defectos, sino que se trata de comprender realmen-

te qué es lo que esa situación o experiencia está señalando que requiere ser desarrollado.

Así, el ser humano, en su proceso de crecimiento y en tanto que expresión de la *realidad trascendente*, está llamado a vivir una plenitud encarnada. Y lo que realmente le hace vivir una plenitud interna (real, auténtica, estable) es el crecimiento, el desarrollo. En concreto, lo que nos desarrolla, en tanto que seres humanos es el acto por el cual ejercitamos las capacidades básicas que somos en esencia; actualizamos el potencial, hacemos presente la comprensión y el amor en nuestros actos, y los ejercitamos de manera activa en las respuesta a las situaciones que nos presenta la vida. En vistas a nuestro crecimiento y a nuestra plenitud, nada puede sustituir este acto de presencia, este acto por el cual hacemos presente en lo concreto de nuestra vida diaria aquello que nos constituye en esencia.

Antonio Blay plantea que nuestra vida debería estar regida por el crecimiento natural, y por tanto, por una experiencia de plenitud, pero esto no suele suceder así. Tal como él dice; “estamos llamados a vivir una plenitud encarnada, y en general vivimos una frustración encarnada”. Por tanto, es importante comprender cuáles son los factores que hacen que nuestro crecimiento no progrese de “un modo natural”.

Presenta dos elementos importantes como determinantes en tanto que obstáculos al crecimiento natural:

- a) *Los hábitos reactivos*. En nuestra educación se produce una “desconexión del fondo natural” que somos, de manera que sin ser muy conscientes de ello, vamos ubicando nuestro centro de conciencia en la mente. Con ello nos instalamos también en un tipo de funcionamiento reactivo. Esto es, aprendemos a responder en función de la reacción automática que genera en nosotros el estímulo que recibimos; “vivimos pasivamente la respuesta que se produce en nosotros en función del estímulo que nos llega” nos dice, y en esa reacción automática basamos nuestra respuesta ante las situaciones de la vida. Es decir, adquirimos unos hábitos de respuesta reactiva y nos pasamos la vida respondiendo desde esas reacciones, lo que es totalmente opuesto a un funcionamiento basado en una respuesta lúcida y creativa que desarrolle/actualice el potencial que somos.
- b) *La identificación con unos modelos*. Junto con los hábitos reactivos de respuesta, des-

cribe un poderoso mecanismo que frena el crecimiento natural, es la identificación con unos modelos o patrones de funcionamiento. A partir de la desconexión del fondo natural que somos, nos identificamos con unos modelos o patrones de funcionamiento. Ya no nos reconocemos con nuestro fondo natural, sino que nos creemos ser “un alguien” constituido por un entramado de ideas y emociones, nos identificamos con lo que Antonio Blay llama “*el personaje*”, y pasamos a vivir desde él y en función de él. Circunscritos dentro de lo que nos marca y nos permite este personaje; confundimos con él nuestra verdadera identidad.

Antonio Blay describe con detalle distintos aspectos implicados en el proceso de identificación, y plantea una serie de prácticas o ejercicios enfocados a restituir el crecimiento natural y restablecer la conexión consciente con el “*fondo*” esencial que somos. Las líneas de trabajo que plantea se podrían agrupar en dos grandes ejes: concienciar y desarrollar.

Concienciar

Hace referencia, por un lado al proceso de descubrir aquello que nos creemos ser, el personaje con el que nos identificamos. Y por otro lado, descubrir lo que somos en realidad, la esencia que es nuestra verdadera identidad.

Entender cuál es el personaje que estamos representando, que estamos creyendo ser, implica entender el entramado psicológico y emocional del argumento de nuestro personaje, el entramado de nuestros deseos y temores. Pero se trata no sólo de comprenderlo, en el sentido de descubrirlo, entenderlo y aceptarlo, sino también y sobre todo, en el sentido de ser conscientes de que confundimos nuestra identidad con él, ser conscientes de la identificación que nos mantiene apegados a un modo particular de ser y a todo lo que desde este modo queda condicionado. En todo este proceso, se engloban también los hábitos de respuesta automáticos. Este proceso regido por la toma de conciencia nos orienta hacia lo que él llama “normalización del ser humano”.

En relación a descubrir lo que somos en realidad, plantea el centramiento como práctica esencial para ir descubriendo experimentalmente la presencia y realidad que somos en esencia más allá de los modos concretos con los que nos identificamos. En sus propias palabras. “*Ser lo que soy, desde donde lo soy*”

Desarrollar

El otro gran eje del trabajo que propone es la actitud positiva. Hace referencia a restituir el crecimiento natural, es decir, ejercitar activamente las cualidades esenciales básicas, actualizar el potencial que somos, haciéndolo presente en nuestra experiencia concreta cotidiana. Esto es, vivir en lo concreto de nuestra vida diaria la esencia que nos constituye.

Antonio Blay plantea que el punto de enlace entre lo personal y lo transpersonal sucede de modo natural. A través de la integración del nivel psicológico y de la reconexión consciente con el propio fondo o nivel esencial, se va produciendo de modo natural una expansión de la conciencia, de manera que de un modo espontáneo se hace evidente la existencia de una unidad mayor: los niveles superiores de conciencia. Y esto se da tanto en un sentido horizontal como en un sentido vertical.

La expansión de conciencia en sentido horizontal, hace referencia al hecho de que el centro de la existencia individual es el mismo que el centro de la conciencia o existencia universal, colectiva. Toda la existencia emana desde un mismo foco. En la práctica, en un plano concreto, esto significa que en la relación con los demás, uno descubre que todo lo que uno percibe en los demás es, de hecho, un aspecto de uno mismo. Así, la relación con los demás brinda la posibilidad de “ir reconociendo lo que soy pero no me había reconocido como siéndolo”. Otro punto importante es que desde esta conciencia superior, a nivel horizontal, se vive la relación con los demás como un intercambio gozoso, como un medio de expresión de la *realidad profunda* que se es en un encuentro de celebración compartida.

En cuanto a la expansión de conciencia en sentido vertical, expone el descubrimiento de que estas tres cualidades básicas que nos constituyen tienen su correspondencia en un nivel superior. Describe la existencia de unos campos infinitos de felicidad, campos infinitos de luz y de energía. “Campos” de una calidad “extra-ordinaria”, sustancialmente distinta a cualquier registro experimentado a nivel fenoménico. Estos campos están siempre ahí, los somos, pero la identificación y crispación de la mente en unos registros de conciencia muy delimitados, definidos, hace que se produzca una desconexión parcial, es decir se “corta” la posibilidad de vivir conscientemente esa *realidad superior* que somos.

Todo ello le lleva a delimitar el ámbito de lo psicológico como todas aquellas zonas de la personalidad que cambian, que evolucionan, todas las manifestaciones que surgen del yo central en su contacto con el mundo exterior. Todo lo que vivimos de un modo concreto y en evolución, desarrollo o transformación. Y lo espiritual, lo entiende como la esencia que es causa de todos los fenómenos, aquello que mantiene una identidad permanente en sí misma, independiente de cualquier afectación fenoménica.

Lo espiritual puede constituirse como objeto de creencia, con lo cual ordena y enfoca nuestros valores y nuestro comportamiento, pero para él lo verdaderamente importante es que lo espiritual se constituya como experiencia, como realidad presente y operativa en la vida diaria. Para integrar la verdad espiritual en la personalidad concreta, en el sentir interno, es necesario “*un trabajo*”. Un trabajo para que la personalidad habitual, sujeta a las crispaciones e identificaciones de su historia, pueda alinearse con lo espiritual. Se trata de que el foco de conciencia habitual, crispado en la identificación con lo que marcan los sentidos físicos y psíquicos (ideas y sentimientos), se sostenga en la apertura y transparencia que permite la alineación con la *experiencia trascendente*.

Dicho de otra manera, Antonio Blay expone que la dificultad para estabilizarse en la experiencia viva de los niveles superiores de conciencia deriva de la inercia con que vivimos, de la fuerza que tienen los hábitos en nosotros. Ello hace necesario un trabajo en el psiquismo (en la mente y el corazón) para modificar la capacidad perceptiva, para afinar la percepción y ensanchar y abrir la conciencia presente a la dimensión trascendente. En resumen el trabajo es importante para permitir la entrada a lo que está delimitado por los hábitos y la identificación, y así ampliar el “yo experiencia” al realizar (hacer real) en la conciencia particular, en el movimiento de la existencia, la *realidad esencial* que es más allá de los movimientos fenoménicos.

A medida que la persona va tomando más conciencia de esta realidad, el psiquismo puede sostener una mayor apertura, se va dando mayor expresión de estas cualidades superiores en la vida cotidiana. En este punto, Antonio Blay nos dice que la única perfección del hombre es reconocerse en la naturaleza superior y abrirle paso para que se exprese.

Esta toma de conciencia, este trabajo de redescubrimiento, este cambio a nivel del psiquismo personal, puede realizarse mediante diversas prácticas. Prácticas que poco a poco van polarizando la mente y el corazón hacia los niveles superio-

res, lo que va permitiendo ir trascendiendo la identificación en estructura personal.

Antonio Blay plantea una doble vertiente de trabajo en relación a los niveles superiores de conciencia.

- a) Una línea de trabajo activo, que incluiría: la *Meditación*, que es el trabajo al nivel de la mente, del discernimiento (propone distintos aspectos en la meditación; una meditación en tanto que reflexión profunda, la meditación como práctica para sintonizar, y la meditación para sostener la apertura de la mente); y la *Oración* que es la práctica realizada desde el nivel afectivo. En la oración distingue entre oración espontánea, oración de petición y oración contemplativa).
- b) Y, por otro lado en la línea de trabajo receptivo, propone la práctica del *Silencio*. Distingue dos tipos fundamentales de silencio; por un lado, está el *silenciarse*, esto significa entender el silencio como medio de profundización. La manera natural de llegar a percibir lo que es más profundo, es silenciar la zona de percepción que aparece en primer plano. Lo que está detrás de las cosas que vemos es aquello que las fundamenta, es su naturaleza profunda, su esencia no fenoménica. Así, el silencio nos abre paso hacia la receptividad de la verdad no fenoménica o esencial que está detrás de lo manifiesto. Por otro lado, se entiende el *silencio* como la capacidad de mantenerse despierto, atento, lúcido pero sin objeto. Habitualmente nuestra conciencia está siempre enfocada hacia algún objeto; la atención siempre es la conciencia que se dirige hacia un objeto o fenómeno. Y se apunta, en este momento, a la posibilidad de mantenerse en el silencio lúcido y sin objeto. “Al ser absoluto sólo se llega mediante la abstracción de lo que es pensamiento, sentimiento y acción. El silencio es el único medio para descubrir lo que es en sí, la realidad en sí. (...) Al silencio se llega cuando todo lo demás se calla, se apacigua, cuando el interés -de la mente, del corazón y de la voluntad- para descubrir la Verdad, la Realidad es superior a todo lo demás”.

Su manera de entender la interdependencia e interconexión de los niveles personales con la

trascendencia, queda claramente expresada cuando nos dice que *el ser superior (o Dios, u otro nombre que podamos preferir) está comunicando sus propias cualidades para que sean expresadas en nosotros, y a través de nosotros hacia todos los demás. Este es el sentido concreto de la vida, de nuestra existencia. Éste es nuestro verdadero destino. Pero sólo podrá realizarse si nosotros lo aceptamos, si nosotros nos atrevemos a dejar todas nuestras pequeñas inseguridades, nuestras huidas, nuestros miedos, para abrírnos a lo único que es real, seguro, y eterno.*

Su aportación en relación a la psicología transpersonal

A los 17 años Antonio Blay vivió la experiencia que marcó el inicio de su trayectoria como investigador. No es fácil establecer en qué momento inició su labor como comunicador. Ésta se inició primero en encuentros y charlas de carácter distendido, informal. Pronto estos encuentros fueron transformándose en conferencias y en lo que ahora llamamos talleres y cursos. Situaríamos esta etapa, anterior a los años 40. Unos 10 años después, su actividad estaba ya bastante estabilizada como tal.

Sin ánimo de ser muy exhaustivos, podemos hacer un breve recorrido por algunos de los teóricos más reconocidos como pioneros de la psicología transpersonal e ir viendo como lo que cada uno de ellos va aportando, de alguna manera, estaba ya incluido en la exposición que planteaba Antonio Blay.

Roberto Assagioli, creador de la psicósíntesis, diferencia entre el inconsciente colectivo y el inconsciente superior o transpersonal. Antonio Blay nos decía que cuando la persona se integra a nivel psicológico y profundiza en la conexión profunda de sí mismo, se produce de manera espontánea una expansión de conciencia. Y esta expansión de conciencia se detecta en dos sentidos: *en sentido horizontal* (el centro de la conciencia individual es el mismo que el centro de la conciencia universal o colectiva) y *en sentido vertical* (campos superiores de conciencia).

Stanislav Grof, destacaba la acción terapéutica de la dimensión espiritual. Desarrolló su trabajo a partir de sus experiencias con psicodélicos que proporcionaban estados alterados de conciencia. Antonio Blay era conocedor de los estados de conciencia que describía Grof, afirmaba que tales estados eran accesibles sin el uso de sustancias que los estimularan. De hecho, tales eran algunos de

los estados que había ido describiendo. Alguna de las prácticas que propone Blay, apuntan específicamente al efecto transformador de la dimensión espiritual en el psiquismo.

Abraham Maslow, en el *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, afirmó que las experiencias cumbres son la clave para adentrarse en la dimensión transpersonal. Esto es exactamente lo que vivió Antonio Blay y lo que se preocupó por transmitirnos. Por otro lado, es conocida la pirámide de Maslow o jerarquía de las necesidades humanas, en la que se afirma la importancia de atender y satisfacer todos los niveles de éstas necesidades. Antonio Blay describe también en su “mapa de la conciencia”, la importancia que ocupan todos los aspectos del hombre y estableció prácticas específicas dirigidas a cada uno de estos niveles. Por otro lado, afirmaba que aunque el contacto con los niveles superiores en determinadas condiciones puede disolver dinámicas de niveles psicológicos, también es cierto que cuando se trata del desarrollo, no es posible que un nivel resuelva lo que debe ser resuelto desde otro nivel. Cada necesidad debe ser desarrollada y resuelta en su propio nivel.

Ken Wilber plantea una esencia o conciencia primordial que se manifiesta a través de lo que designa como el *espectro de la conciencia*. Este espectro es como un mapa de los diferentes niveles de la conciencia y su evolución. Donde cada nivel es necesario y precede al siguiente en un proceso de desarrollo sano. Plantea un trabajo psicoterapéutico adecuado a cada nivel. El espectro de la conciencia tal como lo presenta en su libro “La conciencia sin fronteras” resulta así:

- I. Nivel de la Persona >> Persona / Sombra
- II. Nivel del Ego >> Ego / Cuerpo
- III. Nivel del Centauro >> Organismo total / Medio
- IV. Yo transpersonal >> Bandas transpersonales
- V. Conciencia natural >> Estado natural

El paralelismo o correspondencia con los distintos aspectos del ser humano que plantea Antonio Blay es claro: el *nivel persona* hace referencia a lo que Blay describe cuando habla de los “hábitos de respuesta reactiva”. Donde Blay habla de la identificación con los modelos, Wilber describe el *nivel del ego*. En el *nivel del centauro* encontramos aquello que Blay apunta cuando plantea la re-conexión con el fondo: *el centramiento*. Las *bandas transpersonales* corresponden a los niveles superiores de conciencia. Y el *estado natural* hace

referencia al silencio lúcido y sin objeto que describía Antonio Blay.

Aunque no vamos a entrar en ello pues excede en mucho el contenido de este artículo, es importante señalar que Ken Wilber presenta, en el trabajo mencionado, los distintos tipos de psicoterapias dirigidas a cada nivel del espectro. Tal como hemos dicho antes, también Antonio Blay había planteado unas prácticas de trabajo dirigidas específicamente a cada uno de los niveles descritos en su aportación, y que corresponden a los distintos niveles de conciencia del ser humano.

La época tras la muerte de Antonio Blay

Desde distintos lugares, distintas personas han sentido internamente la inquietud por dar cursos basados en la aportación de A. Blay. Como Antonio Blay nunca tuvo intención de hacer escuela, nunca organizó ni asignó a nadie como su seguidor o continuador. Como hemos dicho más arriba, lo importante era la implicación sincera y comprometida con un sentir o anhelo interno. Desde ahí se hace lícito el hacer de cada uno.

Al mismo tiempo, podemos decir que parecería que su intencionalidad de no crear escuela ha generado una dinámica en la que no hay un centro de referencia en torno a su aportación. Por todo ello en el año 2007 se organizó un encuentro (con formato de jornadas), donde nos dimos cita muchos de los que en ese momento estábamos impartiendo cursos en la línea que nos aportó Blay. La idea era, por un lado facilitar el marco donde contactar y conocernos, es decir, presentar el trabajo que cada uno estaba desarrollando. Y por otro lado, dar la oportunidad para rendir un pequeño homenaje y expresar nuestro agradecimiento a la figura de Antonio Blay.

Se pueden encontrar las audiciones de las charlas que se desarrollaron en ellas, en la página web: www.antoniobl原因.com

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