



Christian Psychology Around The World
THE EMCAPP JOURNAL

25/2026

Main Topic:

**Personality development from a Christian
psychological perspective**

- Fathers' effects on their children's behavior and personality...
- Self-awareness as a mediating process...
- The Value of Having and Developing Hope...
- and others ...

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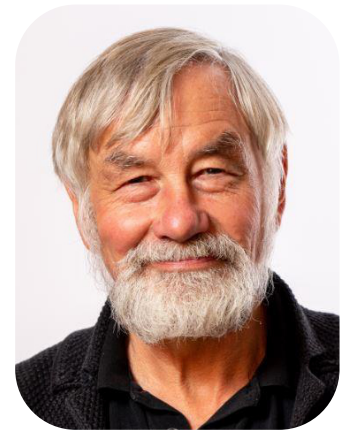
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editorial



Dear friends, dear readers,
this is now the 25th issue of Christian Psychology Around The World. We launched this project in 2012, without any idea how long it would last.

Initially, the articles in each issue came from one country: Poland, Germany, Russia, Switzerland, the USA, Finland, Canada, and South Africa. The accompanying comments came from all over the world.

Since 2016, each issue has had a main theme, as is the case in this 25th issue: "Personality development from a Christian psychological perspective."

The fact that all contributions are published not only in English but also in the author's native language has always been, and will remain, a special feature.

Besides that, the intercultural and interfaith dialogue is very important to me.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed over the years as authors, commentators, and artists.

As I write this editorial I have Eric Johnson ([see here page 82](#)) from the USA as my guest. He has embraced and supported this project from the very beginning and has consistently enriched it with his contributions.

And Eric says that he's already looking forward to the next 25 issues. But we will see.

Yours, Werner May

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Why do we have a bilingual journal?

In our movement for Christian Psychology, we meet as Christians with very different backgrounds: different churches, different cultures, different professional trainings...

There is a common desire for the movement, but highly "multi-lingual" ideas of its realization! Therefore, a bilingual journal is just a small reference to our multilingual voices to remind us:

Languages are an expression of cultures, countries and of their people. By writing in two languages, we want to show our respect to the authors of the articles, to their origin and heritage, and at the same time symbolically show respect to all the readers in other foreign countries.

There are many foreign languages that we do not understand. Within our own language, we intend to understand one another, but we fail to do so quite often. To really understand one another is a great challenge, and we also want to point to this challenge by offering a bilingual journal.

"When languages die, knowledge about life gets lost." (Suzanne Romaine, 2011)

Finally, there is a pragmatic reason: As we want to have authors from one special country to write the main articles of every journal, it will be easier for them to distribute the journal in their own country, when it also is in their own language.

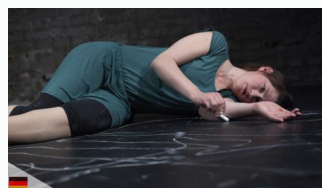
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the first 24 numbers

of the eJournal Christian Psychology Around The World



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Poland



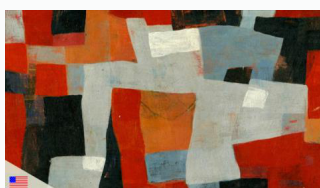
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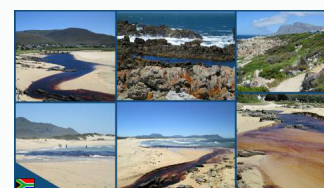
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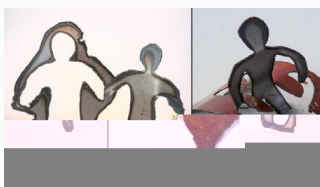
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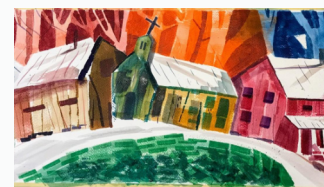
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JOURNAL NO. 11 - 2018
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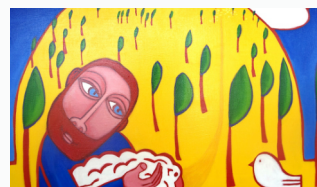
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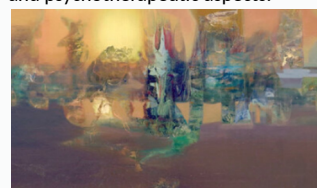
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JOURNAL NO. 17 - 2022
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JOURNAL NO. 18 - 2022
„Ways out of the Shame-Fear Cycle“



JOURNAL NO. 19 - 2023
„Spiritual Formation“



JOURNAL NO. 20 - 2023
„Christian faith in everyday life“



JOURNAL NO. 21 - 2024
„Love in different dimensions“



JOURNAL NO. 22 - 2024
„The Importance of the Holy Spirit in Theory and Practice for Christian Psychology“



JOURNAL NO. 23 - 2024
„Personal Freedom from a Christian Psychological Perspective in Theory and Practice.“



JOURNAL NO. 24 - 2025
„Suffering, Pain, Misery, Misfortune, ... from a Christian Psychological Perspective in Theory and Practice.“

See here: <https://emcapp.ignis.de>

The EMCAPP Journal "The Christian Psychology Around the World" is published in Germany, the main editor is Werner May. Since 2011 the internet bilingual Journal is published two times a year. The authors of articles and comments are psychologists, psychotherapists and scientists from different countries of the world. This journal is published by the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy in cooperation with the IGNIS-Akademie für Christliche Psychologie.



about the artist

Brigitte Falk (Germany)
brigitte-falk.art

Raised in a Christian family with four siblings, the early death of my father when I was twelve was a shock that, on the one hand, drew me toward God as my Father, and on the other hand, over time, drove me away from HIM, full of doubt and despair. Over those many years, my high school teacher gradually became my spiritual mother, accompanying me throughout my adult life until her death. After completing my secondary education, my friend—with whom I had been creatively active studied art. I felt a desire within myself to follow in her footsteps, and at the same time, due to my family's financially precarious situation, I felt a strong need for security. I became a special education teacher and studied, among other subjects, art education. This was followed by my marriage, the First State Examination, and approximately ten years of life in the Jesus BRuderschaft/Brotherhood of Jesus. During this time our four children were born and many valuable spiritual friendships were formed that continue to enrich our lives to this day. A new beginning in the early 1990s led me to complete the Second State Examination and enter the public school system, which I concluded with my retirement in 2019. I completed a three-year program of further training in Christian therapeutic pastoral care with Philippi Trust in England and Germany. Through this training, I experienced inner healing of my heart, a deepening of my faith, and growth in the professional skills I needed for my vocation. Outside of the school setting, I have since offered pastoral counseling in various contexts. About ten years later, I decided to undertake training as a spiritual director for retreats, based on the

Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, with Prof. Dr. Paul Imhof at the Protestant Monastery of Schwanberg. This training included four weeks of silent retreats. This requirement of self-awareness initially filled me with feelings of inadequacy and fear. Yet in the silence, I experienced deep and unique encounters with God that changed my life in lasting ways.

The Spirit of God activated my artistic gift in a freedom I had never experienced before. In the years prior, our children gradually left home, and caring for my parents-in-law in our own house, alongside my work as a special education teacher, had cost much time and energy. I was tired and exhausted. Our first grandchild was already on the way. At that time, God gave me, through creative work, a place of restoration—a refuge, a way to spend time with HIM. While painting, words from the Bible moved me, and in the resulting paintings or sculptures I discovered HIS work. Over the next six years, works of art quietly accumulated, hidden from view.

During this time, my mother, suffering from terminal cancer, moved in with us. What a “hidden” place I now had within my own home! While painting in the silence and seclusion of my studio, I could leave everything heavy outside and forget it. I was fully present in the moment—with myself and my heavenly Father—and nothing else existed. This has remained so to this day.

Two years after my mother's death, the first truly major exhibition took place. A unique inner journey lay behind me. I had received a new calling: “Serve Me in word and image.”

Ten years later, there have now been more than twenty exhibitions in various locations. At vernisages and finisages, in worship services, at women's gatherings, and at a Christian symposium, I have experienced how this calling takes concrete form. There is joy and wonder within me, and a special happiness in seeing how the Holy Spirit fills the spaces I am meant to create through this service with His presence—and how HE rejoices in being able to work. For the third time, a temporary Stations of the Cross installation will be installed over Easter 2026 in the Bad Camberg city park. Involved are the three Christian congregations (Catholic, Protestant, and Free Evangelical), the city of Bad Camberg (Building Authority; the Mayor as patron), local business owners with their association "Wir für Bad Camberg," the Taunus School with its religious studies department, as well as individuals, bible study groups, and the Gnadenthal Community. The final station is the small Chapel of St. Wendelinus at the riding grounds at the end of the spa park. Once again, I have been asked to design this station, the "Resurrection." The result is a painting (70 × 100 cm) that shows Christ today—how HE stands at the door, how HE is present before peoples and nations, saying: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me."

Now I am venturing something entirely new. The new "Resurrection painting" is challenging, uncomfortable, perhaps provocative. I am curious to see how people in my small provincial town will respond. (I ask for prayer and protection because of this challenging work. It is possible to obtain prints or reproductions of the painting. Where the original might one day find a permanent home is still an open question.)

Also in progress are wooden sculptures made from 600-year-old oak from our medieval half-timbered house: "Children of the King." Nine faces are finished; five more will follow. Seven queens, seven kings. Perhaps one day, my legacy to our grandchildren (seven girls, seven boys). I was raised in a Christian family with four siblings. When my father died at an early age, I was twelve years old. His death was a shock. On the one hand, it drew me toward God as my Father. On the other hand, over time, it led me away from HIM, filled with doubt and despair.

Over the years, my high school teacher gradually became my spiritual mother. She accompanied me throughout my adult life until her death. After finishing school, my friend, with whom I shared a creative life, studied art. I felt a strong desire to follow her path. At the same time, because of my family's financially precarious situation, I felt a deep need for security. I became a special education teacher and studied art education among other subjects.



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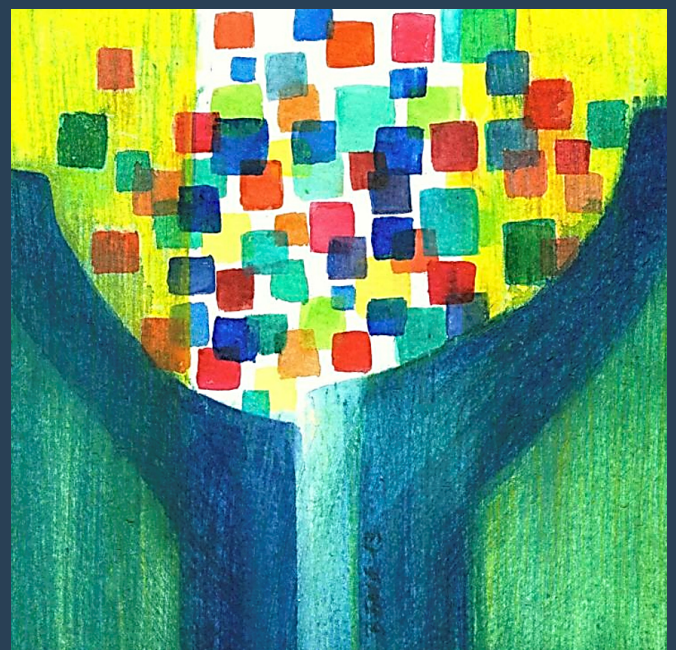
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Faith

The Main Topic

**Personality development
from a Christian psychological perspective**



Germany

Italy



USA



Mexico



Brazil





Russia



Finland



Israel

Poland





Love



Elena Strigo (Russia), M.A., psychologist, psychotherapist, lecturer. Has graduated from Eastern European Institute of Psychoanalysis (EEIP, St. Petersburg). Member of the European Movement of Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy (EMCAPP), member of European Association for Psychotherapy, current member of Professional Psychotherapeutic League of Russia. An author of several articles in books and journals.

Sphere of practicing is psychoanalysis and psychoanalytical psychotherapy. Field of practical and theoretical interest is ethical aspects in personal functioning and symptom formation.

Former Contribution by Elena you can see here:

emcapp.ignis.de/3/#/102

emcapp.ignis.de/11/#p=52

[/emcapp.ignis.de/15/#p=28](https://emcapp.ignis.de/15/#p=28)

Елена Стриго (Россия), М.А., психолог, психотерапевт, преподаватель, выпускник Восточно-Европейского Института Психоанализа (ВЕИП, Санкт-Петербург). Член EMCAPP, сертифицированный член Европейской Ассоциации Психотерапии, действительный член Общероссийской Профессиональной Психотерапевтической Лиги, аккредитованный специалист Союза Психотерапевтов и Психологов (Россия). Автор нескольких статей в сборниках и журналах.

Практикует в сфере психоанализа и психоаналитической психотерапии. Область интересов: этические аспекты в функционировании психоаналитического субъекта и в образовании симптомов.

Deification and the Ethical Dimension of a Human Being: Toward a Theological-Anthropological Framework for Psychotherapeutic Reflection

Introduction: Preliminary Reflections

This text represents a preliminary reflection on the potential conceptualisation of the theological concept of theosis (deification) within the development of horizons for therapeutic thought. It further explores which aspects of this concept might prove pertinent to psychotherapeutic (psychoanalytic) practice in the structuring of therapeutic discourse. Conventionally, the narrative of a human life on the path toward deification is found within ascetic literature, as seen in the biographies of Christian monastics. Does this imply that the significance of theosis is revealed exclusively within the domain of theological-philosophical theory, or through hagiographic accounts?

Обожение и этическое измерение бытия человека: теологическо-антропологическое основание психотерапевтической рефлексии

Этот текст представляет собой набросок к размышлению о том, как концепт обожения представленный в богословском дискурсе может быть осмыслен при выстраивании горизонтов терапевтической мысли. А также какие аспекты этого концепта могут быть интересны психотерапевтической (психоаналитической) практике для структурирования терапевтического дискурса. Как правило, историю жизни человека на его пути к обожению мы находим в аскетической литературе на примере биографий христианских подвижников. Означает ли это что смысл обожения раскрывается исключительно в поле богословско-философских теорий, либо в описании жития святых?

Can we reflect upon the strategy and tactics of psychotherapeutic (psychoanalytic) treatment by drawing on the structural elements of the theological concept of theosis? Can we measure the perspective of an approach to healing through the categories of deification? It appears essential to introduce anthropological premises and the ontological status of human nature – as understood by theological ontology—into the psychotherapeutic gaze, granting them greater space within the discourse. It would be compelling to conceive of the human being not merely as a subject or object of therapy, but also as God's anthropological project; to define the topology of the subject within the context of theosis as the semantic core of Christian ontology.

Given that theosis, beyond its primary function of assimilation to God, also serves the function of salvation (the final healing from sin and the attainment of freedom in God), the possibility of examining ethical questions within the framework of the deification hypothesis is of particular interest.

The theological content of the concept of theosis is represented here through the theological-philosophical teachings of St Maximus the Confessor. In outlining these fundamental ideas, I rely upon the systematic exposition of his doctrine provided by V. M. Lourié [8].

The first part of this article provides a concise summary of the core components of theosis in St Maximus's theory. Certain points relevant to the current theme are offered in interpretation. The second part presents an outline for the potential practical application of specific structural elements of this concept to the ethical dimension of human existence.

Potential Being, Actual Theosis

In the theology of St Maximus the Confessor, creation is merely an initial and partial actualisation of being, insofar as its full actualisation is theosis [8, 372].

"Theosis is the deification of man, who becomes God while remaining human; moreover, becoming precisely the kind of human being originally conceived by the Creator" [8, 359].

A fundamental principle in St Maximus's philosophical ontology is that "the movement of the creature toward the Creator is no longer a return:

Можем ли мы размышлять о стратегии и тактике психотерапевтического (психоаналитического) лечения с опорой на структурные элементы богословской концепции обожения? Можем ли мы померить категориями обожения перспективу подхода к исцелению? Кажется необходимым ввести в психотерапевтический взгляд на человека антропологические предпосылки и онтологический статус человеческой природы, как его понимает богословская онтология, и дать им больше пространства в психотерапевтическом дискурсе. Было бы интересно помыслить человека не только в качестве субъекта/объекта терапии, но также, как антропологический проект Бога. Задать топологию субъекта в контексте обожения как смыслового ядра христианской онтологии.

Учитывая, что обожение кроме своей основной функции – уподобления Богу – имеет еще и функцию спасения (окончательного исцеления от греха и обретения свободы в Боге), возможность рассмотрения этических вопросов в контексте гипотезы обожения представляет особенный интерес.

Богословское содержание концепции обожения представлено в тексте богословско-философским учением св. Максима Исповедника. В пересказе основных идей я опираюсь здесь на систематическое изложение его учения, сделанное В. М. Лурье [8].

В первой части статьи я дам краткое изложение основных компонентов обожения в теории св. Максима. Некоторые моменты, актуальные для данной темы, даны в интерпретации. Во второй части будут представлены наброски к возможному практическому приложению некоторых структурных элементов концепции к этическому измерению бытия человека.

Потенциальное бытие, актуальное обожение.

В богословии св. Максима Исповедника творение является всего лишь начальной и частичной актуализацией бытия, так как полная актуализация есть обожение [8, 372].

«Обожение—это обожение человека, который становится Богом, оставаясь человеком и, более того: становясь именно таким человеком, который был изначально задуман Творцом» [8, 359].

the creature moves toward its origin, yet an origin *in which it has never previously existed*" [8, 372].

Thus, God's anthropological project may be envisioned through the operation of three registers of existence-movement: 1) the being of man; 2) the becoming of man – the becoming of the 'image'; 3) the becoming of the human being as originally conceived by the Creator – the movement from the 'image' toward the 'Archetype' (Christ).

The Divine Logos in Man

"The Logos of God, which is within every human being, creates within man a constant striving toward God" [8, 373].

It is precisely due to the presence of the "pre-existing logoi of being in God" within the human person that man, in three distinct senses, proves to be a part of God: as one merely possessing being, as one possessing well-being, and as one deified. In all three senses, he is a part of God only through the Divine logoi within him [8, 373].

This dimension of the doctrine reveals that man does not determine the character of his existence across various ontological levels of his own accord; rather, he acts as a reflection of the Logos that resides in God. Insofar as the Divine logoi within the creature are uncreated and pre-eternal, man is powerless to nullify their operation. In light of his anthropology, man is, in a sense, constitutively oriented toward deification; he cannot but yearn for it according to his nature, yet he may fundamentally refuse it according to his freedom. Thus, the subject stands in a position either to strive toward God or to reject Him. This constitutes a mode of negation or refusal.

The Tropos of Existence

To demonstrate that human nature does not 'dissolve' or suffer annihilation in the process of theosis, but is, moreover, preserved within the framework of human being, St Maximus introduces the concept of the tropos of existence.

The tropos of existence is the being of nature within the individual – that is, within the hypostasis. The concept of tropos addresses the question of how transformations of nature are possible on the path toward deification. "Everything that nature can perform of its own accord, or that it can under-

Принципиальным в философской онтологии св. Максима является то, что «движение твари к Творцу уже не является возвращением: тварь движется к своему началу, но такому, в котором ее никогда не было» [8, 372].

Таким образом, антропологический проект Бога можно представить в действии трех регистров существования-движения: 1) бытия человека; 2) становления человека – становлении «образом»; 3) становления человеком, который был изначально задуман Творцом – движение «образа» к «первообразу» (Христу)

Логос Божий в человеке.

«Логос Божий, который в каждом человеке, создает в человеке постоянное стремление к Богу» [8, 373].

Именно из-за наличия в человеке «предсуществующих в Боге логосов бытия», человек в трех разных смыслах оказывается частью Бога: как просто обладающий бытием, как обладающий благобытием и как обоженный. Во всех трех смыслах он является частью Бога только через логосы Божии в нем [8, 373].

Из этой части учения мы видим, что человек не от себя определяет характер бытия на разных онтологических уровнях, а является отражением логоса, который в Боге. Поскольку логосы Божии в твари нетварны и предвечны, человек не может отменить их действие. Человек в силу своей антропологии как бы предопределен к обожению, не может не стремиться к обожению согласно своей природе, но может совсем не стремиться согласно своей свободе. Таким образом, он может либо стремиться к Богу, либо отвергать Бога. Это режим отрицания, отказа.

Тропос существования.

Чтобы показать, что природа человека не «растворяется» и не уничтожается в процессе обожения, более того, сохраняется в форме человеческого бытия, св. Максим вводит понятие тропоса существования.

Тропос существования—это бытие природы в индивидууме, то есть в ипостаси. Понятие тропоса отвечает на вопрос как возможны изменения природы на пути к обожению. «Всё, что природа может сделать сама, или что она может претерпеть, не будучи уничтоженной, есть изменение тропоса ее существования» [8,

go without being annihilated, constitutes a change in its tropos of existence" [8, 354]. St Maximus teaches: "For the logos of human nature is the soul and the body... whereas the tropos is the *order* (τάξις) of acting and being acted upon naturally." The category of tropos allows for the possibility of radical shifts in the mode of being of the hypostasis (the person) without the loss of the essential parameters of identity.

For instance, when Saul, on the road to Damascus, was blinded by a radiant light and heard the reproachful voice of the Lord: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9: 3–8), he came to believe, was healed of his blindness, and was baptised under the name of Paul. From the perspective of the hypostasis, Paul remained himself, yet his tropos of existence had changed, a shift symbolised by the changing of his name. A new name denotes a different series of identifications; these, in turn, establish a different mode of being for the new designation.

It is specifically to the tropos that different levels of being and different ontological realities correspond.

St Maximus distinguishes three states of human nature: 'being' (einai), 'well-being' (eu einai), and 'eternal being' (aei einai, or theosis). The transition from the first to the second constitutes the "renewal of natures" (change). The tropos of existence within the hypostasis depends upon the individual's free will. According to St Maximus, 'well-being' depends solely upon our will (the choice of virtue). 'Eternal being' is "the result of the joint activity of our will and Divine grace; it is unattainable by the powers of human nature alone and possesses an eternal, irreversible, and imperishable character" [8, 358].

Three Ontological Statuses

St Maximus "distinguishes three ontological statuses possible for man: the present, empirical status, in which man constantly chooses either well-being (eu einai) or ill-being (kakoeinai), as well as one of two eternal ontological statuses – eternal well-being or eternal ill-being – which are attained, respectively, through the acceptance or the final rejection of God's gift of grace" [8, 358].

354]. «Ведь логос человеческой природы—это душа и тело и то, чтобы быть по при роде из разумной души и тела, а тропос—это порядок (τάξις) в том, чтобы действовать и быть действуемой природно», учит св. Максим. Понятие тропоса позволяет говорить о возможности достаточно кардинальных изменений образа бытия ипостаси (лица) без потери основных параметров идентичности. Так, например, когда Савл на пути в Дамаск был ослеплен ярким светом, услышал укоризненный голос Господа: «Савл, Савл! Что ты гонишь Меня?» (Деян. 9: 3–8), он уверовал, был исцелен от слепоты и принял крещение под именем Павла. С точки зрения ипостаси Павел остался собой, но тропос существования его изменился, что и было символизировано сменой имени. Новое имя означает другую серию идентификаций; они же, в свою очередь, закрепляют за новым именованием другой способ бытия.

Именно тропосу соответствуют разные уровни бытия, разные онтологические реальности.

Св. Максим различает три состояния человеческой природы: «бытие», «благобытие», «приснобытие» (обожение). Переход от первого ко второму и есть «обновление природ» (изменение). Тропос существования в ипостаси зависит от свободной воли индивида. «Благобытие» по св. Максиму, зависит только от нашей воли (выбор добродетели). «Приснобытие» «является результатом совместной деятельности нашей воли и благодати Божией, который недостижим одними только силами человеческой природы и имеет вечный, необратимый, непреходящий характер [8, 358].

Три онтологических статуса.

Св. Максим «различает три онтологических статуса, возможных для человека: нынешний, эмпирический статус, в котором человек постоянно выбирает либо благобытие, либо злобытие, а также один из двух вечных онтологических статусов—вечного благобытия или вечного злобытия,—которые достигаются, соответственно, принятием или окончательным отвержением дара Божия, благодати» [8, 358]. Таким образом, смена тропоса существования в пользу благобытия (или, напротив, злобытия)

Thus, the shift of the tropos of existence in favour of well-being (or, conversely, ill-being) encompasses, beyond the ontological, an ethical dimension – that is, the choice of how to exercise one's freedom (will) [8, 358]. It is vital to understand that the choice of well-being (or ill-being) is not the result of mere intellectual deliberation or a "kind-hearted instinct" [2, 31]. Rather, the human being, as it were, 'disposes' the totality of their striving (nature) toward the meanings of existence defined by the Divine Logos. This process constitutes a particular ontological reality, thereby effecting a change in the tropos. The "completion" of this sum of decisions and identifications is the choice itself – that is, the human being as an identity (hypostasis). The subject (hypostasis) discovers itself as a choice, rather than preceding its own choices.

Natural Will and Gnostic Will

Volition (proairesis) is the operation of the free (natural) will of man. St Maximus introduces the concept of gnome (γνώμη) to emphasize the significance of individual consciousness in the individual choice of the direction of striving [8, 395]. He defines volition as the sum of three constituents: impulse (natural will), desire, and deliberation. When all three constituents are present, the 'impulse' (natural will) acquires a specific individual disposition (gnome). "Gnome relates to volition in the same sense that a state relates to an action (energy)" [8, 395]. The introduction of the concept of 'disposition' implies that volition is not entirely identical to the choice itself, that is, to the volitional act. It is here that the possibility for the exercise of human freedom emerges.

Drawing upon the concept of individual disposition (gnome), St Maximus introduces a further term: the 'gnomic will'. The gnomic will is the natural will having received a 'gnomic' disposition within the individual (hypostasis). The concept of the gnomic will is introduced to allow for the individual's capacity to impart various tropoi to their natural energy [8, 395].

Thus, the tropos of existence within the hypostasis depends upon the individual's free will. The will itself, while remaining essentially free, receives a gnomic disposition. Since the issue at hand is the choice between well-being or ill-being, freedom may be discussed not only within ontological coor-

содержит, кроме онтологического, еще и этическое измерение, то есть выбор способа распоряжаться своей свободой (волей). 358 Здесь важно понимать, что выбор благобытия (злобытия) не есть результат интеллектуального размышления или «добросердечного инстинкта» [2, 31]. Человек как бы «располагает» все свое стремление (природу) в направлении смыслов существования, заданных логосом Божиим. Это и образует ту или иную онтологическую реальность. Тем самым происходит смена тропоса. «Завершением» этой суммы решений и идентификаций является выбор, то есть сам человек как идентичность (ипостась). Субъект (ипостась) обнаруживает самого себя как выбор, а не предшествует собственным выборам.

Воля природная и воля гномическая.

Произволение это действие свободной (природной) воли человека. Св. Максим вводит понятие «гноми» (γνώμη) чтобы подчеркнуть значение индивидуального сознания в индивидуальном выборе направления стремления [8, 395]. Он определяет произволение как сумму из трех слагаемых: стремления (природной воли), хотения и рассуждения. Когда все три слагаемых налицо, «стремление» (природная воля) приобретает определенное индивидуальное «расположение» (гноми). «Тноми" относится к произволению в том же смысле, в каком состояние относится к действию (энергии)» [8, 395]. Введение понятия расположения предполагает не полную тождественность произволения собственно выбору, то есть самому волевому акту. Здесь образуется возможность применения свободы человека. Опираясь на концепт индивидуального расположения (гноми) св. Максим вводит новое понятие: «гномическая воля». Гномическая воля есть природная воля, получившая «гномическое» расположение в индивидууме (ипостаси). Понятие гномической воли вводится для того, чтобы иметь возможность говорить о способности индивидуума придавать своей природной энергии те или иные тропосы [8, 395].

Итак, тропос существования в ипостаси зависит от свободной воли индивида. Сама же воля,



Ladder to heaven

dinates but also within ethical ones. In St Maximus's own definition, the gnostic will "is a spontaneous individual impulse and movement of the mind" [8, 395]. The term 'spontaneous' (autexousion) in this definition refers to the concept of self-determination and free choice.

In theosis, a person employs their 'self-determination' (autexousia) in such a way as to renounce their gnostic will in favour of the Divine will. Upon attaining deification, the saints no longer possess a gnostic will. In the deified state, the gnostic will no longer operates; instead, only the Divine will remains, united with the human natural will. This is what St Maximus terms the 'single energy' of God and the saints. Consequently, St Maximus constructs a radically new conception of the will: 'two wills' in man and in Christ, but a single will in the deified.

The human will of the saints is removed specifically in the sense of their personal, gnostic will. In the words of the Apostle Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20) [8, 402]. In theosis, St Maximus notes, personal desires lose the capacity to deviate from God [8, 386]. Meanwhile, the natural will of the human person (as energy) is not abolished but is preserved as activity (the capacity to act). The gnostic will, however, is defined as passivity. Consequently, the concept of the 'active passivity' (passio activa) of human nature (will), developed by St Maximus for Christology, may be applied to the deified – as well as serving as a guide for the transformation of the human will during a shift in the tropos of existence.

Summary of Key Ontological Concepts

In the ontology of St Maximus, several concepts emerge as promising for further reflection. At this stage, they hold a primarily worldview-oriented interest; their subsequent development regarding therapeutic practice remains the subject of separate research. Here, we shall highlight the following: The Tropos of Existence. This is the order of organisation of strivings (desires), motives of volition, and rational decisions which, within a given ontological status: 1) operates, and 2) is subject to change-renewal in accordance with the Divine Logos.

Gnostic Disposition and Volition. The ontological status in which man exists prior to theosis is termed by St Maximus the empirical status. Within this status, the individual constantly chooses between

оставаясь, по существу, свободной, получает гномическое расположение. Поскольку вопрос стоит о выборе благобытия либо злобытия, речь о свободе может идти не только в онтологических координатах, но и в этических. В определении самого св. Максима гномическая воля «есть самопроизвольное индивидуальное стремление и движение разума» [8, 395]. «Самопроизвольное» в этом определении отсылает к концепту свободы и свободного выбора.

В обожении человек использует свое «самовластие» (свободу) так, чтобы отказаться от своей гномической воли в пользу воли Божией. Достигая обожения, святые не имеют уже гномической воли. В обожённом больше не действует его гномическая воля, а только воля Божия, соединенная с природной волей человеческой. Это то, что св. Максим называет «единой энергией» Бога и святых. Тем самым св. Максим создает радикально новую концепцию воли: «две воли» в человеке и во Христе, но одна воля в обожённых.

Человеческая воля святых устраняется в смысле их личной, гномической воли. Говоря словами ап. Павла: «уже не я живу, но живет во мне Христос» (Гал. 2,20) [8, 402]. В обожении, говорит св. Максим, личные хотения человек утрачивают возможность куда-либо уклоняться от Бога [8, 386]. При этом природная воля человека (как энергия) не упраздняется, но сохраняется как активность (способность действовать). Воля гномическая определяется как пассивность. Следовательно, понятие активной пассивности человеческой природы (воли), разработанной св. Максимом для христологии, может быть применимо и к обожённым. А также как ориентир для преобразования человеческой воли при смене тропоса существования.

Резюмируем. В онтологии св. Максима можно выделить несколько концептов, перспективных для дальнейшего осмысления. На данном уровне рассмотрения они представляют пока мировоззренческий интерес. Их дальнейшая разработка применительно к практике терапии – дело отдельного исследования. Здесь же сделаем акцент на следующем.

1. Тропос существования. Это порядок организации стремлений (желаний), (мотивов)

well-being (eu einai) or ill-being (kakoeinai). Leibniz suggested that deliberation signifies the direction in which one intends to "bend one's soul" [1, 214]. Disposition originates not only in consciousness but also in the unconscious.

Hypostasis and Name. While St Maximus's theory does not place primary emphasis on the name – a theme more central to Dionysius the Areopagite – the hypostatic name bears a substantial relation to the shift in tropos. The hypostasis itself does not change with the shift in tropos, yet it is precisely to the hypostasis that what we call the 'self' belongs. The transformation of nature within the hypostasis leads to a shift in the order of identifications. The manner in which the hypostasis (the subject) disposes of nature within itself defines the sum of identifications expressed by the name. Here, the name functions primarily not as a proper noun, but as a signifier (signifiant), framing and revealing the entire network of true meanings. The disposition is included within the name as a predicate [1, 22]; the name indicates the direction of the disposition. (Apostle) Paul, (Saint) Anthony, Jesus Christ, Abraham, Moses, Job – these are names in which one may read all the meanings pertaining to the disposition of their hypostases. We recall that one of the names of Christ is Man. Leibniz asserted that the concept of the subject contains everything that happens to the subject – that is, everything that is predicated of the subject as true. In "Adam sinned," the sin at a certain moment belongs to the concept of Adam [1, 27].

The Ethical Dimension within the Tropos of Existence

The concept of theosis establishes dogmatic coordinates for the ethical decisions of the subject, insofar as the actions of the free will constitute the foundation of the ethical – conceived as the manner in which a human being exercises their freedom. Kierkegaard speaks of a "new ethics": an ethics that presupposes dogmatics as its premise [5, 38].

Who is the subject of ethical decisions? In the context of deification, it is man as such – not a private, "accidental," or singular representative of one's own "opinion" (such as Peter or Paul), but the subject acting on behalf of nature.

произволения и разумных решений, который в том или ином онтологическом статусе 1) действует, 2) подлжит изменению-обновлению в соответствии с логосом Божьим.

2. Гномическое расположение и произволение. Онтологический статус, в котором человек находится до обожения св. Максим называет эмпирическим статусом. В нем человек постоянно выбирает либо благобытие, либо злобытие. У Лейбница есть мысль, что раздумывание означает, в какую сторону я собираюсь сгибать свою душу [1, 214]. Расположение имеет своим источником не только сознание, но и бессознательное.

3. Ипостась и имя. Теория св. Максима не делает особого акцента на имени. Это тема Дионисия Ареопагита. Однако, ипостасное имя имеет существенное отношение к смене тропоса. Сама ипостась не изменяется со сменой тропоса, но именно к ипостаси относится то, что мы называем собственным я. Изменение природы внутри ипостаси приводит к изменению порядка идентификаций. То, как ипостась (субъект) располагает внутри себя природу, задает сумму идентификаций, выраженных именем. Имя выступает здесь не в первую очередь как имя собственное, а как означающее, оформляющее и раскрывающее всю сеть истинных значений. Расположение входит в состав имени как предикат [1, 22]. Имя указывает направление расположения. (Апостол) Павел, (святой) Антоний, Иисус Христос, Авраам, Моисей, Иов – имена, в которых можно прочесть все смыслы, относящиеся к расположению их ипостасей. Напомним, что одно из имен Христа – Человек. Лейбниц утверждал, что понятие субъекта содержит, все, что с субъектом происходит, то есть все истинное, что говорится о субъекте. В понятии «Адам согрешил» грех в некий момент принадлежит к понятию Адама. [1, 27].

Этическое измерение в тропосе существования.

Концепт обожения создает догматические координаты для этических решений субъекта, поскольку действия свободной воли лежат в основании этического как способа применения человеком своей свободы. Кьеркегор говорит о новой этике: этике, которая заранее полагает догматику в качестве своей предпосылки. [5, 38].

Two concepts frequently encountered in ascetic literature – "trial" (испытание) and "temptation" (искушение) – may serve as registers for examining the applicability of the components of theosis as a concept within the ethical dimension. Both trial and temptation concern how the hypostasis (the subject) understands its relationship with the Divine Logos and how it disposes itself – that is, how it employs its freedom in relation to the meanings of the logos. Given the constraints of the present text, we shall, for the time being, focus exclusively on the register of the trial.

Trial

1. The Junction of the Divine logos and the Tropos of Existence

In its ultimate sense, the trial (испытание) concerns the relationship between God and man. An encounter with the Real [7] typically entails two conditions: 1) a challenge to the totality of human destiny, and 2) one's personal response with the whole of one's being. The trial touches upon a certain "core of being" (Kern unseres Wesens) – something situated at the "boundaries of the Real," beyond which there is no further retreat for the individual. This is the "place" which constitutes the Divine Logos within every human being. The trial serves precisely to uncover this logos at the core of existence and to manifest fidelity to it, now exercised through one's own free will. The essence of the trial lies in the possibility and capacity to reveal the truth of oneself on an anthropological level. "The trial is absolutely transcendent and plunges man into a purely personal confrontation with God, into a position that does not allow for contentment with any second-hand explanation" [4, 101]. The transcendent nature of the trial points toward the domain of the mysterious and the inscrutable, which "appals" or terrifies [4, 97].

"How is a man to know whether that which befalls him is a trial?" Kierkegaard asks. A trial cannot be subjectivised. One cannot say, "I am undergoing a trial"; one cannot apply it to oneself as a mere category. It remains always a gaze from the side of God. The task for the individual is to uphold the internal law. Kant termed this "respect and veneration for the law" (Achtung). The famous Kantian maxim refers to the law of reason within the heart [4]. The fundamental Divine law is love. "In all Job's obstinacy, love and trust in God are clearly visible" [4, 98–99]. Simultaneously, Job knows that "alt-

Who is the subject of ethical decisions? In the context of deification this is a person as such, not a particular, «случайный», сингулярный представитель собственного «мнения» (Петр или Павел), а как субъект, действующий от лица природы.

In the registers of consideration of the applicability of the components of deification to the ethical measurement, one can take for consideration two often encountered concepts in ascetic literature: «испытание» and «искушение». The trial and temptation have to do with how the hypostasis (subject) understands its relationship with the Logos and how it disposes itself, that is, how it uses its freedom relative to the meanings of the logos. Considering the limitations of the volume of the text, we will stop for the moment only on the register of the trial.

Испытание

1. Сопряжение логоса Божьего и тропоса существования.

The trial in its ultimate sense concerns the relationship between God and man. An encounter with the Real [7] typically entails two conditions: 1) a challenge to the totality of human destiny, and 2) one's personal response with the whole of one's being. The trial touches upon a certain "core of being" (Kern unseres Wesens) – something situated at the "boundaries of the Real," beyond which there is no further retreat for the individual. This is the "place" which constitutes the Divine Logos within every human being. The trial serves precisely to uncover this logos at the core of existence and to manifest fidelity to it, now exercised through one's own free will. The essence of the trial lies in the possibility and capacity to reveal the truth of oneself on an anthropological level. "The trial is absolutely transcendent and plunges man into a purely personal confrontation with God, into a position that does not allow for contentment with any second-hand explanation" [4, 101]. The transcendent nature of the trial points toward the domain of the mysterious and the inscrutable, which "appals" or terrifies [4, 97].

"How is a man to know whether that which befalls him is a trial?" Kierkegaard asks. A trial cannot be subjectivised. One cannot say, "I am undergoing a trial"; one cannot apply it to oneself as a mere category. It remains always a gaze from the side of God. The task for the individual is to uphold the internal law. Kant termed this "respect and veneration for the law" (Achtung). The famous Kantian maxim refers to the law of reason within the heart [4]. The fundamental Divine law is love. "In all Job's obstinacy, love and trust in God are clearly visible" [4, 98–99]. Simultaneously, Job knows that "alt-

though man is a frail creature, in the matter of freedom he represents something great; he possesses a self-consciousness that even the Lord God Himself, having granted it, cannot take away" [4, 98]. Thus, in this situation, Job defines himself twofold: through love and trust in God, and through his inherent value in the eyes of God. In other words, he perceives himself as God perceives him. He identifies himself with the gaze from the side of God.

A trial, by Kierkegaard's definition, is a temporal category and must be resolved within the bounds of time, yet occasionally this "time" encompasses the entirety of a person's destiny. The character of the shift in the tropos of existence is, in fact, the destiny of man. The trial may be termed the "sublimation of being."

2. The Incorruptibility of Volition. The Immutability of Volition.

St Maximus defines sin as the "corruption of volition" (тление произволения). This corruption arises as a consequence of the "corruption of nature" (тление естества) spreading toward the volitional act. In the case of Job, this "corruption of nature" – manifested through the manifold sufferings visited upon him – rendered existence itself unbearable. "The secret of Job," Kierkegaard writes, "his vitality, his nerve, his very idea – is that Job... stands his ground. He maintains that he is at one with God, innocent and pure of soul, and that God is of the same opinion – even if his entire existence suggests the contrary" [4, 98]. Kierkegaard identifies Job as the founder of the category of the trial [4, 101].

Job had every reason to succumb to despair, to lose his mind, or to grow feeble and surrender to the mercy of the Punisher. "But no, he stood his ground!" Job was coerced toward a choice by his friends and his wife. We frequently formulate moral choice as a selection between good and evil. However, at the level of the trial – when it concerns an encounter with the Real (with God, love, truth) – the very posing of the question of choice is already an evil. Job's environment pressured him to choose between sin and the renunciation of God. In a situation of forced choice, the manifestation of freedom can be either death (for which Job yearns) or standing in God.

This steadfastness is what St Maximus terms the incorruptibility of volition. Job chooses fidelity to God

категорию. Это всегда взгляд со стороны Бога. Задача человека держаться внутреннего закона. Кант называл это уважением и поклонением закону. Знаменитая кантовская максима — закон разума, который в сердце [4]. Основной божественный закон есть любовь. «При всем упорстве Иова ясно видны любовь и доверие к Богу» [4, 98–99]. В то же время Иов знает, что «хотя человек и брэнное создание, но в отношении свободы представляет нечто великое, обладает самосознанием, которого не может отнять у него и сам Господь Бог, давший ему это самосознание» [4, 98]. Таким образом в этой ситуации Иов определяет себя двояко: через любовь и доверие к Богу, и через свою ценность в глазах Бога. Иначе говоря, он смотрит на себя так, как видит его Бог. Испытание по определению Кьеркегора есть категория временная, и должна разрешаться в пределах времени, однако иногда это время всей судьбы человека. Характер смены тропоса существования и есть судьба человека. Испытание можно назвать «сублимацией бытия».

2. Нетление произволения. Непреложность произволения.

Св. Максим определяет грех как «тление произволения». Тление произволения возникает вследствие распространения на него тления естества. «Тление естества», представленное всевозможными страданиями, которые обрушились на Иова, сделали невыносимым бытие. «Тайна Иова», пишет Кьеркегор, «его жизненная сила, нерв, идея его — в том, что Иов ... твердо стоит на своем. Он утверждает, что в ладах с Богом, невинен и чист в душе, что и Бог того же мнения, — хотя бы все его существование доказывало противное» [4, 98]. Кьеркегор называет Иова основателем категории испытания [4, 101]. «Иову было от чего прийти в отчаяние, лишиться рассудка или обессилеть, совсем опуститься и сдаться на милость Карающего. Но нет, он твердо уперся!». Со стороны друзей и жены Иов был принуждаем к выбору. Мы часто формулируем моральный выбор как выбор между добром и злом. На самом деле, на уровне испытания, когда дело идет о встрече с реальным (с Богом, любовью, истиной), сама постановка вопроса о выборе уже является злом. Окружение Иова

as a form of the "law" of love. Only by maintaining this fidelity to love can he remain free. To confess himself a sinner would be to forfeit both love and freedom. Job chooses not to choose. This is the essence of freedom in God: to refrain from exercising one's human freedom of choice. While Kierkegaard does not consider the trial an ethical category, it is precisely this choice not to exercise "freedom of choice" that can be understood here as an ethical decision. This is an ethical resolution of a different order: not a choice between alternatives, but a level of essential self-determination. It is an identification following the formula: "I am that I am." By his own will, man demonstrates the "immutability of volition which naturally belongs to God alone" [8, 403]. It is the very freedom of man that allows him to renounce his human freedom of choice, accepting the choice of the Good as final and beyond revision [8, 403].

In theosis, St Maximus states, nature is "transformed through the immutability of volition into incorruptibility, for God rationally judged that a man who does not change his volition may once again receive back an immortal nature" [8, 398]. God restores property and family to Job, and Isaac to Abraham, not as a reward for their courage. He restores life because He is the God of the living, not of the dead. Deification presupposes the transformation of human nature (consisting of rational soul and body) as a whole, including its physicality. This is no mere symbol or mark of distinction. The path toward theosis is not a ritual act, but a real process accomplished through the free volition of a living person.

3. Hypostasis and the Name

Theosis, according to St Maximus, is "accomplished through the Divine logoi in each individual in a singular manner—specifically, that which is granted to Paul personally... that is, by virtue of Paul's own assent, rather than merely by virtue of Paul's belonging to human nature" [8, 386]. The disposition of the subject is structured around the name.

Job's trial lies in the fact that his friends offered him a different mode of naming. His hypostatic nature would have had to acquire new signifiers, and consequently, a new disposition. The name of the subject implies a shift in position, a new point of reference. The subject is constituted by the viewpoint,

предлагает ему сделать выбор между грехом и отречением от Бога. Проявлением свободы в ситуации вынужденного выбора может быть либо смерть (чего и жаждет Иов), либо стояние в Боге. «Но нет, он твердо уперся!», говорит Кьеркегор. Это твердое стояние св. Максим называет нетлением произволения. Иов выбирает верность Богу как форму «закона» любви. Только при сохранении верности любви он может оставаться свободным. Признание себя грешником лишило бы его и любви и свободы. Иов выбирает не выбирать. В этом смысл свободы в Боге: не пользоваться своей человеческой свободой выбора. Кьеркегор не считает испытание этической категорией. Однако, именно выбор не пользоваться «свободой выбора» может быть здесь понят как этическое решение. Это этическое решение другого уровня: не выбора альтернатив, а уровня сущностного самоопределения. Это идентификация по формуле «я есмь тот, кто есмь». Человек по своей воле показывает «непреложность произволения, которая свойственна по естеству только Богу» [8, 403]. Именно свобода человека позволяет ему отказаться от своей человеческой свободы выбора, приняв выбор добра в качестве окончательного и не подлежащего пересмотру [8, 403].

В обожении природа, говорит св. Максим, «преобразилась через непреложность произволения в нетление, поскольку Бог разумно рассудил, что человек, не изменяющий произволения, вновь может получить обратно бессмертную природу» [8, 398]. Бог возвращает имущество и семью Иову и Исаака Аврааму не для того, чтобы вознаградить их за мужество. Он возвращает жизнь, потому что он Бог живых, а не мертвых. Обожение предполагает преобразование природы человека (из разумной души и тела) как целого, в том числе ее телесности. Это не чистый символ, не знак отличия. Путь к обожению не ритуальное действие, а реальный процесс, совершаемый свободным произволением живого человека.

3. Ипостась и имя.

Обожение, говорит св. Максим, «осуществляется через логосы Божии, в каждом человеке «особым образом, и именно таким,

rather than the viewpoint being constituted by the subject [1, 33]. The name is the centre of identification. Along with the name, the perspective of the relationship with the Divine Logos is constructed. Now Job "must" identify himself as "Job the Sinner" or "Job the Apostate."

However, in the first chapter of the Book of Job, God says to Satan: "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:18). A change in naming (disposition) would mean for Job not only appearing before God as a man who "deceives" but also acknowledging God as a "deceiver." We may assume that Job understood that the signifier "sinner," in the sense offered by his friends, denotes not a state of sin but a state of evil. For him a change in disposition in favour of calling himself a sinner is a movement towards ill-being.

In the context of the perspective of deification, the name "Servant of God" represents an initial and, at the same time, a final name for the subject. The name "Servant of God" is an antinomy: it is both the most ordinary and the most singular concept in one person. It is a proper name – the name of this specific individual in the full totality of their singularity – an "ordinary" servant of God. Simultaneously, it is the name that represents the whole of human nature before the Divine Logos on behalf of the singular subject. The path toward theosis begins at the point where man obtains this name.

Summary

The concept of the gnostic will provides the theoretical framework to discuss the individual's capacity to impart specific tropoi to their natural energy – that is, to make decisions regarding the direction toward good or evil. This allows the concept of theosis to be viewed as a set of dogmatic coordinates for the ethical questions confronting the human subject.

The Divine Logos, which resides within every human being, is inevitably present in the resolution of questions encountered on the path toward self-actualisation and healing. The doctrine of theosis provides both a perspective and a direction for the transformation of the mode of being (the shift in the tropos of nature's existence), as well as a trajectory for changing the manner in which a person handles their freedom (in the sense of healing-salvation).

который даруется Павлу лично, ... то есть по причине соизволения самого Павла, а не просто по причине принадлежности Павла к человеческой природе» [8, 386]. Расположение субъекта выстраивается вокруг имени.

Испытание Иова в том, что друзья предлагают ему иной способ именованья. Его ипостасная природа должна была бы приобрести новые означающие, следовательно, новое расположение. Имя субъекта предполагает смену позиции, новую точку отсчета. Субъект конституируется точкой зрения, а не точка зрения субъектом [1, 33]. Имя — это центр идентификации. Вместе с именем выстраивается и перспектива отношений с логосом Божьим. Теперь он должен идентифицировать себя как «Иов-грешник» или «Иов-отступник». Однако Бог в первой главе книги Иова говорит сатане: «обратил ли ты внимание твое на раба Моего Иова? Ибо нет такого, как он на земле: человек непорочный, богобоязненный, справедливый и удаляющийся от зла» (Иов. 1:18). Смена именованья (расположения) означала бы для Иова не только предстать перед Богом человеком, «обманывающим Бога», но и признать Бога «обманщиком». Возможно, Иов понимал, что означающее «грешник» в том смысле, который предлагают ему друзья, есть не состояние греха, а состояние зла. Перемена расположения в пользу именованья себя грешником есть движение в сторону злобытия.

В контексте перспективы обожения имя Раб Божий представляет собой некое начальное и в то же время конечное имя субъекта. Имя Раб Божий есть антиномия: это и самое ординарное и самое сингулярное (единичное) понятие в одном лице. Это имя собственное, имя вот этого индивидуального во всей его полноте единичности субъекта, «обычного» раба Божьего. В то же время это имя, представляющее от имени единичного субъекта всю человеческую природу перед Логосом Божьим. С места обретения имени человеком начинается путь обожения.

Резюмируем.

1) Понятие гномической воли дает возможность говорить о способности индивидуума придавать своей природной энергии те или иные тропосы, то есть принимать решения о выборе направления к добру или злу. Это

Theosis emerges as the universal horizon of human existence. In this sense, the hypothesis of deification and its fundamental coordinates may be validly applied when considering the tasks of psychotherapeutic healing as one of the conditions for the path to salvation.

позволяет рассматривать концепт обожения как догматические координаты для этических вопросов, стоящих перед человеком.

2) Логос Божий, который в каждом человеке, неизбежно присутствует в решении вопросов, стоящих перед человеком на пути его самоосуществления и исцеления. Концепция обожения дает перспективу и направление преобразования образа бытия человека (смена тропоса существования природы), а также направление изменения способа обращения человека со своей свободой (в смысле исцеления – спасения).

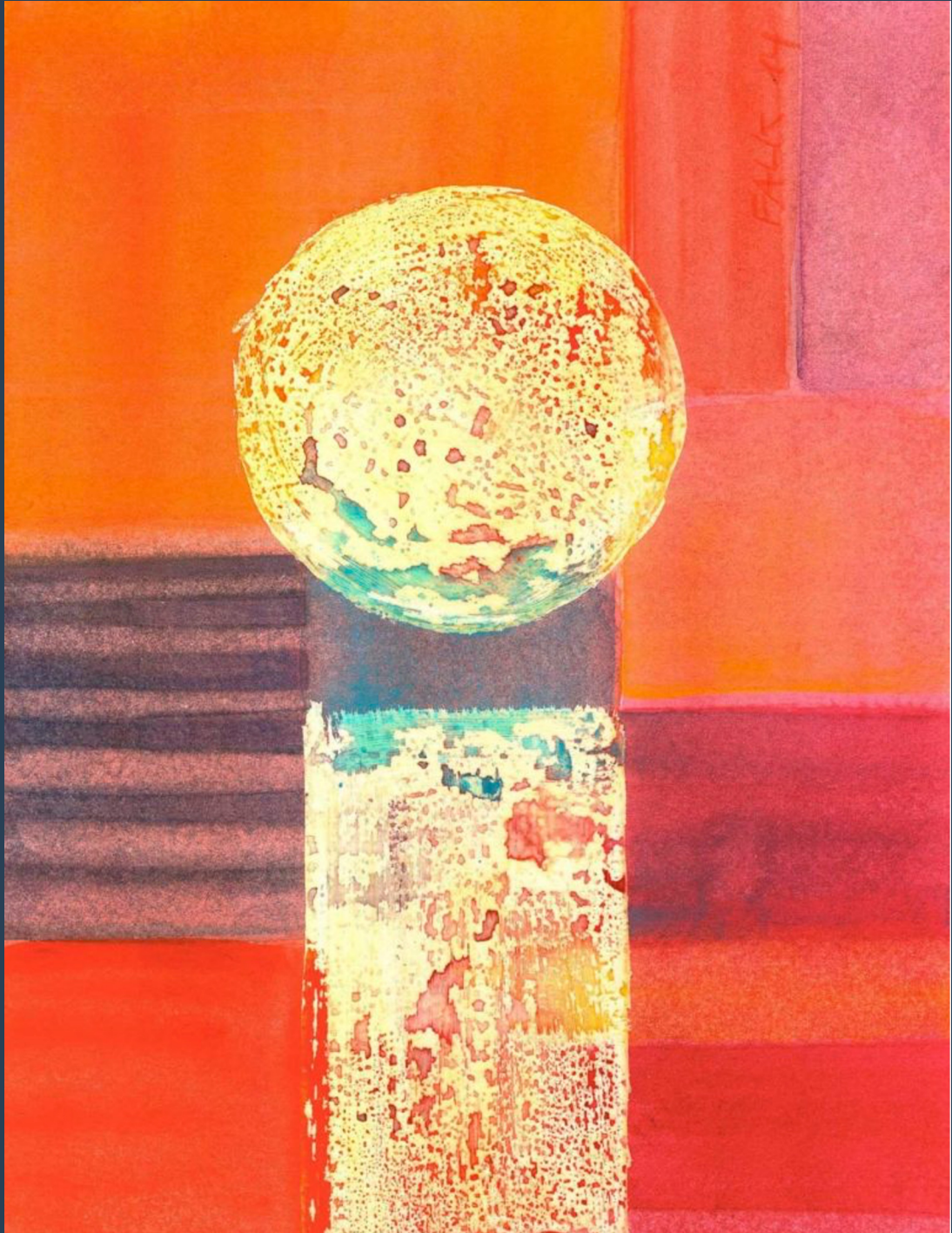
3) Обожение оказывается общим горизонтом существования человека. В этом смысле гипотеза обожения и ее основные координаты могут иметь место при рассмотрении задач психотерапевтического исцеления человека как одного из условий его пути к спасению.

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Breakthrough

comment

Elena Strigo is to be commended for her discussion of St. Maximus the Confessor's theology of the will, which uses the distinction between natural and gnostic wills and the doctrine of theosis to introduce an ethical and ontological teleology to the psychoanalytic project. While I appreciate Strigo's arguments, I think we diverge significantly on the role and value of choice in the journey toward deification (*theosis*).

The Maximian Framework: Natural and Gnostic Wills

St. Maximus posits two modes of the human will. The **natural will** is an inherent faculty of human nature, acting as a perpetual, intrinsic movement toward God. It is this uncorrupted, pre-lapsarian capacity that allows a person to act naturally according to the Divine Logos. The **gnomic will** is not an inherent faculty but a personal, individual mode (*topos*) of willing, involving deliberation, hesitation, and, crucially, choice. A consequence of our fallen state, this will is often divided against itself. The natural will aims at God; the gnostic will chooses how and if to pursue that aim.

Points of Convergence: The Fragmented Will

Both Strigo and I agree that the current state of human existence is fundamentally damaged. In my reading of St. Maximus, that this damage is due to reason intruding between the will and God, leading to a hesitant and painful existence. The gnostic will's choice between well-being (*eu einai*) and ill-being (*kakoeinai*) reflects our profound alienation from the natural will's true purpose. The gnostic will is preoccupied with a flawed, self-centered identification—an idealized self-image—which is the root of *prelest* (self-delusion) in our spiritual life and neurosis in our psychological life. *Theosis*, or complete resolution of this internal conflict, is a divine gift only realized fully eschatologically, where the will functions as a "single energy" shared by God and the saints.

The Crux of Disagreement: The Value of Choice

Our primary divergence concerns the ethical value of choice. For Strigo, choice is an essential and vital ethical act; the conscious, free exercise of choice effecting a real, substantive change in one's mode of being. Deification is a process of active ethical resolution. Conversely, I would argue that the ability to make gnostic choices is, for Maximus, a symptom of freedom's absence and a reflection of our fallen state. The act of making gnostic choices reflects our attachment not to the Good Who is God but to our limited *ideas* about the Good. True spiritual progress is rooted in the sacraments and requires renouncing the choosing self of the gnostic will through ascetical struggle in favor of the total, unreserved created attachment to the Infinite that defines the natural will.



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This difference in valuation leads to distinct psychological applications. Strigo uses the figure of Job's ethical "trial" to illustrate freedom, focusing on his refusal to choose a false identification. This refusal confirms his original orientation and fidelity to the Logos (natural will). What Job must resist is his own, gnostic will. In psychological language, the gnostic will brings not freedom, but a life of neurotic compulsion in which the person is not a free agent making choices but is driven by an internalized, idealized self-image and a drive for artificial safety.

I concur with the author that the ultimate goal of human life is renunciation of the internally fragmented, self-obsessed gnostic will in favor of communion with God. Where Strigo sees the path defined by the active exercise of ethical choices, I think it is more theologically precise to say that transformation requires we renounce the gnostic will in favor of the natural will. This act of repentance is not a matter of making better choices, but gradually coming to live more in the harmony with God that is the natural will.

Reconciliation Not Integration

This is why I think spirituality and psychology should pursue reconciliation over integration. Pastoral and clinical practitioners must move beyond the self-determining impulse that characterizes the gnostic mode of our respective professions—beholden as they both often are to the fanciful world of idealized self-images—and toward the reality of God and the neighbor. This process is inherently painful because it requires the surrender of the self that the gnostic will has spent a lifetime constructing.

Ultimately, the "problem" of the will is the central drama of human life. The gnostic will is the mechanism by which we isolate ourselves in a world of our own making, disconnected from the sacrament of creation. Healing, or theosis, is the process of shedding this gnostic mode and returning to the natural will, where the human person is no longer a hesitant, wandering creature, but one fully attached to the only Reality capable of providing true rest. Through this reconciliation, the fragmented, "gnomic" selves of spirituality and psychotherapy are surrendered, allowing the person to exist as they were truly intended: in union with the Eternal and Unchanging.

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More about him see here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Vitz

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Fathers' effects on their children's behavior and personality: Research and a summary of findings

This paper summarizes the positive effects of a father's presence for his children's personality development and on the negative effects of father absence. It identifies a few basic early studies but concentrates on recent findings including recent research from Asia, Africa and South America. The positive effects of a father's presence include children's having better mental health and higher academic performance, and the mother's having better morale. Father-present children also show better social development, better impulse control, and have better economic outcomes. The negative con-

sequences of father absence include much criminal behavior and violence, drug use, and psychological disorders. The paper then summarizes the basic positive father contributions. These are: the father is the primary source of self-control; he is an important source of gender identity—especially for boys—and is a source of individuation and social identity; he also is the major parent for passing on religious faith. The paper then turns to the issue of how this understanding of the father might be given more social awareness. It mentions the already existing programs for enhancing the father's role

and provides many references to these programs. Social forces hostile to fathers, and to men in general, must be recognized and overcome. Finally, it is suggested that a better understanding of a masculine self is needed. This masculine self should be understood as having a complementary relation to the female self. Mothers often sacrifice for their children and fathers should also see their highest purpose is having the courage to sacrifice for others, especially for the family.

Despite much research over many decades, it is still the case that many people today do not grasp and appreciate the importance of fathers for their children. The goal of these pages is to present some basic early United States research followed by recent evidence from the US and from Asia, South America and Africa. At the end of this paper, we will present basic, major father effects and note behind these effects and note reasons for resistance to recognizing their importance. Relevant Biblical references to father effects are given in an Appendix.

Introduction to General Findings

Although much of the research is recent, clear findings on fathers' impact on their offspring are available as far back as 1950, by Glueck and Glueck. Likewise, Peterson, et al. (1959) reported that the attitudes of fathers were just as influential to children as the attitudes of mothers. Other early papers Stinnett (1964) and Walters and Stinnett (1971) wrote that the research showed that the father's influence on his children seemed to be as important as the mother's at least after the early years. The work of Parish provided further early evidence for a father's positive contribution to his children's personality and behavior. See Parish (1980), Parish & Copeland (1980), Parish & Kappes (1980), and Parish & Taylor (1979).

A more recent review of father effects on their children with much evidence for father importance is Cabrera & Tamis-LeMonda (2013). Putnick et al. (2015) show the importance of both mother and father acceptance or rejection in nine very different countries: China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, the Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, and the United States.

Here are other early general early findings. In a systematic cross-cultural comparative study of 101 societies around the world Rohner (1975) found that children everywhere—across a full range of social and economic systems—tend to be accepted by

mothers to a greater degree in households where fathers are present on a day-to-day basis than in households where the fathers are less present (Rohner and Veneziano, 2001, p.387). In addition, Rohner's research showed that the more important fathers are as socializing agents in the family the greater the warmth children receive from *all* the major caregivers in that society (p. 388). These findings were upheld in later studies of 186 different societies: Rohner (1986), Rohner & Rohner (1982).

More recent studies support these general findings. For example, studies often report that father presence reduces maternal distress (Coley & Schindler, 2008) and increases the supportiveness of the mother with her children (Chikovore, Makusha & Richter, 2013) and also helps reduce her possible pre- and postpartum depression: Fields, et al. (2023), Zhang, Ma & Li (2023). For the protective role of fathers in response to maternal adversity see Fields, et al., 2023.

Specific Positive Effects of Father Presence

The following pages note a large number of recent specific positive father effects including 1. better happiness and emotional life, 2. better cognitive and academic achievement, 3. better social development and resilience, 4. freedom from mother's over-emotional involvement, 5. good sexual identity and impulse control, 6. less bullying and better peer relationships.

In homes with adolescent mothers, consistent father contact was associated with better socio-emotional and academic functioning at 8 and 10 years of age. Children with greater levels of father contact had fewer behavioral problems, more academic motivation, and higher academic performance, particularly with higher scores on reading achievement. For research supporting the preceding effects, see a review by Allen & Daly (2007); and studies by Chikovore, Makusha & Richte (2013); Howard, et al., (2006). For adolescents in foster care, resilience was positively associated with acceptance by the father: Davidson-Arad & Naarobitton (2015). For general resilience coming from fathers see Feldman (2023). A typical example of the positive effects of father involvement on emotional well-being comes from a study in Botswana, Africa by Kesebonye & Amone-P'Olak (2021).

Caberea, Shannon & Tamis-Lemonda (2007) also show positive father effects on cognitive abilities

and emotional well-being. Contributions of fathers to the child's executive functions include positive effects on children's language development are reported by Pancsofar, Vernon-Feagans & Family Life Project Investigators (2010), and by Ataman-Devrim, Nixon & Quigley (2023). This positive contribution to executive functioning was also found by Chou, et al. (2023). Pougnet, et al. (2011) found that for both boys and girls, father's positive parental control predicted higher performance IQ and fewer internalizing problems over a period of six years.

Father's positive effect on student achievement is reported by McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan & Ho (2005) and by Roopnarine, et al., (2006). Kim (2018) identifies the importance of the father for child academic achievement in ways that are different from the mother.

The association between father involvement and happiness was equally strong for both sons and daughters (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003a). The same authors also found that father involvement at child age seven protected against psychological maladjustment in adolescents from non-intact families, and that father involvement at child age 16 protected against adult psychological distress in women: Flouri & Buchanan (2003b); Flouri, (2005); Ali, Khalque, & Rohner (2015). Father involvement reduced both depressive symptoms due to maternal rejection and the effects of bullying in his children: Papadaki & Geovaziolias (2015), Teel, et al. (2016). However, it is not surprising if the father relationship is negative his protection against depression no longer shows up: Demidenko, Manion & Lee (2015). Secure attachment with the father has been shown to significantly reduce anxiety in their adolescent children (Vetterly, et al., 2024); and greater father and greater mother attachment were each separately associated with lower depression in their children: Xu, et al. (2023). A child's secure attachment to the father makes a unique contribution to a child's self-esteem. Pinto, et al. (2015).

Fathers contribute also to subjective well-being in their children as they transit to adulthood: Semšiová, Ráčová, & Babinčák (2024). Eggebeen (2008) also reports the father's contribution to child well-being. A child's secure attachment to the father makes a unique contribution to a child's self-esteem. Pinto, et al. (2015).

When fathers are positively engaged in their children's lives, the children are more likely to excel soci-

ally, emotionally, and academically: Adamsons & Johnson (2013), Baker, Kainz & Reynolds (2018), Downer, et al., (2008). This effect is particularly strong among children who are disadvantaged, including those in low-income communities and subpar educational systems (Mathwasa & Okeke, 2016).

Many researchers have found that the father makes major contributions to a child's social development. See the meta-analysis by Deneault, Hammond & Madigan (2023). Fathers also contribute to a child's individual identity. Examples include Cath, et al. (1989), Hetherington (1980), Ross (1984), Cabello, Spencer-Contreras & Carcamo (2023).

The father helps the child separate psychologically from the mother and to individuate as a distinct person. (See Walper and Gerhard, 2001, on over 400 German youth.) For development of social skills (Feldman, et al., 2023). And for good peer relationships children are also supported by father-child interaction: Cui, et al., (2023), Jin, et al. (2023). They write, the "fathers positive parenting attitudes (emotional warmth and understanding or interference protection) can improve children's peer communication and social adaptability" (quote from abstract). Not surprisingly, they add that father negative attitudes can hinder these abilities. In a related study it was found that a high level of father presence was especially positive for the development of cognitive empathy, affective empathy, and sympathy in Chinese adolescents (Ying, Li & Tan, 2021).

The father teaches the child, especially boys, to control impulses and to learn and respond to the laws and rules of the society. The father also contributes significantly to the sexual socialization of his children. (Grossman, et al., 2024). Kubicka, et al., (2024) show that the father also helps children reduce their sense of body shame,

The father serves also as a buffer for the mother's attention and emotions (both affection and anger) that might otherwise be too heavily focused on the child. Thus, the father offers the child another reference point and a haven and helps the mother to avoid over emotionalizing her relationships with her children. For example, fathers have been found to help develop emotional regulation in their children. See Islamiah, et al., (2023).

For young children, the father also commonly facilitates intellectual and cognitive development, along with as noted, behavioral control (e.g. Duncan, et

al.,1994). Supporting these findings is evidence that fatherless children more frequently drop out of school: McNeal, (1995), Sandefur, McLanahan & Wojtkiewicz (1992). The father has a reliable positive effect on increasing his children's academic performance: Alfaro, Umana-Taylor & Bamaca (2006), Howard, et al., (2006). Even expressive language can be enhanced by father involvement in young children: Ataman-Devrin, Nixon & Guigley (2023).

In a study done in the Peoples Republic of China by Chen, et al. (2000) researchers, using sixth grade students, found that the degree of father's warmth, but not mother's warmth, was associated with less disruptive aggression toward peers. Also, father's warmth was positively associated with the child's academic performance and social competence. A review of some of the positive effects of father involvement, including different effects on boys and girls, is found in Sarkadi, et al. (2008). A more recent meta-analysis of father involvement and academic achievement highlighting positive father effects is by Jeynes (2015).

Many studies have now shown that a warm and loving father is a major contributor to a son's masculine identity. Curiously, this finding was dependent on paternal warmth and was independent of the father's own masculinity (Lamb, 1997, Rohner and Veneziano, 2001).

It's the father's acceptance or warmth/love toward the child that is *the crucial factor* not his mere presence. Other studies showing the positive effects of a father's love and/or presence include Amato & Rivera (1999), Coley (2003), Khaleque and Rohner (2002), Kim, Cain and McCubbin (2006), Veneziano (2003), Rohner (2004). A study by Khaleque, Rohner and Laukkala (2008), using Finnish subjects in an on-going relationship, found that psychological adjustment was positively related to remembrance of father's acceptance for both men and women (maternal acceptance was not thus related).

The kind of findings noted above are summarized in a quote from the abstract of Henry, Julion, Bounds & Sumo (2020): "Positive father involvement is critical to the healthy social, emotional, and academic outcomes of children at all stages of development." A meta-analysis by Jeynes (2016) summarizes in his abstract much of the above as follows: a positive "association between fathering and the outcome variables held across social measurements, psychological indicators, and academic achievement. This

relationship also held for both boys and girls and across age groups."

There are also well documented books supporting the above findings that include Gray & Anderson (2010); Raeburn (2014).

Specific Negative Effects of Father Absence

a. Criminal behavior

Early Studies. Probably the single most widely and indeed now massively documented finding is the importance of fathers in preventing criminal and anti-social behavior in their sons. Even 75 years ago this finding was well documented by two Harvard University researchers, Glueck and Glueck (1950), who published a scale that predicted juvenile delinquency in boys with an accuracy seldom found in social science. Their scale, used by them and by others in subsequent studies, contains five dimensions, all evaluations of family life. These are: father's affection for the boy, father's discipline of the boy, mother's affection for the boy, mother's supervision of the boy, and overall cohesiveness of the family. Low scores on these dimensions, especially on all five, reliably predicted youthful criminality. If the father is not present in the family a low score is obviously inevitable on the first two dimensions, father's affection and father's discipline and very likely on the last one, cohesiveness of the family. In addition, the mother's capacity to supervise is commonly greatly reduced by father absence; and finally, research cited below has found that even a mother's affection for her children is often lower when the father is absent.

Another important early study done in England by Wilson (1980) made this clear. Wilson examined boys growing up in both inner city and suburban areas. Juvenile delinquency was tested against parental strictness, social handicap (inner city vs. suburban) and parental criminality (parental arrest record). Parental strictness was measured by such factors as whether a child was required to be home by a certain time, and whether his mother could find him when he was not at home. Wilson found that the delinquency rate in lax families was over seven times greater than that in strict families! The delinquency rate in socially handicapped families and those with a parent with a criminal record was markedly less, being only about two times as high as the comparison group. Wilson concluded: "supervision is the most important single factor in determining juvenile delinquency" (p. 230). Many

social scientists have commented that supervision, especially of boys, is difficult for single mothers since they often have little time for supervision and since children see their fathers as more powerful and threatening Hetherington (1979), Phares (1997). It is reported that siblings fight with each other more in female-headed households than do children raised in the traditional two parent household (Laurson, 1995).

Young men who see their parents' divorce—and their father leave—during their teen years are especially likely to engage in criminal behavior: Jenkins (1995), Mednick, Baker and Carothers (1990). The growth of female delinquency has also been linked to father absent homes: Heimer (1996), Rantakallio, Myloman and Koiranen (1995). Snell and Morton (1994) have also reported that 42% of a very large sample of women in prison grew up in a single-mother household.

Recent studies: There are many recent reports that show the link between fatherlessness and criminal behavior. Some examples based primarily on US subjects include: Barrett, Katslyannis & Zhang (2010), Cobb-Clark & Tekin (2011), Gove and Crutchfield (1982), Figueira-McDonough (1993), Harper and McLanahan (2004), Marquis (1992), Landers, Mitchell & Coates (2015), Matsueda and Heimer (1987), Phares (1997), Sampson (2011), Sourander, et al. (2006), Tolan, Cronwell, & Brasswell (1986), Yoder, Brisson & Lopez (2016). And TenEyck, Knox & El Sayed (2021) report that the negative effect of an absent father on later criminal behavior sometimes shows up even in late adulthood. A study by Alleyne-Green, et al., (2015) found in a sample of American black adolescents that closeness to the father or father-figure reduced dating violence in males and lowered sexual risk behavior for females.

The criminality effect of the fatherless is worldwide. For example, Veneziano (1998) in a cross-cultural comparative study of 32 societies, representing the world's known and adequately described socio-cultural systems, found that the lack of the father's presence and warmth predicted young male's interpersonal violence. Still other examples include a study by the German researchers Klosinski and Bertsch (2001) who investigated 40 cases of juvenile arsonists, 39 of whom were male. They especially noted that these subjects' family histories were characterized by "a striking frequency of father absence" (p. 100). Another European study (Kofler-

Westergren, Klopff & Mitterauer, 2010, found father absence strongly linked with delinquency, conduct disorders and drug use. A study by Lopez, et al. (2007), using South American subjects aged 11-16, showed a close association between violent behavior and negative communication with the father. Supporting these negative behaviors is that lower moral sensitivity has been found in the children of American father absence families by Song, Li & Xi-ang (2024).

There is even some interesting research with rodents that suggests a neuronal basis for the disturbing behavior of father deprived animals. K. Braun and colleagues (Helmeke, et al., 2009) found that a particular rodent normally raised by both parents when raised with only the mother present had a neuronal deficit in the brain. They proposed that this deficit was a cause of the greater impulsiveness and aggressiveness in the father deprived rodents. (See Wang, 2009).

All this aggression reminds us of a well-known report of "teenage" male elephant behavior when raised without adult males. These young males in Kruger National Park in South Africa showed abnormally high levels of aggression and ended up killing many endangered rhinos. The solution was to put in older bulls that could confront and challenge them in a fight and thus the younger bulls learned how to de-escalate their aggressive behavior. In short, the older bulls taught the younger males how to control their violence (Delinquent elephants, 2000).

One way to put this criminal behavior in perspective, at least for the United States, is to note that 90% of major and violent crimes are committed by men (Gilder, 1986, p. 65), and most of these come from father absent family backgrounds: Beck and Klein (1988), Chapman (1986), Landers, Mitchell & Coates (2015). Also, a study has noted that a father's incarceration, and thus his absence, is reliably and positively associated with adolescent delinquency: Swisher & Shaw-Smith (2015).

In the United States it has often been noted that its prisons are essentially buildings to house fatherless young men. It is important to keep in mind that the US has one of the largest prison populations of any country in the world, and possibly the largest proportion of its population in prison of any country. For every country, however, the economic and social costs of prisoners are enormous. These include the costs: 1. Of the crime itself; 2. The costs of the

police involved; 3. The costs of the judicial system's involvement; 4. The yearly costs of prison housing of each inmate which we last heard was equal to the cost of attending a private high school; 5. And finally the terrible cost of millions of young men with lost years and a blighted future.

b. Drug use.

Another kind of anti-social behavior reliably linked to father absence is the use of drugs and substance abuse.

Early studies and more recent studies. There is a long history of research showing the link between single parent (father absent families) and drug use with US subjects: Prendergast & Schafer (1974), Barnes (1984), Bekir, et al. (1993), Beman (1995), Gfellner (1994), Mandara & Murray (2006), Velez and Ungemack (1994). In a German study, investigators found that alcoholics compared to non-alcoholics clearly suffered from father deprivation in their childhood. In some cases, the father was present but intolerant and not affectionate (Erhard and Janig, 2003, p. 113-4). Also relevant here is Napp-Peters (1995) who identified father absence with juvenile violence and right-wing radical groups in German cultures. The Napp-Peters study also linked daughters of father absent divorced families with promiscuity and drug use.

c. Mental health, behavior problems and cognitive deficits

Early studies. Peterson, et al. 1959 found father attitudes were causally related to mental and emotional problems in their children. Wallerstein, Lewis & Blakeslee, 2000 found many emotional problems caused by father absence in their research beginning before 1980.

More recent studies. A wide range of mental and behavioral problems have been found in children raised without fathers or with little fathering. Here are some of the more common results. A review of the literature by East, Jackson & O'Brien (2006, East, et al., 2014) clearly identified father absence as an important and harmful factor to adolescent well-being and development. Studies by Fitzgerald & Bocknek (2013), and by Blaze, Iacono, & McGue (2008) report similar findings. Serious mental issues were found in a report of fatherless American Black children, as reported by Causer (2025).

In another study, based on over 15,000 families, the authors concluded: "Father absence seems to

be mainly the cause rather than the outcome of child problem behaviour in young UK families, and to boys and girls similarly" (Flouri, Narayanan & Midouhas, 2015; the quote is from the abstract). A Japanese study addressed father absence caused by the father's job transfer. The authors, Tanaka and Nakazawa (2005) found that such separation had negative effects on the child's social norms and if the separation exceeded five years the child's motivation declined. (For further negative effects of father absence on the family see Gobbi, et al., 2015). A study of over 4000 young men in Finland found that seeking help at a mental health clinic was associated with living alone, having a poor paternal relationship, having no contact with father, and death of father. See Kaskeala, Sillanmaki, & Sourander (2015). A report from China by Wang, Qiu & Zhu (2015) concludes that children with a negative father-child relationship display more problem behavior and withdrawn symptoms. Also, father absence was shown in Chinese boys to increase malicious envy: Su, Xiang & Wang (2024). Also noteworthy is that with Chinese children, when the father was absent, the mother was much more controlling and the children were more likely to be involved in bullying or victimization: Wu, et al., (2022). Protection against being bullied is a contribution of fathers Papadaki & Giovazolias, 2015.

Many additional studies note father absence is associated with children's increased emotional problems, decreased general well-being and increased behavioral problems: Amato & Rivera (2005), Cuffe, et al., (2005), Flouri (2005), Formoso, et al., (2007), McLanahan, Tach & Schneider (2013). For example, Ramchandani, et al. (2013) report that disengaged and remote interactions between fathers and their infants predicts early behavioral problems in children as young as age one.

Father absence was especially detrimental for children growing up in households with a high risk of mental problems, especially depression: Teel, et al., (2016). Luo, Wang & Gao (2012) report that subjects who experienced life without fathers had increased anxiety and lower self-esteem when compared to other subjects. The already noted long-term study by Napp-Peters (1995) "led to the result that children of divorced parents living in a lone parent or stepfamilies without father-child contacts had clearly more disorders and problems than children who had contact with their fathers"



Couple, chalice of joy



(quoted in Erhard and Janig, 2003, p. 97). Culpin, et al. (2022), report using a large sample of UK young people that father absence in childhood is strongly associated with increased depression in childhood, adolescence and in early adulthood. Boyce, et al. (2006) found that children experiencing low father involvement in infancy had greater risk of later mental health symptoms as indicated by behavioral, autonomic and adrenocortical measures. Children not living with both biological parents, usually without the father, have four times the risk of an affective disorder: Cuffe, et al., (2005).

A study with Syrian children showed that father separated children were highly vulnerable to depressive symptoms and poor self-development: Eltanamly, et al., (2024). Both boys and girls of father absent divorced families are more apt to drop out of school (Napp-Peters, 1995). Indeed, fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, 1994) and twice as likely to have to repeat a grade (Nord and West, 2001). Reuven-Krispin, et al (2021) report that partial father absence due to divorce leads to higher psychopathology, maternal overprotection, but lower maternal care and other negative effects.

d. Economic effects

Early and more recent studies. The economic importance of the father for sons and daughters is underlined in a study by Furstenberg and Hughes (1995). They report that children who are born to teenage mothers and who grow up with the biological father in the house are almost four times more likely to find employment as young adults and more than twice as likely to achieve stable economic status. These findings are in comparison to children of teenage mothers who did not grow up with the biological father.

Sons from divorced, mostly father absent families are much less likely to follow a father's good economic example. Specifically, Biblarz and Raftery (1993), found that "family disruption during childhood substantially increases men's odds of ending up in the lowest occupational stratum as opposed to the highest." Powers (1996) in a similar vein report that boys who grow up in fatherless homes drift about and have trouble making a commitment to any kind of work. Children in father-absent homes are five times more likely to be poor (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).

e. Different effects on boys and girls

Early and more recent studies. Studies have shown that the detrimental effects of a father's absence on sons are often different from those on daughters. Some of the regularly reported effects of father absence on sons are high aggressive behavior (already noted criminal behavior above), strong preference for immediate gratification, lack of social responsibility, intellectual deficits (among them a lower IQ), low need achievement, as high delinquency potential, tendencies toward homosexuality and gender role uncertainty, lack of trust in other males, and low self-esteem: Biller (1971, 1993), Cortes (1972), Mandara, Murray & Joyner (2011), Sameroff, et al., (1993), Zucker (1995).

Commonly reported effects of father absence on girls are early puberty, increased promiscuity and risky sexual behavior (an increase often interpreted as a kind of search for the absent father, and a general anxiety about self-worth and male evaluation), lack of independence, lowered cognitive capacity and lack of impulse control: see Burns (2008), Del Priore (2014), Del Priore, Schlomer & Ellis (2017), Ellis, et al. (2003), Ellis, et al., (2012), Gohel, Diamond & Chambers (1997), Goodyear, Newcomb

& Allison (2000), Haung (2007), Hetherington (1972), James, et al., (2012), Langley (2011), Metzler, et al., (1994, Ryan (2015); Santelli, et al., (2000), Gaml-Sorensen, et l., (2021).

Father absence is also a commonly found predictor of daughter depression and sometimes suicide: Bretherton (2010), Warren and Tomlinson-Keasy (1989). The absence of fathers due to divorce appears to have special long-lasting negative effects, especially on girls including depression and low self-esteem: Clifford and Clark (1995), Evans and Bloom (1997), McCabe (1997), Rogers (1994). Father absence is also linked to early menarches and depression in girls: Culpin, et al., (2015). The absence of the father has also been found associated with depression in teenage mothers: Buzi, et al. (2015), Giurgescu & Templin (2015), Lewin, et al. (2015). Much of the importance of fathers for their daughters is well presented in Nielsen (2012, 2014).

f. Physical problems.

More recent studies Jackson, Newsom & Beaver (2016) report that children whose fathers were absent at their birth were at greater risk of incurring various negative developmental diagnoses. Studies reliably report that when the father is absent his children have a higher death rate at birth, lower weight and other serious medical problems: Alio, et al. (2010), Alio, et al. (2011), and Masho, Chapman & Ashby (2010). Importantly, father absence is related to increased physical maltreatment, physical injury and abuse of children: Afifi, et al. (2015), Orton, et al. (2012), Sedlak & Broadhurst (1996), Sedlak, et al. (2010). Children who live apart from their fathers are 2.61 times more likely to have asthma than those who live with their father: Harknett (2005). Stewart and Menning (2005) have noted that childhood obesity and food insecurity are issues that disproportionately affect children with absent fathers.

Looking at all the above effects of the absent father, we can be grateful that sometimes a substitute father shows up. In many cases substitutes fill at least part of the gap; these include grandfathers, uncles, older brothers and often coaches as well.

Short summaries of basic father effects

Our concern here is not to bring in interpretations of fatherhood as found in the relatively abstract theories of Freud, Lacan, Jung and others. (Although the recent development of evolutionary

theory may be less abstract and more concrete. See Gray, 2010.) We focus on the more concrete research presented here. As an example, we can quote from the developmental psychologist Daniel Paquette (2004): "Fathers play a particularly important role in the development of children's openness to the world. Men seem to tend to excite, surprise and momentarily destabilize children; they also encourage children to take risks, while at the same time ensuring the latter's safety and security, thus permitting children to learn to be brave in unfamiliar situations, as well as to stand up for themselves. But this dynamic can only be effective in the context of an emotional bond between father and child; this relationship is termed the father-child activation relationship, in contrast to the mother-child attachment relationship aimed at calming and comforting children in times of stress" (p. 193).

1. Fathers are a primary source of self-control/self-regulation

In recent decades psychologists have discovered and researched the concept of self-control, or as it is often called "self-regulation" or "self-discipline". Research has shown that self-control is as important as IQ in predicting academic performance in adolescents (e.g., Duckworth & Seligman, 2005), and that childhood self-control is major predictor of well-being in later life. The prominent psychologist Walter Mischel (Mischel, et al, 2010) wrote that high self-control "Predicted higher SAT scores and better social, cognitive, and emotional coping in adolescence", and also predicted "later outcomes in adulthood including higher achievement, higher sense of self-worth, better able to cope with stress and less cocaine/crack use particularly in individuals vulnerable to psychosocial maladjustment" (both p. 253). Other research has shown that high self-control in childhood is even predictive of physical health in adulthood (see Moffit, et al, 2010).

Mischel discovered the impact of fatherless families on the self-control of children while researching ethnic stereotypes in Trinidad. Mischel reported that the most meaningful effect was found in the difference between children who had fathers at home and children who did not.

About half of the [African] children living with father chose the delayed reward, but none of the children living in fatherless homes were willing to wait. Similarly, none of the Indian children living wi-

thout a father were willing to wait: Baumeister & Tierney (2011), p. 207.

This variable suggests that children who grow up in a single-parent home, especially with a father who has abandoned his family, have a predisposition for poor self-control.

It is important to note that the correlation between poor self-control and these negative findings was significantly less in children with fathers who had *not* voluntarily abandoned them, that is, fathers who worked overseas or who had died.

Related research on the development of a child's executive function has shown the positive effect of fathers for both early and middle childhood: Meuwissen & Englund (2016), Bronte-Tinkew, Moore & Carrano (2006) report that in intact families the positive influence of the father is especially strong at reducing risky behaviors in male adolescents although less so with female adolescents. In a related study Browning (2007), studying primarily African American and Hispanic families, found that even the involvement of non-resident fathers was associated with adolescents who had lower levels of delinquency, especially among those who showed an early tendency to such behavior. Fathers have been found to reduce externalizing problem behavior, especially in boys in research by Peng, et al. (2022).

2. Fathers are major source of gender identity, especially for boys

Gender identity refers to the masculine or feminine identity that each boy or girl needs to form. In general boys have more difficulty with gender identity than girls do. The girl usually has her mother present and often other women as well, and they model for her what it is to be feminine. The boy usually knows he is different from his mother and sisters but often he doesn't know what this means, since even fathers who are usually present are frequently absent during the day while at work. Or perhaps the father travels a lot. Without a steady role model the boy may find it difficult to know what it means to be masculine. Therefore, gender identity tends to be more difficult for boys than girls. (See Zhang, et al., 2015). A classic text by Zucker (1995), on Gender Identity Disorder clearly demonstrates that for GID boys a recurring theme was **emotional or physical absence** of the father, whether due to work, divorce, passivity, or detachment. Zucker, et

al. (2012) and Singh, Bradley & Zucker (2021) report the same effect many years later. Zucker also noted that, if present, the father was commonly **distant, uninvolved, or critical**, and showed little identification or bonding with the child.

In addition, fathers are very important in giving daughters an appreciation of their feminine identity. Early sexual behavior and promiscuity of girls without fathers, as noted earlier, is interpreted as a search for male affirmation which they did not get at home.

3. Fathers are a basic source for children learning separation, individuation and achievement, and social identity

Separation/individuation refers to the need for the child to separate from its mother and to individuate, that is, to develop its own independent personality with its own individual characteristics. (See Alderson, 2022.) As one important theoretical example, attachment theory makes a distinction between what it calls a 'safe haven' and a 'secure base'. A child returns to a parent as a safe haven when faced by fear or threat; a secure base is when a child uses a parent as a base from which to explore the environment. Both parents are attachment figures. There is evidence that the mother more often is the safe haven, and the father more often the secure base. (See Kerns, et al., 2015).

Girls on average tend to find separation/individuation more difficult than boys. Girls are more likely to be merged with their mother than boys. Contributing to this fact is that girls are more interpersonal than boys--- for example they smile earlier and more often to others, even as babies, and as children generally show more interest in people. Boys, on average, are less interpersonal and show more interest in objects than in people.

One of the most importance achievements of adulthood is certainly resilience. A positive father relationship in childhood has been found as a strong contributor to adult resilience: Angele (2024). This need is also noted by Yoon, et al. (2024) who report: "Findings highlight the importance of positive father-child relationships in building social resilience among children who experience maltreatment. Practitioners working with youth who are at risk for maltreatment should con-

sider engaging fathers in services to support the development of strong father–child relationships.” Gender identity is only part of how fathers help in the very general problem each child has of finding his or her social identity. This involves things like: Who are my people? And especially: Is my father known and respected? Does my father have an important job? Does he provide well? Does he know how to do things—like going camping, or fishing, or playing baseball, etc. Zueva (2024) emphasizes the father’s role in the family as helping the child in finding his or her own social identity,

In summary, the father has a very important contribution to basic developmental tasks. First, he models masculinity for the boy. Absent the father or other father-figure as a genuine example of masculinity, boys have a reliable tendency to fall into a pattern of effeminacy or an insecure macho masculinity often supported by peers or gangs who replace the absent father. Second, a common function of fathers is to introduce their children to the world outside the family, for example, to sports or camping or the business world or politics. Fathers commonly serve as the major mediator between the child and the outside world. In doing this they help both sons and daughters, but they are especially important in helping daughters separate from the mother and home environment. Fathers are important contributors to a child’s involvement in such outside activities as politics and religion: Hoohe & Boonen (2015).

4. Fathers are the major parent for the passing on of religious faith.

There is good evidence that fathers are especially important in passing on their religious faith to their children. A recent book has systematically investigated the question on how religion is passed down across generations: Bengtson (2013). The author concluded: “But what is really interesting is that, for religious transmission, having a close bond with one’s *father* matters even more than a close relationship with the mother” (p. 76, italics in original). Examples of other research supporting this link between fathers and their children’s religious faith are Limke and Mayfield (2011) and DuVall (2015). For a supporting finding in Catholic Europe see Conway, Spruyt & Coutino (2023). This effect, of course, fits with the general contribution that fathers make as mediators to and as representatives of the outsi-

de world. Related to this is the evidence of absent or dysfunctional fathers in the lives of prominent atheists: Vitz (2013).

Some questions

An important question is why have these well-documented findings been relatively ignored by our society? Why has the importance of the father ---a real elephant in the room---been so regularly omitted from our general cultural awareness? This question deserves its own detailed lengthy response, but for now certain politically correct pressures are the usual suspects. Large numbers of the divorced find it upsetting. Feminists and lesbians are quite opposed to it. Unisex thinkers reject it along with any unique and important male behaviors. Finally, some African Americans incorrectly see it as covert racism. This is not shown by the research since similar father effects are shown by all races. There is also a tendency of our politically correct social scientists who study moral behavior and children at risk to ignore the importance of fathers.

Obviously, people need to be much more aware of the positive father effects. In many respects the door to understanding and supporting fathers is already half open. Therefore, now is the time to open it completely! We must push aside all restrictions and come out in full force. Fatherhood along with motherhood must become our widespread social goals and ideals.

The above pages give many examples of relevant reading material, but a look on the internet will show many videos that also can be used to remedy our ignorance of fatherhood. A book by Hobson, 2002 is relevant. Further, we suggest using existing fatherhood programs that seem appropriate to the particular group being addressed. The programs invite young men, or new fathers, or existing fathers, often from poor environments to meetings where the importance of fatherhood is noted along with examples of what fathers can do to support mothers and their children. The programs are typically free and may last for several weeks. Good examples of recent research based on or describing such programs can be found in the following sources that are listed in chronological order: Burrus, et al. (2012), Campbell, et al. (2015), Frank, Keown & Sanders (2015), Marczak, et al. (2015), Szmagalski (2015), Henry, et al. (2020), Fagan & Kaufman (2022), Kohl, et al. (2022), Cowan, Cowan & Gillete (2022), González al. (2023), Kim & Jang (2023), As-



Like a mother comforts her child (Isaiah 66:13)

hton, et al. (2024), Blackwell (2024), Labuschagne, Koen & Daniel-Smit (2024), Moura, et al. (2024), Garnica-Torres, et al. (2024), Brown, et al. (2024), Wang & Chen (2024), Cederbaum, et al. (2024), Kocayörük (2025).

Such programs can, of course, be modified to be more in line with the values and goals of the particular user. Churches, schools and family organizations should be using and promoting at least some of them.

A concluding interpretive response

The preceding father problems raise the issue of how men themselves might change their understanding of masculinity in a way to be open to a positive father role. Let me suggest what has been called the “Complementary Model” (See Vitz, 2021, for a Catholic perspective and *Christian Counseling Today*, May 2025, for a similar Protestant perspective.) Here, maleness and femaleness are each seen as important and as positive differences, and as fundamental to reality and to the nature of each person. We were created male and female from the beginning--- and it was good! The reality and importance of sexual differences obviously contrast with the unisex/androgyny model. In the complementary model, maleness and femaleness are both seen as good and of equal dignity and as capable of cooperating in a mutually supportive and synergistic fashion. (For synergy see Sr.Allen, 2021.) This mutual valuing of the other sex contrasts markedly with the macho devaluation of women and with the recent radical feminist devaluation of men.

For men the complementary model means that in actual practice their natural masculine gifts of leadership, energy, strength, aggressive intelligence, confidence, etc. can be acknowledged, expressed and valued as long as they are put in the service of others! If, however, men put these qualities in the service of the self, the macho has reared his ugly head; if the masculine qualities aren't even there the wimpo has resurfaced. But when men put their abilities in the constructive service of others, neither women, nor children or communities complain.

What does one mean by “in the service of others”? A good way to understand this is to see that men, at the highest level, are all called to be fathers. Such a father-based representation of the mature man is clearly implied in Erik Erikson's well-known theory of the stages of human development in which the

“generative stage” is identified as the highest form of mental health for people between the ages of 30 and 65.

Of course, not every man is to be a biological father. After all, a celibate man has no natural children, but he is called to be a father, a teacher, a role model, a mentor to many; Likewise, Mother Theresa of Calcutta was a mother—but with no natural children. The world has long recognized motherhood as the highest form of womanhood. One major reason for this is that mothers show so much self-sacrifice. They sacrifice much time and convenience and their children and others observe it. This sacrifice probably begins with morning sickness and even involves the risk of death in giving birth. Motherhood not only shows sacrifice, it also shows courage.

In the military, self-sacrifice by men still exists, and those men who give or risk their life for their comrades receive the highest honors. It is time for men to recognize that what makes a man is not the ability to have a child but the courage to raise one. Courage, of course, involves sacrifice. Fathers *often* sacrifice time, money, and career advancement for their family. There are, as well, *dealing with* the troubles that inevitably come with each child. *A good, helping sacrifice is to sacrifice time by mentoring.* See Galloway, 2025. Fathers are also protectors of their family, and this often entails conflict with the outside world and sometimes real physical risk. As a consequence of such sacrifice, fatherhood becomes the highest form of manhood, the highest form of masculinity.

Appendix

Relevant Scripture: A few Biblical examples of the sins of fathers

Christians should be already aware of father failure from the Scriptures. In the Bible there is a real concern with the sins of the fathers and very little with the sins of the mothers. A rather strange emphasis in such a patriarchal text. But of course, Scripture deals with family reality. Mothers are much more reliably good mothers than men are good fathers. Even in rare cases of a mother's failure, ---perhaps she is psychotic or drug addicted ---such failure is usually detected early and is corrected by a new mother, perhaps an aunt or granny. But truly bad mothering is apt to leave the child deeply depressed, withdrawn, or emotionally incompetent so that he or she can cause society little trouble. But good mothering combined with bad or inadequate

fathering can cause a great deal of trouble for the child and the society.

Most Scriptural references, including these below refer to a father who is present but dysfunctional. Usually, he is either weak and indifferent or strong, harsh, and authoritarian. This failure was usually at a time when polygamy was common which makes for a rather different father role than today. For New Testament Scripture this may not have been the case.

2 Samuel 11–18 (esp. 12:10–12; 13:1–28). David's adultery and murder precede the rape of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, the rebellion of Absalom; paternal sin is linked to family disintegration.

Genesis 25:28: "Isaac loved Esau... but Rebekah loved Jacob."

Divided parental loyalty fuels lifelong sibling rivalry. Genesis 37:3–4.: Jacob's favoritism toward Joseph provokes hatred and violence among brothers. A classic Biblical critique of unequal paternal affection. 1 Kings 1:5: David's son Adonijah exalts himself, and the text states: "His father had never displeased him at any time by asking, 'Why have you done thus?'" Explicit indictment of fatherly indulgence.

Judges 2:10. "There arose another generation... who did not know the Lord." Implies intergenerational spiritual failure, especially among fathers charged with instruction (cf. Deut. 6).

Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:6; 29:15. These assume that failure to discipline is destructive, not loving. Malachi 4:5–6. "He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children..."

Father-child rupture is presented as a covenantal crisis requiring prophetic repair

Ephesians 6:4. "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger..."

Recognizes paternal behavior as a source of resentment and injury.

Colossians 3:21. "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Psychological realism about paternal harshness and emotional withdrawal.

Matthew 23:1–7. While addressed to religious leaders, the critique applies directly to fathers who teach without practicing. Authority without integrity undermines formation.

Romans 2:21–24. Moral inconsistency among leaders brings dishonor and confusion. Applicable to paternal leadership within households

It is significant that the sins of the fathers can be passed on to the third or even seventh generation.

(Ex 20:5, 34:7, De 5:9, Nu 4:18, Lam: 5:7, Jer 32:18, Is 14:21).

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comment

The summary of research findings by authors Paul C. Vitz and Quentin Herman approach a globally significant topic – the effects of fathers on their children’s personality and behavior. These summarized findings are wide-reaching in their global, cross-cultural nature and impact.

For example, for the field of mental health and wellness, the authors discuss research findings of secure father-attachment, and how that significantly reduces anxiety in adolescent children. In addition, secure father-attachment also positively contributes to a child’s self-esteem. The research summary indicates how a child is more likely to excel socially, academically, and emotionally when they have a father, who is present and positively engaged in their lives. Amidst a world surrounded by uncertainty and fear, the research findings illustrate what meaning a safe father-relationship has on the child’s personality formation and development.

In the summarized research, a father’s absence was revealed to affect socio-economic status, self-discipline, and multiple facets of identity development. An absent father was found to result in increased anti-social and criminal behavior. Situations, where the father may have been present but the relationship was negative due to aspects such as substance abuse and violence, negatively affected the children’s behavior and personality development.

Early attachments shape the view of God (Clinton & Straub 2010). God is also called a father. Therefore, having an absent father is indicated to have an impact on how an adult child of an absent father perceives God. While the authors make a brief statement on absent fathers and atheism, that could have been elaborated more. As stated, the summarized research suggests that fathers have an important role in passing on religious faith to children.

In his research on the impact of the fatherless relating to God as Father, Peter Dobbs (2013) observed how more respondents with an absent father, or a father with negative perceptions, tended to view God as less accepting or nurturing. Having said that, Dobbs observed how overtime, as the study participants’ faith developed and matured, some came to see God as the perfect Father which had been absent in their lives.

The summarized research findings pose an important question: what about children who grow up without a father? How can their personality development and behavior patterns be increasingly fostered towards overall health and well-being? Furthermore, how might safe and committed father-figures play a meaningful role as a guide, coach, mentor, and a trusted adult? Such a support, according to these findings, would foster the child’s true dependence on others and help guide them towards their true north.



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The authors briefly note the role and importance of a substitute father's presence. For further research, it would seem to be valuable to comprehend the impact of such role and presence in the lives of children who grew up with an absent father.

This article has several major contributions. First, the research findings are particularly wide-reaching and significant in their global, cross-cultural nature and impact. Studies presented from several different countries and cultural traditions indicate similar findings about the impact of absent fathers. Secondly, the summarized research's focus on the effect of absent fathers varies widely, including for example aspects of mental health, academic success, economic status, and behavioral traits. As such, the research findings are both insightful and practical, as well as compelling in their implications of human life and overall wellness.

Thirdly, this summary raises significant questions about the role and meaning of a father in the life of a child. As indicated by the research summary, we must become aware of the importance of a father's active presence in the child's life. And, as suggested by the authors, we must have courage to address such significance.

Finally, the authors discuss the calling for men to be fathers, whether they are a biological father or not. Based on these findings, such substitute fathers can make a difference of a lifetime for someone, who has grown up with an absent father.

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Former contributions in our eJournal by Ulla you can see her:

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/24/#p=66>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/14/#p=182>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/13/#p=72>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/12/#p=50>



Angel of Hope



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Former contributions in our eJournal by Daniel available here:

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/15/#p=126>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/14/#p=46>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/13/#p=94>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/16/#p=21>

A Christian Psychological Perspective with Clinical Reflections from Trauma Contexts

Personality development has long been conceptualized within psychodynamic, trait-based, and cognitive-behavioral frameworks. While these approaches provide valuable insights into emotional regulation, identity consolidation, and behavioral patterns, they often lack a theological anthropology capable of integrating the moral and spiritual dimensions of human formation. From a Christian psychological perspective, personality development is not merely the stabilization of traits but the progressive formation of the self in relational, moral, and spiritual communion. Grounded in the biblical doctrine of the *Imago Dei* (image of God), this article proposes that personality development is a lifelong process of relational integration, narrative coherence, and character transformation. Drawing from attachment theory, interpersonal neurobiology, moral injury research, and trauma studies—including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)—the article examines how trauma disrupts developmental trajectories and how restoration may occur through integrated psychological and spiritual processes. Three anonymized clinical vignettes from therapeutic work in Israel illustrate these dynamics. A four-dimensional model of Christian personality development is proposed: regulation, relational attachment, narrative identity, and moral-spiritual formation. The article argues that Christian Psychology offers a comprehensive framework for understanding personality development in a fragmented world.

1. Introduction: Why Personality Development Requires Christian Psychology

Modern psychology has offered numerous theories explaining how personality emerges, stabilizes, and adapts across the lifespan. Trait theory identifies consistent patterns of behavior. Psychodynamic theory explores unconscious processes and early relational influences. Cognitive approaches emphasize belief systems and schemas. Developmental psychology traces identity formation across stages. Yet an essential question often remains implicit: toward what end does personality develop?

Christian Psychology asserts that personality development is teleological—it moves toward a purpose. That purpose is not self-actualization in isolation, but restored communion with God and others. Personality, in this view, is not morally neutral structure but directionally oriented formation.

Eric Johnson (2007) argues that psychology is never anthropologically neutral; it is always grounded in an implicit vision of the human person. Christian Psychology makes this vision explicit: the human being is created, fallen, and redeemable. Therefore, development must be understood within the larger narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

In clinical practice—particularly in contexts marked by trauma, war, and moral complexity—the insufficiency of purely secular developmental models becomes evident. Emotional regulation and cognitive restructuring are necessary but not sufficient.

Questions of guilt, shame, meaning, forgiveness, and identity before God inevitably arise.

2. Theological Anthropology and the Structure of Personality

The doctrine of the *Imago Dei* (Latin: image of God) affirms that human beings are created in God's image. In Hebrew, *b'tzelem Elohim* means "in the image of God" (Spanish: imagen de Dios; English: image of God). This affirmation establishes three foundational dimensions of personality:

1. Relationality
2. Moral agency
3. Narrative identity

Human beings are not autonomous self-creators; they are relationally constituted and morally accountable.

Rabbinic tradition describes the tension between *yetzer haTov* (Hebrew: inclination toward good; English: inclination toward moral integration) and *yetzer haRa* (Hebrew: inclination toward disordered or self-centered drives; English: inclination toward impulsive self-protection). Though rooted in Jewish thought, these categories illuminate a universal psychological reality: personality develops within internal moral tension.

Christian theology similarly recognizes the tension between flesh and spirit. Personality formation therefore involves integration, not elimination, of conflict.

3. Relational Development: Attachment and Communion

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978) demonstrates that secure attachment fosters emotional regulation and exploratory confidence. Allan Schore and Daniel Siegel have shown that early relational attunement shapes neurobiological integration.

From a Christian perspective, attachment reflects the relational nature of God. Secure bonds are not merely adaptive; they mirror divine faithfulness. The child who internalizes consistent love develops:

- Basic trust
- Emotional flexibility
- Capacity for intimacy
- Stable self-worth

This relational foundation supports moral development and spiritual receptivity.

When attachment is insecure or traumatic, personality may organize around anxiety, avoidance, or defensive control.

4. Narrative Development and Identity in Redemptive Context

Narrative identity research (McAdams, 2001) shows that individuals construct life stories to maintain coherence. Christian Psychology situates personal narrative within redemptive history. Identity is not self-generated fiction but participation in God's larger story.

Healthy development integrates suffering without allowing it to define ultimate identity. Trauma disrupts narrative coherence, often producing fragmentation and identity confusion.

5. Moral Development and Character Formation

Christian personality development includes virtue formation. Unlike trait models that describe consistency, virtue models emphasize moral growth.

Virtues such as humility, courage, patience, and justice emerge through repeated relational and spiritual practices. Sanctification, in theological language, may be understood psychologically as progressive integration of values and behavior.

Moral development requires:

- Recognition of wrongdoing
- Capacity for repentance
- Reception of forgiveness
- Recommitment to responsibility

Without moral integration, personality remains fragmented.

6. Trauma, PTSD, and Developmental Disruption

Trauma represents a significant interruption in personality development. PTSD includes symptoms such as hypervigilance, intrusive memories, avoidance, and emotional numbing. These are not isolated pathologies; they reflect reorganizations of personality around survival.

Stephen Porges' polyvagal theory explains how chronic threat shifts autonomic functioning toward defense. Daniel Siegel conceptualizes trauma as failure of integration.

In military contexts, moral injury frequently accompanies PTSD. When individuals believe they have

violated deeply held moral convictions, personality organization may become dominated by shame or self-condemnation.

Trauma may distort:

- Relational trust
- Narrative coherence
- Moral stability
- spiritual confidence

Yet trauma does not erase the *Imago Dei*. Ontological dignity remains.

7. Clinical Illustrations

Case 1: Combat-Related Moral Injury

A young combat veteran presented with chronic guilt and hyperarousal. His personality had reorganized around self-judgment and threat anticipation. Treatment involved somatic stabilization, trauma processing, moral reflection, and reintegration of responsibility without self-annihilation. Development resumed as his identity shifted from shame-based coherence to morally integrated agency.

Case 2: Developmental Attachment Trauma

A woman raised in emotional instability developed anxious attachment and identity fragility. Secure therapeutic alliance facilitated regulatory stabilization and narrative reconstruction. Spiritual language, once associated with judgment, became associated with dignity and grace.

Case 3: Faith Crisis and PTSD

A Christian believer exposed to terrorist violence experienced both PTSD symptoms and crisis of faith. Treatment differentiated trauma physiology from theological interpretation. As regulation improved, faith matured into resilient trust rather than defensive certainty.

8. A Four-Dimensional Christian Model of

Personality Development

From a Christian psychological perspective, personality development unfolds across four interrelated dimensions:

1. Regulation

Neurobiological integration and emotional flexibility.

2. Relational Attachment

Secure bonds reflecting divine fidelity.

3. Narrative Identity

Coherent autobiographical story situated within redemption.

4. Moral-Spiritual Formation

Progressive character transformation.

These dimensions interact dynamically across the lifespan. Trauma may interrupt but does not nullify development.

9. Implications for International Christian Psychology

In a global context marked by fragmentation, violence, and secular reductionism, Christian Psychology offers a comprehensive framework integrating empirical science and theological anthropology. Personality development is not mere stabilization of behavior but formation toward communion, virtue, and restored identity.

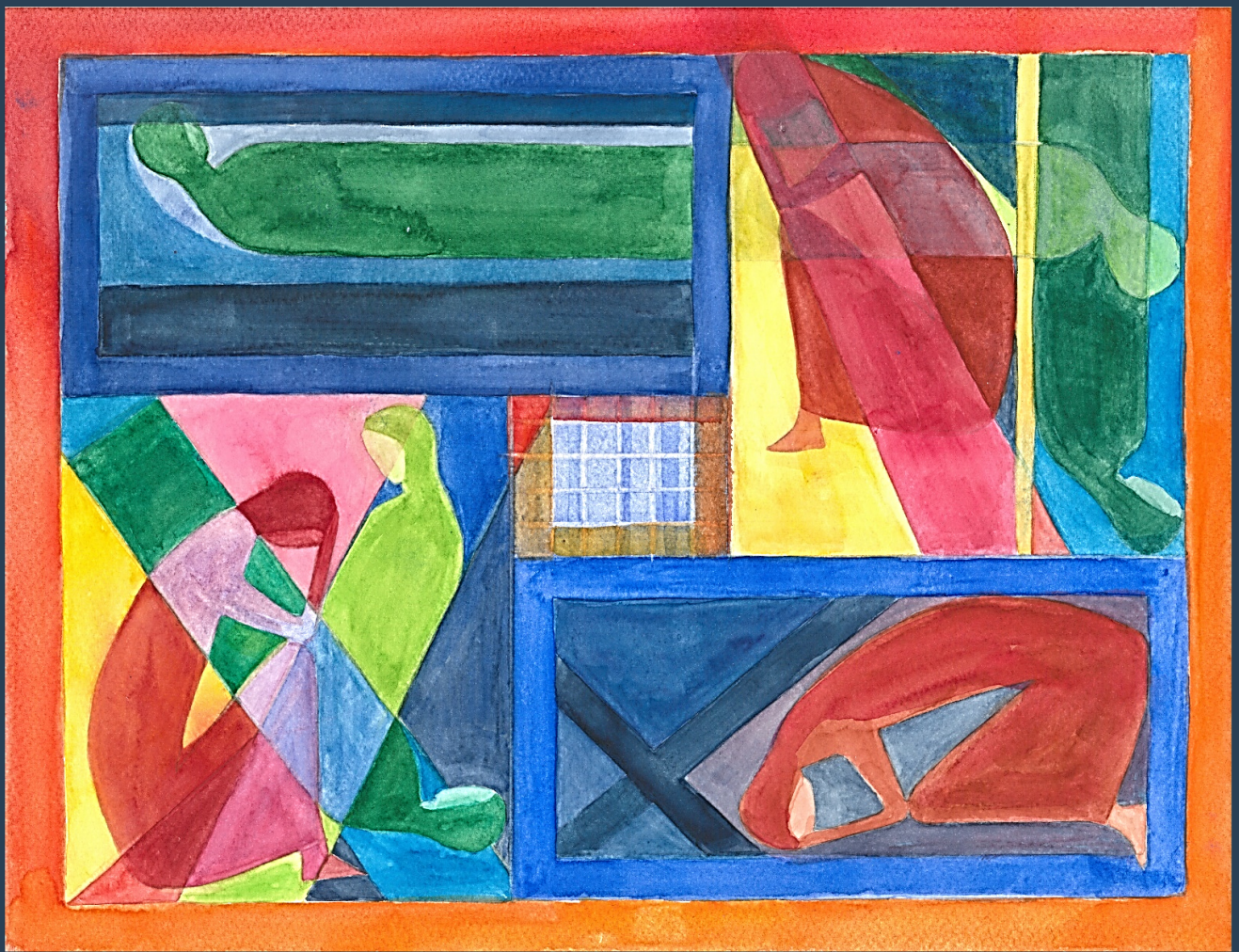
10. Conclusion

From a Christian psychological perspective, personality development is a lifelong process of relational, narrative, moral, and spiritual formation. PTSD and trauma may disrupt developmental trajectories, yet restoration remains possible because human dignity is grounded in the *Imago Dei*.

Personality is not a closed system of traits but an unfolding story oriented toward redemption.

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Captured within himself

comment

Eytan's work belongs to the field of integral personal psychology, which seeks to combine the principles of the Christian faith with modern neuroscience and clinical theories of trauma.

The article proposes a four-dimensional model of personality development as a lifelong process of relational integration, narrative coherence, and moral transformation. Through clinical illustrations, the work highlights how trauma (and moral injury) disrupts development, and how Christian psychology offers a therapeutic framework for restoration through integrated psychological and spiritual processes. Several authors (such as Martín F. Echavarría, Enrique Martínez, Joan D. A. Juanola, and María Dolores Barroso) have demonstrated that the Thomistic tradition is particularly fruitful and well-suited for properly understanding the integral human being and, consequently, for grasping the implications that an evil such as trauma has for the human person.

Man is made in the image of God ("Imago Dei"), and can be fully understood only by looking to the ultimate end toward which his life is directed. What is this end?

St. Thomas teaches that "all human actions are for an end" and that "the end is the cause of causes"; moreover, "the end is last in execution but first in intention."

It is therefore from the ultimate end that every science—and psychology in particular—should begin its inquiry. As Mercedes Palet rightly points out, the two fundamental concerns for a psychologist are human nature and its purpose (Palet M., *La familia, educadora del ser humano*, pp. 15–16).

These two questions are closely interconnected. Understanding the end allows for a deeper comprehension of human nature, and vice versa: a deeper understanding of human nature makes it easier to discover man's ultimate end.

The Christian vision is, in fact, a teleological one: "The human being is created in the image of God, capable of knowing and loving his Creator" (*Gaudium et spes*, 12), and, as St. John Paul II adds, "(...) at the same time divided within himself."

People who suffer from complex trauma—arising from war contexts or severe calamities—and who question the meaning of life and suffering can only be fully understood within a framework of "creation, fall, redemption, and restoration."



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Personality formation, therefore, involves the integration—not the elimination—of conflict.

A traumatic event is one that produces in the subject the apprehension of a future evil of the highest degree, insofar as it threatens life or honor, and is extremely difficult to resist due to its intensity, rarity, and unpredictability (Rojas Saffie, J. P., *EMDR Therapy: An Analysis in Light of the Work of St. Thomas*, p. 143).

Eytan's work on trauma follows in the footsteps of other authors such as the aforementioned Rojas Saffie, as well as F. de los Bueis Ordóñez, who produced the first study devoted exclusively to defining psychological trauma from the perspective of the Common Doctor.

The results presented by Eytan are very encouraging and confirm what has already emerged from previous studies, namely, the importance of considering human nature in its entirety if one wishes to support the human person's journey toward the fullness of happiness to which he is called: "the ideal of himself as he ought to be" (Magda Arnold, in Parenti, 2017).



Dancer



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Self-awareness as a mediating process between faith and clinical listening in Christian Psychology

This article proposes to understand self-awareness as a fundamental mediating process in the mediation between faith and clinical listening of Christian psychologists. It is argued that, by expanding the reflective, affective, and ethical capacity of the psychologist over their own subjective participation, self-awareness favors a clinical presence that is more integrated, responsible, and open to the other.

“Do not go outside yourself; return into yourself. In the inward man dwells truth.” - Augustine, *Of True Religion*

What, and from where, does a Christian psychologist listen when faced with the suffering of a client?

Certainly, it can be said that, like any Psychology professional, they listen to the narratives of their clients with the support of theories and techniques accumulated throughout the formative period of the Psychology course. When listening to a client, a psychotherapist must remember the guided rea-

Autoconsciência como processo mediador entre fé e escuta clínica do psicólogos cristãos

Este artigo propõe compreender a autoconsciência como um processo mediador fundamental na mediação entre fé e escuta clínica de psicólogos cristãos. Argumenta-se que, ao ampliar a capacidade reflexiva, afetiva e ética do psicólogo sobre sua própria participação subjetiva, a autoconsciência favorece uma presença clínica mais integrada, responsável e aberta ao outro.

“Não saias de ti; volta-te para dentro de ti mesmo. No homem interior habita a verdade.” - Agostinho, *A Verdadeira Religião*

O que, e a partir de onde, escuta um psicólogo cristão quando está diante do sofrimento de um cliente?

Certamente pode-se dizer que, como qualquer profissional da Psicologia, ele escuta a narrativa de seus clientes com o apoio de teorias, técnicas acumuladas durante todo o período formativo do curso de Psicologia. Ao ouvir um cliente, um psicoterapeuta deve lembrar-se das leituras orientadas de sua abordagem teórica, bem como das orientações recebidas em supervisão. De maneira profissional,

dings of their theoretical approach, as well as the orientations received in supervision. In a professional manner, a psychotherapist must be identified as a technician in their field. Not only that, it is also necessary to remember that they—including the Christian psychologist—inevitably listen with the support of their beliefs, values, affects, and structures of meaning that compose their experience (Degani-Carneiro, 2018).

The Christian psychologist can be identified as someone who, beyond their technical and theoretical training in Psychology, identifies with the Christian tradition in a significant way, having faith as a central aspect of their identity as a person. In turn, this professional seeks to relate psychological practice in the light of a Christian ethic, which involves integrating a Christian understanding regarding human nature, suffering, and mental health (Johnson, 2017).

Although the Christian psychologist can be theoretically defined this way, little is known for certain about how a Christian psychologist manages their own religious beliefs with those of their clients—that is, how they organize their therapeutic listening so as not to incur ethical risks in the profession. This focus on the Christian psychologist's own reflexivity, arising from the psychologist-client encounter, makes the therapeutic setting a stage for distinct worldviews that can be a field where the professional's self-awareness is inevitably activated. This article aims to discuss, from a theoretical-critical perspective while situating it within the Brazilian context, how self-awareness—as a reflective psychological process that mediates between faith and therapeutic listening of Christian psychologists, here used as an illustrative figure and condition of analysis—assists in ethically oriented professional practice, based on a previous study (Santos, 2025). To this end, this article is organized around three objects of listening: the psychologist-client encounter, religiosity, and the psychologist's subjectivity through self-awareness.

LISTENING AND THE THERAPEUTIC ENCOUNTER PSYCHOTHERAPY IS AN ENCOUNTER OF TWO PERSONALITIES

Psychotherapy is a modality of work that depends on the combined encounter of two personalities:

um psicoterapeuta deve ser identificado como um técnico de sua área. Não apenas isso, é preciso também lembrar-se que ele, inclusive o psicólogo cristão, escuta, inevitavelmente, com o apoio de suas crenças, valores, afetos e estruturas de significado que compõem sua experiência (Degani-Carneiro, 2018).

O psicólogo cristão pode ser identificado como alguém que além de sua formação técnica e teórica na Psicologia, identifica-se com a tradição cristã de modo significativo, tendo a fé como um aspecto central da sua identidade como pessoa. Por sua vez, este profissional busca relacionar a prática psicológica à luz de uma ética cristã, o que envolve integrar um entendimento cristão acerca da natureza humana, do sofrimento e da saúde mental (Johnson, 2017).

Embora teoricamente possa se definir o psicólogo cristão assim, pouco se sabe ao certo sobre como um psicólogo cristão gerencia suas próprias crenças religiosas com as de seus clientes, isto é, como organiza sua escuta clínica para que não venha a incorrer em riscos éticos na profissão. Esse foco na própria reflexividade do psicólogo cristão, a partir do encontro de psicólogo-cliente, faz do consultório psicológico um palco de cosmovisões distintas que podem ser um campo onde ativa inevitavelmente a autoconsciência do profissional.

Este artigo visa discutir de uma perspectiva teórico-crítica e situando no contexto brasileiro, como a autoconsciência, enquanto um processo psicológico reflexivo que media a relação entre a fé e a escuta clínica de psicólogos cristãos, aqui utilizado como figura ilustrativa e condição de análise, auxilia na prática profissional eticamente orientada, a partir de um estudo prévio (Santos, 2025). Para tanto, este artigo organiza-se em torno de três objetos de escuta: o encontro psicólogo-cliente, a religiosidade e a subjetividade do psicólogo por meio da autoconsciência.

ESCUA E ENCONTRO TERAPÊUTICO PSICOTERAPIA É ENCONTRO DE DUAS PERSONALIDADES

A psicoterapia é uma modalidade de trabalho que depende do encontro somado de duas personalidades, sendo do psicólogo e de seu cliente (Frankl, 2015). Para que esse seja um encontro genuíno, é esperado que haja uma boa quantidade de con-

the psychologist and their client (Frankl, 2015). For this to be a genuine encounter, it is expected that there be a good amount of congruence between both, so that the therapeutic relationship, as the link that joins trust and bond in psychotherapy, is secure and based on attitudes that facilitate this relationship, guided by qualified and empathetic listening (Rogers, 1983).

Clinical psychologists are confronted by an enormous amount of themes and content which, upon entering the therapeutic setting, can promote an impact on professional clinical listening. In a psychological session, themes such as sexuality, marriage, meaning of life, psychopathologies, and many other topics require not only technical preparation but also a capacity to know how to manage these contents internally.

THERAPEUTIC LISTENING AND SUBJECTIVITY

To assist in listening to their clients, a psychologist makes use of a theoretical approach, with concepts and assumptions about human nature, suffering, and mental health, organized in the form of a specific methodology (Johnson & Sandage, 1999). Based on this theoretical and methodological structure, modern psychologists seek to grasp the experience of suffering of their clients, with the intention of moving towards a human “telos” or ideal of maturity, health, and psychological well-being, qualifying psychotherapy as a work permeated by values and virtues (Johnson, 2017).

However, this listening does not only involve theoretical and technical mastery. The constant presence of the psychologist's own subjectivity—that is, their convictions, emotional experiences, personal beliefs—constantly enters the therapeutic setting, challenging immediate clinical neutrality. Some studies have already demonstrated that modern psychologists inform their work with knowledge that may be outside the domains of science, coming from philosophical, religious, or political convictions (Bilgrave & Deluty, 2002), and that their clinical listening may receive interferences from their personal experiences at some point (Santos, 2025).

gruência entre ambos, de maneira que a relação terapêutica, enquanto o elo que une confiança e vínculo na psicoterapia, seja seguro e baseada em atitudes facilitadoras desta relação, norteadas por uma escuta qualificada e empática (Rogers, 1983). Psicólogos clínicos são confrontados por uma enorme quantidade de temas e conteúdos que, ao se inserirem no consultório psicológico, podem promover um impacto na escuta clínica profissional. Em um atendimento psicológico, temas como sexualidade, casamento, sentido de vida, psicopatologias e tantos outros temas, exigem não só um preparo técnico, mas também uma capacidade de saber manejar esses conteúdos internamente.

ESCUA TERAPÊUTICA E SUBJETIVIDADE

Para auxiliar na escuta de seus clientes, um psicólogo faz uso de uma abordagem teórica, com conceitos e pressupostos sobre a natureza humana, o sofrimento e a saúde mental, organizados na forma de metodologia específica (Johnson & Sandage, 1999). Com base nessa estrutura teórica e metodológica, os psicólogos modernos procuram apreender a experiência de sofrimento de seus clientes, no intuito de mover-se na direção de um “telos” humano ou ideal de maturidade, saúde, bem-estar psicológico, qualificando a psicoterapia como um trabalho permeado de valores e virtudes (Johnson, 2017).

No entanto, essa escuta não envolve apenas domínio teórico e técnico. A presença constante da própria subjetividade do psicólogo, isto é, suas convicções, afetos, crenças pessoais, constantemente adentram o setting terapêutico, desafiando a neutralidade clínica imediata. Alguns estudos já demonstraram que psicólogos modernos informam seu trabalho com conhecimentos que podem estar fora dos domínios da ciência, advindo de convicções filosóficas e religiosas ou políticas (Bilgrave & Deluty, 2002), e que sua escuta clínica pode receber interferências de suas experiências pessoais em algum momento (Santos, 2025).

O PSICÓLOGO ENTRA NO SETTING COMO PESSOA

Quando inicia um atendimento, um psicólogo não entra vazio de religiosidade, espiritualidade e de experiências pessoais no setting terapêutico, mas precisa gerenciar sua própria escuta com qualidade para que possa observar como sua própria cosmo-

THE PSYCHOLOGIST ENTERS THE SETTING AS A PERSON

When beginning an appointment, a psychologist does not enter the therapeutic setting empty of religiosity, spirituality, and personal experiences, but needs to manage their own listening with quality so they can observe how their own worldview impacts the therapeutic relationship with their client (Freitas, 2014).

The Christian psychologist, as well as psychologists who are part of any religious orientation, need to clearly discern the impact of their religious beliefs on their therapeutic listening and find ways to make the Christian ethics that surround them assist in the work to be done. This is because, inside the office, it is natural and expected that they will need to deal with moral divergences between themselves and their client, the risk of ethical imposition, or even incurring a premature judgment of the contents of their clients' lives.

LISTENING TO RELIGIOSITY IN THE CLINIC THE PRESENCE OF RELIGIOSITY IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

Due to these aforementioned tensions, it becomes particularly relevant to frequently ask about the place of religiosity in psychological practice. Religiosity is understood as a set of faith practices, such as belief and behavior, that identify the way someone interacts and manifests their creed in God or in something considered Sacred (Zangari & Machado, 2022).

Although in contemporary Psychology, religiosity is recognized as a significant dimension of the individual's constitution and experience, often identified as a useful resource for psychological treatment, the relationships between Religion and Psychology are marked by pulsations and conflicts in the theoretical realm, figured in the form of silencing, rejection, and even the pathologization of religious experiences and beliefs. Because of this, within the clinic, a "religiosity gap" is perceived in the training and practical performance of many Psychology professionals, with some studies showing that some psychologist biases regarding the client's religiosity can influence treatment, mainly because psycholo-

gists impact the therapeutic relationship with their client (Freitas, 2014). Para o psicólogo cristão, essa pode ser uma tarefa ainda mais relevante, em face de haver em si mesmo um conjunto de pressuposições baseadas na fé e espiritualidade cristã para compreender determinados fenômenos humanos.

O psicólogo cristão, como também psicólogos que fazem parte de alguma orientação religiosa, precisam discernir com clareza o impacto de suas crenças religiosas em sua escuta clínica e encontrar meios de fazer com que a ética cristã que o envolve lhe auxilie no trabalho a ser feito. Isso porque dentro do consultório, é natural e esperado que precise lidar com divergências morais entre ele e seu cliente, risco de imposição ética ou até mesmo incorrer em um julgamento precoce de conteúdos da vida de seus clientes.

ESCUTANDO RELIGIOSIDADE NA CLÍNICA A PRESENÇA DA RELIGIOSIDADE NA PSICOTERAPIA

Em razão dessas tensões mencionadas anteriormente, torna-se particularmente relevante perguntar-se com frequência o lugar da religiosidade na prática psicológica. Entende-se religiosidade como um conjunto de práticas da fé, como a crença e o comportamento, que identificam a maneira de alguém interagir e manifestar o credo em Deus ou em algo que se considere Sagrado (Zangari & Machado, 2022).

Apesar de na Psicologia contemporânea, a religiosidade ser reconhecida como dimensão significativa da constituição e da experiência do indivíduo, frequentemente identificada como recurso útil ao tratamento psicológico, as relações entre Religião e Psicologia são marcadas por pulsações e conflitos no âmbito teórico, figuradas na forma de silenciamento, rejeição e até patologização das experiências e crenças religiosas. Por causa disso, no âmbito da clínica percebe-se uma "lacuna de religiosidade" na formação e atuação prática em muitos profissionais da Psicologia, com alguns estudos mostrando que alguns vieses dos psicólogos sobre a religiosidade do cliente podem influenciar o tratamento, principalmente em razão dos psicólogos não receberem treinamentos adequados sobre como abordar religiosidade na psicoterapia (Freitas, 2014).

Em resposta a isso, alguns estudos sugerem para melhor aprimoramento e treinamento dos psicólogos na integração da religiosidade na psicoterapia,

gists do not receive adequate training on how to approach religiosity in psychotherapy (Freitas, 2014).

In response to this, some studies suggest better improvement and training for psychologists in the integration of religiosity in psychotherapy as an element that occupies the diversity of the clinic, with the intent of guiding psychologists based on multicultural dimensions that encompass religiosity, sexuality, race, etc., according to the Multicultural Guidelines that value context, identity, and intersectionality (American Psychological Association, 2017).

CLINICAL COMPETENCIES IN RELIGIOSITY

In this context, the study by Vieten et al. (2013) conducted a mapping of the competencies necessary for the integration of religiosity and spirituality into clinical practice, presenting 16 important competencies that every psychology professional should know. With the support of empirical validation with a wide population of psychologists (Vieten et al., 2016), such competencies centrally include the attitudes and religious beliefs of psychologists, which implies being aware of how their own formation of religious beliefs (or the absence of them) can influence assumptions about the nature of psychological processes and various themes such as marriage, sexual orientation, abortion, suicidal ideation, free will, and personal responsibility (Vieten et al., 2013).

Not only that, with 50% of the sample being composed of Christian psychologists (Protestants and Catholics), the study by Vieten et al. (2016) points out that having a religious faith does not constitute a clinical competence in itself and that one must guard against the risk of using faith in a hasty and poorly oriented manner without proper training.

Therefore, recommendations have been made to religious psychologists regarding how they ground their clinical practice, avoiding basing the work intuitively in favor of a scientifically grounded and ethically monitored psychological practice. In the case of the Christian professional, they must be attentive to how their religious belief influences the treatment, be careful with affiliation biases and the judgment of clients who do not possess similar beliefs, and ensure the conscious and proficient use of evidence-based spiritual resources, utilizing

como um elemento que ocupa a diversidade da clínica, com intuito de orientar os psicólogos a partir de dimensões multiculturais que abrangem religião, sexualidade, raça etc, de acordo com as Diretrizes Multiculturais que valorizam o contexto, a identidade e a interseccionalidade (American Psychological Association, 2017).

COMPETÊNCIAS CLÍNICAS DE RELIGIOSIDADE

Nesse contexto, o estudo de Vieten et al. (2013) realizou mapeamento das competências necessárias para a integração da religião e espiritualidade na prática clínica, apresentando 16 competências importantes que todo profissional da psicologia deve conhecer. Com apoio de validação empírica com população ampla de psicólogos (Vieten *et al.*, 2016), tais competências incluem, de maneira central, atitudes e crenças religiosas dos psicólogos, o que implica estar consciente de como sua própria formação de crenças religiosas (ou ausência delas), pode influenciar em suposições acerca da natureza dos processos psicológicos e de variados temas como casamento, orientação sexual, aborto, ideação suicida, livre arbítrio e responsabilidade pessoal (Vieten *et al.*, 2013). Tais questões recebem menções importantes para que se possa, por sua vez, identificar questões legais e éticas relacionadas à espiritualidade e/ou religião que podem surgir no trabalho com clientes, exigindo contínua avaliação das pesquisas e estudos sobre religiosidade e espiritualidade na psicoterapia.

Não apenas isso, com 50% da amostra sendo composta por psicólogos cristãos (protestantes e católicos), o estudo de Vieten et al. (2016) pontua que ter uma fé religiosa não configura como competência clínica por si só e, que se deve-se preservar do risco em utilizar-se da fé de maneira apressada e pouco orientada sem o devido treinamento. Entre as recomendações inclui-se um apelo à autoconsciência do psicólogo, acompanhada de uma capacidade de monitorar vieses direcionados a clientes que não fazem parte de sua orientação religiosa.

Portanto, recomendações têm sido feitas a psicólogos religiosos na forma como embasam a prática clínica, evitando fundamentar o trabalho de modo intuitivo, para uma prática psicológica cientificamente fundamentada e eticamente monitorada. No caso do profissional cristão, deve estar atento a como sua crença religiosa influi no tratamento, cuidado com os vieses de afiliação e o julgamento de

the client's religious dimension as a legitimate therapeutic tool whenever there is manifest mutual consent between both, without violating the secular nature of the profession (Vieten et al., 2016).

LISTENING TO RELIGIOSITY IN THE REALITY OF BRAZIL

BRAZILIAN CONTEXT: INSTITUTIONAL AND ETHICAL TENSIONS

The discussions presented demonstrate that the integration of religiosity into the psychologist's clinical practice goes beyond the theoretical or ethical scope, also reaching dimensions of the psychologist's subjectivity and the way their own experience and perceptions of religiosity impact clinical work. Because of this, the Brazilian context has been marked by intense debates in the academic community and the media, where once again the phenomenon of religiosity occupies the center of interest, with mentions being made about its epistemological legitimacy (Pereira & Holanda, 2019).

In Brazil, where a significant portion of the population has a religious orientation, the scenario surrounding religiosity in psychotherapy remains in constant tension, conflict, and transformation from first-level training (undergraduate) to professional practice, including discussions in the political and legal spheres related to freedom of expression, secularism, and the limits of psychological practice. In this context, Christian psychologists frequently occupy the center of gravity in these discussions, especially with the bodies that regulate the profession in the country, with attempts at normalization in the form of the dissemination of psychotherapy services.

EXPERIENCES OF RELIGIOSITY IN BRAZILIAN CLINICAL PRACTICE

As a consequence, different studies have pointed to tensions experienced by Brazilian psychologists when religious content emerges in an appointment. Some research reports that psychologists do not feel comfortable hearing clients talk about religious experiences, stating they feel anxiety, concerns, and self-questioning regarding their own personal religiosity, being crossed by the concern of maintaining ethical conduct with patients (Luczinski, 2005; Vargas et al., 2026).

Ser um psicólogo religioso no Brasil não aparece como uma garantia de competência e domínio

clientes que não possuem crenças similares, além do uso consciente e proficiente de recursos espirituais baseados em evidências, utilizando-se da dimensão religiosa do cliente como ferramenta terapêutica legítima, sempre que houver consentimento mútuo manifesto entre ambos, sem ferir a laicidade da profissão (Vieten et al., 2016).

ESCUTANDO RELIGIOSIDADE NA REALIDADE BRASILEIRA

CONTEXTO BRASILEIRO: TENSÕES INSTITUCIONAIS E ÉTICAS

As discussões apresentadas demonstram que a integração da religiosidade na prática clínica do psicólogo ultrapassa o âmbito teórico ou ético, alcançando também dimensões da subjetividade do psicólogo e o modo como sua própria experiência e percepções da religiosidade impactam o trabalho clínico. Por causa disso, o contexto brasileiro tem sido marcado por intensos debates na comunidade acadêmica e na mídia, onde uma vez mais o fenômeno da religiosidade ocupa o centro de interesse, com menções sendo feitas acerca de sua legitimidade epistemológica (Pereira & Holanda, 2019).

No Brasil, onde parcela significativa da população possui orientação religiosa, o cenário em torno da religiosidade na psicoterapia permanece em constante tensão, conflito e transformação desde a formação de primeiro nível (graduação) até a atuação profissional, incluindo discussões no âmbito político e jurídico relacionados à liberdade de expressão, laicidade e limites da prática psicológica. Nesse contexto, psicólogos cristãos frequentemente ocupam o centro de gravidade nestas discussões, especialmente

junto aos órgãos que regulamentam a profissão no país com tentativas de normatização na forma de divulgação dos serviços de psicoterapia.

VIVÊNCIAS DE RELIGIOSIDADE NA PRÁTICA CLÍNICA BRASILEIRA

Como consequência, diferentes estudos têm exibido para tensões vivenciadas por psicólogos brasileiros quando conteúdos religiosos emergem no atendimento. Algumas pesquisas relatam que psicólogos não se sentem confortáveis em ouvir os clientes falarem de experiências religiosas, afirmando sentirem ansiedade, preocupações e autoquestionamentos quanto à sua própria religiosidade pes-

teórico, ético e reflexivo. O cenário pode ser particularmente relevante no caso dos psicólogos cristãos, em virtude dos conflitos vivenciados tanto no ambiente religioso, onde uma resistência à Psicologia aparece, quanto no setting terapêutico junto ao público em geral, com desafios na compreensão dos limites de sua religiosidade pessoal na prática clínica, os papéis de psicólogo e do líder religioso e o modo como integram sua religiosidade na prática clínica (Johnson, 2017).

Being a religious psychologist in Brazil does not appear as a guarantee of competence and theoretical, ethical, and reflective mastery. The scenario can be particularly relevant in the case of Christian psychologists, due to the conflicts experienced both in the religious environment, where a resistance to Psychology appears, and in the therapeutic setting with the general public, with challenges in understanding the limits of their personal religiosity in clinical practice, the roles of the psychologist and the religious leader, and the way they integrate their religiosity into clinical practice (Johnson, 2017).

When observing more closely the subjective experience of Brazilian Christian psychologists, studies indicate the use of religious belief in handling the religious themes of clients, demonstrating the mediating role of the psychologist's religious faith in appointments. In turn, the entry of themes such as homosexuality, marriage, and other contents that mobilize the moral and religious conscience of the Christian professional can produce discomfort, tensions, and insecurity in clinical management (Degani-Carneiro, 2018).

These difficulties in the psychologist's practice have been perceived since student training in Brazil (Pereira & Holanda, 2019), but also in professional practice, through the fear of infringing ethical regulations of the professional regulatory body, the Federal Council of Psychology, which in the reference of the Psychologist's Code of Ethics, guides not to induce religious or political convictions in care (Conselho Federal de Psicologia, 2013). In practice, Brazilian psychologists appear fearful regarding how they should conduct or handle religious content in appointments in an ethical and responsible manner, lacking the necessary competencies and the development of training in religiosity in the clinic.

soal, sendo atravessados pela preocupação de manterem a conduta ética com os pacientes (Luczinski, 2005; Vargas et al., 2026). Com efeito, tem sido comum que no contexto brasileiro clientes religiosos venham se queixando de seus psicólogos por não sentirem abertura suficiente para falarem de sua fé religiosa com psicólogos, substituindo psicólogos seculares por psicólogos religiosos mais alinhados à sua comunidade religiosa (Degani-Carneiro, 2018).

Ser um psicólogo religioso no Brasil não aparece como uma garantia de competência e domínio teórico, ético e reflexivo. O cenário pode ser particularmente relevante no caso de psicólogos cristãos, em virtude dos conflitos vividos tanto no ambiente religioso, onde aparece uma resistência da Psicologia, como no setting terapêutico com o público em geral, com desafios em compreender os limites de sua religiosidade pessoal na prática clínica, os papéis do psicólogo e do líder religioso e, o modo como integram sua religiosidade na prática clínica (Johnson, 2017).

Quando observada mais de perto a experiência subjetiva de psicólogos cristãos brasileiros, estudos indicam para o uso da crença religiosa na condução de temas religiosos dos clientes, demonstrando para o papel mediador da fé religiosa do psicólogo nos atendimentos. Por sua vez, a entrada de temas como a homossexualidade, casamento e outros conteúdos que mobilizam a consciência moral e religiosa do profissional cristão, podem produzir desconforto, tensões e insegurança na condução clínica (Degani-Carneiro, 2018).

Essas dificuldades na prática do psicólogo vêm sendo percebidas desde a formação estudantil no Brasil (Pereira & Holanda, 2019), mas também na atuação profissional, por meio do receio em infringir normativas éticas do órgão regulamentador da profissão, o Conselho Federal de Psicologia, que na referência do Código de Ética do Psicólogo, orienta para não se induzir convicções religiosas ou políticas no atendimento (Conselho Federal de Psicologia, 2013). Na prática, os psicólogos brasileiros se apresentam receosos com relação a como devem conduzir ou manejar conteúdos religiosos nos atendimentos de maneira ética e responsável, carecendo de competências necessárias e no desenvolvimento de treinamento em religiosidade na clínica. A literatura brasileira tem buscado consolidar o campo atuação profissional do psicólogo com religiosidade, procurando compreender a partir da ori-

Brazilian literature has sought to consolidate the psychologist's field of professional activity with religiosity, seeking to understand it based on religious orientation, academic training, education, and training in religiosity, with the aim of identifying variables as predictors in the relationship of Brazilian psychologists with religiosity. The study by Vargas et al. (2026) is an investment in this direction through a broad survey of 4,300 Brazilian psychologists and shows that the factor with the greatest impact for receiving training in the area of religiosity among professionals refers to the psychologist's personal religiosity. Psychologists with some religious affiliation indicated greater interest in receiving training in the area and expected more favorable prognoses regarding religiosity in psychotherapy. In contrast, secular psychologists, without a religious affiliation, showed less interest in receiving training in the area and expressed greater skepticism regarding the treatment prognosis with religious clients and tended to perceive religiosity as harmful or not very beneficial for mental health.

Given the above, the psychological clinic appears marked by more complex contours than just theoretical or technical mastery in psychological practice. The clinical listening of the Brazilian Christian psychologist can be crossed by varied themes in psychological care that can produce mobilizations in their internal experience, because of eventual misalignments between their religious beliefs and those of their clients (Santos, 2025). Thus, religiosity appears in many forms in the psychological clinic, but of special interest has been the need to map the ways in which these contents cross clinical listening and visit them subjectively.

LISTENING TO ONESELF SELF-LISTENING AND THE EXPERIENCE OF PSYCHOLOGISTS

Although psychologists are continuously attentive to their clients through the exercise of clinical listening, their self-referential contents—such as their religiosity, morality, values, feelings, and meanings—can emerge silently in the clinical experience. Despite classic recommendations regarding care with clinical countertransference and reactions directed at clients, it is still little understood how psychologists observe and reflect on their own conscious experience in relation to the appointments they perform (Santos, 2025).

entação religiosa, formação acadêmica, educação e treinamento em religiosidade, com objetivo de identificar variáveis como preditoras na relação dos psicólogos brasileiros com religiosidade. O estudo de Vargas et al. (2026) é uma investida neste sentido por meio de um levantamento amplo com 4.300 psicólogos brasileiros e apresenta que o fator de maior impacto para receber treinamento na área da religiosidade entre os profissionais se refere a religiosidade pessoal do psicólogo. Psicólogos com alguma afiliação religiosa indicaram mais interesse em receber treinamentos na área e acreditavam em prognósticos mais favoráveis quanto à religiosidade no atendimento; em contrapartida, os psicólogos seculares, sem uma afiliação religiosa, apresentavam menos interesse em receber treinamento na área e expressavam maior ceticismo quanto ao prognóstico de tratamento com clientes religiosos e tendiam a perceber a religiosidade como nociva ou pouco proveitosa para a saúde mental. Esses achados reforçam a hipótese de que as variáveis pessoais do psicólogo – como sua história religiosa, crenças e convicções pessoais –, podem influenciar a condução clínica a conteúdos religiosos no atendimento.

Diante do exposto, a clínica psicológica aparece marcada por contornos mais complexos do que apenas domínio teórico ou técnico na prática psicológica. A escuta clínica do psicólogo brasileiro cristão pode ser atravessada por variados temas no atendimento psicológico que podem produzir mobilizações em sua experiência interna, por causa de eventuais desalinhamentos entre suas crenças religiosas e as de seus clientes (Santos, 2025). Assim, a religiosidade comparece de muitas formas na clínica psicológica, mas de especial interesse vem sendo a necessidade de mapear os modos como estes conteúdos atravessam a escuta clínica e o visitam subjetivamente.

ESCUTANDO A SI MESMO AUTOESCUTA E EXPERIÊNCIA DE PSICÓLOGOS

Embora os psicólogos estejam continuamente atentos a seus clientes através do exercício de escuta clínica, seus conteúdos autorreferentes, tais como sua religiosidade, moralidade, valores, sentimentos, significados, podem surgir silenciosamente na experiência clínica. Apesar de recomendações clássicas aos cuidados com a contratransferência clínica e reações dirigidas aos clientes, ain-

Research with psychologists has seen an important resurgence in the present, with the topic of self-awareness and conscious experience being an element of interest (Williams, 2008). Theoretical models have sought to map the internal experience of psychologists, based on the exploration of their subjective processes such as thoughts, sensations, memories, and meanings evoked in the psychologist-client relationship, which signals a vast network of phenomena, especially when related to the psychologists' personal religiosity (Castonguay & Hill, 2017).

While many questions are directed at how psychologists should manage religiosity in the clinic, attention to the psychologist's internal processes shifts the discussion to how their subjectivity participates silently in clinical listening. This turn in the issue describes the psychologist as an implicated subject and reorients religiosity from a theoretical object to an element present in the intersubjective encounter with the client, relocating it from description to self-conscious implication.

SELF-AWARENESS AND RELIGIOSITY IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLINIC

The term self-awareness was originally used in Psychology by Duval and Wicklund (1972) through the Objective Self-Awareness Theory (OSA), understanding self-awareness as the result of the simple fact of taking oneself as the object of attention. The definition and concepts received theoretical and methodological advances after their establishment in Psychology, passing through approaches that present self-awareness as a central psychological process of the self (Morin, 2004), or as a qualitative internal state that allows access to a complex phenomenology of internal experience such as thoughts, feelings, and mental images (Nascimento, 2008), with its empirical documentation being expanded and reaching less privileged populations such as the self-awareness of psychologists (Santos, 2025).

An operational definition of psychologists' self-awareness is understood as the recognition of and attention to psychologists' thoughts, emotions, physiological responses, and immediate behaviors during a psychotherapy session (Williams, 2008), or

da é pouco compreendido como psicólogos observam e refletem acerca de sua própria experiência consciente em relação aos atendimentos que realizam (Santos, 2025).

As pesquisas com psicólogos têm recebido um resurgimento importante no presente, sendo o tópico da autoconsciência e experiência consciente um elemento de interesse (Williams, 2008). Os modelos teóricos têm buscado mapear a experiência interna de psicólogos, a partir da exploração de seus processos subjetivos como pensamentos, sensações, memórias, significados, evocados na relação psicólogo-cliente, que sinaliza para o curso de uma rede extensa de fenômenos, principalmente quando relacionado com a religiosidade pessoal dos psicólogos (Castonguay & Hill, 2017). Enquanto muitos questionamentos são dirigidos ao modo como psicólogos devem manejar a religiosidade na clínica, a atenção aos processos internos do psicólogo desloca a discussão para o modo como sua subjetividade participa silenciosamente da escuta clínica. Essa virada na questão descreve o psicólogo como um sujeito implicado e reorienta a religiosidade de objeto teórico para um elemento presente no encontro intersubjetivo com o cliente, realocando-a da descrição à implicação autoconsciente.

AUTOCONSCIÊNCIA E RELIGIOSIDADE NA CLÍNICA PSICOLÓGICA

O termo autoconsciência foi originalmente utilizado na Psicologia por meio de Duval e Wicklund (1972), por meio da Teoria da Autoconsciência Objetiva (OSA), entendendo a autoconsciência enquanto resultado do simples fato de tomar a si mesmo como objeto da atenção. A definição e os conceitos receberam avanços teóricos e metodológicos após sua edificação na Psicologia, passando por abordagens que apresentam a autoconsciência como um processo psicológico central do *self* (Morin, 2004), ou ainda enquanto um estado interno qualitativo que permite acessar uma fenomenologia complexa da experiência interna como pensamentos, sentimentos, imagens mentais (Nascimento, 2008), com sua documentação empírica sendo expandida e alcançando populações pouco privilegiadas como é o caso da autoconsciência de psicólogos (Santos, 2025).



Source of joy

also understood as “a state of awareness of one's own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, behaviors, and of knowing how these factors are shaped by important aspects of each individual's developmental history” (Pieterse et al., 2013, p. 191).

In clinical practice, the study of self-awareness allows it to be applied as a reflective and guiding process for psychological practice, assisting the professional in a more conscious way to perceive their “blind spots,” conflicts, and challenges inherent to clinical work associated with their culture of belonging, religious history, and personal convictions (Pieterse et al., 2013).

In this sense, qualitative studies have investigated how religious content can emerge in the self-conscious experience of psychologists during clinical practice, indicating that such content can act as organizing elements of the psychologist's subjective experience in the encounter with the client (Santos, 2025).

The study by Santos (2025) conducted a qualitative mapping of the self-conscious experience of psychologists from the northeast region, in Pernambuco, Brazil, exploring how religious contents emerging from clinical practice can be incorporated into the professional's reflective experience. Preliminary results suggest that psychologists with a Christian identity may experience in an intensified way situations of value conflicts with their clients, promoting ethical tensions in the professional when the client's content collides with the psychologist's values, with anguish arising in response to this that impacts the clinical experience. In this sense, findings point out that self-awareness operates as an intersubjective mediating process between the psychologist's religious faith and the client's religious contents, mobilizing different levels of subjective experience from what the study named as silent internal dialogues, autobiographical memories related to religion, religious schemas, among others that will be presented in full in a future study.

The aforementioned study is used here as empirical support that exemplifies the role of the psychologist's self-awareness in clinical practice. The discussion gains specific contours with the Christian professional, taken here in an illustrative and analytical

Uma definição operacional da autoconsciência de psicólogos é compreendida como o reconhecimento e a atenção dos psicólogos a seus pensamentos, emoções, respostas fisiológicas e comportamentos imediatos durante uma sessão de psicoterapia (Williams, 2008), ou ainda compreendida como “um estado de consciência dos próprios pensamentos, sentimentos, crenças, comportamentos, e de saber como esses fatores são moldados por aspectos importantes da história de desenvolvimento de cada indivíduo” (Pieterse et al., 2013, p. 191).

Na prática clínica, o estudo da autoconsciência permite aplicá-la como um processo reflexivo e norteador para a prática psicológica, auxiliando o profissional de maneira mais consciente a perceber seus “pontos cegos”, conflitos e desafios inerentes ao trabalho clínico associados com sua cultura de pertença, história religiosa e convicções pessoais (Pieterse et al., 2013).

Nesse sentido, estudos qualitativos têm investigado como conteúdos religiosos podem emergir na experiência autoconsciente de psicólogos durante a prática clínica, indicando que tais conteúdos podem atuar como elementos organizadores da experiência subjetiva do psicólogo no encontro com o cliente (Santos, 2025).

O estudo de Santos (2025) realizou um mapeamento qualitativo da experiência autoconsciente de psicólogos da região nordeste, em Pernambuco, Brasil, explorando como conteúdos religiosos emergentes da prática clínica podem ser incorporados à experiência reflexiva do profissional. Resultados prévios sugerem que psicólogos com identidade cristã podem experimentar de forma intensificada situações de conflitos de valores com seus clientes, promovendo no profissional tensões éticas quando o conteúdo do cliente colide com os valores do psicólogo, surgindo em resposta a isso uma angústia que impacta a experiência clínica. Neste sentido, os achados apontam que a autoconsciência opera como um processo mediador intersubjetivo entre a fé religiosa do psicólogo e os conteúdos religiosos do cliente, mobilizando diferentes níveis da experiência subjetiva a partir do que o estudo nomeou como diálogos internos silenciosos, memórias autobiográficas relacionadas a religião, esquemas de religiosidade, dentre outros que

way as a case of particular reflection between faith and clinical listening. In the study (Santos, 2025), self-awareness could be understood in psychological functions such as regulatory and intersubjective dimensions, and the self-apprehension of the psychologist's religious meanings and beliefs in the interface with professional exercise. Based on these contributions, a brief discussion of these dimensions as theoretical operators follows to reflect on the implications of the psychologist's personal religiosity, in the case of the Christian psychologist in particular, in the organization of clinical listening and ethical management.

Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation. Self-regulation emerges as a capacity for monitoring and managing the psychologist's thoughts and feelings, with the aim of adjusting internal content through silent dialogues with themselves (Santos, 2025). It is observed in the exploratory results that continuously monitoring their affective contents in response to the client's discourse assists in the psychologist's self-conscious capacity. Identifying affects helps the psychologist not to let themselves get lost in negative emotions and to maintain the focus on the patient's demand (Santos, 2025).

In the case of the psychologist with a Christian identity, internal regulation can be understood not only as a cognitive-affective process but also crossed by implicit moral evaluation, internal tensions of internalized religious values, and the need to maintain coherence between faith and clinical practice. In these cases, self-regulation can assist the Christian psychologist in observing and monitoring moral and spiritual judgments emerging during clinical practice, favoring a more reflective internal reception of the contents mobilized by psychotherapy.

Self-Awareness in Intersubjectivity. By taking themselves as the object of attention, the psychologist can identify doubts and self-questioning about their performance in the therapeutic relationship, as well as recognize the "blind spots" that appear silently in the session, such as evaluating their behavior with the client. This intersubjective navigation allows observing where the worldviews of the psychologist and the client meet and in what way the psychologist may be affected by the alterity of the other (Santos, 2025).

This tension between worldviews, for the Christian psychologist, can be particularly represented in the

serão mais tarde apresentados na íntegra em estudo futuro.

O estudo supracitado é utilizado aqui como suporte empírico que exemplifica o papel da autoconsciência do psicólogo na prática clínica. A discussão ganha contornos específicos com o profissional cristão, tomado aqui de modo ilustrativo e analítico como caso de particular reflexão entre fé e escuta clínica. No estudo (Santos, 2025), a autoconsciência pôde ser compreendida em funções psicológicas tais como dimensões regulatórias, intersubjetivas e de autoapreensão dos significados e crenças religiosas do psicólogo na interface com o exercício profissional. A partir dessas contribuições, a seguir se apresenta breve discussão dessas dimensões como operadores teóricos para refletir em implicações da religiosidade pessoal do psicólogo, no caso do psicólogo cristão em particular, na organização da escuta clínica e manejo ético.

Autoconsciência e Autorregulação. A autorregulação surge como uma capacidade de monitoramento e gerenciamento de pensamentos e sentimentos do psicólogo, com intuito de ajustar o conteúdo interno por meio de diálogos silenciosos consigo mesmos (Santos, 2025). Observa-se nos resultados exploratórios que monitorar continuamente seus conteúdos afetivos em resposta ao discurso do cliente, auxilia na capacidade autoconsciente do psicólogo. Identificar os afetos ajuda o psicólogo a não se deixar perder-se em emoções negativas e manter o foco na demanda do paciente (Santos, 2025).

No caso do psicólogo de identidade cristã, a regulação interna pode ser compreendida não apenas como um processo cognitivo-afetivo, mas atravessado por avaliação moral implícita, tensões de valores religiosos internalizados e pela necessidade de manter uma coerência entre a fé e a prática clínica. Nestes casos, a autorregulação pode auxiliar o psicólogo cristão na observação e monitoramento de julgamentos morais e espirituais emergentes durante a prática clínica, favorecendo um acolhimento interno mais reflexivo dos conteúdos mobilizados pela psicoterapia.

Consciência De Si Na Intersubjetividade. Ao tomar a si mesmo como objeto de atenção, o psicólogo pode identificar dúvidas e autoquestionamentos sobre seu desempenho na relação terapêutica, bem como reconhecer os "pontos cegos" que aparecem silenciosamente no atendimento, tais como avaliar

form of moral and religious divergences on diverse themes such as sexuality, family, and ethics, activating adverse reactions in the psychologist, making self-awareness an important observation resource in the self-understanding of the role of personal religiosity in the therapeutic relationship.

Self-Awareness and Structures of Meaning of Religiosity. The exercise of self-awareness can produce constant personal and professional learning by unveiling aspects of the interior life that would otherwise remain inaccessible. The self-listening to the psychologist's personal meaning structures can reveal the network of meanings implicated in their beliefs and religious schemas and how they shape their interpretation of events and conduct in the appointment (Santos, 2025).

Understanding whether these religious schemas are flexible or rigid can especially determine the quality of the Christian psychologist's reception and how they react to the demands of their clients. Not only that, reflecting on this item allows the psychologist to know their presuppositions beforehand when entering psychological care as someone

neutral regarding religiosity or personal convictions, but attentive to remaining spiritually conscious and oriented toward responsible clinical practice.

When considered through the lens of the Christian psychologist, these axes involved by self-awareness tend to be modulated by the centrality of religiosity as a system of meaning, which reinforces its role not just as personal content, but as a structuring aspect of the clinical experience. Indeed, the Christian psychologist can be understood as a condition of analysis for the effects of self-awareness in the mediation of clinical listening at the interface of themes such as morality, faith, and personal ethics.

In this way, the psychologist's self-awareness can be understood as an operator that mediates subjectivity and clinical practice, allowing the psychologist to recognize their own implication in the process of clinical listening (Williams, 2008). In this framework, religiosity ceases to appear only as a theoretical variable of the clinic to be observed as a constitutive dimension of the psychologist's self-conscious experience, with direct effects on the way religious values can organize and orient professional practice (Santos, 2025).

seu comportamento com o cliente. Essa navegação intersubjetiva permite observar onde as cosmovisões do psicólogo e do cliente se encontram e de que maneira o psicólogo pode estar sendo afetado pela alteridade do outro (Santos, 2025).

Essa tensão entre as cosmovisões, para o psicólogo cristão, particularmente pode ser representada na forma de divergências morais e religiosas sobre temas diversos como sexualidade, família, ética, ativando reações adversas no psicólogo, tornando a autoconsciência um recurso de observação importante na autocompreensão do papel da religiosidade pessoal na relação terapêutica.

Autoconsciência e Estruturas de Significado De Religiosidade. O exercício da autoconsciência pode produzir constante aprendizado pessoal e profissional ao desvelar aspectos da vida interior que, de outra forma, permaneceriam inacessíveis. A autoescuta das estruturas de significado pessoal do psicólogo pode exibir a rede de significados implicadas nas suas crenças e esquemas religiosos e como moldam sua interpretação de eventos e condutas no atendimento (Santos, 2025).

Entender se esses esquemas religiosos são flexíveis ou rígidos podem determinar especialmente a qualidade do acolhimento do psicólogo cristão e como ele reage a demandas de seus clientes. Não apenas isso, refletir acerca desse item permite ao psicólogo conhecer previamente seus pressupostos ao se inserir no atendimento psicológico como alguém neutro de religiosidade ou convicções pessoais, mas atento a manter-se espiritualmente consciente e orientado em prol de uma prática clínica responsável.

Quando considerados sob a ótica do psicólogo cristão, esses eixos envolvidos pela autoconsciência tendem a ser modulados pela centralidade da religiosidade como sistema de significado, o que reforça seu papel não apenas como conteúdo pessoal, mas enquanto aspecto estruturante da experiência clínica. Com efeito, o psicólogo cristão pode ser

compreendido como uma condição de análise dos efeitos da autoconsciência na mediação da escuta clínica na interface de temas como moralidade, fé e ética pessoal.

Dessa forma, a autoconsciência do psicólogo pode ser compreendida como um operador que media subjetividade e prática clínica, permitindo ao psicólogo reconhecer sua própria implicação no

CONCLUSION

Given the above, it is understood that the psychological clinic constitutes a space structured by alterity, in which psychologist and client are mutually constituted in an intersubjective plot crossed by discourses, values, and modes of meaning. In this context, clinical listening cannot be reduced to a neutral technical process but is involved by the participation of the psychologist's subjectivity, including their cultural, ethical, and religious references.

Thus, despite the tensions experienced regarding the legitimacy of the place of the Christian psychologist in the psychological clinic, it is necessary to reflect that the issue of religious faith and clinical practice are not organized in terms of an opposition between the domains of being a psychologist and being a Christian, but rather in the way religiosity, when present, can arise in an integrated, reflective, ethical, and self-conscious way in practice. From this perspective, the Christian psychologist is not a case to be silenced or rejected, but dialogued with, through empirical mentions and discussions that allow for the understanding of how and where the clinical listening of the professional takes place.

From this, self-awareness emerges as an operator that goes beyond the theoretical domain, allowing for mediation between subjectivity and clinical practice with responsibility, enabling the psychologist to recognize and ponder the crossings of their personal history, their worldview, and the ethical requirements in professional performance.

Finally, the discussion developed here suggests new entries and theoretical and empirical investments that deepen the ways in which the Brazilian context should reflect on the modes of integration of religiosity into psychotherapy, but also the place that religiosity has been occupying in Psychology training, especially promoting a space where religiosity is understood in its complexity, but also as a co-participatory element of the maturity of professional self-awareness.

processo de escuta clínica (Williams, 2008). Nesse enquadre, a religiosidade deixa de aparecer apenas como uma variável teórica da clínica para ser observada como dimensão constitutiva da experiência autoconsciente do psicólogo, com efeitos diretos na forma como valores religiosos podem organizar e orientar a prática profissional (Santos, 2025).

CONSIDERAÇÕES FINAIS

Diante do exposto, compreende-se que a clínica psicológica constitui um espaço estruturado pela alteridade, no qual psicólogo e cliente se constituem mutuamente em uma trama intersubjetiva atravessada por discursos, valores e modos de significação. Nesse contexto, a escuta clínica não pode ser reduzida a um processo técnico neutro, mas é envolvida pela participação da subjetividade do psicólogo, incluindo suas referências culturais, éticas e religiosas.

Dessa forma, apesar das tensões vividas em torno da legitimidade do lugar do psicólogo cristão na clínica psicológica, faz-se necessário refletir que a questão da fé religiosa e da prática clínica não se organizam em termos de uma oposição entre domínios de ser psicólogo e ser cristão, mas sim na forma como a religiosidade, quando presente, pode surgir de maneira integrada, reflexiva, ética e autoconsciente na prática. Nessa perspectiva, o psicólogo cristão não é um caso a ser silenciado ou rejeitado, mas dialogado, com menções empíricas e discussões que permitam a compreensão de como e onde se realiza a escuta clínica do profissional.

A partir disso, a autoconsciência surge como um operador que ultrapassa o domínio teórico, mas permite a mediação entre a subjetividade e prática clínica com responsabilidade, permitindo ao psicólogo reconhecer e ponderar os atravessamentos de sua história pessoal, sua cosmovisão e as exigências éticas na atuação profissional.

Por fim, a discussão aqui desenvolvida sugere para novas entradas e investidas teóricas e empíricas que aprofundem os modos como o contexto brasileiro deva refletir sobre os modos de integração da religiosidade na psicoterapia, mas também do lugar que a religiosidade vem ocupando na formação da Psicologia, especialmente promovendo espaço onde a religiosidade seja compreendida em sua complexidade, mas também como um elemento coparticipativo da maturidade da autoconsciência profissional.

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Tree of Life

comment

The Author writes: „...clinical listening cannot be reduced to a neutral technical process but is involved by the participation of the psychologist's subjectivity, including their cultural, ethical, and religious references”. Yes! In recent years, the fields of psychotherapy and psychiatry worldwide have become increasingly interested in the significance of spirituality and religiosity in clinical practice. “It is absurd to assume that a psychotherapist can set aside his or her own values, which may sometimes be expressed explicitly but are always implicitly present in his or her behaviors and attitudes.” [Evans, Gilbert, 2005:1]. (Kenneth Evans – past president of the European Association of Integrative Psychotherapy (EAIP) www.euroaip.eu , past president of the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) www.europsyche.org .)

Adapting the therapeutic relationship to the patient's specific characteristics (beyond the diagnosis) increases the effectiveness of psychological treatment. Effective ways to tailor therapy to a specific individual include, among other things, taking into account the patient's religion and spirituality [Norcross, Lambert, 2018, 308; Norcross, Wampold, 2019].

“Those who train psychotherapists and supervisors should teach students to recognize and respect the client's cultural heritage, values, and beliefs - in a way that strengthens the therapeutic relationship” [Norcross, Lambert, 2019:310].

In 2016 the World Psychiatric Association and the World Health Organization issued the „WPA Position Statement on Spirituality and Religion in Psychiatry”. Psychiatrists should always be sensitive to and respect patients' beliefs and practices in the area of spirituality and religion.

A new practice has emerged of informing people seeking therapy about a therapist's worldview. On PsychologyToday.com, information about psychotherapists now includes their religious affiliation. The disclosure of a psychotherapist's worldview is a new phenomenon in therapy.

Research has shown that psychotherapy that incorporates religion or spirituality (R/S) is just as effective as other types of psychotherapy. Psychotherapy tailored to a patient's R/S resulted in greater improvement in clients' psychological and spiritual well-being compared to no treatment and psychotherapies without R/S. [Captari, Hook, Hoyt, Davis, McElroy-Heltzel, Worthington, 2018; Norcross, Wampold, 2019].



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Today, the question is no longer IF but HOW.

A psychotherapist's self-awareness is important in any approach. Psychotherapy is always based on some form of anthropology. However, psychologists and psychotherapists are often unaware of the specific anthropological framework they are working within, and in practice they simply rely on their own beliefs.

A psychotherapist's internal integration encompasses standard psychological knowledge, psychotherapeutic skills, self-awareness, and an understanding of healthy spirituality/ religiosity or spirituality disrupted by psychological factors. They should distinguish between healthy beliefs—that is, those concerning a personal relationship with God—and beliefs distorted by psychological factors, based on rigid patterns and defense mechanisms.

A psychotherapist in training must undergo their own psychotherapy. It should be emphasized that a psychotherapist is professionally trained to treat mental disorders. They should be professionals. They should also be open to the unknown, to the mysteries that arise in the encounter with the patient. A psychotherapist does not engage in spiritual guidance.

In the context of incorporating the R/S dimension into psychotherapy, it is worth noting that the focus is not on the patient's spiritual level. What matters is the depth of the psychotherapist's own level.

In therapeutic work based on Christian anthropology, it is essential to be aware of:

1. One's own emotions, body, thoughts, beliefs, decisions, as well as one's own traumas and possible transference.
2. One's own beliefs regarding the image of the human person. In Christian anthropology, the human is a person, possesses freedom and dignity, and is in a relationship with God.
3. God's presence in the therapy room.

We can observe the following characteristics of God's love:

1. Acceptance of the person.
2. Expressing acceptance.
3. Deeply knowing the person.
4. Understanding the person within the context of his/her entire life story.
5. And helping the person toward the good.

The profession of a Christian psychotherapist is unique. They use knowledge and skills developed by psychotherapy worldwide. This enables them to develop the ability to deeply know and understand another person. But they are also open to God's love for themselves; and, by living and working in God's Presence, convey to the patient a love similar to that of

God. In this way, the psychotherapist themselves grows spiritually, as they develop their knowledge of God and human being and their love.

A Christian psychotherapist, open to God's love, should above all love every patient. God is love.

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Personality: How Christians Might Develop Theirs

Addressing personality development from a Christian perspective possess a conundrum when starting with a secular word: personality. How should we attempt to discuss and utilize a secular scientific construct that we so often use colloquially? Complicating matters, people understand and utilize the idea of personality differently. For example: Some blame their personality for struggles. Some define their personality by large categories (think Enneagram numbers). Some reject the notion of labelling their personality at all. This leaves us with a couple of problems: What does personality mean for the Christian and how can it be useful?

If we approach the question 'what is personality?' from secular scientific psychology, we enter a discussion of universal 'traits', 'factors', or 'styles' that attempt to clarify and codify personal constitution. It is concerning that no unified definition of personality exists. With theorists disagreeing on the constituent parts of personality, there is a high degree of complexity around the construct. For example, The Big 5 approach (that measures openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) has risen to relative dominance while at the same time personality is often assessed in clinical contexts using measures like the MMPI which isn't based on personality theory at all (Fehler & Vernon, 2021). The MMPI actually measures codified dimensions of psychopathology while still being used to discuss personality.

Beyond this, psychologists have complex debates, such as the degree to which biological traits determine personality expression (it seems genetics

plays a significant role). Or whether we should seek increasing numbers of dimensions to capture personality diversity or seek more robust typologies to classify people in larger groups (Caspi et al., 2005). Tongue-in-cheek, we could say psychology has a personality problem. Bergner (2020) articulates it well:

"Psychology is a science, and we pride ourselves on its being such. However, as lamented famously by Sigmund Koch (1959) many decades ago, we continue to push forward with this science without being clear on the nature of its core subject matter – without articulating such central concepts as "behavior", "person", "self", or, in the present instance, "personality." (p. 6)

Christian thinkers might even suggest psychology has a broader problem. Since psychology is not bound by any worldview or philosophical system it remains open to the roaming trends of social and scientific interest. To avoid the trap of an ever-changing psychology, Christians can look to scripture to find stability. As Roberts (2012) articulates, there is a scriptural psychology containing, "a conception of human nature, a conception of human dysfunction, a set of procedures for correcting dysfunction, and a positive personality outcome goal: faith, hope, love, patience, humility, gratitude, love of neighbor and love of God" (p. 40). Meanwhile, Christian scholarship still largely joins the secular ranks without a definition of personality. It is plausible that Christians have yet to consistently define personality because a Christian psychology drawn from scripture doesn't address personality in the manner of modern western psychological thought.

The challenge is many Christians continue to utilize the idea of personality in colloquial ways, picking up ideas from cultural uses and narratives. For example, I live in the United States of America where personality is often used as an indicator of why you may or may not like someone. Or as an indicator of job-person-environment fit. And personality descriptors are increasingly used as self-diagnostic tools that explain why you live and choose as you do (see discussions around Disk assessments or the Enneagram). The benefits of using personality in this way seem clear. For instance, we have a tool to ground self-reflection and awareness. Yet, from a Christian viewpoint pitfalls remain: Personality can be used to override responsibility, limit one's willingness to grow and adapt to new situations or even be centralized as the point of our development.

Considering these challenges, Christians can seek a scriptural framework (within a Christian psychology) that allows us to discuss our personal experiences, tendencies and proclivities. This type of framework will be useful only if it helps stimulate development and management of self-expression, and it may end up with an alternative moniker to personality.

A Christian Perspective on Development

Roberts (2012) states that "Psychologies in general are human self-understandings... [and can be] intensely practical or even "spiritual" in a broad sense of the word, shaping a person's emotions, actions and relationships" (p. 39). He goes on to point out that self-help books occupy a huge market because we long for such self-understanding. We want to be interpreted so that we can internalize a self-schema that organizes our lives.

Secular psychology's attempt at these personality schemas have left us wanting. Not least as we grasp for a robust pathway from medical diagnosis to practical formation. Roberts (2012) words deserve direct citation here as he illuminates a careful and clear Christian appreciation for development amidst the wider human desire for a useful tool to define, articulate, and support change: "Practical psychologies are capable of being a basis for character, for ongoing personal dispositions toward self, other people, and the non-human world. But the nurturing of character has always been the business of the church, and its business has been more particularly that of sanctification—the forma-

tion of a holy character, holy by the church's own lights" (p. 39).

The key point is this: Let us (Christians) have our guiding light (Scripture) illuminate the challenge of personal formation. Scripture orients this illumination and formation as an outward project, rather than a challenge of self-definition. In scripture we are invited to define ourselves outwardly—in relation to God and his Will. God has a declared intention for our lives, and our actions are meant to help us conform to it (e.g., Rom 12:2). Specifically, we are called to develop over time and to be marked by (indeed to enact!) the character of Christ (e.g., Eph 5:1-2), with the fuller goal of participation in communities of blessing (e.g., 1 Pet 4:10).

A Christian focus on formation shifts us from a concern about personality, to concern about preparation for participation. Of course, there are many challenges to our Christian formation that ride atop our physical maturation. First, formation is influenced by emerging capacities (like reasoning and self-control). Second, our formation is forged amidst the unrelenting pressure of culture and context. Sinful hearts inside, sinful contexts outside. I agree with Roberts that we do indeed need a practical psychology assists us in formation that enables us to participate as God intended!

The Role of Identity

Scripture is replete with calls to Christians that they 'put on', 'take up', and 'remember' who they are, what they are, and what they are for. The apostles take up this challenge by teaching, discipling, serving, and meeting with one another (e.g. Acts 2:42). Then they extend these behaviors to others and show them how to live in accordance (1 Tim 4:12, Gal 6:1). We also see the epistles address all manner of sinful insides and sinful outsides (e.g. Rom 6:1-2, 1 Cor 5), as they attempt to prepare Christians to demonstrate their faith as a testimony to their own salvation (Jam 2), and as a witness before others (Tit 2:7-8). Here is a practical psychology in action: Understand yourselves in this holistic way, so that you might desire and express yourselves accordingly.

Developmental theory has also paid great attention to identity formation. Interestingly, Erik Erikson (a prominent theorist) was influenced by deep theological roots. Gunnoe (2022) explores how Erikson became steeped in Christian thinking while continuing his scientific study. She states how Erikson

believed healthy functional identities that were able to shape choices and behavior are anchored in a bigger existential identity. He supposed a healthy functional identity provided a powerful shaping force precisely becomes is anchored in this deeper sense of meaning. Like we just saw with the apostles—they were functionally assisted in change.

Erikson saw development in stages and suggested the Identity versus Role Confusion stage is a time of forming a coherent sense of self where what someone is (body, temperament, internalized experiences) is aligned to the choices available to them. In short, identity is the ability to say I am this, in a world that is like this, and this is how I shall enact myself in response. These types of declarative identity statements imply practical motivation and commensurate expressions. When people practice these patterned motivations over time, they become characterological.

The crux of formation sits in one's schema – or the knowledge of self and the world that is internalized. Perhaps we must include 'applied by' the Spirit to our idea of internalizing. Neuroscience helps us understand how we learn through neurons, but scripture makes plain that the Spirit is at work to open hearts and apply truth. (Does this mean the Spirit work with neurons – a topic for another day!). What is clear is that a Christian practical psychology emerges in the New Testament that serves as a basis for understanding and producing change. The Christians internalize a new understanding of themselves (an identity) as they participate with one another and the Spirit. This psychology is as Roberts (2012) says, "a basis for character, for ongoing personal dispositions toward self, other people, and the non-human world" (p. 39). This is a psychology illuminated by the Spirit where identity leads to character.

The Role of Character

Galatians 5 provides a prophylactic to any Christian obsession with personality. The thrust of Paul's argument in the chapter urges Christians to live out their freedom in Christ, which includes the acts of denying the flesh and living in accord with the Spirit. The chapter does this by listing the works of the flesh and contrasting them with the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit are the well-known list of character virtues that may be expressed in many forms. It is noteworthy that the list is given but its enactment seems to be Paul's priority.

We could argue that a 'Galatians 5 personality' is evidenced by repeated activities that accord with the Spirit, showing His fruit. The Christian invites the Spirit, requires Him for partnership in change, and then shares this change with others through character rich expressions. In Galatians the Spirit is understood to be just as active as we are in Christian expressions of turning, putting away, repenting, putting to death, and loving. For our purposes it is clear: Personality is not emphasized but identity in Christ, fruitful character, and action are.

Now, if we returned to secular categories of personality such as The Big 5, you would likely see someone measured as open and extraverted expressing the character and actions of kindness differently from the analytical and introverted person. Perhaps this is just one example of the delightful diversity God planned. Regardless, neither personality construction predicts or prohibits an expression of kindness that signals a maturing believer. However, personality (or trait) vocabulary may help us capture the differences in how believers enact their character. It may be that the construct of personality provides us with a rubric through which we can appreciate and expect diverse, character rich, expressions of Christian identity. This may ultimately grow our humility and compassion for one another.

Here we have come back to the question of personality in Christian development. Should we seek to define biblical categories of personality? Would this help us form identity and character? The apostles do not seem concerned with this, but there may be merit if it helps us appreciate diversity and develop humility. Repeat patterns of individual expression could be cataloged or coded using Biblical categories to develop a Christian personality taxonomy. I fear this would distract us from joining Paul in a focus on developing identity and character and return us to self-focus. Perhaps we are better off heeding Erikson's insights by helping one another develop a rich and coherent sense of self where what someone is (body, temperament, internalized experiences) is then disciplined into alignment with the choices available to us in the Spirit. This appears to align with Paul's focus in Galatians.

Church and Counseling Contexts

I want to end this discussion by returning to the developmental thrust of Galatians 5:13-15. Here we are called to freedom and to love one another. How

can we partner with the Spirit in a formation that will surely lead to what we colloquially call a new personality? There is a long Christian tradition prioritizing spiritual formation. Permit me to blur the lines between development and spiritual formation, for as we have seen, we participate in maturity with the spirit through our embodied acts.

Brown and Strawn (2012) highlight that “spiritual formation is about reshaping the whole embodied person – as in new habits, a different character, new virtues, and a greater capacity for hospitality, love and care for others” (p. 109), all of which may coalesce into new patterns of relating that we might call personality. This type of formation begins with new internalized commitments as the Spirit opens our mind to learn a new identity. However, we don’t just learn through conscious cognitive processes, we also learn amidst relational and systemic factors that the church can excel in.

First, Christian communities (church, counseling, and more) can model and invite us into character forming relationship with Christ. Loosemore (2023) found the quality of our relationship with God significantly correlated to increased humility, gratitude, and compassion, which leads to increased well-being. We must emphasize the formative power not just of life in the Spirit, but relationship to God by the Spirit. By remaining in God, we bear fruit (John 15:4), and in drawing close to God He draws close to us (James 4:8). Let us commune with God in prayer, corporate worship, and fellowship with our brothers and sisters. This will enhance our relationship with the Lord, solidify our sense of identity, change our character, and impact our actions.

Second, Christian community shapes us through intimate contact. We are called to be the body of Christ that effects change. “For the church to be a body – that is, a dynamical system that shapes individuals and has an impact on the surrounding neighborhood and city – there must be sufficient quantity and quality of communication and interaction among congregants” (Brown & Strawn, 2012, p. 125). As we are formed in relationship with God and our character develops, we are prepared to engage community in a manner “characterized by flexibility, adaptability, and interdependence leading to a form of cohesion that is neither rigidly enmeshed nor passively disengaged.” (Brown & Strawn, 2012, p. 125). Of course, when we are immature in our relationship with Christ, a more mature community may be the vehicle that stimulates our de-

velopment. Formation is bi-directional: Individual to system; system to individual.

Third, Christian community can be stimulated in development by leadership that fosters Christian identity by assisting people to observe their lives against the bigger cohering story of Christ and His world (Brown & Strawn, 2012). Whatever our leadership role, it is likely that we can creatively participate to help others internalize a coherent story of themselves as beloved and included in the work of the Kingdom. Leadership, modeling, mentoring, and pastoring all stimulate reflection and internalization of identity that leads to motivation and intentionality. This is especially when people have previously experience themselves as misaligned from God’s story.

In short, we the church are to live in loving service of one another. We do that through engaging one another in expressions of self that reciprocally form us and work in partnership with the Spirit. What a relief that we are not called to walk this road alone, and that development is baked into the Christian life! When we follow the apostles’ lead and remember our calling to put off the flesh, live unto our freedom, and love one another, the result is Christians who are naturally moved into development. Development of identity, of character, and ultimately the patterned expressions of self that we know so well as personality.

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New Life





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Former contributions by Patrycja Ewa in our eJournal you can see her:

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/21/#p=27>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/24/#p=104>

The Value of Possessing and Developing Hope

Hope, understood as an existential virtue, constitutes a fundamental component of human life and development. According to the Polish pedagogue Professor Andrzej de Tchorzewski, hope not only enhances the quality of contemporary human life, but also serves as a protective force against despair and the experience of meaninglessness. It accompanies individuals throughout all stages of life—from childhood to old age—and has a universal character, independent of religion, origin, or worldview. Within the structure of personality, hope manifests itself as a multidimensional phenomenon grounded primarily in trust and consolation. Trust reflects an attitude of confidence and reliance, whereas consolation provides comfort and encouragement, especially in times of crisis.

Hope accompanies human beings in their pursuit of goals they perceive as valuable and essential for existence. It protects them from losing a sense of meaning and from the disintegration of their internal axiological order. Its absence may lead to despair and even to destructive decisions. Examples

Wartość posiadania i rozwijania nadziei

Nadzieja postrzegana jako cnota egzystencjalna, stanowi kluczowy komponent ludzkiego życia i rozwoju. Według polskiego pedagoga prof. Andrzeja de Tchorzewskiego, nadzieja nie tylko poprawia jakość życia współczesnego człowieka, ale także działa jako siła chroniąca przed rozpaczą i poczuciem bezsensu. Jest obecna we wszystkich etapach życia, od dzieciństwa po starość, i ma charakter uniwersalny, niezależny od wyznania, pochodzenia czy światopoglądu.

W strukturze osobowości człowieka nadzieja objawia się jako zjawisko wielowymiarowe, którego podstawowymi filarami są ufność i otucha. Ufność wyraża zawierzenie, zaś otucha daje pocieszenie i pokrzepienie, szczególnie w momentach kryzysu. Nadzieja towarzyszy człowiekowi w dążeniu do spełnienia celów, które uważa za wartościowe i niezbędne dla egzystencji. Chroni go przed utratą sensu i rozkładem wewnętrznego ładu aksjologicznego. Jej brak prowadzi do rozpacz i decyzji o charakterze destrukcyjnym. Przykłady z życia osób ocalałych z Holocaustu, czy rodzin zmagających się z

drawn from the lives of Holocaust survivors or families struggling with children's addiction demonstrate that hope can sustain a person even under extreme circumstances. Moreover, hope fosters spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social development.

Contemporary reality, dominated by technology and processes of globalization, poses numerous threats to hope. In a world driven by haste and lacking reflection - where consumption and superficiality often prevail - it becomes increasingly difficult to discover lasting meaning. Young people entering adulthood frequently equate hope with material success, which may result in disappointment and frustration. In contrast, older adults tend to anchor their hope in deeper values such as closeness, health, and the meaningfulness of a life already lived.

Professor de Tchorzewski identified six key elements in the structure of hope: freedom, expectation, patience, solitude, sensitivity, and courage. Genuine hope emerges in a person who is internally free, capable of patient waiting, unafraid of solitude, and courageous enough to set ambitious goals. It represents an active projection of the future, grounded in awareness of one's limitations and possibilities. Hope enables individuals to confront difficulties without denying their existence, instead granting them meaning.

It is important to distinguish hope from dreams. Dreams are often transient and may be unrealistic. Hope, by contrast, presupposes intentionality, rootedness in values, and a realistic possibility of fulfillment. It also possesses an axiological dimension, as it opens individuals to goodness, truth, and beauty. Hope allows for the search for deeper meaning even in boundary situations such as illness, loss, or trauma. It constitutes a source of strength for action and for rebuilding social bonds.

In a pedagogical context, hope is not only an aim of education but also its method. Educators, teachers, and pastoral workers should recognize hope as a formative force shaping young people's attitudes, motivating them to overcome difficulties and to open themselves to values. Within educational processes, hope serves as a tool for fostering responsi-

uzależnieniem dzieci, pokazują, że nadzieja może utrzymać człowieka przy życiu nawet w ekstremalnych warunkach.

Co więcej, nadzieja sprzyja rozwojowi duchowemu, intelektualnemu, moralnemu i społecznemu. Współczesność, zdominowana przez technologię i procesy globalizacji, niesie wiele zagrożeń dla nadziei. W świecie pędzącym bez refleksji, gdzie triumfuje konsumpcja i powierzchowność, coraz trudniej odnaleźć trwałe sens. Młodzi ludzie, wchodzący w dorosłość, często ulegają złudzeniu nadziei utożsamianej z sukcesem materialnym, co może prowadzić do rozczarowań i frustracji. Z drugiej strony, seniorzy opierają swoje nadzieje na wartościach głębokich, takich jak bliskość, zdrowie czy sens przeżytego życia. Profesor Tchorzewski wskazywał na sześć kluczowych elementów struktury nadziei: wolność, oczekiwanie, cierpliwość, samotność, wrażliwość i odwaga. Prawdziwa nadzieja rodzi się w człowieku wolnym wewnątrz, który potrafi cierpliwie czekać, nie boi się samotności i ma odwagę stawiać sobie wysokie cele. Jest ona formą aktywnego projektowania przyszłości, opartą na świadomości własnych ograniczeń i możliwościach. Nadzieja pomaga mierzyć się z trudnościami, nie zaprzeczając ich istnieniu, lecz nadając im sens.

Trzeba odróżniać nadzieję od marzeń. Te ostatnie są nietrwałe i bywają nierealne. Nadzieja natomiast zakłada celowość, osadzenie w wartościach oraz realną możliwość spełnienia. Posiada także wymiar aksjologiczny, gdyż otwiera człowieka na dobro, prawdę i piękno. Umożliwia poszukiwanie głębszego znaczenia nawet w sytuacjach granicznych, takich jak choroba, utrata czy trauma. Jest źródłem siły do działania i odnawiania więzi społecznych. W kontekście pedagogicznym, nadzieja stanowi nie tylko cel wychowania, ale także jego metodę. Wychowawcy, nauczyciele i duszpasterze powinni dostrzegać w nadziei siłę formującą postawy młodych ludzi, motywującą do przezwyciężania trudności i otwierania się na wartości. Nadzieja w procesach wychowawczych jest narzędziem budowania odpowiedzialności, wiary w siebie i relacji międzyludzkich.

Nadzieja nie istnieje w oderwaniu od innych cnót. Ma związek z wiarą i miłością. Bez nich staje się iluzją - pustym projektem pozbawionym treści. Tylko

bility, self-confidence, and interpersonal relationships.

Hope does not exist in isolation from other virtues. It is closely connected to faith and love. Without them, it becomes an illusion - a hollow project devoid of substance. Only in relation to other people and to God does hope become an authentic life stance that gives meaning to everyday existence and opens a perspective toward the future. In this understanding, hope appears not as a fleeting emotion, but as a lasting moral disposition that supports individuals in remaining true to themselves, even in a world marked by chaos, uncertainty, and axiological instability (de Tchorzewski, 2018, pp. 32–52)."

Reference:

Andrzej Michał de Tchorzewski, Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2018, "Nadzieja – cnota usprawniająca jakość życia współczesnego człowieka. (Title in English: "Hope – the Virtue that Improves the Quality of Life of Modern Humans.")

More information: The text of the article is an extended version of a paper presented by the author at the open scientific meeting of the Department of General Pedagogy and Theory of Education at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow and the Department of General and Comparative Pedagogy at the Pedagogical University of Krakow on May 17, 2018.

w relacji do drugiego człowieka i do Boga nadzieja staje się autentyczną postawą życiową, która nadaje sens codzienności i otwiera perspektywę przyszłości. W tym ujęciu nadzieja jawi się nie jako chwilowe wzruszenie, ale jako trwała dyspozycja moralna, która wspiera człowieka w byciu sobą, nawet w świecie pełnym chaosu, niepewności i aksjologicznego rozchwiania. (de Tchorzewski, 2018)"



Angel of Love

comment

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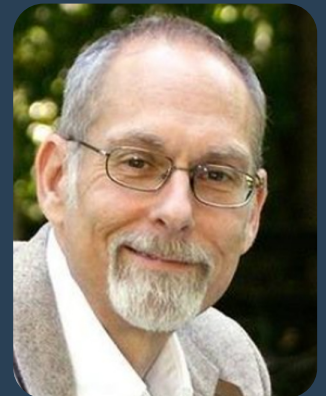
An accomplished author and editor, Eric is widely respected for his work at the intersection of theology and psychology. He brings over 25 years of pastoral counseling experience and is a frequent speaker at conferences and academic events.

Eric is married to Rebekah and cherishes time with their two children and three grandchildren. In his free time, he enjoys hiking and bike riding.

There is much to appreciate about the model of hope which Ms. Longawa describes. Defining hope as an “existential virtue,” Longawa signals her willingness to assume a human-science perspective and interpret hope within an ethical, axiological, and even a transcendent order, in contrast to a more reductionist approach that would interpret hope as nothing more than an organismic expectation or (even worse) a probabilistic prediction, based on information processing.

Longawa considers hope to be a source of meaning that can sustain through illness, loss, and trauma; a buffer that can protect from the ills of modernity – consumerism, materialism, and busyness; and a formative force in human development and education. Most importantly, she suggests that hope is necessarily linked to faith and love, without which it is merely a positive illusion. Hope, then, is a distinguishing feature of human life that contributes to a meaningful, flourishing human life.

Nevertheless, little is said about the specific ground or content of hope. As it is, hope resembles a humanistic and mildly religious form of optimism. There could be two reasons for this. Perhaps Longawa desires simply to write at a general level of description that focuses on features common to all kinds of hope, in order to promote communication and understanding between different worldview communities. On the other hand, perhaps Longawa is writing in the language of “modernese,” which has discourse rules that prohibit reference to sources of knowledge not universally recognized. Both reasons are justifiable, depending on the motives. However, to advance psychological science within the Christian worldview community, it is desirable to make reference to all sources of psychological information that Christians consider legitimate. A distinctly Christian version of hope has its ground in divine revelation (2Tim 3:16; including the gift of the Holy Spirit, Ro 5:5), and significant content has been given regarding eternal life (Tit 1:2), the manifestation of the children of God (Ro 8:19), the eternal inheritance of the saints (Eph 1:18), the coming of Christ (Tit 2:13), and the future glory of God (Ro 5:2). Such specifics are warranted in the development of a Christian psychology, and they will be increasingly of interest to a truly pluralistic psychological science seeking to become culturally sensitive to emic psychologies around the world.



Former contributions in our eJournal by Eric you can see here:

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/1/#/96>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/6/#/8>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/2/#/4>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/8/#p=8>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/11/#p=22>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/15/#p=60>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/21/#p=110>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/22/#p=5>



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<https://emcapp.ignis.de/15/#p=56>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/13/#p=90>

<https://emcapp.ignis.de/12/#p=104>

Intrinsic religiosity and personality maturity: the mediating role of moral transcendence

Some individuals conceive and experience faith as a resource that enables them to obtain comfort, motivation, security, or social support. In these cases, religion is used by those who practice it as a means that facilitates coping with difficulties, regulating emotions, and feeling accompanied within a community.

In contrast, other individuals live their faith in a far more internalized manner; not so much as an instrument for obtaining specific benefits, but rather as an end in itself endowed with personal meaning and moral commitment. This form of religiosity has been illustrated within the Christian tradition through verses from a sonnet of disputed authorship belonging to Spanish Golden Age poetry: "I am not moved, my God, to love you by the heaven you have promised me; nor does the hell so feared move me to cease offending you." In this type of experience, faith tends to become a core conviction that guides decision-making and provides a frame-

Religiosidad intrínseca y madurez de la personalidad: el papel mediador de la trascendencia moral

Algunas personas conciben y experimentan la fe como un recurso que les permite obtener consuelo, motivación, seguridad o apoyo social. En estos casos, la religión es empleada por quienes la profesan como un medio que facilita afrontar dificultades, regular emociones y sentirse acompañado dentro de una comunidad.

En cambio, otras personas viven la fe de una manera mucho más internalizada; no tanto como un instrumento para obtener determinados beneficios, sino como un fin en sí mismo dotado de significado personal y compromiso moral. Esta forma de religiosidad ha sido ilustrada en la tradición cristiana mediante los versos de un soneto de autoría discutida perteneciente a la poesía del Siglo de Oro español: "No me mueve, mi Dios para quererte el cielo que me tienes prometido; ni me mueve el infierno tan temido para dejar por eso de ofenderte". En este tipo de vivencia, la fe tiende a constituirse en una convicción nuclear que orienta la toma de deci-

work of meaning from which individuals interpret their own life experience.

This difference in the way faith is experienced was already noted by Gordon Allport (1950) in his studies on the psychology of religion, where he distinguished between mature and immature forms of religiosity; a distinction he later conceptualized, in 1967, in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation, respectively.

From this perspective, intrinsic religiosity is characterized by a deeper integration of faith into the personality, such that religious beliefs function as an organizing principle for values, behavior, and the interpretation of reality, promoting greater coherence between those beliefs and everyday conduct. Beliefs do not remain merely at the level of ideas or formal practices, but instead influence decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and the manner in which individuals face life's difficulties. Religion thus ceases to be a mere set of external practices oriented toward obtaining benefits and instead becomes an internal structure that provides meaning, purpose, coherence, and psychological stability.

Within the context of intrinsic orientation, religious morality is experienced not as a set of commandments whose observance entails reward and whose violation demands punishment, but rather as an internalized system of values grounded in the conviction that such values possess a positive, transcendent, and desirable moral meaning beyond their prescriptive character or the outcomes that may result from their observance.

This process of internalization, described by Ryan et al. (1993) in terms of identification, requires moral transcendence, a concept present in various theological, philosophical, and legal works, although its meaning has not yet been fully standardized. In the present context, moral transcendence is understood as the internalization of ethical principles perceived as valuable in themselves and oriented toward a horizon of meaning that transcends the limits of the individual self, as well as the immediate benefits or consequences of moral action. In this sense, this process allows behavior to be guided not by fear or the pursuit of immediate gratification, but by conviction, thereby promoting higher levels of prosociality, greater emotional sta-

siones y proporciona un marco de sentido desde el cual interpretar la propia experiencia vital.

Esta diferencia en la forma de vivir la fe fue señalada tempranamente por Gordon Allport (1950) en sus estudios sobre psicología de la religión, al distinguir entre formas maduras e inmaduras de religiosidad; distinción que posteriormente, en 1967, conceptualizó en términos de orientación religiosa intrínseca y extrínseca, respectivamente.

Desde este enfoque, la religiosidad intrínseca se caracteriza por una integración más profunda de la fe en la personalidad, de modo que las creencias religiosas actúan como principio organizador de los valores, la conducta y la interpretación de la realidad, favoreciendo una mayor coherencia entre dichas creencias y la conducta cotidiana. Las creencias no permanecen únicamente en el plano de las ideas o de las prácticas formales, sino que influyen en la toma de decisiones, en la forma de relacionarse con los demás y en la manera de afrontar las dificultades de la vida. La religión deja entonces de ser un simple conjunto de prácticas externas orientadas a obtener beneficios para convertirse en una estructura interna que aporta significado, propósito, coherencia y estabilidad psicológica.

Desde esta perspectiva, en el contexto de la orientación intrínseca, la moralidad religiosa se experimenta no como un conjunto de mandamientos cuyo cumplimiento conlleva recompensa y cuyo incumplimiento exige castigo, sino como un sistema de valores interiorizado, sustentado en la convicción de que dichos valores poseen un sentido moral positivo, trascendente y deseable, más allá de su carácter prescriptivo o del resultado que pueda desprenderse de su cumplimiento.

Este proceso de interiorización, descrita por Ryan et al. (1993) en términos de identificación, requiere de la trascendencia moral, un concepto presente en diversos trabajos teológicos, filosóficos y jurídicos, aunque su significado no se encuentra todavía plenamente consensuado. En el contexto presente, la trascendencia moral se entiende como la internalización de principios éticos percibidos como valiosos en sí mismos y orientados hacia un horizonte de significado que trasciende los límites del yo individual, así como los beneficios o las consecuencias inmediatas de la acción moral. En este sentido, este

bility even when religious expectations are not fulfilled, and a reduced risk of religious disengagement by anchoring motivation in principles considered intrinsically valuable and transcendent.

By contrast, when religion is experienced from a more extrinsic and instrumental orientation, functioning tends to revolve around the attainment of benefits or the avoidance of perceived threats, such as divine punishment or the influence of adverse spiritual forces. In such cases, religion tends to depend more heavily on circumstantial factors such as emotional states, life events, the social environment, or the normative pressure exerted by the group of belonging and religious authority figures. Within this way of experiencing faith, adverse events tend to be more easily interpreted in terms of spiritual warfare, abandonment, disapproval, or divine punishment. This may be associated with higher levels of religious anxiety, feelings of guilt or frustration, as well as a greater likelihood of distancing, fluctuation, or abandonment of religious practice due to the stronger dependence on emotional and situational factors that characterizes this type of orientation, which psychological literature generally considers more immature.

In this sense, the distinction between both forms of religiosity does not lie in the intensity of religious belief but rather in the manner in which faith is articulated across the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of personality, reflecting different levels of psychological maturity and autonomy with respect to emotional and situational factors.

This pattern becomes particularly relevant when analyzing certain doctrinal frameworks that emphasize the attainment of benefits or the avoidance of undesirable experiences as consequences of adherence to—or failure to comply with—specific religious prescriptions that do not necessarily have an explicit foundation in biblical texts. An example can be observed in contexts where material prosperity, or conversely the emergence of economic difficulties, illness, or personal setbacks, is attributed to the degree of fidelity in observing certain religious practices, such as making specific financial contributions exceeding ten percent. In such cases, religious adherence may be motivated primarily by the expectation of reward or the avoidance of negative consequences rather than by the internaliza-

proceso permite que la conducta se oriente no desde el temor o la búsqueda de satisfacción inmediata, sino desde la convicción, lo que promueve mayores niveles de prosocialidad, una mayor estabilidad emocional incluso cuando las expectativas religiosas no se cumplen y una reducción del riesgo de abandono religioso, al anclar la motivación en principios considerados intrínsecamente valiosos y trascendentes.

Por el contrario, cuando la religión se vive desde una orientación más extrínseca e instrumental, suele predominar un funcionamiento centrado en la obtención de beneficios o en la evitación de amenazas percibidas, tales como el castigo divino o la acción de fuerzas espirituales adversas. En estos casos, la religión tiende a depender en mayor medida de factores circunstanciales tales como el estado emocional, los acontecimientos vitales, el contexto social o la presión normativa ejercida por el grupo de pertenencia y las figuras de autoridad religiosa. Desde esta forma de vivir la fe, las experiencias adversas tienden a interpretarse con mayor facilidad en términos de guerra espiritual, desamparo, desaprobación o castigo divino; lo que puede asociarse con mayores niveles de ansiedad religiosa, sentimientos de culpa o frustración, así como con una mayor probabilidad de distanciamiento, fluctuación o abandono de la práctica religiosa debido a la mayor dependencia de factores emocionales y circunstanciales que caracteriza a este tipo de orientación, considerada en la literatura psicológica como más inmadura.

En este sentido, la distinción entre ambas formas de religiosidad no radica en la intensidad de la creencia religiosa, sino en el modo en el que la fe se articula en las dimensiones cognitiva, emocional y conductual de la personalidad, lo que refleja diferentes niveles de madurez psicológica y de autonomía frente a factores emocionales y circunstanciales.

Este patrón es particularmente relevante cuando se analizan ciertos marcos doctrinales que enfatizan la obtención de beneficios o la evitación de experiencias indeseadas como consecuencia de la adhesión o el incumplimiento de determinadas prescripciones religiosas que no necesariamente encuentran un fundamento explícito en los textos bíblicos. Un ejemplo de ello puede observarse en con-

tion of ethical principles perceived as intrinsically valuable. Consequently, this type of motivational dynamic may hinder the development of intrinsic religiosity grounded in moral conviction and the search for meaning.

From a psychological perspective, such interpretations tend to be more readily adopted by individuals with a more extrinsic and instrumental religious orientation and, at the same time, with lower levels of psychological maturity. By contrast, individuals who exhibit an intrinsic religious orientation and higher levels of emotional maturity and personal autonomy tend to show less willingness to engage with communities in which religion is structured in terms of exchange.

These psychological considerations find some support in recent neuroscientific research identifying differences in neural correlates associated with distinct forms of religious and moral processing. Taken together, these studies point in a convergent direction by identifying differences in neural correlates associated with different forms of religious experience, particularly in relation to emotional regulation, moral decision-making, and personality integration. For example, Zhong et al. (2017) found that lesions in regions such as the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (dlPFC) are associated with stronger adherence to fundamentalist beliefs and reduced cognitive flexibility, characteristics traditionally linked to extrinsic religiosity in which religious motivation tends to be structured to a greater extent around fear or punishment avoidance.

These findings suggest that adequately preserved prefrontal functioning may facilitate more integrated forms of religiosity characterized by a religious experience less centered on fear and more oriented toward trust and meaning. In this regard, it is noteworthy that psychological literature commonly considers functions associated with the prefrontal cortex—executive control, moral evaluation, the integration of emotion and cognition, and prosocial behavior—as indicators linked to higher levels of personality maturity (Goodpaster et al., 2026).

From this perspective, it is plausible to propose that individuals who develop more reflective and internalized forms of religiosity, in which religious

textos donde se atribuye la prosperidad material o, por el contrario, la aparición de dificultades económicas, enfermedades o contratiempos personales al grado de fidelidad en la observancia de determinadas prácticas religiosas, como la realización de contribuciones económicas específicas superiores al diez por ciento. En estos casos, la adhesión religiosa puede quedar motivada principalmente por la expectativa de recompensa o por la evitación de consecuencias negativas, más que por la interiorización de principios éticos percibidos como valiosos en sí mismos. Este tipo de dinámica motivacional, por tanto, puede dificultar el desarrollo de una religiosidad intrínseca basada en la convicción moral y en la búsqueda de sentido.

Desde una perspectiva psicológica, este tipo de interpretaciones tienden a ser más fácilmente adoptadas por personas con una orientación religiosa de carácter más extrínseco e instrumental y, al mismo tiempo, con niveles inferiores de madurez psicológica. En cambio, aquellas personas que presentan una orientación religiosa intrínseca y mayores niveles de madurez emocional y autonomía personal tienden a mostrar una menor disposición a vincularse con este tipo de comunidades en las que la religión se estructura en términos de intercambio.

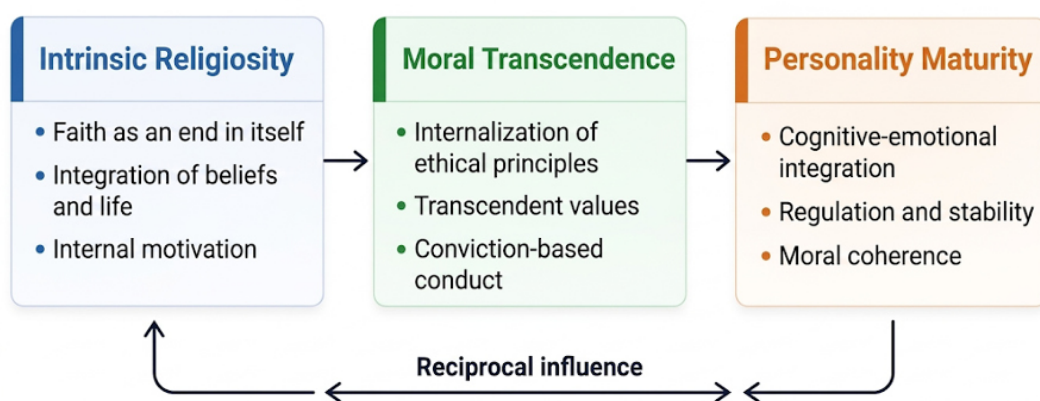
Estas consideraciones psicológicas encuentran cierto respaldo en investigaciones neurocientíficas recientes, que identifican diferencias en los correlatos neurales asociados a distintas formas de procesamiento religioso y moral. En conjunto, estos estudios apuntan en una dirección convergente al identificar diferencias en los correlatos neurales asociados a distintas formas de experiencia religiosa, particularmente en lo relativo a la regulación emocional, la toma de decisiones morales y la integración de la personalidad. Por ejemplo, Zhong et al. (2017) encontraron que lesiones en regiones como la corteza prefrontal ventromedial (vmPFC) y dorsolateral (dlPFC) se asocian con una mayor adhesión a creencias fundamentalistas y con una menor flexibilidad cognitiva, características tradicionalmente asociadas a una religiosidad extrínseca en la que la motivación religiosa tiende a articularse en mayor medida en torno al temor o a la evitación al castigo.

Estos resultados sugieren que un funcionamiento prefrontal adecuadamente preservado podría faci-

experience is organized around meaning, personal conviction, and moral coherence, may also display—through the process of moral transcendence—higher levels of psychological maturity, as well as greater capacity for emotional regulation and cognitive–affective integration, consistent with patterns described in the neuropsychological literature.

Furthermore, some studies have suggested possible associations between religious experience and neurochemical profiles linked to psychological well-being, such as the modulation of neurotransmitters involved in emotional regulation—including serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin—together with relatively lower levels of cortisol. Although these relationships have not been examined directly in comparisons between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, the patterns observed in integrated religious practices (lower cortisol, higher oxytocin) are consistent with profiles associated with greater emotional stability and psychological well-being. Accordingly, these findings suggest that certain forms of religious experience may be associated with differentiated patterns of brain functioning congruent with varying levels of personality integration and maturity in terms of emotional regulation, moral coherence, and internal motivational stability.

Figure 1: Mediation model: intrinsic religiosity, moral transcendence, and personality maturity



On the basis of this empirical convergence, it is possible to propose the hypothesis that moral transcendence may play a mediating role between religious orientation and personality maturity. From this perspective, intrinsic religiosity could contribu-

litar formas de religiosidad más integradas, caracterizadas por una vivencia religiosa menos centrada en el temor y más orientada hacia la confianza y el sentido. No resulta casual, en este sentido, que en la literatura psicológica las funciones vinculadas al córtex prefrontal -control ejecutivo, evaluación moral, integración entre emoción y cognición y conducta prosocial- suelen considerarse indicadores asociados a mayores niveles de madurez de la personalidad (Goodpaster et al., 2026).

Desde esta perspectiva, resulta plausible plantear que aquellas personas que desarrollan formas de religiosidad más reflexivas e interiorizadas, en las que la experiencia religiosa se articula en torno al sentido, la convicción personal y la coherencia moral, tiendan también a mostrar, a través del proceso de trascendencia moral, mayores niveles de madurez psicológica, así como una mayor capacidad de regulación emocional e integración cognitivo-afectiva, en línea con los patrones descritos en la literatura neuropsicológica.

Asimismo, algunos estudios han planteado posibles asociaciones entre la experiencia religiosa y perfiles neuroquímicos vinculados al bienestar psicológico, como la modulación de neurotransmisores relacionados con la regulación emocional -entre ellos serotonina, dopamina y oxitocina- junto con niveles relativamente más bajos de cortisol. Aunque estas relaciones no han sido examinadas de forma directa en la comparación entre religiosidad intrín-

seca y extrínseca, los patrones observados en prácticas religiosas integradas (menor cortisol, mayor oxitocina) resultan compatibles con perfiles de mayor estabilidad emocional y bienestar psicológico. Por tanto, estos hallazgos sugieren que determinadas formas de vivencia religiosa

podrían asociarse con patrones diferenciados de funcionamiento cerebral, congruentes con los distintos niveles de integración y madurez de la personalidad relativos a la regulación emocional, la coherencia moral y la estabilidad motivacional interna.

te to the development of more mature forms of psychological functioning through the internalization of moral values perceived as intrinsically valuable and transcendent, thereby fostering greater integration among the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of personality.

However, this relationship should not necessarily be understood in strictly unidirectional terms. It is plausible that the development of psychological maturity itself may, in turn, promote more internalized forms of religious experience, giving rise to a process of reciprocal influence between intrinsic religiosity and personality maturity mediated by the progressive development of moral transcendence.

The proposed model suggests that moral transcendence may constitute a relevant psychological mechanism for understanding the relationship between intrinsic religiosity and personality maturity. This proposal carries implications for future research in the field of the psychology of religion. In particular, it would be valuable to examine, through longitudinal studies, the mediating role of moral transcendence within this relationship in order to better understand the mechanisms through which the internalization of transcendent moral values is associated with psychological well-being and personality integration.

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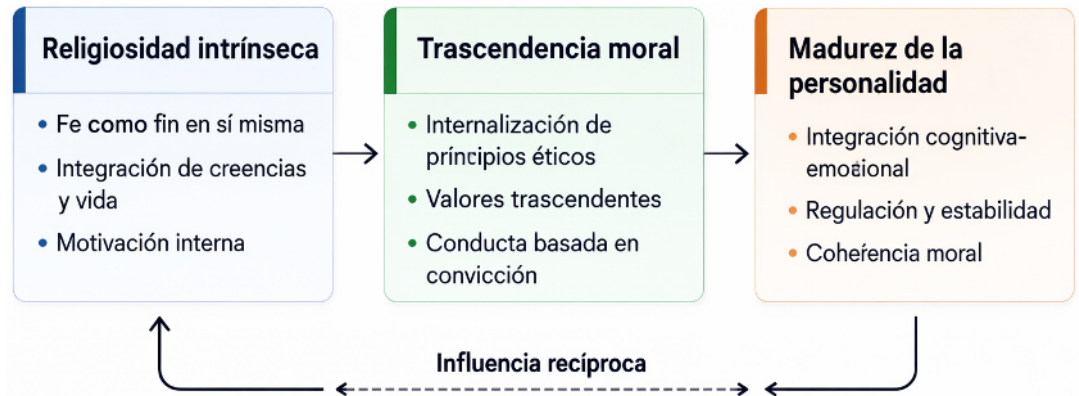
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Figura 1: Modelo de mediación: religiosidad intrínseca, trascendencia moral y madurez de la personalidad



Sobre la base de esta confluencia empírica, puede plantearse la hipótesis de que la trascendencia moral desempeña un papel mediador entre la orientación religiosa y la madurez de la personalidad. Desde esta perspectiva, la religiosidad intrínseca podría contribuir al desarrollo de formas más maduras de funcionamiento psicológico mediante la interiorización de valores morales percibidos como intrínsecamente valiosos y trascendentes, lo que favorecería una mayor integración entre las dimensiones cognitiva, emocional y conductual de la personalidad.

No obstante, esta relación no necesariamente debe entenderse en términos estrictamente unidireccionales. Es plausible que el propio desarrollo de la madurez psicológica favorezca, a su vez, formas más interiorizadas de vivencia religiosa, dando lugar a un proceso de influencia recíproca entre religiosidad intrínseca y madurez de la personalidad, mediado por el desarrollo progresivo de la trascendencia moral.

El modelo propuesto sugiere que la trascendencia moral podría constituir un mecanismo psicológico relevante en la comprensión de la relación establecida entre la religiosidad intrínseca y la madurez de la personalidad. Este planteamiento tiene implicaciones para la investigación futura en el ámbito de la psicología de la religión. En particular, resulta conveniente examinar mediante estudios longitudinales el papel mediador de la trascendencia moral en dicha relación, con el fin de comprender mejor los mecanismos mediante los cuales la interiorización de valores morales trascendentes se asocia con el bienestar psicológico y la integración de la personalidad.



Future



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Spiritual disability as a universal dimension of human experience

This article addresses the issue of spiritual disability as a phenomenon constituting a deficit in the realm of human spiritual functioning. It presents the evolution of the concept of spirituality from a psychological perspective, highlighting the complexity of its definition and the relationship between spirituality and religiosity. Based on empirical research, the article discusses the fundamental manifestations of spiritual disability: a loss of a sense of meaning, difficulties in integrating experiences, a lack of gratitude and acceptance, weakened interpersonal bonds, and deficits in the relationship with the transcendent. The article emphasises that spiritual disability is not a diagnostic category, but a descriptive approach to the limitation of a person's capacity for self-transcendence, inner coherence and spiritual well-being. Its significance for health psychology was also highlighted. The conclusions emphasise the need for further research into the spiritual dimension of mental health and the integration of spirituality into clinical and educational practice. The article also includes a description of research into the neurobiological foundations of religious, spiritual and mystical experiences. It also contains a brief report on research into the acceptance of characterological values and dimensions of personality development in relation to the prevention of spiritual disability.

Niepełnosprawność duchowa jako uniwersalny wymiar ludzkiego doświadczenia

Artykuł podejmuje problematykę niepełnosprawności duchowej jako zjawiska stanowiącego deficyt w obszarze funkcjonowania duchowego człowieka. Przedstawiono ewolucję pojęcia duchowości w ujęciu psychologicznym, wskazując na złożoność definicyjną oraz zależność między duchowością a religijnością. W oparciu o badania empiryczne omówiono podstawowe przejawy niepełnosprawności duchowej: utratę poczucia sensu, trudności w integracji doświadczeń, brak wdzięczności i akceptacji, osłabienie więzi interpersonalnych oraz deficyty w relacji z transcendencją. W artykule podkreślono, że niepełnosprawność duchowa nie jest kategorią diagnostyczną, lecz opisowym ujęciem ograniczenia zdolności człowieka do autotranscendencji, wewnętrznej spójności i duchowego dobrostanu. Wskazano także na jej znaczenie dla psychologii zdrowia. Wnioski akcentują konieczność dalszych badań nad duchowym wymiarem zdrowia psychicznego oraz integracji duchowości w praktyce klinicznej i edukacyjnej. Artykuł zawiera również opis badań nad neurobiologicznymi podstawami doświadczeń religijnych, duchowych i mistycznych. Znajduje się w nim także krótki raport z badań nad akceptacją wartości charakterologicznych i wymiarami rozwoju osobowości w aspekcie zapobiegania niepełnosprawności duchowej.

The inspiration for addressing this topic and the originator of the term „spiritual disability” in Poland is Romuald Jaworski (1950–2025), a priest of the Catholic Church, retired professor at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, psychologist and psychotherapist, and co-founder of the Association of Christian Psychologists in Poland.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition, disability is „a multidimensional phenomenon resulting from the interactions between people and their physical and social environment” (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, 2001, p. 246). Disability, viewed in this way, takes into account the biopsychosocial aspect. It, however, overlooks the spiritual dimension.

The above terms and definition frame disability solely as physical processes – both bodily and mental. However, this approach fails to reveal the full complexity of the human being as a person who transcends the material dimension. The materialist conception of humanity challenges the notion of spirituality, particularly the transcendent, and the existence of a spiritual aspect to human beings. Researchers drawing on a materialistic conception of the human being argue that everything pertaining to the human being can be reduced to biological processes and the associated psychological phenomena; consequently, the human being can be described solely in terms of predetermined psychological processes, which is characteristic of psychologism. Viktor Emil Frankl, however, criticises materialist anthropology, believing that it deprives man of what distinguishes him from other beings, namely his spirituality, particularly in its religious and moral dimensions, which Frankl describes as the noetic sphere. This sphere encompasses such structures and experiences as: a sense of purpose and meaning in life, a hierarchy of values, religiosity, and the experience of values that constitute humanistic culture.

“Human existence is realised in the tension between what is and what ought to be, and this tension is necessary. For man does not exist in order to be, but in order to become... Everything that is human is conditioned. However, what is essentially human is itself only insofar as it rises above its own conditioning and insofar as it surpasses it, insofar as it transcends it. Man is therefore human only to the extent that – as a spiritual being – he is something hig-

Wprowadzenie

Inspiracją dla podjęcia tego tematu i pomysłodawcą upowszechnienia terminu „niepełnosprawność duchowa” na gruncie polskim jest Romuald Jaworski (1950-2025), kapłan Kościoła Katolickiego, emerytowany profesor Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, psycholog i psychoterapeuta, współzałożyciel Stowarzyszenia Psychologów Chrześcijańskich w Polsce.

Według definicji Światowej Organizacji Zdrowia (WHO) niepełnosprawność [ang. disability] to „wielowymiarowe zjawisko wynikające z wzajemnych oddziaływań między ludźmi i otaczającym ich środowiskiem fizycznym i społecznym” (Międzynarodowa Klasyfikacja Funkcjonowania Niepełnosprawności i Zdrowia, 2001, s. 246). Niepełnosprawność w tym ujęciu uwzględnia aspekt biopsychospołeczny. Pomija zaś wymiar duchowy.

Powyższe określenia i definicja ujmują niepełnosprawność jako procesy tylko fizyczne – cielesne i psychiczne. Jednak takie podejście nie ujawnia całej złożoności człowieka jako osoby, która wykracza poza wymiar materialny. Materialistyczna koncepcja człowieka kwestionuje pojęcie duchowości, zwłaszcza transcendentnej i istnienie duchowej strony człowieka. Badacze opierający się na materialistycznej koncepcji człowieka oceniają, że wszystko, co dotyczy człowieka, można zredukować do procesów biologicznych i powiązanych z nimi zjawisk psychicznych, zatem człowieka można opisać wyłącznie w kategoriach zdeterminowanych procesów psychicznych, co jest charakterystyczne dla psychologizmu. Viktor Emil Frankl stawia natomiast zarzut antropologii materialistycznej, uważa że pozbawia człowieka tego, co go wyróżnia od innych istot tj. z jego duchowości, szczególnie w wymiarze religijnym i moralnym, którą Frankl określa jako sferę noetyczną. W sferze tej występują takie struktury i doświadczenia, jak: poczucie celu i sensu życia, hierarchia wartości, religijność i przeżywanie wartości tworzących kulturę humanistyczną.

„Był ludzki urzeczywistnia się w napięciu między tym, co jest, a tym, co być powinno, i napięcie to jest potrzebne. Człowiek bowiem nie istnieje po to, by być, ale po to, by się stawać... Wszystko, co ludzkie, jest uwarunkowane. Jednakże to, co istotnie ludzkie, jest sobą tylko o tyle, o ile wznosi się ponad własne uwarunkowanie i o ile je przewyższa, o ile je transcenduje. Człowiek jest więc człowiekiem tylko o tyle, o ile – jako istota duchowa – jest czymś wyż-

her than his mere physical and psychological existence” (Frankl, 1998, p. 47).

According to Romuald Jaworski (2018, pp. 28–29), spirituality is: “The uniquely human sphere of life associated with questions of values, the purpose and meaning of life, and religiosity. Many people equate spirituality with the cultural sphere. In a religious sense, spirituality is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit at work within a person. A holistic understanding of the human person requires taking their spiritual life into account”.

Despite their complexity, human beings are a unified whole; all spheres are interconnected – every physical, psychological or spiritual process influences the other spheres. Only an affirmative approach to the spiritual sphere, as a potential source of suicidal tendencies and existential problems, can in many cases provide support and form the foundation of psychotherapy for people facing such issues. In this context, spiritual disability is the source of the problems for which a person seeks psychotherapy, and the rejection or omission of spiritual disability in therapy may prevent or seriously hinder an understanding of the person’s actual problems.

We are unable to prove the existence of a spirit within a person; nevertheless, science now has the technical means to observe brain activity in a state described as a spiritual state. At the Centre for Neuropsychological and Cognitive Research (CERNEC) at the University of Montreal, Mario Beauregard and Vincent Paquette conducted a study among 15 nuns of the Carmelite Order aged between 22 and 64 (average age 50) from convents in the suburbs of Quebec (Beauregard, O’Leary, 2011). Each of these nuns had experienced at least one intense episode of mystical union. The study utilised functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and quantitative EEG (QEEG) to investigate brain activity during RSE (Religious, Spiritual and/or Mystical Experiences). The research question was formulated as follows: Are specific states of brain activity correlated with mystical contemplation? The nuns were asked to recall and thus attempt to relive their most significant mystical experiences during the study (mystical state conditions), to also recall their most intense state of union with another person (control conditions), and their brain activity was observed under conditions of normal consciousness.

The conclusions drawn from the fMRI and QEEG studies are as follows: in a mystical experience, in addition to the temporal lobes, the inferior parietal

z ym niż sam jego byt cielesny i psychiczny” (Frankl, 1998, s. 47).

Duchowość według Romualda Jaworskiego (2018, s. 28-29) to: „Specyficzna dla człowieka sfera życia związana z problematyką wartości, z celem i sensem życia oraz religijnością. Wiele osób utożsamia duchowość ze sferą życia kulturalnego. W sensie religijnym duchowość jest przejawem działającego w człowieku Bożego Ducha. Integralne rozumienie człowieka zakłada uwzględnienie jego życia duchowego”.

Człowiek, pomimo swej złożoności, jest jednością, wszystkie sfery są ze sobą powiązane – każdy proces somatyczny, psychiczny czy duchowy oddziałuje na pozostałe sfery. Tylko afirmatywne podejście do sfery duchowości, jako ewentualnego źródła skłonności samobójczych, problemów egzystencjalnych może w wielu przypadkach stanowić pomoc i fundament w psychoterapii osób mierzących się z takimi problemami. W tym wymiarze niepełnosprawność duchowa stanowi źródło problemów, z którymi zgłasza się osoba do psychoterapii i odrzucenie lub pominięcie niepełnosprawności duchowej w terapii może uniemożliwić lub poważnie utrudnić zrozumienie właściwych problemów człowieka.

Nie potrafimy wykazać istnienia ducha w człowieku, niemniej aktualnie nauka dysponuje możliwościami technicznymi, aby zobaczyć aktywność mózgu, który znajduje się w stanie opisywanym jako stan uduchowiony. W Centrum Badań Neuropsychologicznych i Poznawczych Uniwersytetu w Montrealu (CERNEC) przeprowadzono badania przez Mario Beauregarda i Vincenta Paquette’a wśród 15 zakonnicek zgromadzenia karmelitanek w wieku od 22 do 64 lat (średni wiek 50 lat) z klasztorów znajdujących się na przedmieściach Quebecu (Beauregard, O’Leary, 2011). Każda z tych zakonnicek przynajmniej raz przeżyła intensywne doświadczenie zjednoczenia mistycznego. Do badania wykorzystano funkcjonalny rezonans magnetyczny (fMRI) oraz ilościowe EEG (QEEG), by dowiedzieć się więcej na temat aktywności mózgu podczas DRDM (Doświadczenia religijnego, duchowego i/lub mistycznego). Sformułowano problem: Czy konkretne stany aktywności mózgu są skorelowane z kontemplacją mistyczną? Poproszono zakonnice, aby w czasie badania wspominały i w ten sposób próbowały ponownie przeżywać swoje najważniejsze mistyczne doświadczenia (warunki stanu mistycznego), aby wspominały również swój najbardziej intensywny stan zjednoczenia z innym człowiekiem (warunki kontrolne) i obserwowano stan

lobule, visual cortex, caudate nucleus and the left side of the brainstem are also involved. DRMDs are complex and multidimensional in nature. The experience is mediated by areas responsible for perception, cognitive processes, emotions, body representation and self-awareness. These findings should not be regarded as fully verified, but they point to an interesting direction for research into the neurobiological basis of religious spiritual experiences. The pattern of heightened brain activity analysed in the studies described resembles a state of unconditional love (Beauregard, O'Leary 2011, 404 -416).

Spiritual experiences are elusive in quantitative research and psychological measurement. Faith and reason (*fides et ratio*), supernatural and sensory-intellectual cognition, as described by John Paul II (1998), were defined as two paths to the knowledge of truth, two wings on which the human spirit soars in the contemplation of truth. The convergence of these distinct perspectives offers an opportunity for a more comprehensive understanding of the human person.

It is, however, possible to observe and describe phenomena accompanying internal spiritual processes that occur in the somatic or psychological sphere. For example, someone has committed a grave sin (according to Catholic doctrine) and, as a result, experiences remorse, which in the psychological sphere may manifest as despondency or depression. In the spiritual sphere, they feel that their vital relationships with God and other people have been disrupted. One cannot effectively help a person from a psychological perspective without understanding the spiritual processes taking place within them.

Neglecting the spiritual aspects of a person can lead to spiritual disability, which may manifest itself, amongst other things, in: an inability to forgive; existential problems; a lack of a sense of meaning in life; suicidal tendencies; and the undermining of moral principles.

The concept of intellectual disability

Is spiritual suffering exclusively religious in nature? Research suggests that it affects both religious and non-religious people (King et al., 2013; Klimasiński et al., 2022). This applies to people who believe they have a clearly defined spirituality, as well as those who have never put a name to it. In a world where superficial divisions between people are often defined by differing beliefs, convictions or ideologies, there exists a profound dimension of

aktywności mózgu w warunkach normalnego stanu świadomości.

Wnioski jakie uzyskano z badania fMRI i QEEG są następujące: w doświadczeniu mistycznym oprócz płatów skroniowych biorą udział m. in. płacik ciemieniowy dolny, kora wzrokowa, jądro ogoniaste, lewa część pnia mózgu. DRDM mają złożony i wielowymiarowy charakter. W przeżywaniu pośredniczą obszary odpowiadające za percepcję, procesy poznawcze, emocje, reprezentację ciała, samoświadomość. Wniosków tych nie należy traktować jako w pełni zweryfikowane, ale wskazują ciekawy kierunek badań nad neurobiologicznymi podstawami doświadczeń duchowych o charakterze religijnym. Obraz wzmożonej aktywności mózgu analizowany w opisywanych badaniach przypomina stan bezwarunkowej miłości (Beauregard, O'Leary, 2011, 404 -416).

Doświadczenia duchowe są nieuchwytnie w badaniach ilościowych, pomiarze psychologicznym. Wiera i rozum (*fides et ratio*), poznanie ponadnaturalne i zmysłowo – intelektualne przez Jana Pawła II (1998) zostały określone jako dwie drogi do poznania prawdy, dwa skrzydła, na których unosi się duch ludzki w kontemplacji prawdy. Spotkanie tych odrębnych punktów widzenia stanowi szansę na pełniejszą koncepcję człowieka.

Możliwe jest jednak zaobserwowanie i opisanie zjawisk towarzyszących wewnętrznym procesom duchowym, które występują w sferze somatycznej, czy psychicznej. Np. ktoś popełnił ciężki grzech (zgodnie z doktryną kościoła katolickiego) i ma z tego powodu wyrzuty sumienia, które w sferze psychicznej mogą przejawiać się jako przygnębienie, depresja. W sferze duchowej ma poczucie zaburzenia ważnych relacji z Bogiem i ludźmi. Nie można skutecznie pomóc człowiekowi od strony psychologicznej, jeżeli nie rozumie się zachodzących w tym człowieku procesów duchowych.

Zaniechanie obszarów duchowych w człowieku prowadzić może do niepełnosprawności duchowej, która może przejawiać się m.in. w: niezdolności do przebaczenia; problemach egzystencjalnych; braku poczucia sensu życia; skłonnościach samobójczych; podważaniu zasad moralnych.

Pojęcie niepełnosprawności duchowej

Czy cierpienie duchowe ma wyłącznie charakter religijny? Badania wskazują, że dotyczy ono zarówno osób religijnych, jak i niereligijnych (King et al., 2013; Klimasiński et al., 2022). Dotyczy to osób, które

suffering that transcends these divisions. In its existential universality, it unites all people, regardless of their worldview, and irrespective of their affiliation with a particular religion, value system or philosophy of life.

With regard to spirituality, two basic groups of definitions can be distinguished: those which assume that spirituality concerns a person's relationship with God or a Higher Being, and those which are devoid of this assumption and approach spirituality in a secular (naturalistic), existential or humanistic manner (cf. Jarosz, 2010).

In the first conception, rooted in religious traditions, spirituality is associated with a relationship with God, the divine, or some other higher reality. Karl H. Reich, Fritz K. Oser and George Scarlett (1999) define spirituality as a relationship with God, which is one of the manifestations of a person's religious and spiritual development. Similarly, Julia D. Emblen (1992) defines it as a transcendent relationship with God. In turn, Larry L. Fahlberg and Lauri A Fahlberg (1991) describe spirituality as a relationship with the divine, emphasising the aspect of consciousness and the transcending of ego boundaries towards unity with the spiritual dimension. According to David G. Benner (1989), spirituality is the human response to God's grace, which highlights its dynamic nature and relational dimension. Understood in this way, spirituality thus encompasses the experience of a relationship with a higher being, the divine or God, which forms the basis of meaning, hope and a sense of purpose in an individual's life. This is a perspective in which spirituality and religiosity are closely intertwined, and the boundaries between them are often blurred.

The second approach to understanding spirituality does not presuppose the existence of God or a Higher Being. In this school of thought, spirituality is understood as a dimension of human experience which may, but need not, relate to transcendence in the religious sense. Within this framework, three main categories of definition can be distinguished: experiential, motivational and dispositional.

The first category comprises definitions emphasising the experiential dimension of spirituality – mystical experiences, a sense of unity with nature and the world, or contact with the sacred (Maslow, 1971; Hill and Pargament, 2003; Goodenough, 1998). The second category comprises definitions that understand spirituality in motivational terms – as a person's inner drive to seek meaning, purpose

uważają, że mają wyraźnie określoną duchowość, jak i tych, którzy jej nigdy nie nazwali. W świecie, w którym powierzchowne podziały między ludźmi często wyznaczone są poprzez odmienne wierzenia, przekonania czy ideologie, istnieje głęboki wymiar cierpienia, który wykracza poza te podziały. W swojej egzystencjalnej uniwersalności łączy wszystkich ludzi, bez względu na światopogląd, niezależnie od przynależności do określonej religii, systemu wartości czy filozofii życia.

W odniesieniu do duchowości można wyróżnić dwie podstawowe grupy definicji: takie, które zakładają, że duchowość dotyczy relacji człowieka z Bogiem lub Istotą Wyższą, oraz takie, które pozbawione są tego założenia i ujmują duchowość w sposób świecki (naturalistyczny), egzystencjalny lub humanistyczny (por. Jarosz, 2010).

W pierwszym ujęciu, zakorzenionym w tradycjach religijnych, duchowość wiąże się z relacją z Bogiem, boskością lub inną wyższą rzeczywistością. Karl H. Reich, Fritz K. Oser i George Scarlett (1999) ujmują duchowość jako relację z Bogiem, będącą jednym z przejawów rozwoju religijnego i duchowego człowieka. Podobnie Julia D. Emblen (1992) definiuje ją jako transcendentną relację z Bogiem. Z kolei Larry L. Fahlberg i Lauri A Fahlberg (1991) opisują duchowość jako relację z boskością, podkreślając aspekt świadomości oraz przekraczania granic ego w kierunku jedności z wymiarem duchowym. W ujęciu Davida G. Bennera (1989) duchowość to ludzka odpowiedź na Bożą łaskę, co podkreśla jej dynamiczny charakter oraz relacyjny wymiar. Tak rozumiana duchowość obejmuje więc doświadczenie relacji z bytem wyższym, boskością lub Bogiem, które stanowi podstawę sensu, nadziei i poczucia celu w życiu jednostki. Jest to perspektywa, w której duchowość i religijność są ze sobą ściśle powiązane, a granice między nimi często się zacierają.

Drugie podejście do rozumienia duchowości nie zakłada istnienia Boga ani Istoty Wyższej. W tym nurcie duchowość ujmowana jest jako wymiar ludzkiego doświadczenia, który może, ale nie musi, odnosić się do transcendencji rozumianej religijnie. W jego ramach wyróżnić można trzy główne kategorie definicji: doświadczeniowe, motywacyjne oraz dyspozycyjne.

Pierwszą kategorię stanowią definicje akcentujące wymiar doświadczeniowy duchowości – przeżycia mistyczne, poczucie jedności z naturą i światem, czy kontakt z tym, co święte (Maslow, 1971; Hill i Pargament, 2003; Goodenough, 1998). Drugą kategorię

and significance in existence (Shafranske and Gorsuch, 1984; Doyle, 1992; Emmons, 1998). The third category comprises concepts that treat spirituality as a disposition – a relatively stable trait of the individual, enabling them to transcend the limitations of their own ‘self’ and fostering integration and development (Pearce, 2004; Mosby, 2009; Heszen-Niejodek & Gruszczyńska, 2004).

In an attempt to bring order to the existing conceptual chaos in the field of spirituality, Ralph F. Piedmont (1999, 2001) proposed a theory of spiritual transcendence. In his view, spirituality is the human capacity to adopt a perspective that transcends one’s own temporal and spatial limitations, enabling a view of life from a broader, more objective standpoint. Understanding spirituality in this context as a universal dimension of human existence, independent of any specific religious belief, allows us to recognise that this area too can be subject to various kinds of disturbances, limitations and crises. Analogous to health and illness, which, according to Aaron Antonovsky (2005), are treated as a continuum rather than dichotomous categories, spirituality can also be considered in terms of a spectrum – ranging from well-being to deficit. In this context, the proposed concept of spiritual disability may constitute an attempt to describe a state in which a person experiences limitations in their own spiritual functioning.

Spiritual disability may be permanent or temporary and refers to a diminished ability to discover, express and fulfil one’s spiritual needs – understood as a fundamental aspect of human experience, independent of religious affiliation or worldview. This phenomenon manifests itself in a diminished ability to find meaning in life, and difficulties in forming deep and authentic relationships – both interpersonal and those relating to the transcendent dimension, understood as values, ideas, nature, a higher power or God. It may also be associated with problems in integrating spiritual experiences into everyday life, a sense of rootlessness and lack of coherence, as well as difficulty in accepting reality, a limited capacity to feel gratitude, and engaging with something greater than the individual perspective. Although this proposal does not fit within the classical diagnostic framework, it forms part of a broader trend of reflection on the spiritual dimension of health and may serve as a starting point for further research into human functioning in situations of exis-

stanowią definicje rozumiejące duchowość w ujęciach motywacyjnych – jako wewnętrzny napęd człowieka do poszukiwania sensu, celu i znaczenia istnienia (Shafranske i Gorsuch, 1984; Doyle, 1992; Emmons, 1998). Trzecią kategorię stanowią koncepcje, które traktują duchowość jako dyspozycję – względnie stałą cechę jednostki, pozwalającą jej na przekraczanie ograniczeń własnego „ja” i sprzyjającą integracji oraz rozwojowi (Pearce, 2004; Mosby, 2009; Heszen-Niejodek, & Gruszczyńska, 2004).

W ramach prób uporządkowania istniejącego chaosu koncepcyjnego w obszarze duchowości, Ralph F. Piedmont (1999, 2001) zaproponował teorię transcendencji duchowej. W jego ujęciu duchowość to zdolność człowieka do przyjęcia perspektywy wychodzącej poza własne ograniczenia czasowe i przestrzenne, umożliwiającej spojrzenie na życie z szerszego, bardziej obiektywnego punktu widzenia. Rozumienie duchowości w tym kontekście jako uniwersalnego wymiaru egzystencji człowieka, niezależnego od konkretnego przekonania religijnego, pozwala zauważyć, że również ten obszar może podlegać różnego rodzaju zaburzeniom, ograniczeniom i kryzysom. Analogicznie do zdrowia i choroby, które w ujęciu Aarona Antonovsky`ego (2005) traktowane są jako continuum, a nie kategorie dychotomiczne, duchowość również może być rozpatrywana w kategoriach spektrum – od dobrostanu po deficyt. W tym kontekście proponowane pojęcie niepełnosprawności duchowej może stanowić próbę opisanego stanu, w którym człowiek doświadcza ograniczeń w zakresie własnego funkcjonowania duchowego.

Niepełnosprawność duchowa może mieć charakter trwały lub przejściowy i odnosi się do osłabienia zdolności jednostki do odkrywania, wyrażania i realizowania jej duchowych potrzeb – rozumianych jako fundamentalny aspekt ludzkiego doświadczenia, niezależny od przynależności religijnej czy światopoglądowej. Zjawisko to przejawia się w osłabionej zdolności do odnajdywania sensu istnienia, trudności w budowaniu głębokich i autentycznych relacji – zarówno interpersonalnych, jak i odnoszących się do wymiaru transcendentnego, pojmowanego jako wartości, idee, natura, siła wyższa lub Bóg. Może także wiązać się z problemami w integracji doświadczeń duchowych w codziennym życiu, poczuciem braku zakorzenienia i koherencji, a także z trudnością w akceptacji rzeczywistości, ograniczoną zdolnością do odczuwania wdzięczności i angażowania się w coś większego niż jednostkowa perspektywa. Choć propozycja ta nie mieści się w klasycznych ramach



Kings of Kings

tential crisis and into the developmental potential offered by the restoration of spiritual well-being.

Signs of spiritual disability

Spirituality, understood as the ability to give meaning to one's own life, is strongly correlated with a sense of purpose and life satisfaction (Deb et al., 2019; das Chagas & Muñoz-García, 2023). The loss of this sense leads to a decline in mental well-being, increased levels of stress, anxiety, depression and sleep disorders, and in extreme cases may result in a loss of the will to live (Yalom, 1980). Research confirms that people who find meaning are characterised by higher levels of well-being, better quality of life and greater survival rates (Frankl, 2009; Tanno et al., 2009). Spirituality in this sense need not be linked to religion – it often constitutes an experience expressing the need to situate oneself within a broader context of community, nature or values transcending individual life (Koenig, 2012; Puchalski & Romer, 2000). Empirical research demonstrates a clear link between spirituality and a sense of meaning and mental health. Sheryl Zika and Kerry Chamberlain (1992) found a strong correlation between a sense of meaning in life and mental well-being, whilst David J. Craig and colleagues (2021) demonstrated that a sense of meaning in life mediates between spirituality and positive affect, protecting against depression and anhedonia. In their study, Olga Garduño-Ortega and colleagues (2021) demonstrated that higher levels of spiritual well-being, particularly in terms of a sense of meaning and peace, were predictors of a better quality of life and lower levels of depression in women following breast cancer treatment. From the perspective of Viktor E. Frankl's logotherapy (2009, 2010), a person cannot live fully without a sense of meaning. A lack of purpose leads to an existential void that is a source of spiritual suffering. The search for meaning generates tension, which is essential for mental health and development – its absence leads to existential stagnation. A similar position is taken by Artur Fabiś and Aleksandra Błachnio (2015), who emphasise that the ability to generate personal meaning constitutes an indicator of the quality of mental functioning, and its absence reduces spiritual well-being.

A person's inner coherence and well-being depend largely on four interrelated qualities: acceptance, integration, coherence and gratitude. Acceptance

diagnostycznych to wpisuje się w szerszy nurt refleksji nad duchowym wymiarem zdrowia i może stanowić punkt wyjścia do dalszych badań nad funkcjonowaniem człowieka w sytuacjach kryzysu egzystencjalnego oraz nad potencjałem rozwojowym, jaki niesie przywracanie sprawności duchowej.

Przejawy niepełnosprawności duchowej

Duchowość, rozumiana jako zdolność do nadawania znaczenia własnemu życiu, silnie koreluje z poczuciem sensu istnienia i satysfakcją z życia (Deb et al., 2019; das Chagas & Muñoz-García, 2023). Utrata tego poczucia prowadzi do obniżenia dobrostanu psychicznego, wzrostu poziomu stresu, lęku, depresji i zaburzeń snu, a w skrajnych przypadkach może skutkować utratą woli życia (Yalom, 1980). Badania potwierdzają, że osoby, które odnajdują sens, charakteryzują się wyższym poziomem dobrostanu, lepszą jakością życia i większą przeżywalnością (Frankl, 2009; Tanno et al., 2009). Duchowość w tym ujęciu nie musi być związana z religią – często stanowi doświadczenie, wyrażające potrzebę osadzenia siebie w szerszym kontekście wspólnoty, natury czy wartości przekraczających jednostkowe życie (Koenig, 2012; Puchalski & Romer, 2000). Empiryczne badania wykazują wyraźny związek między duchowością a poczuciem sensu i zdrowiem psychicznym. Sheryl Zika i Kerry Chamberlain (1992) stwierdzili silną korelację między poczuciem sensu życia, a dobrostanem psychicznym, natomiast David J. Craig i współpracownicy (2021) udowodnili, że sens życia pośredniczy między duchowością, a pozytywnym afektem, chroniąc przed depresją i anhedonią. W badaniu Olga Garduño-Ortega i współpracownicy (2021) wykazali, że wyższy poziom duchowego dobrostanu, zwłaszcza w zakresie poczucia sensu i pokoju, był predyktorem lepszej jakości życia i mniejszego nasilenia depresji u kobiet po leczeniu raka piersi. Z perspektywy logoterapii Viktora E. Frankla (2009, 2010) człowiek nie może żyć w pełni bez poczucia sensu. Brak celu prowadzi do pustki egzystencjalnej będącej źródłem cierpienia duchowego. Poszukiwanie sensu rodzi napięcie, które jest niezbędne dla zdrowia psychicznego i rozwoju – jego brak prowadzi do stagnacji egzystencjalnej. Podobne stanowisko zajmują Artur Fabiś i Aleksandra Błachnio (2015), którzy podkreślają, że zdolność do generowania osobistego sensu stanowi wykładnię jakości funkcjonowania psychicznego, a jej brak obniża duchowy dobrostan.

serves as the starting point for spiritual and psychological development. Frankl (2009) notes that a lack of acceptance can lead to a breakdown of one's value system and greater susceptibility to destructive influences. Irvin D. Yalom (1980), in turn, emphasises that an inability to accept oneself often results in shifting responsibility onto the external world, which hinders the process of personality integration. Integration is more than a logical combination of experiences into a coherent narrative – it is a profound spiritual process involving the recognition that suffering, loss and fear are an integral part of one's identity. Fabiś and Błachnio (2015) describe spiritual intelligence as an acceptance of life in its fullness – with its rhythm, uncertainty and trust in the face of the unknown.

Closely linked to the concept of integration is that of coherence, or internal consistency, as introduced by Antonovsky (2005). A person with a strong sense of coherence perceives life as understandable, manageable and meaningful. Although this sense does not protect against suffering, it helps to mobilise internal resources in crisis situations and fosters the belief that even difficult experiences have value. Gratitude, on the other hand, is one of the deepest expressions of spiritual well-being. It is not merely an element of positive psychology, but a spiritual force that deepens one's sense of meaning and grounds a person in the present moment. Frankl (2009) notes that even under the extreme conditions of a concentration camp, gratitude could arise from the smallest signs of kindness. Empirical research confirms the link between gratitude and mental and spiritual well-being. Alex M. Wood and colleagues (2010) demonstrated that practising gratitude correlates with higher levels of happiness, better mental health and lower levels of depression. Studies using gratitude journals have shown that the daily practice of gratitude reduces the impact of stress and promotes mental well-being (Krejtz et al., 2016). Research by Paul J. Mills et al. (2015) conducted among patients with heart failure showed that higher levels of gratitude are associated with better sleep, less fatigue and lower levels of depression. Literature reviews (Wirtz et al., 2014; Fernández-Pascual et al., 2025; Thampi Sana et al., 2024) confirm a significant link between gratitude and spirituality across different cultures and religions, indicating that gratitude is one of the foundations of spiritual well-being. Difficulties in accepting and integrating experiences can lead to crises of

Wewnętrzna spójność i dobrostan człowieka w dużej mierze zależą od czterech powiązanych ze sobą jakości: akceptacji, integracji, koherencji i wdzięczności. Akceptacja stanowi punkt wyjścia do rozwoju duchowego i psychicznego. Frankl (2009) zauważa, że brak akceptacji może prowadzić do załamania systemu wartości i większej podatności na destrukcyjne wpływy. Z kolei Yalom (1980) podkreśla, że nieumiejętność zaakceptowania siebie często skutkuje przetrzucaniem odpowiedzialności na świat zewnętrzny, co utrudnia proces integracji osobowości. Integracja jest czymś więcej niż logicznym połączeniem przeżyć w spójną narrację – to głęboki proces duchowy, polegający na uznaniu, że cierpienie, strata i lęk stanowią integralną część tożsamości. Fabiś i Błachnio (2015) opisują duchową inteligencję jako zgodę na życie w jego pełni – z rytmem, niepewnością i zaufaniem, wobec tego, co nieznanne.

Z integracją ściśle wiąże się pojęcie koherencji, czyli wewnętrznej spójności, którą wprowadził Antonovsky (2005). Osoba o silnym poczuciu koherencji postrzega życie jako zrozumiałe, możliwe do zarządzania i sensowne. Choć poczucie to nie chroni przed cierpieniem, sprzyja uruchamianiu wewnętrznych zasobów w sytuacjach kryzysowych oraz przekonaniu, że nawet trudne doświadczenia mają wartość. Wdzięczność natomiast stanowi jeden z najgłębszych przejawów duchowego dobrostanu. Nie jest ona jedynie elementem psychologii pozytywnej, ale siłą duchową, która pogłębia poczucie sensu i zakorzenienia człowieka w teraźniejszości. Frankl (2009) zauważa, że nawet w ekstremalnych warunkach w obozie koncentracyjnym wdzięczność mogła rodzić się z najdrobniejszych przejawów dobra. Empiryczne badania potwierdzają związek wdzięczności z dobrostanem psychicznym i duchowym. Alex M. Wood i współpracownicy (2010) wykazali, że praktykowanie wdzięczności koreluje z wyższym poziomem szczęścia, lepszym zdrowiem psychicznym i niższym poziomem depresji. Badania z wykorzystaniem dzienników pokazały, że codzienne praktykowanie wdzięczności redukuje wpływ stresu i sprzyja dobrostanowi psychicznemu (Krejtz et al., 2016). Badania Paula J. Millsa i in. (2015) przeprowadzone wśród pacjentów z niewydolnością serca pokazały, że wyższy poziom wdzięczności wiąże się z lepszym snem, mniejszym zmęczeniem i niższym poziomem depresji. Przeglądy literatury (Wirtz et al., 2014; Fernández-Pascual et al., 2025; Thampi Sana et al., 2024) potwierdzają istotny związek wdzięczności z duchowością w różnych kulturach i religiach, wskazując, że wdzięcz-

values and a sense of inner chaos (Frankl, 2009). Conversely, a lack of gratitude – understood as the conscious recognition of the good in everyday life – deprives a person of the depth of experience and spiritual grounding. Practising gratitude, acceptance and integration can therefore constitute a unique process of spiritual healing, leading to a sense of coherence and meaning in life.

Building authentic bonds and a sense of community is a key aspect of human spiritual well-being. Research confirms that spiritual experiences foster authenticity in relationships and promote the formation of meaningful bonds. A lack of a sense of belonging or authentic relationships, on the other hand, leads to social isolation, anxiety, depression and reduced mental well-being (Christy et al., 2020; Burnett et al., 2022). Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) point out that health and well-being require not only physical but also emotional and social bonds – a sense of security and satisfaction in relationships with others, referred to as social connection. Research shows that chronic loneliness significantly increases the risk of depression, anxiety, sleep disorders and somatic illnesses (Lim et al., 2020). In the context of medical care, Baum, Nowak, Nowosadko and Głodowska (2022) emphasise that spirituality influences the way in which patients cope with illness and suffering. Interpersonal relationships, a sense of community and social support act here as protective factors, enhancing a sense of meaning and aiding the recovery process. In turn, Fabiś and Błachnio (2015) point out that an appropriate level of social adaptation is a sign of maturity – it encompasses empathy, understanding and support for others. Maturity in late adulthood manifests itself in the ability to maintain harmonious relationships and a willingness to engage with the community. Corey L. M. Keyes (1998) regards social well-being as one of the pillars of mental health, alongside emotional and psychological well-being. He identifies five components: social acceptance, integration, coherence, self-actualisation and social contribution. High levels of these components promote a sense of meaning and fulfilment in human functioning (Keyes, 1998). Research confirms that a sense of belonging is strongly linked to better mental health, life satisfaction and professional success (Lim et al., 2020). Among Indigenous communities in North America, Chantal Burnett and colleagues (2022) demonstrated that a strong sense of community identity and spirituality were associated with lower le-

ność jest jednym z fundamentów duchowego dobrostanu. Trudności w akceptacji i integracji doświadczeń mogą prowadzić do kryzysów wartości i poczucia chaosu wewnętrznego (Frankl, 2009). Z kolei brak wdzięczności – rozumianej jako świadome dostrzeganie dobra w codzienności – pozbawia człowieka głębi przeżyć i duchowego zakorzenienia. Praktykowanie wdzięczności, akceptacji i integracji może więc stanowić swoisty proces duchowego zdrowienia, prowadzący do poczucia koherencji i sensu życia.

Budowanie autentycznych więzi i poczucia wspólnoty stanowi kluczowy wymiar duchowego funkcjonowania człowieka. Badania potwierdzają, że doświadczenia duchowe wspierają autentyczność w relacjach i sprzyjają tworzeniu znaczących więzi. Brak poczucia przynależności lub autentycznych relacji prowadzi natomiast do izolacji społecznej, lęku, depresji i obniżonego dobrostanu psychicznego (Christy et al., 2020; Burnett et al., 2022). John T. Cacioppo i William Patrick (2008) wskazują, że zdrowie i dobrostan wymagają nie tylko fizycznych, ale też emocjonalnych i społecznych więzi – poczucia bezpieczeństwa i satysfakcji w relacjach z innymi, określane go mianem *połączenia społecznego* (*social connection*). Chroniczna samotność, jak pokazują badania, znacząco zwiększa ryzyko depresji, lęku, zaburzeń snu i chorób somatycznych (Lim et al., 2020). W kontekście opieki medycznej Baum, Nowak, Nowosadko i Głodowska (2022) podkreślają, że duchowość wpływa na sposób, w jaki pacjenci radzą sobie z chorobą i cierpieniem. Relacje międzyludzkie, poczucie wspólnoty i wsparcie społeczne pełnią tu rolę czynników chroniących, zwiększających poczucie sensu oraz pomagających w procesie zdrowienia. Z kolei Fabiś i Błachnio (2015) wskazują, że odpowiedni poziom przystosowania społecznego jest przejawem dojrzałości – obejmuje on empatię, zrozumienie i wspieranie innych. Dojrzałość w późnej dorosłości przejawia się zdolnością do utrzymywania harmonijnych relacji oraz gotowością do zaangażowania we wspólnotę. Corey L. M. Keyes (1998) traktuje dobrostan społeczny jako jeden z filarów zdrowia psychicznego, obok dobrostanu emocjonalnego i psychologicznego. Wyróżnia on pięć komponentów: społeczną akceptację, integrację, koherencję, aktualizację siebie i wkład społeczny. Wysoki poziom tych składników sprzyja poczuciu sensu i pełni funkcjonowania człowieka (Keyes, 1998). Badania potwierdzają, że poczucie przynależności jest silnie powiązane z lepszym zdrowiem psychicznym, satysfakcją z życia i

vels of depression and anxiety. Andrew G. Christy et al. (2020) noted, in turn, that authenticity in relationships is often strengthened by spiritual experiences and participation in communal practices. From a logotherapeutic perspective, Frankl (2009) emphasised that contact with another person is one of the fundamental ways of finding meaning in life. Love – even for an absent person – was, in his experience, a source of strength and comfort, enduring despite uncertainty about their fate. Contemporary psychological concepts (Keyes, 1998; Seligman, 2012) indicate that an individual's well-being encompasses not only emotional and cognitive aspects, but also relational ones. Authentic bonds and a sense of belonging to a community play a central role in spiritual development and in the experience of the meaning of existence.

The relationship with transcendence constitutes one of the key dimensions of human spiritual functioning. Numerous studies indicate that self-transcendence – understood as the ability to transcend the boundaries of one's own „self” and connect with something greater than the individual – is associated with higher levels of spiritual and psychological well-being (Suliman et al., 2022; Gottlieb, 2023). Frankl (2009) believed that self-transcendence is the essence of human existence and a prerequisite for spiritual healing, enabling one to break the vicious circle of egocentrism. Similarly, Maslow (1971) pointed out that a person engaged in self-actualisation is guided by higher values that go beyond the needs of deprivation. Contemporary research confirms that transcending the ego correlates with greater inner peace, a sense of meaning, and better mental health (Suliman et al., 2022). In Claude Robert Cloninger's (1994) concept, self-transcendence constitutes one of three dimensions of character alongside self-direction and cooperativeness, forming an integral part of the Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI). In his view, self-transcendence expresses an individual's ability to transcend the boundaries of the ego, to experience unity with other people, nature or the spiritual realm, and to perceive one's own life as part of a greater whole. Individuals with a high level of self-transcendence are characterised by greater acceptance of themselves and others, altruism, and a tendency towards existential and spiritual reflection (Cloninger, 2004). In the context of public health, it is noted that the development of a mature personality and mental well-being may be linked to reflection on

sukcesami zawodowymi (Lim et al., 2020). Wśród rdzennych społeczności Ameryki Północnej Chantal Burnett i współpracownicy (2022) wykazali, że silna identyfikacja wspólnotowa oraz duchowość wiązały się z niższym poziomem depresji i lęku. Andrew G. Christy et al. (2020) zauważyli z kolei, że autentyczność w relacjach często wzmacniana jest przez duchowe doświadczenia i uczestnictwo w praktykach wspólnotowych. W perspektywie logoterapeutycznej Frankl (2009) podkreślał, że kontakt z drugim człowiekiem jest jednym z podstawowych sposobów odnajdywania sensu życia. Miłość – nawet do osoby nieobecnej – stanowiła w jego doświadczeniu źródło siły i pocieszenia, trwające mimo niepewności co do jej losu. Współczesne koncepcje psychologiczne (Keyes, 1998; Seligman, 2012) wskazują, że dobrostan jednostki obejmuje nie tylko aspekty emocjonalne i poznawcze, ale także relacyjne. Autentyczne więzi i przynależność do wspólnoty odgrywają centralną rolę w rozwoju duchowym oraz w doświadczaniu sensu istnienia.

Relacja z transcendencją stanowi jeden z kluczowych wymiarów duchowego funkcjonowania człowieka. Liczne badania wskazują, że autotranscendencja – rozumiana jako zdolność do przekraczania granic własnego „ja” i łączenia się z czymś większym niż jednostka – wiąże się z wyższym poziomem dobrostanu duchowego i psychicznego (Suliman et al., 2022; Gottlieb, 2023). Frankl (2009) uważał, że autotranscendencja jest istotą ludzkiej egzystencji i warunkiem duchowego uzdrowienia, pozwalającym przerwać błędne koło egocentryzmu. Podobnie Maslow (1971) wskazywał, że człowiek zaangażowany w aktualizację siebie kieruje się wyższymi wartościami wykraczającymi poza potrzeby braku. Współczesne badania potwierdzają, że przekraczanie ego koreluje z większym spokojem wewnętrznym, poczuciem sensu oraz lepszym zdrowiem psychicznym (Suliman et al., 2022). W koncepcji Claude'a Roberta Cloningera (1994) autotranscendencja stanowi jeden z trzech wymiarów charakteru obok kierowania sobą i kooperatywności, tworząc integralną część modelu temperamentu i charakteru (TCI). W jego ujęciu autotranscendencja wyraża zdolność jednostki do przekraczania granic ego, doświadczania jedności z innymi ludźmi, naturą lub wymiarem duchowym, a także do postrzegania własnego życia jako części większej całości. Osoby o wysokim poziomie autotranscendencji cechuje większa akceptacja siebie i innych, altruizm oraz skłonność do refleksji egzystencjalnej i duchowej (Cloninger, 2004). W kon-

values that transcend everyday life (cf. Tobiasz-Adamczyk, 2023). A lack of connection with something greater than the individual – whether understood as God, a higher power, nature or a system of values – can lead to a sense of emptiness, a lack of meaning and existential anxiety. As Roger S. Gottlieb (2023) notes, spiritual unity with nature acts as a counterbalance to the consumerism and isolation of modern humanity. A study by Muhammad Suliman and colleagues (2022) demonstrated a strong positive correlation between self-transcendence and spiritual well-being in stroke patients, whilst in a study by Garduño-Ortega et al. (2021), spiritual well-being – particularly in terms of meaning and peace – was the main predictor of a better quality of life and lower levels of depression. Transcendence therefore constitutes an essential element of spiritual and mental well-being – a source of meaning, coherence and hope in the human existential experience.

Acceptance of character traits and dimensions of personality development in the context of preventing mental disability

„The question of moral character belongs to psychology, and not exclusively to ethics or religion. One cannot exclude this issue from psychology without leaving the discipline headless and crownless. The proper culmination of personality development is the cultivation of a proven and valuable character”, argued Stefan Szuman (1995, p. 8).

According to Wiesław Łukaszewski (2007), traditional concepts of character have now been replaced by: the Five-Factor Model of Personality by Costa and McCrae within the field of individual differences psychology; approaches referring to a higher-order cognitive system of behaviour regulation (e.g. anticipation, goal-setting, self-control, etc.) according to Bandura, Reykowski, and Łukaszewski; the concept of the normative self (Reykowski) and the duty-oriented self (Edward Tory Higgins); research into private conceptions of human nature from the perspective of its stability or malleability (Dweck, Lachowicz-Tabaczek); research into the personal and social identity of the individual.

Piotr Oleś (2007) identifies the following areas of research as continuing the exploration of character in contemporary personality psychology: self-image, self-knowledge and self-evaluation; attitudes towards values, particularly the sense of their realisation in action; research into interpersonal relations-

tekście zdrowia publicznego zwraca się uwagę, że rozwój dojrzałej osobowości i dobrostanu psychicznego może wiązać się z refleksją nad wartościami wykraczającymi poza codzienność (por. Tobiasz-Adamczyk, 2023). Brak relacji z czymś większym niż jednostka – niezależnie od tego, czy rozumianym jako Bóg, siła wyższa, natura czy system wartości – może prowadzić do poczucia pustki, braku sensu i egzystencjalnego niepokoju. Jak zauważa Roger S. Gottlieb (2023), duchowa jedność z naturą stanowi przeciwagę dla konsumpcjonizmu i izolacji współczesnego człowieka. W badaniu Muhammada Sulimana i współpracowników (2022) wykazano silną dodatnią korelację między autotranscendencją a duchowym dobrostanem u pacjentów po udarze, natomiast w badaniu Garduño-Ortegi et al. (2021) duchowy dobrostan – zwłaszcza w wymiarze sensu i pokoju – był głównym predyktorem lepszej jakości życia i niższego poziomu depresji. Transcendencja zatem stanowi istotny element dobrostanu duchowego i psychicznego – źródło sensu, spójności i nadziei w doświadczeniu egzystencjalnym człowieka.

Akceptacja wartości charakterologicznych i wymiary rozwoju osobowości w aspekcie zapobiegania niepełnosprawności duchowej

„Zagadnienie charakteru moralnego należy do psychologii, a nie wyłącznie do etyki lub do religii. Nie można wyłączyć tego zagadnienia z psychologii nie pozostawiając tej nauki bez głowy i korony. Właściwym dopełnieniem rozwoju osobowości jest wykształcenie wypróbowanego i wartościowego charakteru” - twierdził Stefan Szuman (1995, s. 8).

Zdaniem Wiesława Łukaszewskiego (2007) współcześnie tradycyjne koncepcje charakteru zostały zastąpione przez: Pięcioletniowy Model Osobowości Costy i McCrae na gruncie psychologii różnych indywidualnych; ujęcia odwołujące się do nadrzędnego systemu regulacji zachowania o charakterze poznawczym (np. przewidywanie, wyznaczanie celów, samokontrola itp.) według Alberta Bandury, Janusza Reykowskiego, W. Łukaszewskiego; koncepcję Ja normatywnego (J. Reykowski) i Ja powinnościowego (Edward Tory Higgins); badania nad prywatnymi koncepcjami natury ludzkiej z punktu widzenia jej stałości bądź zmienności (Dweck, Lachowicz-Tabaczek); badania nad tożsamością osobistą i społeczną podmiotu.

Kontynuację problematyki charakteru we współczesnej psychologii osobowości Piotr Oleś (2007) dostrzega w następujących badaniach: problematy-

hips and social behaviours, such as altruism, prosocial motivation, empathy or decentration; Albert Bandura's social-cognitive theory, which takes into account such characteristics of human nature as intentionality, long-term foresight, self-reflection and self-control. These characteristics are closely linked to the meaning of life and the individual's identity. There is a reluctance to address issues related to character and a tendency to marginalise them in contemporary personality psychology. Research into the socio-moral aspect seems outdated, resembling a continuation of a now obsolete school of thought. Yet the paradigm of „modernity” and „progress” can be misleading in the practice of humanities disciplines focused on the study of specifically human experiences and behaviours, arising from the unchanging nature of man, in the sense of his very essence.

Józef Pastuszka (1962) regarded character as a relatively stable, active and evaluative attitude towards reality. Character is relatively stable, meaning it manifests itself in a consistent way of relating to people, things, ideas and situations. It is expressed through action, that is, purposeful behaviour rooted in the will. Character, as a volitional action, is the conscious pursuit of goals. It manifests itself in the orientation of judgements, the expression of feelings and aspirations, and behaviour. The direction of the actions and conduct that constitute character consists of values directly or indirectly related to morality; this is why Pastuszka refers to character as morally good conduct.

Examining character from the perspective of volitional activity as the principle organising its dynamic structure, and in terms of values (of the „being” type — such as „to have”, spiritual versus material, self-transcendent versus natural, objective versus subjective) allows for a more precise description of the essence of character and an illustration of its connection with activities such as evaluating, choosing and realising values. The typologies of values and modes of existential valuation (pleasure, desire, duty) considered here provide the basis for justifying, on the grounds of psychological theories, that characterological values associated with a higher level of personality development are „being” values (spiritual, symbolic), self-transcendent and discovered as objectively existing. Research into the relationship between the dimensions of personality development defined on the basis of Erik H. , as opera-

ce obrazu siebie, samowiedzy i samooceny; stosunku do wartości, szczególnie poczucie ich realizacji w działaniu; badaniach nad relacjami interpersonalnymi i zachowaniami społecznymi, takimi jak: altruizm, motywacja prospołeczna, empatia lub decentracja; teorii społeczno – poznawczej Alberta Bandury uwzględniającej takie właściwości natury ludzkiej, jak: intencjonalność, dalekowzroczne przewidywanie, refleksję nad sobą i samokontrolę. Te właściwości ściśle łączą się z sensem życia i tożsamością jednostki.

Występuje niechęć do podejmowania problematyki związanej z charakterem i jej marginalizowanie we współczesnej psychologii osobowości. Badania nad społeczno - moralnym aspektem wydają się przebrzmiałe, przypominające kontynuację nieaktualnego już kierunku. Ale paradygmat „nowoczesności” i „postępu” bywa zawodny w uprawianiu dyscyplin humanistycznych zorientowanych na badanie specyficznie ludzkich doświadczeń i zachowań, wynikających z niezmiennej natury człowieka, w sensie jego istoty.

Józef Pastuszka (1962) uznawał charakter jako względnie stałą, aktywną i wartościującą postawę wobec rzeczywistości. Charakter jest względnie stały, czyli przejawia się w utrwalonym sposobie ustosunkowania się do osób, rzeczy, idei, sytuacji. Wyraża się w działaniu, czyli zachowaniu celowym, ugruntowanym w woli. Charakter jako działanie wolitywne jest świadomym realizowaniem dążeń odnoszących się do celów. Przejawia się w ukierunkowaniu ocen, znaku uczuć i dążeń oraz zachowania. Kierunek działania i postępowania składającego się na charakter stanowią wartości pośrednio lub bezpośrednio związane z moralnością, dlatego też Pastuszka nazywa charakter postępowaniem moralnie dobrym.

Rozpatrywanie charakteru z punktu widzenia aktywności wolitywnej jako zasady organizującej jego dynamiczną strukturę oraz w aspekcie wartości (typu „być” - typu „mieć”, duchowe - materialne, autotranscendentne - naturalne, obiektywne - subiektywne) pozwala na dokładniejszy opis istoty charakteru, przedstawienie jego związku z takimi czynnościami, jak ocenianie, wybieranie i realizowanie wartości. Uwzględnione typologie wartości oraz sposoby wartościowania egzystencjalnego (przyjemność, pragnienie, powinność) stanowią podstawę do uzasadnienia na gruncie teorii psychologicznych, że wartości charakterologiczne, związane z wyższym poziomem rozwoju osobowości są wartościami typu „być”



Cottage of Love

tionalised in the WRO Questionnaire, and the acceptance of characterological values as defined by Pastuszka, it appears that there is a statistically significant correlation between most positive and negative ego qualities and the acceptance of characterological values (cf. Lenzion, 2012).

The overall group scores on the S-POZ scale (sum of positive attitudes) differ significantly at the $p < 0.001$ level, with higher values of the positive indicator of healthy psychosocial functioning observed in the WChP group (which exhibits greater resilience). Better adaptation, better health and a stronger personality in individuals from the WChP group are rooted in their capacity for „initiative” (P3); a fairly stable and clearly defined „identity” (P5); a predisposition to form intimate and close emotional bonds (P6); a relatively high degree of „autonomy” and independence in action and in relationships with others (P2). Furthermore, greater „trust” in the world (P1) as well as greater „integrity” (P8) reinforce the psychosocial health of individuals with a stronger resilient character (WChP). Individuals in the NChP group (with a lower level of character resilience) have a significantly lower degree of adaptation in the emotional and social dimensions, due to low „trust” in the world (P1); a poorly developed and uncertain „identity” (P5); low „initiative” in action (P3); low „autonomy” (P2); weak „integrity” (P8); and a lower predisposition to establish personal contacts with others (P6).

All the negative scales in the WRO Questionnaire significantly differentiated the groups under study, with two of them showing very high scores (N2 – „doubt” and S-NEG – the sum of negative attitudes). The higher score on the „distrust” scale (N1) obtained by the NChP group indicates a tendency to perceive the world as a place full of contradictions, overflowing with suffering and dangerous, and therefore hostile and unfriendly. The greater intensity of „doubt” (N2) in the NChP group is associated with a sense of being determined by biopsychological and social conditions, a sense of unfulfillment, low self-esteem and a lack of self-confidence, a tendency to feel sorry for oneself, and excessive self-criticism. A stronger „sense of guilt” (N3) in the NChP group indicates difficulties in accepting and expressing aggression, and a fear of experiencing anger and rage. Individuals in the NChP group experience a greater „sense of inferiority” (N4), doubt in their own abilities, and clumsiness; they feel inferior and weaker than others, and remain on the frin-

(duchowymi, symbolicznymi), autotranscendentnymi i odkrywanymi jako obiektywnie istniejące.

Z badań nad związkiem między wymiarami rozwoju osobowości określonymi na gruncie teorii rozwoju psychospołecznego według Erika H. Eriksona zoperacjonalizowanych w Kwestionariuszu WRO i akceptacją wartości charakterologicznych w ujęciu Pastuszki wynika, że występuje istotna statystycznie zależność między większością pozytywnych i negatywnych jakości ego, a akceptacją wartości charakterologicznych (por. Lenzion, 2012).

Ogólne wyniki grupowe w skali S-POZ (suma postaw pozytywnych) są istotnie różne na poziomie $p.u.<0,001$, w kierunku wyższej wartości wskaźnika pozytywnego, zdrowego funkcjonowania psychospołecznego w grupie WChP (z wyższym charakterem prężnym). Lepsze przystosowanie, pełniejsze zdrowie, silniejsza osobowość u osób z grupy WChP mają swoje ugruntowanie w zdolnościach do „inicjatywy” (P3); dość stabilniej i jasno określonej „tożsamości” (P5); predyspozycjach do wchodzenia w intymne i zażyłe kontakty emocjonalne (P6); raczej dużej „autonomii”, niezależności w działaniu i relacjach z innymi (P2). Ponadto większa „ufność” wobec świata (P1) a także pełniejsza „integralność” (P8) wzmacniają zdrowie psychospołeczne osób z silniejszym charakterem prężnym (WChP). Osoby z grupy NChP (z niższym poziomem prężności charakteru) mają zdecydowanie niższy stopień przystosowania w wymiarze emocjonalnym i społecznym, z powodu małej „ufności” wobec świata (P1); słabo ukształtowanej i niepewnej „tożsamości” (P5); niskiej „inicjatywy” w działaniu (P3); małej „autonomii” (P2); słabej „integralności” (P8); niższych predyspozycji do nawiązywania osobistych kontaktów z innymi (P6). Wszystkie skale negatywne w Kwestionariuszu WRO różnicowały w istotny sposób badane grupy, z czego dwie na bardzo wysokim poziomie (N2 – „zwątpienie” i S-NEG – suma postaw negatywnych). Wyższy wynik w skali „nieufności” (N1) uzyskany przez grupę NChP wskazuje na tendencję do spostrzegania świata jako miejsca pełnego sprzeczności, przepętnionego cierpieniem i niebezpiecznego, a więc wrogiego i nieprzyjaznego. Większe nasilenie „zwątpienia” (N2) w grupie NChP łączy się z poczuciem bycia zdeterminowanym przez uwarunkowania biopsychiczne i społeczne, doświadczeniem niespełnienia, poczuciem małej wartości i brakiem pewności siebie, skłonnością do użalania się nad sobą, nadmiernym samokrytycyzmem. Silniejsze „poczucie winy” (N3) w grupie NChP mówi o trudnościach w akceptowa-

ges of the group. The intergroup difference on the „role confusion” scale (N5), with a significantly higher score in the NChP group, indicates difficulties in resolving conflicts between assumed roles, leading to a fragile sense of identity and the disintegration of self-image. The significantly higher average score for the NChP group on the „isolation” scale (N6) indicates a stronger sense of loneliness linked to a high degree of self-absorption. The higher score of the NChP group on the „stagnation” scale (N7) indicates a lack of clarity regarding life goals and principles, and a tendency to focus heavily on current difficulties. Individuals in the NChP group also achieved a significantly higher score on the „despair” scale (N8), which describes the experience of a sense of having missed out on certain life opportunities, dwelling on past mistakes, and a pessimistic view of the world and people.

An ontological understanding of spiritual disability can be considered within the framework of ethical personalism as represented by Wojciech Chudy (1988). In the light of his views, every kind of being comprises essential, integrating and perfecting parts. A being—for example, a personal being—cannot exist without an essential part. Hence, on the basis of a realistic theory of being, one cannot speak of ‘the ontological infirmity of man’ (Chudy, 1988, p. 107). The integrating parts of a being determine the integrity of the person, in the case of a personal being, whilst the perfective parts determine the increasingly fuller realisation of the potential possessed by a given person. “In both these categories of being, limitation and weakness are immanent features of man as an accidental being” (Chudy, 1988, p. 107). Thus, disability is not an ontological feature of a certain type of person, but constitutes a limitation, a certain lack concerning the integration and perfection of a specific being.

The distinction between the ontological structure of the person (e.g. the spirit and its ‘aspects’: intellect and will) and their functions (e.g. cognitive and volitional) implies that the loss or disruption of functions associated with the essence of human existence does not amount to the annihilation of the structures themselves (Chudy, 1988, p. 148). The fact that the paths along which the human spirit normally proceeds towards its expression are „blocked” does not imply the destruction or degradation of the spirit itself. The inactivity of a structure does not preclude its future activity; the „slumber” of the spirit does not preclude its „awakening”.

niu i wyrażaniu agresji, lęku przed przeżywaniem gniewu i złości. Osoby z grupy NChP w większym stopniu doświadczają „poczucia niższości” (N4), wątpienia we własne możliwości, nieporadności, czują się gorsze i słabsze od innych, pozostają na uboczu grupy. Różnica międzygrupowa w skali „pomieszania ról” (N5) w kierunku istotnie wyższego wyniku w grupie NChP wskazuje na trudności w rozwiązywaniu konfliktów między podejmowanymi rolami, które prowadzą do chwiejnego poczucia tożsamości i dezintegracji obrazu siebie. Istotnie wyższy średni wynik grupy NChP w skali „izolacji” (N6) oznacza silniejsze poczucie osamotnienia powiązane z dużą koncentracją na sobie. Wyższy wynik grupy NChP w skali „stagnacji” (N7) świadczy o małej klarowności celów i zasad życiowych, poświęcaniu wiele uwagi aktualnie przeżywanym trudnościom. Osoby z grupy NChP osiągnęły również istotnie wyższy wynik w skali „rozpaczy” (N8), który określa doświadczenie poczucia utraty pewnych życiowych szans, rozpamiętywanie popełnionych błędów, pesymistyczne spostrzeżenie świata i ludzi.

Ontologiczne rozumienie niepełnosprawności duchowej można rozważać na gruncie personalizmu etycznego reprezentowanego przez Wojciecha Chudogo (1988). W świetle jego poglądów w każdym rodzaju bytu występują części istotowe, integrujące oraz doskonałościowe. Byt np. byt osobowy nie może istnieć będąc pozbawionym części istotowej. Stąd nie można na gruncie realistycznej teorii bytu mówić o „bytowej ułomności człowieka” (Chudy, 1988, s. 107). Części integrujące bytu warunkują integralność osoby, w przypadku bytu osobowego, zaś części doskonałościowe decydują o coraz pełniejszym urzeczywistnieniu możliwości posiadanych przez daną osobę. „W obydwu tych kategoriach bytowych ograniczenie i słabość jest immanentną cechą człowieka jako bytu przygodnego” (Chudy, 1988, s. 107). Zatem niepełnosprawność nie jest cechą bytową pewnego rodzaju ludzi, ale stanowi ograniczenie, pewien brak dotyczący integracji i doskonałości konkretnego bytu.

Rozróżnienie między strukturą ontyczną osoby (np. duchem i jego „stronami”: intelektem i wolą), a jej funkcjami (np. poznawczymi i woliowymi) oznacza, że zanik, czy zakłócenie funkcji wiążących się z istotą bytu ludzkiego nie równa się unicestwieniu samych struktur (Chudy, 1988, s. 148). Fakt „zablokowania” dróg, którymi duch człowieka normalnie podąża ku swej ekspresji nie oznacza zniszczenia, czy degradacji samego ducha. Nieczynność struktury nie

Conclusion

The phenomenon of spiritual disability constitutes an important, though still insufficiently recognised, aspect of human experience. As demonstrated in this study, it affects many dimensions of human functioning – from one's relationship with oneself, through relationships with other people, to one's relationship with the transcendent. A lack of a sense of meaning, an inability to integrate experiences, a loss of gratitude, difficulty in accepting oneself and the world, or a weakening of social bonds – all these manifestations indicate that the spiritual dimension of life is inextricably linked to a person's mental and emotional health. Spiritual disability is therefore not merely a metaphorical term for a crisis of values, but a real experience of a limitation on the ability to lead a full, integrated life. In the light of contemporary research, it can be seen as a state in which a person loses the capacity for self-transcendence – moving beyond oneself towards meaning, goodness and connection. Restoring spiritual well-being therefore requires not so much the adoption of specific ideas, values or religions, but rather the development of an attitude of openness, reflection and mindfulness towards what gives life its depth.

This perspective highlights the need for further research and practical measures aimed at supporting spiritual well-being within the fields of psychotherapy, education and mental health prevention. Understanding spirituality as an integral component of human health allows us to recognise that caring for the spiritual dimension is not a luxury – it is essential for maintaining inner balance, psychological resilience and a sense of meaning in life. Factors that protect against spiritual disability may include deep and intense religious experiences, such as mystical experiences, as well as care for the proper psychosocial development of children, adolescents and adults, which is significantly linked to the acceptance of character-based values (those relating to duty and realised through action).

przekreśla jej uczynnienia w przyszłości, „uśpienie” ducha nie wyklucza jego „obudzenia”.

Zakończenie

Zjawisko niepełnosprawności duchowej stanowi ważny, choć wciąż niedostatecznie rozpoznany obszar ludzkiego doświadczenia. Jak pokazano w niniejszym opracowaniu, dotyczy ono wielu wymiarów funkcjonowania człowieka – od relacji z samym sobą, poprzez relacje z innymi ludźmi, aż po relację z wymiarem transcendentnym. Brak poczucia sensu, niemożność integracji doświadczeń, utrata wdzięczności, trudność w akceptacji siebie i świata czy osłabienie więzi społecznych – wszystkie te przejawy wskazują, że duchowy wymiar życia jest nierozzerwalnie związany ze zdrowiem psychicznym i emocjonalnym człowieka. Niepełnosprawność duchowa nie jest zatem jedynie metaforycznym określeniem kryzysu wartości, lecz rzeczywistym doświadczeniem ograniczenia zdolności do pełnego, zintegrowanego życia. W świetle współczesnych badań można ją postrzegać jako stan, w którym człowiek traci zdolność do autotranscendencji – przekraczania siebie w kierunku sensu, dobra i więzi. Odbudowa duchowej sprawności wymaga więc nie tyle przyjęcia określonych idei, wartości czy religii, ile rozwijania postawy otwartości, refleksyjności i uważności na to, co nadaje życiu głębię.

Perspektywa ta wskazuje na potrzebę dalszych badań i praktycznych działań ukierunkowanych na wspieranie duchowego dobrostanu w ramach psychoterapii, edukacji i profilaktyki zdrowia psychicznego. Zrozumienie duchowości jako integralnego komponentu zdrowia człowieka pozwala dostrzec, że troska o wymiar duchowy nie stanowi luksusu – jest niezbędna dla zachowania wewnętrznej równowagi, odporności psychicznej i poczucia sensu istnienia. Czynnikiem chroniącym przed niepełnosprawnością duchową mogą być głębokie i intensywne doświadczenia religijne, np. przeżycia mistyczne, jak również troska o prawidłowy rozwój psychospołeczny dzieci, nastolatków i dorosłych istotnie łączące się z akceptacją wartości charakterologicznych (powinnościowych i realizowanych w działaniu).

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Bird of paradise

comment

The article 'Spiritual disability as a universal dimension of human experience' by Czuma, Ówikowski, Kaszuba, Lendzion and Tańcula is an important contribution to the study of the human condition in personality research. Starting from a dialogue with Romuald Jaworski and Viktor Emil Frankl, the authors lead the reader to reflect on the "properly human" within psychological science referring to the "noetic dimension" as a spiritual centre of human experience. This noetic dimension was correctly approached as being a specific human aspect that demands studies and reflection that may support care aimed at human flourishing. The authors establish an integral anthropological basis for understanding personality, considering each of its dimensions as essential. They also present neurobiological findings from neuroscience studies on religious, spiritual, and mystical experiences, suggesting possible correlates of the spiritual dimension in human beings.

The authors acknowledge and accept the difficult task of systematizing scientific findings on spirituality and religiosity in psychology. To define 'spirituality' Czuma and colleagues separate the comprehensions in two types: one that understands spirituality as a relationship with a Higher Being and the spirituality experienced on human life in a humanistic, existential, mystical and experiential way. In my opinion the authors gave an intelligent perspective when they chose to organize the scientific literature not trying to reduce it to a single definition of 'spirituality' but establish anthropological bases for the 'spirit' theme. The authors made a wise choice in adopting Viktor Frankl's anthropology.

Many authors studied in Brazil point out that a problem in modern human sciences (including psychology) is that they often fail to ask the fundamental question: "Who is the human being?" in a philosophical-anthropological perspective. Without asking this question, it becomes difficult to interpret the findings of human experience and psychological research.

After defining the concept of "spirituality," Czuma and his colleagues demonstrated what constitutes its "deficiency." Their reflections successfully demonstrate, with sound arguments, that this deficiency manifests itself in everyday life as a self-centered individual (on phenomenological sense) who loses the ability to transcend and to live a coherent, communal, and meaningful life. In their words, the transcendence is "therefore an essential element of spiritual and mental well-being". In other words, a person who loses the capacity for self-transcendence and integration of his experience.



Miguel Augusto Gonçalves (Brazil), currently finishing his Psychology graduate degree with emphasis in Social and Clinical Psychology. Is a researcher in formal groups, developing studies on theological, anthropological and philosophical dialogue with psychology in a Christian and Phenomenological perspective.

An important aspect of the article is the affirmation “universal dimension” to characterize a limitation affecting the existential and spiritual functioning of the person. I agree with the authors when they argue that a non-personalistic ethics and ontology may not help us understand the spiritual disability because it tends to view the human being in fragmented terms, ignoring the integrity of Being as Human and Person. The ontological experience is unique and integral, and the lived suffering can only be understood if their parts are integrated into the Whole of Being.

In everyday life, both religious and non-religious people (as well as our counseling and psychotherapy clients) face situations in which their spiritual capacity to cope with life is lost or diminished. I believe that the article by Czuma and his colleagues will certainly contribute to compassionate care in psychotherapy, especially in the process of understanding and helping our clients make sense of their experiences through the mobilization of spiritual experiences. Thank you, Czuma, Ćwikowski, Kaszuba, Lenzion, and Tańcula, for this scientific and psychological invitation to, in your words, awaken from a “dormancy” of the spirit.



Streams of blessings

Christian Psychology in General

"Why would you describe yourself as a Christian psychologist?"

Questions to Aender Borba (Brazil)



Former contributions
by Aender available here:
emcapp.ignis.de/23/#p=84
emcapp.ignis.de/24/#p=111

Why I Would Describe Myself as a Christian Psychologist

My identity as a Christian psychologist did not grow out of an intellectual decision alone. It was shaped across decades of lived experience in the fertile tension between faith, human suffering, and the care of souls. It has roots in an early conversion and in a journey marked equally by grace and adversity. At the age of eight, I had my first conscious and transformative encounter with the Triune God, within a Catholic Charismatic context. That experience awakened in me a hunger for the Word of God that would never fade. Paradoxically, this spiritual awakening brought with it a first and painful lesson about the complexity of the human soul: exclusion. My family, deeply rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition, could not accept what they perceived as a betrayal — a Protestant deviation. There was rupture, misunderstanding, and at times domestic violence driven by religion. My own mother, on more than one occasion, physically prevented me from attending church gatherings. As painful as that reality was, it only deepened my conviction. Still a child, I learned that faith can cost something. I also learned that the love of God sustains where human love fails.

At the age of twelve, I was baptized in a Baptist church and found a community that would profoundly shape my intellectual and spiritual formation. For three decades I served in music ministry, youth leadership, and evangelism, while a more specific calling was gradually taking form within

me: the care of persons. I worked for years as an electronics technician and began a degree in computer science, but it was in recognizing the centrality of the human soul in my calling that I left that path and started, in 2005, an undergraduate degree in Psychology.

My formation in psychology opened important horizons regarding suffering, human development, and processes of change. Yet the absence of a robust theological framework for interpreting those approaches created a growing tension in me. There was something that secular psychology, for all its richness, could not reach: the dimension of the human soul in its relationship with the sacred, with redeemed guilt, with eschatological hope. It was during my second degree, at a Reformed theological seminary from 2013 onward, that I found the vocabulary and framework I had been missing. There I had my first contact with the works of Dr. Eric Johnson — still untranslated into Portuguese — and something became clear.

The model proposed by Johnson, as developed at the Christian Psychology Institute (CPI), proceeds from the conviction that psychology is not a neutral discipline: it is always practiced on the basis of presuppositions about human nature, about the good, and about ultimate reality. For Johnson, a genuinely Christian psychology does not mean simply adding biblical verses to secular theories, nor does it

mean rejecting the knowledge produced by modern psychological science. It means, rather, reconstructing our understanding of the human person from its deepest foundations: the *imago Dei*, the reality of sin and grace, and the centrality of Christ in the healing and formation of the soul. The CPI's approach is a psychology rooted in Scripture, informed by the Christian tradition, and in critical dialogue with the best available empirical research — what Johnson describes as a Christ-centered, biblically rooted, evidence-based approach.

This epistemological framework transformed my practice. In 2014, I was ordained to pastoral ministry and participated in planting a church in my home city of Belo Horizonte. Later, I was invited to serve as chaplain and professor at the same theological seminary where I had studied. During those years, I deepened my studies and was able to see in practice how the dialogue between good theology and good psychology produces care that is more human, more honest, and more effective. Teaching forced me to articulate what I had been living intuitively: that the human soul cannot be cared for without reference to its Creator, and that pastoral care without psychological rigor is incomplete — just as psychology without a theological horizon is, in the end, an impoverished anthropology.

Today I am a researcher in two research groups at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica (PUC), working in the areas of epistemology, ethics, and religious studies, and I am completing a Master's degree in Religious Studies. This academic path has deepened my sense that Christian psychology is neither a ghetto nor an apologetic concession. It is, rather, an intellectually serious discipline that refuses the dualism which artificially separates scientific inquiry from a theological understanding of the human person.

The Brazilian context and the need for solid foundations

Describing myself as a Christian psychologist also involves a diagnosis of the context in which I work. In Brazil, undergraduate formation in psychology offers no meaningful engagement with the more philosophical dimensions of psychological theory

— its epistemological, anthropological, and ethical presuppositions — let alone with the Christian tradition. My theological studies and the strong influence of Neo-Calvinism helped me understand the need for a critical dialogue with culture: one that generates genuine antitheses from a theologically grounded posture, without dissolving into relativism or being absorbed by secularism.

Over the years I have increasingly been sought out by people who are desperately lost and disillusioned: psychologists who, more than ten years after graduating, have never practiced their profession; undergraduate students coerced by ideologically driven professors never to mention their faith in the clinical setting; biblical counselors unable to articulate their convictions in dialogue with the modern sciences. This is a brief portrait of the Brazilian landscape — one that is changing slowly, but on solid ground.

What I have done for Christian Psychology in Brazil

From 2018 onward, aware of the significant demand for a solid model of Christian psychology in Brazil and the near-total absence of specific formation in this area, I committed to independent study: reading widely and building a framework capable of speaking to the Brazilian context. Drawing on my background in both psychology and pastoral ministry, I began organizing study groups focused on the dialogue between psychology and Christian faith. I started offering clinical supervision with a specifically Christian orientation, and over the past two years this work has grown considerably. With the support of friends and organizations open to this need, we organized an online conference with around 300 participants — in which Dr. Johnson graciously served as one of the speakers — and an in-person congress with approximately 500 registered psychologists.

Beginning in 2026, with the support of the Christian soul-care ministry *Divinamente* (divinamente.app) — founded by my dear friend Dr. Jonatas Leonio, to whom I am deeply grateful — and with official recognition from Brazil's Ministry of Education (MEC), we launched a postgraduate program grounded entirely in the principles developed at the CPI. This

project is opening significant possibilities for foundational consolidation, academic research, and unity among Christian psychologists in Brazil.



A note of gratitude

None of this would have been possible without those who have walked this journey with me. My wife Rozilene Molinari, to whom I have been married for twenty-seven years, and our daughter Natali, now seventeen, have been an extraordinary source of support and have taken part directly in this work, making so much of it possible. I am grateful to my local church for its encouragement, and to the friends and colleagues who trust what we are building together — so that God may be glorified.

I describe myself as a Christian psychologist because I understand that Christ is Lord also over psychology — over its methods, its presuppositions, and its aims. Not as something imposed on the patient, but as the epistemological and ontological foundation of the very act of caring. The healing of the soul, in its fullness, always points to the One who is the Way

Por que eu me descreveria como um psicólogo cristão

Minha identidade como psicólogo cristão não nasceu de uma decisão intelectual isolada. Ela foi forjada ao longo de décadas de experiência vivida na tensão fecunda entre fé, sofrimento humano e o cuidado de almas. Tem raízes em uma conversão precoce e em uma caminhada marcada igualmente pela graça e pela adversidade.

Aos oito anos de idade, tive meu primeiro encontro consciente e transformador com o Deus Trino, no contexto da espiritualidade carismática católica. Essa experiência despertou em mim uma sede pela Palavra de Deus que jamais se apagaria. Paradoxalmente, esse despertar espiritual trouxe uma primeira e dura lição sobre a complexidade da alma humana: a exclusão. Minha família, profundamente enraizada na tradição católico-romana, não conseguiu aceitar o que percebeu como uma traição à tradição: o desvio protestante. Houve ruptura, incompreensão e, por vezes, violência doméstica motivada pela religião. Minha própria mãe, em mais de uma ocasião, impediu-me fisicamente de participar das reuniões da igreja; uma realidade que, por mais dolorosa que fosse, apenas aprofundou minha convicção. Ainda criança, aprendi que a fé pode custar algo. E aprendi também que o amor de Deus sustenta onde o amor humano falha.

Aos doze anos, fui batizado em uma igreja batista e encontrei uma comunidade que moldaria profundamente minha formação intelectual e espiritual. Por três décadas servi no ministério da música, na liderança de adolescentes e jovens e no evangelismo, enquanto uma vocação mais específica ia tomando forma dentro de mim: o cuidado de pessoas. Trabalhei por anos como técnico em eletrônica e iniciei uma graduação em ciências da computação, mas foi ao reconhecer a centralidade da alma humana em meu chamado que abandonei esse caminho e iniciei, em 2005, a graduação em Psicologia.

Minha formação em psicologia abriu horizontes fundamentais sobre o sofrimento, o desenvolvimento humano e os processos de mudança. No entanto, a ausência de um referencial teológico ro-

busto para interpretar as abordagens criou em mim uma tensão crescente. Havia algo que a psicologia secular, com toda a sua riqueza, não conseguia alcançar: a dimensão da alma humana em sua relação com o sagrado, com a culpa redimida, com a esperança escatológica. Foi na segunda graduação, em um seminário teológico reformado, a partir de 2013, que encontrei o vocabulário e o referencial que me faltavam. Ali tive meu primeiro contato com as obras do Dr. Eric Johnson — ainda sem tradução para o português —, e algo se iluminou.

O modelo proposto por Johnson, tal como desenvolvido no Christian Psychology Institute (CPI), parte da convicção de que a psicologia não é uma disciplina neutra: ela é sempre praticada a partir de pressupostos sobre a natureza humana, sobre o bem e sobre a realidade última. Para Johnson, uma psicologia verdadeiramente cristã não significa simplesmente adicionar versículos bíblicos às teorias seculares, nem tampouco rejeitar o conhecimento produzido pela ciência psicológica moderna. Significa, antes, reconstruir a compreensão da pessoa humana a partir de seus fundamentos mais profundos: a imagem Dei, a realidade do pecado e da graça, a centralidade de Cristo na cura e na formação da alma. A proposta do CPI é uma psicologia enraizada nas Escrituras, informada pela tradição cristã e em diálogo crítico com a melhor pesquisa empírica disponível; o que Johnson denomina uma abordagem centrada em Cristo, enraizada biblicamente e baseada em evidências.

Esse enquadramento epistemológico transformou minha prática. Em 2014, fui ordenado ao ministério pastoral e participei da plantação de uma igreja na minha cidade natal, Belo Horizonte. Posteriormente, recebi o convite para me tornar capelão e professor no mesmo seminário teológico em que me graduei. Durante esses anos, aprofundi meus estudos e pude verificar na prática como o diálogo entre boa teologia e boa psicologia produz um cuidado mais humano, mais honesto e mais eficaz. A docência me obrigou a sistematizar o que intuitivamente vivia: que a alma humana não pode ser cuidada sem referência ao seu Criador, e que o cuidado pastoral sem rigor psicológico é incompleto; assim como a psicologia sem horizonte teológico é, em última análise, uma antropologia empobrecida.

Atualmente, sou pesquisador em dois grupos de pesquisa na Pontifícia Universidade Católica (PUC), nas áreas de epistemologia, ética e ciências da religião, e estou concluindo o mestrado em Ciências da Religião. Essa trajetória acadêmica aprofundou minha percepção de que a psicologia cristã não é um gueto nem uma concessão apologética. É, antes, uma disciplina intelectualmente séria que recusa o dualismo que separa artificialmente a investigação científica da compreensão teológica da pessoa humana.

O contexto brasileiro e a necessidade de fundamentos sólidos

Descrever-me como psicólogo cristão implica também um diagnóstico do contexto em que estou inserido. No Brasil, a formação de graduação em psicologia não oferece nenhum contato significativo com as dimensões mais filosóficas da teoria psicológica — seus pressupostos epistemológicos, antropológicos e éticos —, e muito menos com a tradição cristã. Meus estudos teológicos e a forte influência que recebi do neocalvinismo me ajudaram a compreender a necessidade de um diálogo crítico com a cultura: um diálogo que produza antíteses genuínas a partir de uma postura teologicamente fundamentada, sem se dissolver no relativismo nem se afogar no secularismo.

Com o passar dos anos, fui cada vez mais procurado por pessoas desesperadamente perdidas e decepcionadas: psicólogos formados há mais de dez anos que nunca chegaram a exercer a profissão; estudantes de graduação coagidos por professores ideologicamente militantes a jamais mencionarem sua fé no ambiente clínico; conselheiros bíblicos incapazes de articular suas convicções em diálogo com as ciências modernas. Este é um breve retrato do cenário brasileiro; que tem mudado lentamente, mas de forma sólida.

O que tenho feito pela psicologia cristã no Brasil

A partir de 2018, percebendo a grande demanda por um modelo sólido de psicologia cristã no Brasil diante da ausência de formação específica nessa

área, dediquei-me a estudos independentes: lendo amplamente e construindo um referencial capaz de dialogar com o contexto brasileiro. Valendo-me da minha experiência tanto em psicologia quanto no ministério pastoral, comecei a organizar grupos de estudo específicos sobre o diálogo entre psicologia e fé cristã. Passei a oferecer supervisões clínicas com orientação especificamente cristã e, nos dois últimos anos, esse trabalho se consolidou de forma significativa. Com o apoio de amigos e organizações abertas a essa demanda, organizamos um congresso online com aproximadamente 300 participantes — no qual o Dr. Johnson gentilmente foi um dos conferencistas — e um congresso presencial com cerca de 500 psicólogos presentes.

A partir de 2026, com o apoio do ministério cristão de cuidado da alma Divinamente (divinamente.app) — idealizado pelo querido amigo Dr. Jonas Leonio, a quem sou imensamente grato — e com reconhecimento oficial do Ministério da Educação brasileiro (MEC), lançamos uma pós-graduação totalmente fundamentada nos princípios desenvolvidos no CPI. Este projeto abre perspectivas significativas para a consolidação dos fundamentos, a produção acadêmica e a unidade entre psicólogos cristãos no Brasil.

Uma nota de gratidão

Nada disso teria sido possível sem aqueles que caminharam comigo nessa jornada. Minha esposa Rozilene Molinari, com quem sou casado há vinte e sete anos, e nossa filha Natali, hoje com dezessete anos, têm sido uma fonte extraordinária de apoio e participaram diretamente desse trabalho, tornando viável muito do que foi realizado. Sou grato à minha igreja local pelo encorajamento, e aos amigos e colegas que confiam no que estamos construindo juntos, para que Deus seja glorificado.

Descrevo-me como psicólogo cristão porque compreendo que Cristo é Senhor também sobre a psicologia — sobre seus métodos, seus pressupostos e suas finalidades. Não como uma imposição sobre o paciente, mas como fundamento epistemológico e ontológico do próprio ato de cuidar. A cura da alma, em sua plenitude, aponta sempre para Aquele que é o Caminho, a Verdade e a Vida.



Man, become

The 3xC+2xY+7xR+E+S Life-Changer

3xC+2xY+7xR+E+S? What exactly is this?

Let us start with S.

From a Christian psychological perspective, every human being is an independent person who, in turn, can only develop and live this independence in relationships. Learning independence without losing ties with others, learning connectedness without losing one's own independence, is a life-long task for everyone.

And when we experience suffering, pain, misery and misfortune in our lives, we should not and need not be left alone with it. We need advisors, supporters, encouragers, helpers...

We should learn to use synergy (= S): Together we can achieve more when we work together in interconnectedness and unity.

Actually, this should be an everyday question: 'Who could support me, complement me, help me?'

Our life can proactively confront the challenges of suffering, pain, misery and misfortune: tasks do not have to be carried out alone; rather, we should use synergies!

'Who could help me?' should be an everyday question. God does not envisage lone warriors at work, in their leisure time, in the community or in the family.

He sees everyone in pairs at least!

There is a very remarkable story in the Old Testament (Genesis 11): the Tower of Babel.

God realises – and I emphasise: God realises – that the inhabitants of Babel are of one mind and therefore no-one can stand in their way.

But since their minds are set on doing harm, God sets out to disrupt this unity by confusing their languages.

God knows that unity not only makes people strong, but also enables them to achieve more than the sum of their individual efforts.

A much-cited illustration: let's say one ox pulls one ton. How much can two oxen pull? If they pull in the same direction, more than two tonnes, perhaps 2.2 tons.

This 'added value' is called synergy or the synergy effect.

Enduring synergy: We need four groups of people.

In order to lead a fruitful and resilient life, or to find our way back to it, we need four groups of people around us. One or two people from each group may be enough.

1. People to whom we can give something, who accept something from us.
2. People who correct us because they care about us. Without them, we would stray too often, we would lose our way.
3. People who encourage us, in whose presence we can relax completely, who do not drain our energy.



Werner May (Germany/ Deutschland) was the senior chairman of the IGNIS Institute for Christian Psychology in Kitzingen for more than 25 years (www.ignis.de). As a teacher his main interest was in basic questions of Christian Psychology and in counselling of foster families. He also helped to build up the Institute for Christian Psychology, Education and Therapy in Switzerland (www.icp.ch). Now he is the chairman of the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Therapy (www.emcapp.eu) and publishes the free e-journal Christian Psychology Around The World (emcapp.ignis.de). Werner has been married to Agnes for now 50 years. They live in Würzburg, Germany, and have six adult children.

4. People from whom we can learn something.

We can ask ourselves about different types of synergy:

- Who helps me by taking some of the load off my shoulders?
- Who complements me and can do something that I cannot do but need?
- Who could give me advice?
- Who corrects me?
- Who encourages me?
- Who can I learn from?

Where do you feel alone (left to your own devices)? Then pray that God will send these people into your life.

Once we have clarified who could help us, and how, another step is necessary: namely, to become so aligned with this second person that we are pulling in the same direction!

There are a few prerequisites for this:

- How much trust can we develop towards others, perhaps even strangers?
- Can I even allow myself to be helped, i.e. admit weaknesses or at least limitations in my own abilities?
- How well can I understand what is at stake, what I need, give, desire ... and then communicate this?
- Am I prepared to contribute to the synergy? Without keeping score of what the other person contributes?
- Can I and do I want to become one in prayer with this person? 'If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.' (Jesus in Matthew 18:19)

Of course, synergy also means that God is at our side, because he wants to make his contribution. In principle, he always does something, whether we notice it or not.

Once I am certain that I am never alone, this can enable a 'calm in the storm'. And 'V' can begin.

C = Change, meaning changes in habits that we have seriously committed to, habits that shape our lives and usually burden them.

Suffering, pain, misery and unhappiness in our lives can be the result.

Examples of positive habits are 'not going to bed too late, or going to bed earlier, so you get more sleep', 'not spending too much time on the computer/smartphone, so that important tasks don't get neglected', 'not interrupting others or talking too much, but letting others speak, learning to listen and thus shaping relationships positively', ...

The problem here is that we have to 'seriously commit' to these habits. 'Seriously' means that we have really taken the time to decide on this change, that we are convinced of it and that we have good arguments in favour of the new habit and against the old one.

But 3xC?

I always set myself a maximum of three change-related processes, no more – and I give myself 2xY time to complete them! It would be best to concentrate on just one change process, so that it doesn't get lost in the sea of everyday activities. Okay, two or three is still manageable for the Life-Changer, but definitely no more than that!

2xY?

Y = years. Such change processes take time to become an everyday habit, usually much more time than we imagine or normally plan for. In my experience, it's worth giving yourself two years!

And then 7xR?

R = relapse. We will experience relapses or setbacks. Was it all for nothing, we quickly ask ourselves? Have I squandered or destroyed the progress I made? And the thoughts of giving up arise.

A saying from addiction counselling fits particularly well here: Every relapse is progress if it does not lead to giving up.

We can pick ourselves up again after a relapse or setback, and after a few ups and downs, we will be back to the 'level' we had already achieved.

And then it all comes crashing down again. Hopelessness can take hold of us. Inside, we scream, 'Give up! How could I have let myself get into this?' But if we stick with it, we can move forward and be amazed. We even experience a new breakthrough, which in turn has to stabilise again, and so on.

In other words: relapses are to be expected, are planned for and must not cause us to give up.

And there can be 'at least' seven relapses. Seven means, in any event, more than we would like!

The first conclusion: No matter what the issue, we can change! But it takes time!

And let's unlearn the mindset of 'I came, I saw, I conquered' (Caesar).

'I came, I saw, I conquered' – perhaps as depicted in the following graphic?

We will reach our goal in no time!

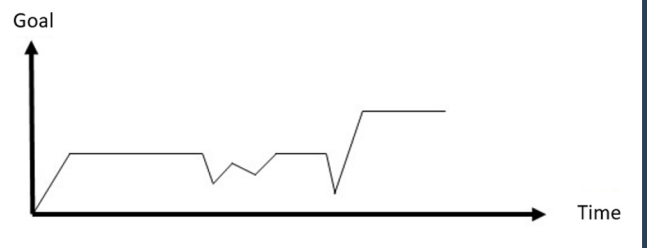
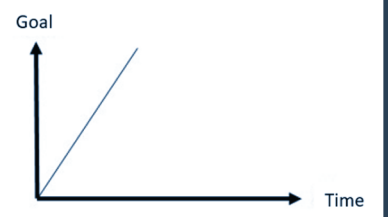
But the reality during the process usually looks more like this:

This simplified diagram illustrates a few key phases:

After initial success, things stop improving and plateau – seemingly coming to a standstill. Disappointment can set in. We overlook the fact that this may be a stabilisation of the progress made, which takes time.

And then we even experience setbacks or slumps. Was it all for nothing? Have I squandered or destroyed what was good?

We can pick ourselves up again after a setback or crash, and after a few ups and downs, we are back to the 'level' we had already achieved.



And then it crashes again. But if we stick with it, things move forward and we are amazed. We even experience a new breakthrough, which then has to stabilise again, and so on.

Become a friend of mistakes! Learn to cope with failure!

The better we learn to deal with failure and continue to work on our change, the better we will change: acquire failure competence, also known as a 'culture of failure'.

A culture of failure means not letting failure discourage you or persuade you to give up, but using failure positively by evaluating it and learning from it.

Make friends with mistakes!

- It is likely that not everything will go smoothly.
- It is not perfection that makes you loved.
- If you fail, it does not negate all your previous successes.
- You can carry on; you do not have to start all over again.
- Do not believe the lies that everything was in vain and that you will never succeed.
- Ask God for forgiveness and carry on. Failure must not prevent us from trusting God to change us!

I want to make friends with mistakes by consciously risking minor mistakes. This will enable me to avoid major mistakes because I will be more alert to deviations from my goal.

We have probably all heard that we should learn from our mistakes. We have probably also learned to avoid mistakes.

But what about making friends with mistakes? This term was introduced in 1977 by Christine Weizsäcker:

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fehlerfreundlichkeit>

Now, does making friends with mistakes mean that we should deliberately make mistakes?

No, these will happen anyway. Because there is no such thing as absolutely correct behaviour, i.e. behaviour that is free of errors.

Even if we seem to achieve a goal one hundred percent, such as wanting to be at the station at 1 p.m. and then actually arriving there at exactly 1 p.m., calmly catching the train, which even arrives on time, we have probably made a lot of minor mistakes on the way to our goal, sometimes perhaps even big ones, because we interrupted a conversation that was much more important than catching the train on time, for example.

Can I learn to make friends with mistakes? What do I need to bear in mind?

1. Expect to go off the course towards your goal and be prepared to be flexible.
2. Instead of being ashamed of mistakes, stand by them, even publicly.
3. When others make mistakes, don't judge the person, but evaluate the mistake.
4. Learn to appreciate mistakes more and more as opportunities for development.

5. Don't make mistakes intentionally to harm others or gain personal advantage.
6. Keep the cost of mistakes low, i.e. if corrections are necessary, ensure that the time and effort involved remain within reasonable limits.
7. Establish a good habit to evaluate your own mistakes and apply what you have learned from them.

+ E

And finally, it all depends on endurance (= E), if we want to see change! Jesus emphasises perseverance in the parable of the four types of soil (Matthew 13:18-23): What characterises the fertile soil, the so-called good land? Someone hears the word and understands it, takes it in and holds on to it, does not allow her/himself to be discouraged, and then bears fruit – one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold, and yet another thirtyfold.

Listen! Seek to understand! Have a kind and good heart! And: patience and perseverance!

Those who persevere bear fruit. And they can compensate for some lack of competence through time and perseverance.

Once again, experience shows that it takes time for a behaviour to become a stable habit, so that I am no longer even aware of it when I perform it.

At least two years, that's how it is: there's no low-cost way! Sorry.

Who still remembers the wrapping of the Berlin Reichstag in 1995, an art project by the artist couple Christo and Jeanne-Claude? The two worked on this project for over twenty years, and it was rejected three times by the respective presidents of the German Bundestag. Nevertheless, they did not give up. This thirteen million euro artwork (the two artists had to raise the money themselves) involved dozens of companies and an army of workers, including ninety professional climbers who had to carry out the covering work, as the artists rejected scaffolding and cranes.

What perseverance for an artistic idea that could not even be photographed, a work of art that could only be viewed for two weeks and was also meant to be temporary!

Hopefully, we have also learned from life experience that what matters in life is not to give up.

This gives us confidence and strength that there is light at the end of every tunnel, no matter how long it may be.

3xV+2xJ+7xR+E+S, isn't that a little too much? Who can keep up with that? I know at least one person.

This conference “Integrating religion and spirituality into psychotherapy” was a special moment this spring.



These were our contributions by EMCAPP:

- Ulla Dahlen (Finland): Short Information about Emcapp
- Agnieszka Wojsz (Poland): 30 years: Association of Christian Psychologists in Poland
- Werner May (Germany): "Humans as Relational Beings are also Part of Systems: A Short Insight in a Practical Approach."
- Ewa Kiliszek (Poland): "The Role of Identity Throughout Human Life."


Here you can see the program:

<https://blogs.uao.es/congreso-antropologia-y-salud-mental/en/#>

And here are two specific, noteworthy experiences from this conference:

Ulla: *“Barcelona conference helped my professional development as the lectures provided were excellent. I particularly valued the deep integration of psychology, spirituality and strong professional, clinical practice. At the same time, the deepest impact was left by the warm, kind, loving contacts - both by the EMCAPP connections and by professors from the Barcelona University and Divine Mercy University. Those encounters were deeply meaningful and encouraging, reminding me of how important each moment, word and person is.”*

Agnieszka: „The conference in Barcelona updated my knowledge of psychology, psychotherapy and the presence of spirituality within them. The experiences shared by the speakers from Spain and the highly practical, research-based presentations by the speakers from the USA were rooted in the speakers' own experiences. I was moved by the depth of some of the lectures and the personal stories recounted during the talks. An important aspect for me was learning about the current situation in Spanish universities regarding the teaching of psychology. The Spanish speakers demonstrated just how necessary the teaching of Christian anthropology is today. Contemporary philosophy offers no answers to questions about the meaning of life or objective truth. If philosophy is weak, then psychology, which has its roots in it, cannot meet human needs either. The dictatorship of relativism, of which Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, is omnipresent; therefore, every lecturer, psychologist or psychotherapist should reflect on how to integrate Christian anthropology, which conveys the truth about the human person, into their work with people. The conference was well organised. The modesty and efficiency of the main organiser – Joan d'À. Juanola – still fill my heart with gratitude to this day.”



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About Us

This journal is published by the European Movement for Christian Anthropology, Psychology and Psychotherapy in cooperation with the IGNIS-Academy, Kanzler-Stürtzel-Str.2, D-97318 Kitzingen. EMCAPP as a non-institutional movement enjoys meeting Christian scholars and practitioner in the field of Christian anthropology, psychology, psychotherapy and counseling from all over the world and from most Christian traditions. We are focused on bringing together key persons from different countries. The richness of experience and background always stimulates and refreshes us.

This magazine is free and can be downloaded from our website. We appreciate everyone who recommends it. Per year, two issues of the journal are planned.

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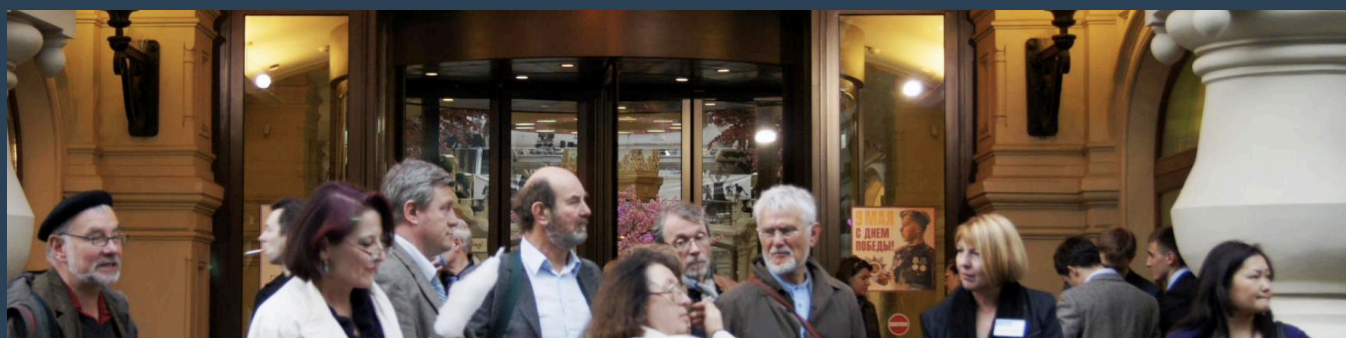
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Seven statements of EMCAPP



The seven statements of EMCAPP are as follows:

- 1. EMCAPP is based on the belief that there is a God who is actively maintaining this world, and therefore there cannot be any discussions about Man without talking about God.**
- 2. EMCAPP acknowledges the limitations of all human knowledge and therefore appreciates the attempts of the various Christian denominations to describe God and their faith.**
- 3. EMCAPP brings together international leaders and pioneers in the field of Christian psychology and psychotherapy and its underlying anthropology.**
- 4. EMCAPP respects and appreciates the cultural and linguistic diversity of backgrounds of its members.**
- 5. EMCAPP encourages its members to learn how to recognize each other as friends and brothers and sisters in Christ.**
- 6. EMCAPP encourages its members in their national challenges and responsibilities.**
- 7. EMCAPP has a global future and it is open to discourse and joint research opportunities around the world.**