Thresholds

Counselling with spirit

January 2018

Giving voice to your soul
Personal development groups in training

When psyche returns to soul
Faith in the therapy room

Findings: discovering writing with soul
Creative writing in therapy

Thresholds is the quarterly journal for members of BACP Spirituality. It provides insight into and discussion of key issues facing those involved or interested in spirituality, belief and pastoral care in counselling and psychotherapy.

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Welcome!

I live in an attic flat, next to some very busy roads. One thing I am very grateful for is the view of the sky from my windows. In the past year or so, I've been able to watch red kites soaring. They are such graceful birds and whenever I see them, they lift my spirits. Their reintroduction to England and Scotland, after a period of near extinction has been remarkably successful.[1] David Abram, a cultural ecologist and environmental philosopher, reminds us of the importance of birds:

'The feathered ones, then, have long been crucial allies for our kind. Watching them swoop and glide and carve their way through the air surely ignited many of our human aspirations toward freedom and flight. Their bewildering array of colours and chromatic patterns probably provoked many of our earliest acts of self-adornment, while their feathers figured prominently in human rituals and dances frequently influenced by avian courtship displays. Birds have ceaselessly inspired us with their mellifluent voices and polyphonic exchanges, undoubtedly instilling some of our earliest impulses toward song and spoken language.... They have been for us messengers, intermediaries, envoys from the forest and its wider life, bearers of intelligence we could not do without.'[2]

> I've been able to watch red kites soaring. They are such graceful birds and whenever I see them, they lift my spirits

I enjoyed BACP's 'Working with Soul' event, held in Cardiff in November. In this issue, we celebrate this event with four articles from various presenters. Ruth Groff and Cath Hancox introduce their work, encouraging students in personal development groups to access resources by imagining their own soul birds. They use readings from a children's book to inspire their students. Ruth and Cath share their own soul birds and their significance and describe how this can allow students to explore sounds, colours, and movement to enable them to express their struggles and successes. We were encouraged to draw our own bird during the workshop.

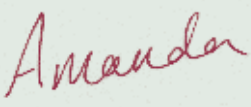
Alistair Ross explores the dynamism of faith in his article, based on his presentation at the 'Working with Soul' event. He offers keywords to provoke a response: religion, spirituality, belief, theology, hope and love. We could be limited by the use of these words or by our understanding of these words. He begins with Freud's thinking, moving on to Bion's approach and Winnicott's ideas. Courage is necessary for us to explore our emergent spiritualities.

Nigel Gibbons writes about his experience of running a creative writing group. During the 'Working with soul' event, he encouraged us to respond to poetry. We worked in small groups and wrote our own responses to listening to a poem read aloud. I found the experience very inspiring and I realised that I don't spend enough time listening to poetry these days. Poetry was very much a part of my life as I was growing up. My father would always choose a poetry book as a Christmas present for me, and these books are treasured belongings. It was good to be reminded of this rich resource that is easily accessible to all of us, and I am sure Nigel's article will provide ideas for our work with clients.

Anissa Chung's thoughtful and moving talk explored working with the transpersonal. She illustrated her talk with a hierarchy of emotional engagement, based on Maslow's work with peak experiences. Anissa works with trainee therapists and highlights the importance of working with the spiritual in therapy and calling for it to take a more prominent role.

I was sad to hear the news that John Foskett has died. We honour his memory and the important role he played in the setting-up of the division we today call BACP Spirituality. We remember his life, by publishing an obituary written by his son and by republishing an article he wrote to mark the 40th anniversary of the Association for Pastoral and Spiritual Care and Counselling (APSCC), the organisation that preceded BACP Spirituality. I wholeheartedly agree with his call for us to 'encourage dialogue between its members, the wider membership of BACP and the many faith communities in the UK and internationally'.

It is always a pleasure to meet members of BACP Spirituality and to be inspired by the creativity of the division. I wish everyone a rich and creative New Year and look forward to more dialogue.



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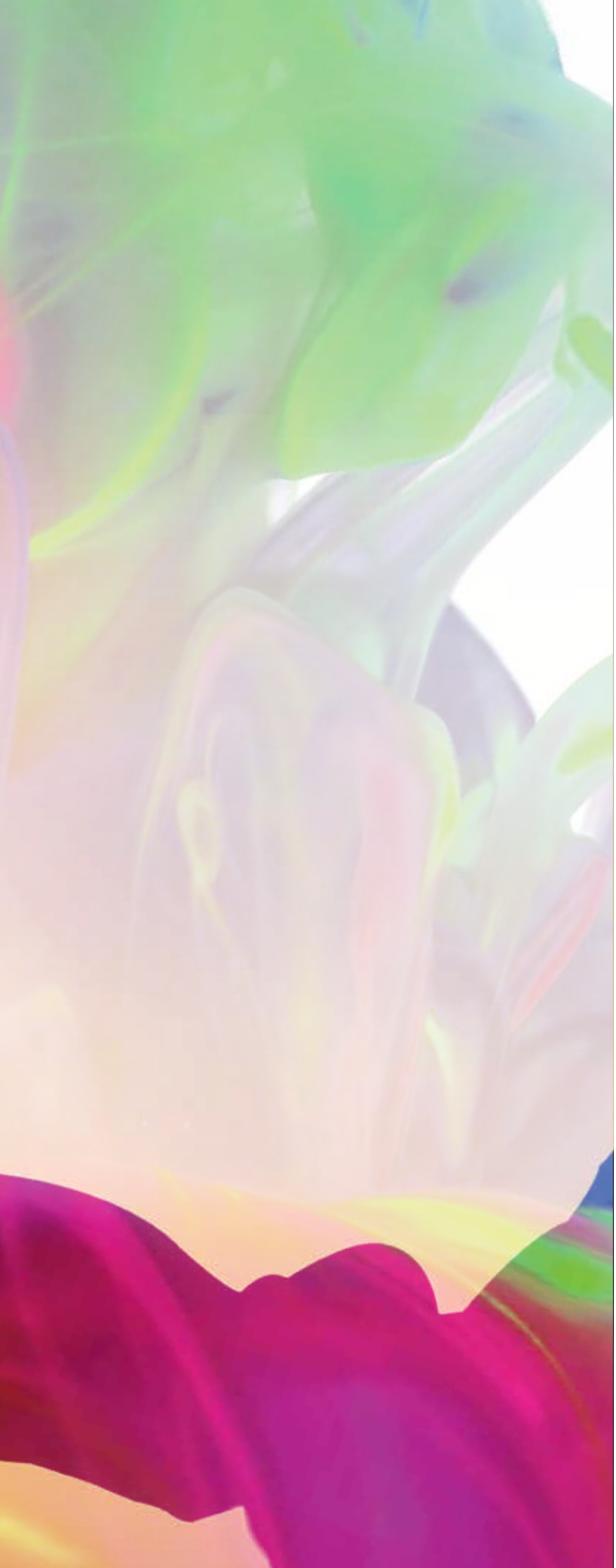
Giving voice to your soul



Ruth Groff and Cath Hancox describe their creative work with personal development groups in training counsellors

Introduction

The story of *The Soul Bird*, by Michal Snunit,[1] gave birth to an organic expression of 'soul', from which evolved a pragmatic, progressive dialogue within the personal development (PD) groups we, the authors of this article, lead at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. We draw on our own narratives as two lecturers to preserve student confidentiality and demonstrate the voice of the soul.

Ruth

My soul bird

In the quiet space deep within, I hear a mournful and soulful 'wooo-oo-oo-oo' sound. A familiar sound, a longing sound, and a belonging sound that brings me home. This meditative sound calls me into relationship with my God, myself and ultimately into relationship with others. It is my soul bird – the mourning dove, who reminds me that I am safe and to hold hope for what is yet to become. It emerges deep within, reminding me to once again take flight.

'Deep down,
inside our bodies,
lives the soul.
No one has ever seen it,
but we all know it's there.
Not only do we know it's there,
we know what's in it, too.'[1]

Approximately 10 years ago, I was introduced to *The Soul Bird*, a short story by Michal Snunit.[1] I remember, at the time, it resonating with me as it provided further insight into my own soul bird as well as some awareness of my client's soul birds. However, the treasured short story found itself within a cluttered drawer, waiting to be opened. Luckily, the drawer was cleared and the book found its way onto a bookshelf, waiting to be explored.

Reading the short story again with clients and with students has provided new depth and awareness in my work. It brought a language, a metaphor, and new meaning in understanding soul or what is held and treasured so deeply within. Is this spirituality? Is this what we're seeking? Is this what we are seeking together? This unique book, *The Soul Bird*, is a catalyst.

Storytelling is a natural process within the therapeutic relationship, and as a practitioner I have listened to numerous stories. These stories are often non-linear and may appear to be fragmented or twirling around in concentric circles. And yet, when I truly, deeply listen, I can also hear and feel the fluttering of wings, the opening and closing of drawers; along with the clamouring of taking out and replacing treasures.

Cath

My soul bird

As I shut my eyes and open my mind to what emerges, I become aware of the colour yellow. Not a solid yellow, but one that is suffused with light – warm, but in some way delicate, vulnerable. I perceive the light as being in a dark place and as I do this, I see a small yellow canary. As I visualise my bird, I am reminded of learning about this little songbird in school, many years ago. The memory resonates in my being, of the small yellow canary sent down into the coal mines of Wales to alert miners to the presence of toxic gases. As long as the bird sang, they would know it was safe for them. There is something about holding the song for clients in places they fear to tread; but in this moment, leading the personal development group in meditative contemplation of their soul birds, it felt as if my soul bird were saying, 'It's OK; I have been here first; you can breathe here'.

I have had a growing sense of my own spirituality within my work as a person-centred therapist during the last 15 years. What I have noticed, particularly, are times when I feel something occurring within me and my experience with a client that seems more than my emotional response and sense of warm acceptance. It seems to me that a deep empathy, and my own genuineness are present and perhaps intrinsic to these occasions; but the experience itself feels more. I have had a sense of waking up, an emerging consciousness of something that had been on the edge of awareness or in my peripheral vision. As I have grown and developed as a therapist, becoming more congruent in my 'self', less afraid or wary of 'doing it right' and more freely able to be in the relationship, I have developed a trust in the healing nature that truly meeting with someone can bring. Martin Buber sees this intensity of relation in terms of the 'I' meeting with the 'thou' as opposed to the 'it' of the other. He says of this relation: 'No deception penetrates here; here is the cradle of the Real Life'.[2] So there is something resolutely honest, vital and true here and that, to me, feels 'holy'. In this sense of true meeting, it seems as if the core essence of me, perhaps my 'true self', is connecting and resonating with the 'true self' of the other – this feels like 'soul'. Carl Rogers captures this sense of experience: 'At those moments, it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself, and has become part of something larger. Profound growth and healing and energy are present.'[3]

Rationale for understanding and working with 'soul'

James Hillman, revisions 'soul' as a perspective, not a thing; it is the mediator between what occurs and how we make meaning of it. It is the process through and by which this 'translation' occurs.[4] 'Soul' is not seen as a religious concept but rather as the meaning of 'psyche'. It is not that which transcends humanity but rather that which anchors humanity in engagement with the visceral reality of living. It is what deepens meaning and experience.

Michael Kearney also recognises this bridging quality of 'soul': 'the living connection between the surface and the unfathomable and meaning-rich depths of who we are.'[5] His notion of 'soul' suggests a vital, dynamic conduit between what is deep within, perhaps the core sense of self, our 'spirit', and how this is conducted and expressed through engagement with the external.

'Most important is to listen to the soul bird,
because sometimes it calls us and we don't hear it.
This is a shame – it wants to tell us about ourselves.
It wants to tell us about the feelings
that are locked up inside its drawers.'[1]

This aspect of human beings, which seems to apply to 'soul' or 'spirit', is more than mind, behaviour, emotion and physicality and yet seems for many, if not all, intrinsic to the human experience. As such, this must be important to counsellors and psychotherapists if we are to assist or support our clients towards becoming the whole of who they are, to become 'a person who is more open to all the

> Storytelling is a natural process within the therapeutic relationship, and as a practitioner I have listened to numerous stories. These stories are often non-linear and may appear to be fragmented or twirling around in concentric circles. And yet, when I truly, deeply listen, I can also hear and feel the fluttering of wings, the opening and closing of drawers; along with the clamouring of taking out and replacing treasures

elements of his organic experience'.[6] We need to be willing to engage and work with 'soul' or 'spirit' and the meaning it has for our clients.

The PD group allows an opportunity to narrate a process of reflection and exploration. In this way it enables students to conceptualise and create their own understanding and experience of their spiritual or 'soul' self – irrespective of religious or non-religious views. This conceptual context usefully supports our understanding of 'soul', and the notion of 'soul bird' provides a pragmatic approach towards accessing and engaging with the 'soul birds' of others.

Barriers to and considerations for working with soul in counselling and psychotherapy

'Some of us hear it all the time.
Some almost never.
And some of us hear it
only once in a lifetime.'[1]

When researching 'presence' for my MA in Counselling Practice, I found a paucity of consensual language in relevant contemporary literature concerning experiences that can be considered spiritual in nature. Despite having little problem in accessing a wide discourse around the area, the language seemed open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Such experiences are difficult to pin down in words, and language can become emotive, assumptive and often misleading; not least, perhaps as words offer different symbolisms to different people. However, if we are to equip the emerging generation of counsellors/psychotherapists to work with the holism of the human being, efforts are needed to find ways to engage with and explore this aspect of ourselves and others. The nomenclature of 'soul' and 'spirit' commonly recurred within the psychological and psychotherapeutic literature during my research.[7] However, the value and meaning inherent in this terminology can create a barrier to the depth and richness of spiritual expression in an increasingly secular-centric context which can seem to struggle against its own notions of inclusivity.

An invitation to metaphor and imagination

The soul bird, in inviting a language of metaphor and imagination, through the gift of story-telling, offers a means to transcend potential barriers. Working with students in personal development provoked a shared recognition of an emerging sacredness and beauty that come as a common language, evolving through a co-created experience.

The opportunity to work with notions of 'soul' in this way, allows individuals to construct their own, meaningful concept of 'self' and 'soul'. This journey in itself encourages self-exploration and personal development; but further than this, it provides a compass-like means for ongoing reflection and a way by which to enter into a dialogue efficient for relational depth. In this way, the soul bird provides a transferable method for working with clients, students and supervision in counselling and psychotherapy; ultimately, encouraging the soul bird to take flight and to be free.

'By now you've understood
that everyone is different
because there's a different
soul bird deep inside.'[1]

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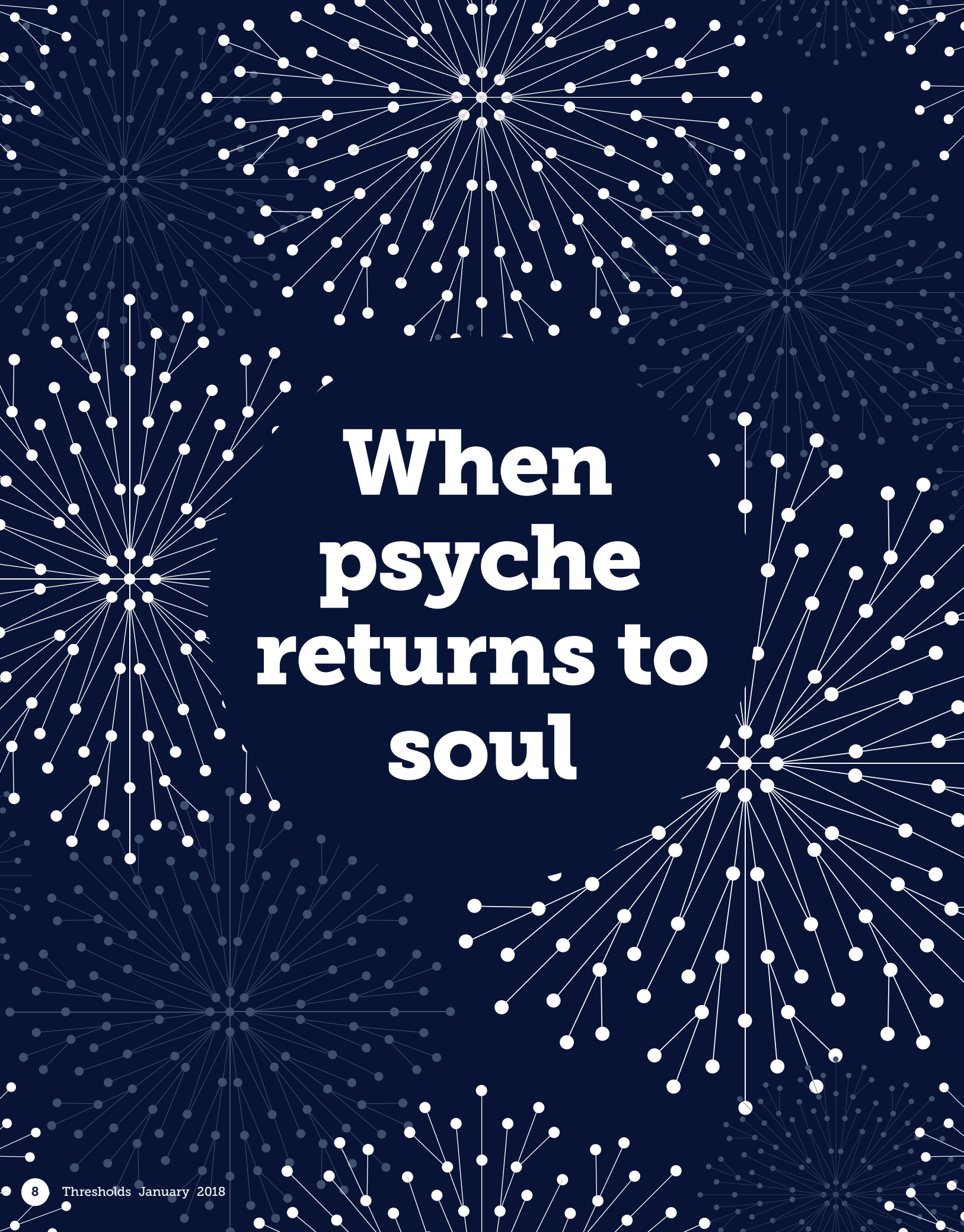
Ruth Groff and Cath Hancox lecture on the counselling programmes at University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Swansea. They co-facilitate the personal development groups for the Postgraduate Certificate in Psychotherapeutic Practice: Humanistic, as part of the master's programme.



When psyche returns to soul

Alistair Ross explores the role of faith in the therapy room

In German, the word *'Seele',* coming from the Greek word *'psyche',* can be translated as 'soul', or, after Freud, 'mind'. When Freud started at university in Vienna, he was interested in philosophy (that included the soul). By the end of his time at university the trajectory of Freud's thinking was empirical, evolutionary, scientific, non-religious, non-metaphysical, and non-mystical. Freud, in his passionate search for truth, wanted no distractions, no appeals to higher powers, no link to any agency external to the self, and no prohibitions upheld by religious traditions. In 1874, Freud wrote: 'I, the godless medical man and empiricist, am attending two courses in philosophy... One... listen and marvel! – deals with the existence of God, and Prof Brentano... is a splendid man, a scholar and philosopher, even though he deems it necessary to support this airy existence of God with his own expositions. I shall let you know just as soon as one of his arguments gets to the point... lest your path to salvation in the faith be cut off.'[1] I hear, in Freud's concluding words, an echo of Dante's opening sentence in *The Divine Comedy:* Halfway through our trek in life, I found myself in a dark wood, the path ahead could no longer be seen [my paraphrase]. For Freud, the 'dark wood' was a life unilluminated by God or any Higher Power, relying on reason to light the path ahead. Freud was convinced of the triumph of atheism and the superiority of science as the source of all truth. I recently attended a secular funeral with no religious language, prayers, or hymns. We were encouraged simply to remember the person. I was left with lingering sadness, a form of spiritual emptiness, an absence of soul, if you like. So all psychodynamic therapies, with the exception of Jungian approaches, began a trajectory away from the soul.

Counselling and psychotherapy are in danger of losing the soul entirely, which is why BACP needs to find ways of valuing the spirituality and religion of its members. We need to rediscover a voice, not just for a sense of belonging, but so we can address people's 'ultimate concerns' located within the psyche that takes us beyond the mind to Being itself. Listening to clients, we hear echoes of lingering sadness, like the ache from an old wound, and a fragmentation of the soul. How can we reconnect what Freud, and many who followed him, dismantled?

The answer lies in a renewed understanding of the concept of faith. Words are important, because they resonate at many levels, offering layers of meaning. Sometimes they evoke critical, emotive responses, beyond rationality. So my choice of 'faith' reflects the implicit reactions to keywords:

Religion is too fixed
Spirituality is too vague
Belief is too abstract
Theology is too technical
Hope is too hopeful
Love is too ambiguous

Faith, like psychodynamic therapy, is always dynamic. In its original New Testament Greek context, faith was always active, affecting what I think, feel, and do. It is holistic, embracing all of me, and all of another. That makes a great definition of dynamic therapy: ...an encounter that embraces all of me, conscious and unconscious, with the conscious and unconscious of another, that transcends categories of body, mind, spirit, psyche, or soul. Expressed in relational analytic terms, it is a co-constructed intersubjective encounter that creates an analytic third as a unique expression of the psyche. In my terms, this is deeply soulful, yet in order for it to come about, it requires faith. I believe that dynamic faith offers a connection between psyche and soul. This idea is drawn from Buber, and psychodynamic writers Eigen and Grotstein, drawing on Bion and Winnicott. Eigen also adds a Jewish mystical tradition.

Bion's 'Acts of faith'

Bion served as an officer during WW1 and was left traumatised. For Bion, the worst aspect of trauma is that it stops the capacity to think. His own thinking developed through studying history, philosophy, literature, and art at Oxford and other universities. He trained as a doctor, specialising in psychiatry, and pioneered working in groups at a military hospital in the Second World War. He was an innovative thinker whose work is complex, drawing on Kant's philosophy, driven by a search for meaning and truth. He had a capacity to speak to our most traumatised parts. Bion distinguished between faith and an act of faith as a scientific state of mind, distinct from any religious meaning. He writes that the term that best expresses his thinking is faith: 'faith that there is an ultimate reality and truth – the unknown, unknowable, "formless infinite"... but the act of faith is not a statement'.[2] Reading Bion, his language reveals a scientific state of

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mind, but written in a distinctly unscientific way. According to Sandler, 'It refers to a sense of experiencing the existence of reality and truth. Even though truth is not wholly reachable, comprehensible or amenable to be uttered or owned, its existence can be intuited and used... It is not the mystical posture it may seem, but an acknowledgement that trained intuition can be developed and put into practice. It expresses the faith that truth exists... "faith" allows one to travel from K (process of knowledge) to O (origin, ultimate truth)'.[2] Bion's concept of O has been taken up by Eigen and Grotstein as a way of opening up connections to the infinite, echoing the origins of Bion's idea in St John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart. An American relational analyst, Paul Cooper, finds parallels between Bion and aspects of Zen Buddhism.[3]

In practice, Bion believed the best way of doing therapy was to be in the room with the client without memory, desire, or understanding, waiting for a moment of intuition. This is an act of faith, when the right interpretation captures something unique that emerges out of the chaos, nothingness, or deprivations of our psyche. An act of faith links knowledge about processes (which can be known) with the ultimate (which cannot be known, but sensed). Another British analyst, Nina Coltart, was influenced by Klein, Bion, Winnicott, and Buddhism. She recalls finding herself shouting at a patient. 'This was a surprising "act of faith". I had given up trying to "understand" this patient, given up theorizing and just sat there day after day without memory or desire in a state of suspension, attending only with an empty mind to him and the unknowable truth of himself, which had shaped his life, until such a moment as I was so at one with it that I knew it for the murderous hate it was, and had to make a jump for freedom – his as well as mine, though I did not think that out at the time – by shouting. These acts of faith can feel dangerous.'[4] Similarly, Fonagy refers to the end of therapy where we hope the client has been helped 'as an act of faith rather than what we know because ultimately we do not know'.[5] What Bion, Coltart, and Fonagy are referring to is faith in the psychoanalytic process.

Winnicott's 'areas of faith'

Eigen defines an area of faith as engaging with our whole being 'with all one's heart, with all one's soul, and with all one's might'.[6] He assumes we know this comes from Jewish daily prayer. Eigen and others see Winnicott taking the inner world of the infant that in faith seeks out the mother, and in doing so lives with the omnipotence and illusion that they have created her. As the infant grows, coming to understand the mother is not an object but a person, they undergo a transition. The experience of a transitional knowledge, feeling, relinquishing, loving and hating that Winnicott believes underpins all creative acts – art, music, etc. By extension, this forms the beating heart of religious or spiritual experience. None of this comes about without faith, faith in the self, and faith in the other, who at one stage was not yet known, but believed to be. We need illusions as creative aspects of the self. We express this in and through areas of faith and acts of faith.

The importance Winnicott places on reconnecting psyche and soul lies in the fact that transitional experiences are part of normal psychological functioning and development. Religious beliefs or spiritual experiences therefore fall within healthy, rather than pathological, development. There is a health warning: all belief systems are capable of being used defensively, not just the religious or spiritual. This is where Bion's 'acts of faith' helps. He argues that it is out of catastrophe that meaning and truth emerge. When catastrophes occur in our lives, external or internal, all such defences are stripped away. St John of the Cross's 'dark night of the soul' finds a parallel in my 'dark horizons of the psyche' that Bion terms 'nameless dread' and Grotstein a psychic 'black hole'.

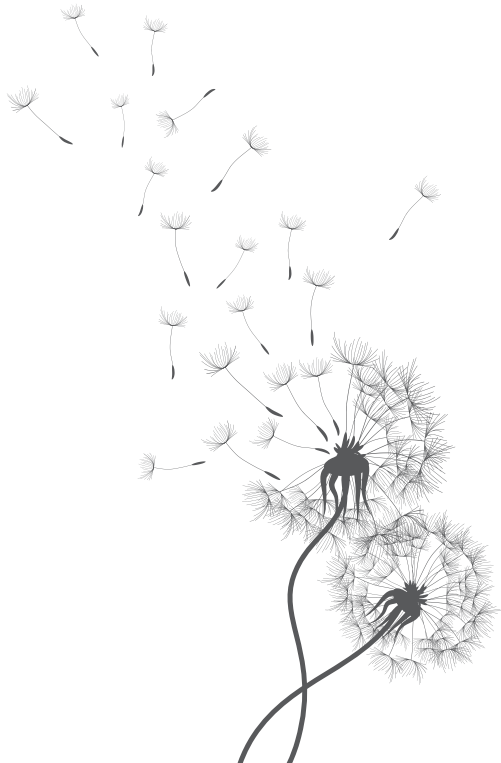
'Phenomenology of dynamic faith'

I have written previously about the different kinds of spiritual phenomenon experienced in therapy, and co-related these to three forms of spirituality, understood at the level of lived experience.[7] Essentially my approach is that while we need acts of faith and areas of faith, in a phenomenal sense, faith is always in the room when the unconscious is involved, bringing with it the potential to connect to the soul. This finds expression in four ways:

1. **The phenomenology of the unconscious.** It is an act of faith to evoke the unconscious because, like all unconscious processes, they are unconscious. Over time, we come to sense a ripple of movement across the surface of the psyche, and it is this that sparks intuition. It grows out of a depth of thinking, reflecting, sensing and feeling.

2. **The phenomenology of dreaming.** We need a broader understanding of what happens in and through dreaming. Dreams are less disguised than Freud originally conceived and we need to live the dream as an expression of our Being. This is a step that requires faith, faith to stay in the 'now' of the dream, not rushing to interpretation. This allows a recovery of the idea of dreams as revelatory, telling us something about ourselves in a new way. It allows dreams to open out back in time, beyond time. They offer a connection to oneself, to one's very spirit or soul, often in connection to the Other.

3. **The phenomenology of intersubjective creativity.** Something happens in therapy. What we call it, varies, and is found across all therapeutic modalities, but includes:



'magic', 'mystical', 'wholeness', 'unity', 'transpersonal', 'transcendent', 'otherness', 'love', 'moment of meeting', 'relational depth', or 'immanent or transcendent empathy', plus other phrases you could add. Martin Buber's *I-Thou* was the first to put words to the phenomenon of a connectedness at a depth that encompasses the soul. 'Dialogue is fulfilled in its being' when people 'have been seized in their depths and opened out by the dynamic of an elemental togetherness. The interhuman opens out what otherwise remains unopened.'[8] Eigen, influenced early on by hearing Buber speak, has connected the *Kabbalah* and psychoanalysis. We experience 'a felt moment vanishing into O emanating from us, a double movement in one. Or returning to God re-creating us in divine embrace'.[6] A Jewish mystical text, the *Kabbalah* has become popularised, which diminishes it. Cooper warns about DIY spirituality. Spirituality is not '...a substitute for failures in emotional relatedness. Although it can help us engage more fully with life, it does not provide comprehensive answers to the mysteries of life. Although it may help us refine our sensitivity to the mystery, the contingency, this sheer strangeness of our being – and our being here at this time and in this place – it is not an end in itself. The *Kabbalah* teaches that spirituality involves service: becoming more human so that through the gateway of the everyday world we can recognize the interconnectedness of all being, and thereby recognize that the world awaits us'.[9]

4. **The phenomenology of spirit/soul and the Other.** What happens when therapy takes us somewhere else? The encounters we experience in therapy can be agonising. Milly talked about her abuse as a teenager. I am the first person she has ever told. She wants to be rid of this so her 'spirit can be free'. Notice the soul-laden language, but it is slow and painful work. It is like growing a plant from seed, sheltered through the winter in a greenhouse, waiting for the day and the season to be planted and grow in a garden, thus revealing beauty, shape, and flower in season. We sense this all the time with our clients. With some, our task is to prepare the ground for what can come in the future, and in this sense it is an act of faith. In Hindu or transpersonal terms this could be an experience of an evolving soul as an expression of Personal Divine Being, or in Jungian terms an archetype of the Self in connection to the Collective or the Other. Freud and Jung disagreed about the unconscious. For Freud it was an unconscious process, for Jung it was a gateway to a collective unconscious. For Freud, the Other was a mirror of the self; for Jung, the Other was what we are drawn to throughout and across time. Freud connected within the self, Jung connected beyond the self. The tragedy of their split is that neither could enrich the thinking of the other about the Other.

Working as a dynamic therapist is serving the needs of a client in a way that opens themselves and connects them to others, inside and outside the therapy space.

I change and am changed by the other and in doing so we create something new. I explore this in *Introducing Contemporary Psychodynamic Counselling and Psychotherapy* (forthcoming).[10] Peppered through it are clinical stories, and in writing these, I realised how much clients have changed me, generally for the better. So, being in dynamic therapy offers the potential for an emergent spirituality because in the phenomenological encounter, faith-filled experiences are not unknown or alien territory. This puts the spotlight on whether the therapist is brave enough to engage with their emergent spirituality and allow that to be an aspect of a co-created analytic third, a something that is unique to this therapy, brought about by the wholeness, complexities, flaws, hopes, dreams, and losses, of two unique people encountering one another.

> “It is like growing a plant from seed, sheltered through the winter in a greenhouse, waiting for the day and the season to be planted and grow in a garden, thus revealing beauty, shape, and flower in season”

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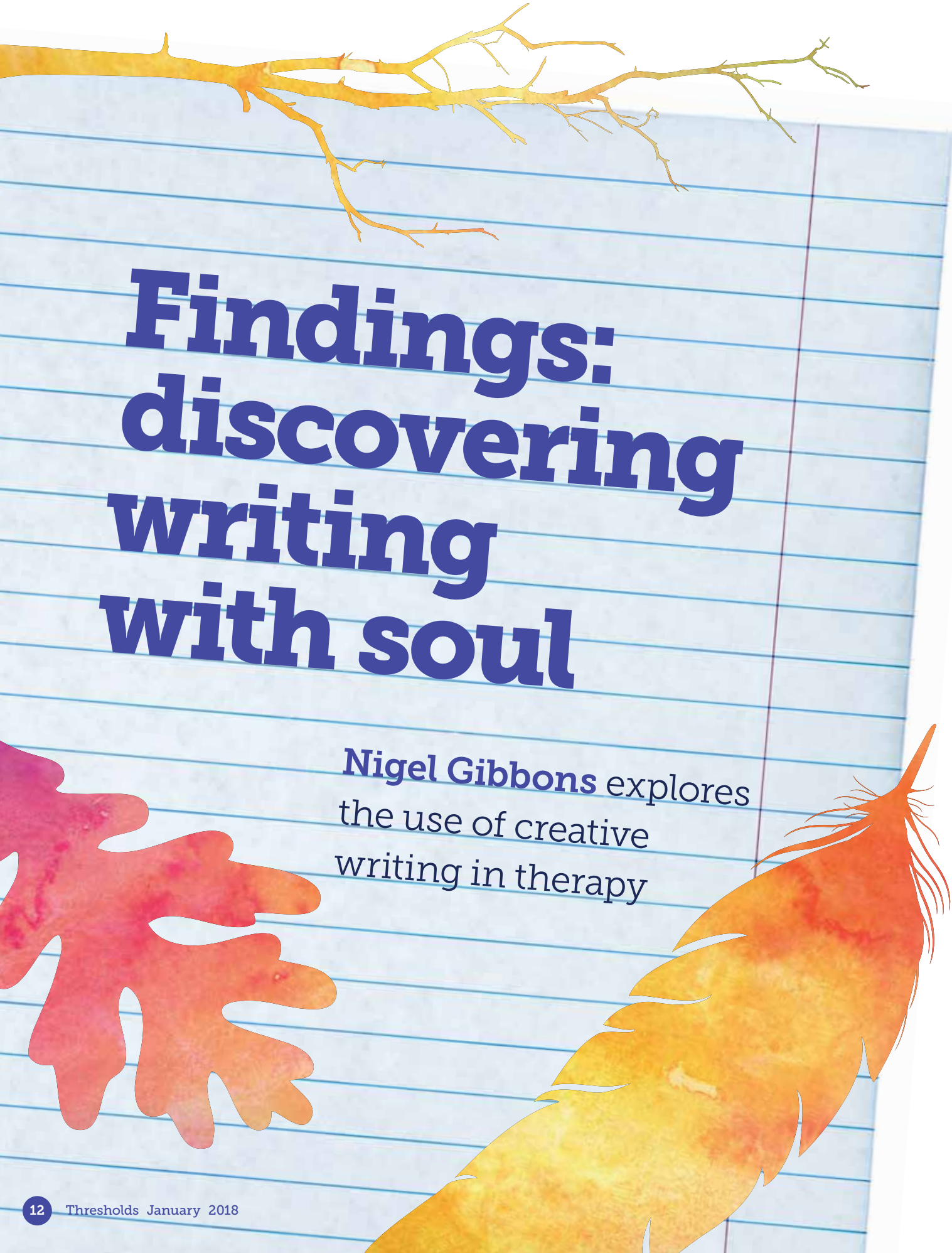
Biography

Alistair Ross is Associate Professor of Psychotherapy at Oxford University. His research is on the engagement between spirituality and psychoanalysis. He is writing *Introducing Contemporary Psychodynamic Counselling and Psychotherapy* (including reference to soul).



Findings: discovering writing with soul

Nigel Gibbons explores the use of creative writing in therapy

I've been doing creative writing since I was a child; short stories were my preferred way of writing, but I also kept a diary and then in my teenage years wrote poetry. They were often personal, stories or poems out of my immediate experience, although often with a dark tinge of horror. Diary writing continued as journaling, and the desire to explore my experience, my narrative, often touching on those classic questions of 'Who am I? What am I doing? What is this all about?' It was an unconsidered, immediate form of writing, often including dreams.

Over the last 10 years, I've begun to use creative writing for wellbeing and therapeutic purposes, with individuals and with groups. Usually, I'm encouraging them to write in an immediate way. I'd describe it as raw writing, words that come from somewhere inside and that spill out onto the page, and in doing so take some form or another so that they become readable. Often the writing that people do is in a broad sense spiritual, it touches on their struggles, their confusions, their questions about themselves, others and the world. However, I occasionally have deliberately chosen to run a group that is explicitly around spirituality. For the last two years, I have run a monthly group, which I've called Findings, as a way to experiment with creative writing connected to the spiritual.

Many of the great religious traditions have writing as part of their holy books, spiritual practices, and ways of communication, and often these practices are forms of creative writing. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are 'religions of the book', in the Hebrew Bible, the book of Psalms is a collection of religious poetry which combines lament, praise, valedictory writing and much else, Sufism has been described as 'a mystical, meditative and poetic tradition of Islam'.[1] Mystics, such as St John of the Cross, have often expressed themselves in poetic and other writings. Writing has a way of conveying the spiritual that is different to speech and theology.

Over recent years there has been a significant number of writers exploring the links between various creative writing practices and spirituality, Pat Schneider (2013), founder of Amherst Writers and Artists, and creative writer and facilitator, has written movingly around her experiences of writing and faith and non-faith, in *How the Light Gets In*.[2] Others have explored the use of Haiku,[3] the sacred journey,[4] the impact of published poetry,[1] and through other practices.[5–7]

Findings is an open group, and has included about 20 different people attending at various times. The group is a mix of people of faith, typically Christian, and some with no faith, but all have been keen to explore the idea of using writing to express and play with concepts related to spirituality. At times we've used quite explicit material, and on other occasions have used more diverse material, for instance, environmental poetry. There has been a core of about half a dozen who have attended most of the sessions: some are competent creative writers while others are novices.

Typically, I'll use a stimulus of some sort, often a poem, but it could be an image, a photo or an art card, an object, whether natural, like a twig, leaf or shell, or manufactured, such as a Playmobil character. If it's a poem, we read it out loud, talk about our reaction to it, and then write in one of a number of ways from it. For instance, finding a word or a phrase in the poem which stands out for us and using that as a starting point. The results can be surprising and moving.

Hear me!
Hear me!
Let no one wound our fragile earth
In whose blue and green heart
rest our dreams
Let no one harm this gentle soul
In whose soft body
God is being discovered
John

Rock
All this has brought me face to face
with rock.
Im grappling for shapes, grateful
For anything I can get my hand around.
I once found a ledge where angels
Served bitter tea for healing.
Below me the sand is pounded clean again,
The waves roar in retreat,
Tea, crevices, unexpected plants.
I climb on, internalizing stone
Smashing words against it til they stick.
Esther

Working in this way you have no idea what people might write, or what might work for them to allow them to write. You have to trust that some exercises will work well, and some might only work for part of the group. If you're working with an individual it's different, because you can get a sense of whether they connect to the poem, or object, and if there is something there waiting to be written.

One of the key concepts to get across to individuals or groups, is one of safety towards themselves, their words, and others and their words. Many years ago, I wrote an acrostic, Writing Well, to try to express something of the attitude which needs to be brought to this sort of writing, because it's not about critical writing, or crafting, or writing something which is of publishable quality. All those things are good, in the right place. However, with raw writing of this sort, where you are trying to help people allow what is deep within them to come out on the page, there is a nervousness and a wariness which is born of previous hurts around their words, or imagined hurts. This is a delicate act.

Writing Well

Write without self-criticism

Respond to our words from your feelings

Ignore grammar, spelling, punctuation, and doing it right

Take the words gently in your hands and do not crush them with criticism

Invite the words to nourish and refresh you

No need to read or share if you do not wish to

Go where your words lead, but only as far as you wish to go

Wise words are not necessarily complicated or difficult, they are often simple and straightforward

Excellence is not required, there is always someone who writes better, but they do not write your words

Listen with your ears and from your heart

Let the words remain confidential to us, and do not scatter them thoughtlessly

I wrote the words above in the immediate flow of my responding to the need to create some guidelines for groups, and have chosen not to edit it, but to let it have slightly awkward edges. As a result, at the occasional writing group when I introduce it, I'm asked about a grammatical point, or phrasing, but for me it's OK, because that's not what's important in this type of writing. Often, I'll go on to explain that in a group, I will also write in response to most of the exercises, and, depending on the numbers, I will share my writing too, even if, from a formal, crafted point of view, it's c**p! That usually gets a laugh.

Writing around spirituality can be direct; you might use *The Guest House by Rumi* (you can find it online if you want to read it).[8] It's funny, quirky, and as long as you suggest to people that when they respond, it might be around God, or Allah, or the Buddha, or the universe or the other, or whatever is appropriate for them, people will find something that responds. People will find words that express a response to an affirmation of themselves.

You might want to try it yourself now. The first thing to realise is that you can write this in any way you want. There is no right or wrong. If you choose to write it as a poem, then bear in mind that for this type of writing, what I call a poem is 'Short lines and big margins'. It doesn't have to rhyme, or have a rhythm, or any of those things. Just short lines, with big margins, although you can write a long line if you want to!

Then, search online for Kaylin Haught's God says yes to me.[9] Read it twice, and notice how you respond within your body, or emotionally; don't overthink it. Then, regardless of whether you like the poem or not, find a word, or a phrase, or a line, which has caught you, and use that as the first line for your writing. On whatever you want to write, put that as the first line, then allow whatever words that want to come, to flow out of you onto the page. Don't edit them, don't criticise yourself and don't try to correct them, unless it's to find the word which is a better 'felt' fit to the feeling inside you. Allow yourself to write for as long as you want.

Once you've written something, try reading it out loud, just to hear the sound. You might want to tweak it a little, but you don't have to. If there's someone you trust who will simply listen, and maybe respond from their feelings rather than a critical, cognitive response, read it to them. But this isn't about craft, or literary criticism. It's about the writing which is sitting inside you coming out onto the page.

How about some more poems from the Findings group? It might be around something which seems very everyday.

Making dal

Making dal is not a long distance walk in mountains.

Its place is kitchen, its scale is small:

Pan, lentils, spices, water.

But in attending to these details I quieten and feel hopeful,

Like the walker who stops to take the long view,

Then pushes on against the day's steep landscape.

Bill

It may have touched on deep topics.

Of dark words and darkness

The dark outside

Whilst we here, comfortable

Even peaceful

Our mortality safely beyond the light.

Occasional quick,

hurried glances

at the howling emptiness

at the monsters that rage.

But we must look

Someday we must go there, and alone

Sally

> If there's someone you trust who will simply listen, and maybe respond from their feelings rather than a critical, cognitive response, read it to them

The potential is unending, it can touch on questions of identity, of belief, of doubt, of ecology, of suffering, but it allows our inner voice a way of expressing itself which is often powerful, surprising, and moving.

No limits

If we let the limits of our senses,
be the limits of our souls

We'll say the temple bells stopped ringing

And silence the flowers.

June

I'd like to thank the contributors for their permission to use their poetry, all names have been anonymised.

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Biography

Nigel Gibbons is a counsellor and supervisor in private practice in Bristol. He teaches on Metanoia Institute's MSc. in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes, and facilitates writing groups. He is also a tutor on Network Training's Diploma in Counselling.

A meeting of souls

Anissa Chung enquires into transpersonal experience in therapeutic relationships

Introduction

In my personal therapy, I have had transpersonal experiences that have been transformational. Consequently, I have felt deeply known and much more alive as a person. I find engaging with others at a profound level enriching to my soul.

As a psychotherapist, I have developed from focusing on techniques and skills to also relating authentically with my clients. I have since witnessed how they were drawn to a deeper connection with their spiritual self and how they were transformed in the process. This has spurred me on to consider the importance of spirituality in psychotherapy, in particular:

- How does the transpersonal relate to spirituality?
- What qualities in a therapeutic relationship may engender transpersonal experience?
- How may transpersonal experience bring about significant personality change?

Spirituality and the transpersonal

Although the terms 'transpersonal' and 'spirituality' are closely related in the literature, they have different meanings. The term 'transpersonal' comes from the fourth force of psychology (after psychoanalytic, behavioural and humanistic),[1] and Rowan points out that it 'puts us in touch with the sacred, the numinous, the holy – the soul, the spirit, the divine'.[2] Clarkson likewise relates the transpersonal to 'the spiritual dimension of a healing relationship'.[3]

I find it helpful to understand transpersonal experience in the light of Maslow's three connected concepts: the hierarchy of human needs, self-actualisation and peak experience – through which individuals may be in touch with the sacred. Maslow claims that beyond self-actualisation, there is a need for transcendence for 'we need something bigger than we are to be awed by and to commit ourselves to'.[4]

Grof succinctly defines transpersonal experience as an expansion or extension of consciousness beyond ego boundaries and beyond the limitation of time and/or space.[5] Wilber sees the transpersonal as the fine line between psychotherapy and the spiritual. For him, it functions like a springboard for individuals to move from psychotherapy into the spiritual realm.[6]

Building on the above, I wanted to limit the term 'transpersonal' in this research to a peak experience that takes place within a therapeutic relationship. It refers to the client's profound and transformational moments of connection with self (intrapersonal), with an other (interpersonal) and with the Great Other (transpersonal). In my view, the experience is in the spiritual realm, whether or not it is expressed in religious terminology or bound to any faith tradition.

Altogether, four therapists took part in my research by sharing their transpersonal experience through semi-structured interviews. In line with the ethos of a heuristic inquiry,[7] I was also interviewed, so my story formed part of the data. To safeguard their anonymity, I have used pseudonyms: Ada, Betty, Carol, Doug and Ella.

Therapeutic relationship

All five participants were in a state of turmoil at the beginning of therapy. With their predominant insecure-avoidant attachment style,[8] they tended to be self-reliant and found it hard to trust others to meet their needs. It was particularly challenging for Carol, who 'hadn't had good experiences with therapists'.

Despite their predicament, all spoke warmly of the therapeutic relationship in which their transpersonal experience took place. Ada quickly found 'trust and safety' and Betty felt 'loved unconditionally'. Despite her relational difficulties, Carol experienced her therapist as 'everything a good mother should be' while Doug found 'implicit unconscious trust… from day one'. Ella experienced 'responsiveness, loving care… and felt deeply held'. It was apparent that their therapists had effectively established a secure therapeutic alliance and met some of the participants' emotional needs early on.

In my understanding, the therapists did not only use their 'instrumental self' – focusing on using skills, strategies and treatment outcomes; in fact, the relational essence captured in the research findings reveals that the therapists also used their 'authentic self'.[9] It was the therapist's 'being' – their authentic presence – that enabled the participant to feel valued, accepted, and safe enough to attach securely.[10] In this respect, Doug found his therapist's presence 'reassuring, grounding'.

The quality of presence is in fact Rogers' seventh condition for therapeutic change – a synthesis of the core therapeutic conditions in his later years of work. Nolan interprets presence as 'being-with' – the therapist's total willingness and availability to stay with the person, embracing and affirming their experiencing in the moment. Presence is therefore an essential relational element: it promotes connectedness with self (intrapersonal) and with an other (interpersonal), which in turn enhances relational depth.[11–13]

In the interviews, the participants expressed the following:

- 'profound engagement'
- 'soul to soul'
- 'she became the hammock… like an extension of God'.

On reflection, I realised that each participant's therapist demonstrated their capability to empathically attune moment by moment, to hold and contain the participant's disturbance without feeling overwhelmed: their vulnerable self resonated with and touched the participant's spirit deeply. These were intimate, soul-to-soul encounters, which echo Buber's 'I-Thou' relationship.[14,15]

All participants claimed awareness of spirituality: two described themselves as spiritual but not religious, while the others' spirituality was based on the Christian faith. Interestingly, each worked with a therapist who was also spiritually attuned. I surmise that none of the participants needed self-censorship for fear that their spiritual experiences might be explained away or interpreted as psychotic. Whether explicit or implicit, my impression was that their therapist's openness gave the participants freedom 'to go there', and connect with their whole self in relationship.

Transpersonal experience

A total of seven transpersonal experiences were recounted by the five participants. They were profound moments of connection with self (intrapersonal), with an other (interpersonal), and beyond self (transpersonal). Three of the experiences happened in session, and four out of session but within the therapeutic context.

My findings indicate that the triggers were ordinary events: a dialogue, a dream, a drawing, physical exercise, or body gestures. One was supernatural – in this case a religious vision. I discovered that the therapist's intuitive, most sensitively attuned intervention in a session could become the catalyst for a transpersonal experience. Ella's therapist simply 'leaned forward, took two small steps in the room… to engage with [her]'. This led to unexpected profound moments of connection on all levels.

When a transpersonal experience happened out of session, such as Doug's dream, his therapist's authentic, attuned and receptive response helped to affirm its 'realness', and 'allowed something to settle [when it] had been heard'. A significant finding is that whether the transpersonal experience happened in or out of session, each of the therapists played a crucial role in bringing resolution to the participant's turmoil.

Despite the different triggers, the participants' perceptions of their transpersonal experiences were very similar. They were immediate, undeniable, and unforgettable. Some of the common phenomena they described overlap with the definitions of the transpersonal from the fourth force of psychology.[16] The way they expressed these included:

- 'emotions were very high'
- 'awe inspiring'
- 'timeless'
- 'pivotal moment, turning point'
- 'beyond words'.

Regarding what happened in the transpersonal experience, Ada summarised hers as 'moving through… turmoil of emotion and then… touching the calm and… peace that's beyond'. In his dream, Doug 'felt alive but also bereft', followed by 'relief, release… a sense of engagement and sadness'. These cases epitomise the nature of the seven transpersonal experiences which were transient but also transcendent: in a higher state of consciousness, the participant moved from a place of turmoil to a place of tranquillity.

The literature often emphasises the joy and wonder – and the ecstasy – of a transpersonal experience, with an assumption that the client will find profound growth and healing as a result. My findings reveal that the participants' process of transformation in fact went through the following stages:

turmoil –> transcendence –> surrender –> resolution

What is seldom explored is the client's surrender – to lose the striving self. In the interviews, all the participants remembered vividly their need to let go, to detach, to take down defences, and to trust the Great Other in the spiritual dimension. I was aware of a paradox – pain and resolution being held in the same moment.

It is heartening that each participant found resolution:

- 'trust… everything… to be OK'
- 'starting the journey into forgiveness'
- 'I was believed… understood'
- '[her] acceptance meant my experience was allowed to be normal'
- 'I… let go and… float'.

Carol, Doug and Ella each explored early traumas in therapy and found resolution at a very deep level. From a humanistic, integrative perspective, I considered this a significant breakthrough: they were unconsciously 'hungry' for healing, and their therapist's finely attuned response met their deepest developmental and/or relational needs, thus helping them to move from a fixed Gestalt to completion of the cycle.[17]

Despite and because of the profundity of these moments, all the participants felt some degree of vulnerability when recounting their experiences. I sensed Carol's initial embarrassment when she expressed, 'I may use strange words to you'. Doug feared that people might think he was mad, and devalue his experience 'rather than simply accepting'.

Therapeutic change

The transpersonal experience gave the participants new meaning and purpose in life, but I also noticed that there was an adjustment phase, where they faced an 'existential shift' with some degree of emotional upheaval. This included not only ecstasy and illumination, but also confusion, sorrow, pain and grief. Carol 'felt tremendously angry and contaminated'. Doug wrestled with 'psychic presences that were beyond death'.

In line with Maslow's claims that peak experiences are highly therapeutic and lead to psychological wellbeing, my findings show that the participants became less inhibited and anxious, more alive and integrated, able to operate from their authentic self. When Carol was believed and understood, 'her depression… lifted'. She was 'enabled to be who she was'. Ella reworked her avoidant attachment style by learning to trust and be held. These cases epitomise the theme of 'becoming' – an integral part of spiritual growth. Their transformation indicates a healthy balance between psychological resilience and fluidity.

Interestingly, this is corroborated by Levine's 'nine-step method for transforming trauma', which delineates the restoration process as resetting the nervous system after encounters with high levels of stress. Each of the participants was empowered by their innate mechanism to contain their strong emotions, to recapture their natural resilience, and to reinstate their dynamic equilibrium.[18]

Moreover, my findings show that the profound self-transformation continues to empower the participants as therapists:

- 'I am a secure base for my clients'
- 'able to give out… because I have received'
- 'equipped to take clients to those places'.

In fact, participants as therapists have described a full circle: they now offer to their clients a depth of experience that they themselves have received.

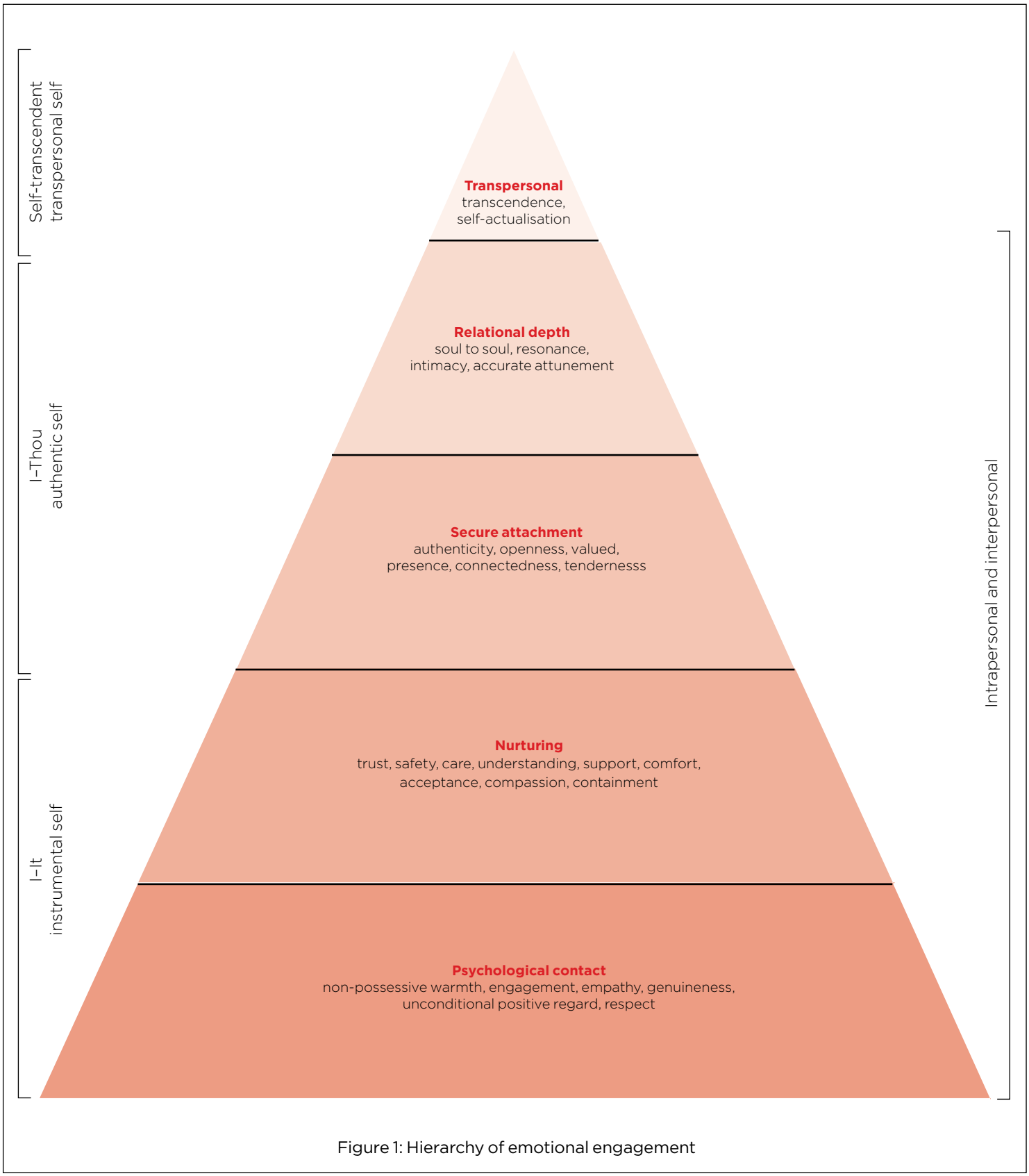

Figure 1: Hierarchy of emotional engagement

> On reflection, I realised that each therapist demonstrated their capability to empathically attune moment by moment, to hold and contain the participant's disturbance without feeling overwhelmed: their vulnerable self resonated with and touched the participant's spirit deeply

Reflections: working with soul

Hierarchy of emotional engagement

I should like to summarise my research findings by offering a framework for the different levels of engagement and progression within the therapeutic relationship. The following is inspired by Maslow's hierarchy of human needs.

In this hierarchy, the client's emotional needs are depicted on five levels. The lower levels are the essential building blocks for the development of relational depth, which may or may not take the client to the height of self-actualisation. In the realm of transcendence, the client may ultimately experience profound healing and transformation.

The descriptions on the left of the diagram indicate the therapist's use of self as it corresponds spontaneously to different levels of relational engagement. There is fluidity within the continuum: for example, the use of the authentic self may incorporate aspects of the instrumental self when appropriate.

The descriptions on the right indicate that the connection with self (intrapersonal) and the connection with an other (interpersonal) are essential elements for relational depth. My findings show that spiritually aware therapists and participants unconsciously brought the spiritual dimension into the therapeutic space, and there was a meeting of souls. It is therefore not surprising that each therapist-participant dyad was spontaneously in touch with the transcendent, which allowed the participant's consciousness to expand beyond self. It was in the transpersonal that they found resolution and healing, followed by self-transformation.

For the therapist, the pyramid is a useful tool for tracking their use of self and for mapping the stages of their journey with the client. It may also help the therapist to anticipate the client's deeper needs and the potential for transpersonal experience. The findings seem to suggest that once the client has begun the process of transformation, that peak experience continues to impact them years later.

At this point, I should like to offer some caveats. First, in my experience, not all therapeutic work needs to include a transpersonal experience in order to be effective. Secondly, such experiences happen unexpectedly: they cannot be manufactured or brought about at will. In fact, therapists need to beware of the temptation to search for any trigger, which may derail the therapeutic work.

Concluding thoughts

I feel very privileged to have shared the participants' subjective experiences, which were so intensely intimate and at times difficult to describe in words. This research has heightened my awareness of spirituality in my own clinical practice.

For me, spirituality is like the 'dish that holds the dinner'. For this reason, I feel that all therapists in training need to have an awareness of their own spirituality, whether secular or religious: their receptivity to spiritual matters will enhance their capacity to take clients to the transpersonal or the transcendent. Their spiritual growth should go hand in hand with their psychological development.

After undertaking this study, I have delivered workshops exploring spirituality with trainee therapists. The experience highlighted for me the tendency to treat spirituality as 'background noise' – something non-essential that we consciously or unconsciously choose not to attune to. In fact, my findings strongly suggest that spirituality is a rich resource for all therapy.

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Biography

Anissa Chung has been delivering training and facilitating learning opportunities since 2010 with Sherwood Psychotherapy Training Institute (SPTI), Nottingham. She is a tutor on the Pastoral Supervision course run by the Institute of Pastoral Counselling, Nottingham.

‘I remember him for his open-mindedness and personal warmth’

John played a major role in promoting pastoral care within BACP and the spiritual dimensions of our work.

I first met him when he was writing *Helping the Helpers* in the mid-1980s. In our discussions then and since, I was impressed by John’s concern with the humanity of counsellors, in all our diversity, and how we can be supported as people emotionally and spiritually. He strove to ensure that this humanity was never eclipsed by expertise in different therapeutic approaches or the professional structures we were developing. I remember him as someone who drew people together, sometimes in unlikely combinations, and encouraging dialogue. I valued his intelligent observations about whatever were the current challenges faced by counselling and pastoral care. Above all I remember him for his open-mindedness and personal warmth.

Tim Bond is Emeritus Professor, University of Bristol and Visiting Professor, University of Malta. He is consultant to BACP’s *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions* and author of *Standards and Ethics for Counselling in Action (4th edition)* (Sage, 2015).

In the beginning

In 2011, the late **John Foskett** wrote an article in *Thresholds* about the uncertain beginnings of the Association for Pastoral Care and Counselling, which later became APSCC, and which today has evolved into the BACP Spirituality division. We reproduce his original article* here

Chris Jenkins' [the journal editor in 2011**] editorial in *Thresholds*, autumn 2009, drew me to thinking about where the Association for Pastoral and Spiritual Care and Counselling (APSCC) has come from. Sometimes this exercise can help us see or at least imagine where it is we are going to in our vision of 'inclusivity to all faiths and none'. Together with the fact that we are celebrating 40 years of pastoral and spiritual care and counselling, I was prompted to look back at the papers that record the founding of the Association for Pastoral Care and Counselling (APCC),[1] and the fascinating attempts that our forbears made in trying to embrace the many individuals and associations who contributed to that beginning.

It was solidly Christian at that time but with a rare and valuable Jewish ingredient. Irene Bloomfield, a psychotherapist and practising Reformed Jew, always invited us to see beyond our own faith traditions towards those of others who we met in the course of our work and our lives. Reading the early minutes of meetings and the exchange of ideas, hopes and plans, it seems to me that there were different stages in the process of APCC's formation, which I am sure have been repeated often in our story. There was a courtship, a conception, a gestation and a birth. These stages echo at least some of the issues and dilemmas that engage us in the business of counselling and care today, and in the evolution of the organisations established to deliver those services, and in APSCC and BACP especially.

In writing this story I have tried to sound those echoes and their relevance to our current wish to 'reach beyond boundaries of religious and spiritual traditions, to hold together insights from Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and many other traditions, to reach beyond the denominational boundaries of counselling, bringing into conversation person-centred, psychodynamic, integrative and systemic practitioners, and making space for chaplains and carers, pastors, rabbis and spiritual healers'.[2] I guess we were not so ambitious 40 years ago, but we have come some way since then, and have a history about which we can have some pride and to which we can look for strength and inspiration.

Courtship

In the 1960s there was considerable ferment in Christian circles, typified by the publication of John Robinson's *Honest to God*.[3] Christians and Jews were divided about how orthodox or liberal they were going to be. Clergy in particular were uneasy about their 'role' in society.[4,5] As many pointed out, churches were on the decline, and the traditional pastoral ministry was being usurped by the new professions of social work and psychotherapy. In 1968, in an attempt to help define the role of pastors in this changing world, the British Council of Churches invited individuals and associations involved in pastoral work to come together and begin the process of clarifying the clergy's role and indeed the role of the laity in ministry. The APCC 'family tree', as it was to become, illustrates this meeting and co-operating which took place in the late

1960s and 70s. The hope was that these individuals and groups would be drawn together to form a new body for pastors, clerical and lay, which would determine the essentials for training people to deliver good pastoral care in contemporary society. The initial gatherings reflected a tentative courtship between associations such as the Council for Health and Healing (CHH), the Westminster Pastoral Foundation (WPF), the Clinical Theology Association (now the Bridge), the Richmond Fellowship (RF), the university departments of pastoral and practical theology in Edinburgh and Birmingham, and the few Anglican dioceses which had appointed directors and advisors in pastoral and care and counselling.

The courtship was not an easy one. From the very first meeting, a division arose between those who looked to the models of counselling and psychotherapy as a blueprint for the development of these very valuable resources in churches and synagogues, and those who were suspicious of this professional and secular model, which encouraged elites and left many disenfranchised in their ministry. The former favoured a focus on humanity in crisis, need, distress and illness, while the latter looked for the health and wellbeing of people in good times as much as in bad. The former wanted a national association which would foster good pastoral counselling and psychotherapy in specialised centres as well as in church-attached services. The latter wanted a much looser form of association which would nurture the resources of the whole church in a 'pastorhood of all the believers' and not of the few experts alone. As Lambourne wrote: 'An accredited hierarchical pastoral movement will be professional, problem solving or problem preventing, standardised and defined. This is based on medical and psychoanalytic models of the USA 20 years ago, and it has proved inadequate. To copy it would be a disaster because not only is it not what is wanted, but also because it will be an obstacle to what is wanted. What is required is a pastoral care which is lay, corporate, adventurous, variegated and diffuse.'[6]

> In today's world there are many echoes of the external threats which promote a coming together and the real effort required to achieve such cohesion

The current debate in counselling and psychotherapy about registration echoes those differences and the fear that the new medically based criteria will undermine what counsellors and psychotherapists most value for their work with clients. Darian Leader, writing recently in the *Guardian*, spelled out this fear on the day that five therapy organisations went to the High Court to hear the judicial review brought against the Health Professions Council (HPC): 'On the HPC model, an expert supplies a product to a consumer, who can complain if the product is faulty. But most therapies offer precisely what can't be predetermined. You can never know what you are going to get, that's why it is an inherently risky process. Indeed therapy often fosters a recognition that life isn't predictable, neat and safe.'[7]

The notes from several meetings in 1970–71 reveal how these differences were managed sufficiently to keep all the interested groups and individuals together, at least in argument and debate. The initial group of some 20 was enlarged to 50 in a national meeting to determine the name and future of a national association. In 1973, the Foster Report, commissioned by the Government, proposed that psychotherapies should be registered in order to protect clients from abuse. The same reasons for protecting the client are high on the list of the HPC's proposals. However, it was this external threat that helped to bring together the many different bodies and associations that were in the end to form BAC.

In today's world there are many echoes of the external threats which promote a coming together and the real effort required to achieve such cohesion. The panel of speakers at the 2009 BACP AGM[8] was wonderfully illustrative of this process. Sarah Browne, in a *Therapy Today* editorial in 2009, wrote about the ambivalence, always a good counselling word, that has to be addressed: 'We must get over our tendency to not engage with what we are not comfortable with'.[8] It was as true 40 years ago as it is today, that different disciplines in mental healthcare still find it easier to converse with fellow professionals of the same psychotherapeutic caste. However, John McLeod, the 'Tony Benn' of counselling, could envisage a time when we 'move beyond separate approaches, like person-centred, psychodynamic, and so forth... all the approaches have got a lot to offer but actually more importantly the gaps within each are actually answered really well within other approaches'.[9] But given our human nature, the sceptical are more likely to hide the gaps in their expertise rather than watch others expose and seek to remedy them. The less optimistic panel members in 2009 found a more realistic voice in Lynne Gabriel's exploration of the sensitive relationship between psychotherapy and counselling. She reminded us that comparing ourselves with others is very natural to us: 'We can't not, we are human beings.'[9] In this courting period,

psychoanalysis topped the tree, and pastoral care grew in its roots. It was the express intention of the Southwark diocesan PC&C scheme, led by Derek Blows, to appropriate the treasures of psychoanalysis in order to share them with the humble pastor in his/her parish. For some time, two psychoanalysts led the supervision groups for the 20-odd leaders of the basic care and counselling groups throughout the diocese of Southwark.[10] In practice, the process worked more in reverse as the most talented forsook their pastoring to become psychotherapists and psychoanalysts.

Conception

In June of 1971, a meeting, chaired by Professor Desmond Pond (Department of Psychiatry at the London Hospital), was called to invite all interested parties to help in the formation of a national association for pastoral care and counselling. Speakers from the initial group introduced different aspects of their discussions thus far. Bill Kyle (WPF) explained the history and objectives of the group and focused particularly on the place and role of pastoral counselling centres like his own in Westminster. Derek Blows (Southwark PC&C) spoke about the different levels of training appropriate for pastors engaged in different kinds of pastoral work. John Wickens (RF), drawing upon his experience of human relations and clinical pastoral education (CPE) at the Richmond Fellowship, promoted his ideas for standards in training programmes. Alistair Campbell (Edinburgh University) outlined the value of training attached to a university where there was a wide range of relevant resources in theology, psychology and sociology and where different points of view and theory could be held in creative tension with one another.

A draft constitution was discussed but not agreed and the question of levels of membership and accreditation, a sensitive subject, were left for future meetings, but the group accepted a name for itself – the Group for the Advancement of Pastoral Care and Counselling (GAPC&C). Those from Birmingham – Bob Lambourn and Michael Wilson – continued to air their doubts about a national organisation, especially one that seemed much more interested in standards for pastoral counselling than in 'lay, corporate and diffuse pastoral care', which they promoted in their pastoral studies course at Birmingham University. The same variety of voices is to be heard in the current debate about registration in counselling and psychotherapy, especially in the fear about the dominance of the 'medical model' and its inappropriateness to counselling and psychotherapy, which individualises treatment and ignores more corporate approaches to care. John McLeod thinks 'we need to take a brave decision not to embrace the medical model way of thinking'.[9] Whereas Jeremy Clarke argues that it is 'an absolute disaster for counsellors to avoid doing randomised control trials (RCTs). The medical model is wedded to these and controls most of the NHS resources. We have to join the club to get our hands on any of its riches.'[9]

Gestation

Following the public meeting in June 1971, the core group, now called an executive of the GAPC&C, discussed the hesitancy and fear of the June meeting and recognised the need for greater understanding of the different points of view expressed there. The core group had got ahead of itself, as such groups generally do, and the more articulate and ambitious members fought for the new national association to reflect their particular model of care and counselling. Psychoanalysis and dynamic psychotherapy were seen as the benchmark for the development of counselling among clergy and, to a lesser extent, talented laity. The American models of CPE and pastoral counselling attracted those who wanted to replicate them here as tried and tested models. Others were more doubtful about their fitting the UK situation. Lambourn[6] and Clinebell,[12] leading pastoral counsellors from the US, were ushered into the ring to debate the conflicting visions of an association on the one hand with a clearly therapeutic basis, and an association on the other which would be non-hierarchical and inclusive of all kinds of pastoral care and not just the therapeutic. As the gestation proceeded, the therapeutic model took the lead because it was more easily defined and had the most adherents in the new association. Levels of training and competency were spelled out and their application in practice agreed.

The core group envisaged three levels of training and practice (Constitutional Papers, 1973). First, for those with ordinary pastoral responsibilities: 'The focus here would be on the general pastoral care of individuals within the community and of the community itself in its formation, growth, development and re-formation.' Second, a training for 'a ministry for working at some depth in the more specialised areas such as are normally designated by the terms counselling and psychotherapy'. Third, 'the ongoing training and development of those who are engaged in both the above fields'. Thus a hierarchy was proposed, with pastoral care at the bottom, counselling in the middle and training and supervision at the top. In time, the association did work to promote pastoral care and counselling in these three ways. Nevertheless, there was, and probably still is, a tension between the objectives of pastoral care in its many and diverse forms, and pastoral counselling and psychotherapy in their more specialised and defined form, which often detached them from the religious communities that had brought them into being. On reflection it is possible to see that pastors at the first level found that an activities sub-committee did the most to address their needs by organising conferences and meetings in which pastoral care was the focus. These were initially held in London and were led by Irene Bloomfield and Hugo Gryn, a rabbi. However, in time, similar activities were organised in Kent by Leslie Virgo and Marjorie Iverson; in the East Midlands by Michael Jacobs (the first editor of the APCC newsletter), Alan Lilley and Fraser McLennan; in Northumberland by David Goodacre; and in Birmingham by Emmanuel Lartey and Geraldine Roy. Those in the

second and third levels concentrated on devising appropriate training programmes and standards of practice and it was they who formed the first accreditation sub-committee. Currently, APSCC caters for both the first and second levels, but shares with the British and Irish Association of Practical Theology (BIAPT), and the newly formed Association of Pastoral Supervisors and Educators (APSE), the aims of the third level.

Here there are obvious connections to the debates of both BACP and APSCC about standards of training and practice. For a time, APCC accredited counsellors, supervisors and trainers. All the original founders were given grandfather status as trainers and supervisors and a few of us intrepid or foolish followers went through the process of accreditation before that responsibility was handed over to BAC in the late 1970s.[10] It is good to see that APSE has begun to address the specific needs and resources of those who have the oversight of pastoral practice in the community and in institutions. They have picked up the baton dropped by APCC all those years ago. At the same time some of APCC's leaders – Michael Jacobs, Tom Leary, Mary Anne Coate and Ted Martin – to name four, followed accreditation in taking on major work with BAC. APCC felt the draught of their going and some within APCC advocated leaving BAC before we lost anyone else! As Lambourne feared, pastoral care, like Cinderella, would never get invited to the party. Many of the members of the Association were of course busy practitioners of pastoral care and only rarely plumbed the depths of pastoral counselling. Rather than being one kind of pastoral care, counselling did its own colonisation by introducing the term 'counselling skills'[11] as that which was appropriate to pastoral carers. In practice, this underlined their sense of being second class counsellors and led to steady withdrawal of pastoral carers from APCC with its mounting subscription and preoccupation with counselling. This was institutionalised when APCC became one of the first divisions of BAC. The new organisation did not really know about or value pastoral care until recently in its discovery of 'embedded counselling'. Pastors have known about and practised embedded counselling for thousands of years but, with a hint of patronage, John McLeod has helped BACP begin to explore it at last: 'I think that the voluntary sector is one of the major strengths in counselling in Britain; and I would go beyond that, and say that what I call embedded counsellors – teachers, nurses, social workers, and other people [no mention of pastors!] – have a counselling role embedded within their main work role and are doing a lot of good work.'[8]

A panel at the BACP Conference in 2009 reflected these hierarchical tensions in the debate about whether or not counselling and psychotherapy are the same, and if not, which should be regarded as better if only in terms of financial reward. Jeremy Clarke spelled out this tension: 'Why are we worrying about whether there is a difference between counsellors and psychotherapists, because we know there is a difference in status, in the tradition and background of the disciplines? Why are we pretending otherwise? The change will come about from counsellors who value what they do themselves, not worrying about what other people do.'[8]

Would that it were so easy. Those at the bottom of any pile learn very quickly to know their place. The same applies to pastoral and spiritual carers, especially lay people, who have to value what they are doing and not worry about what others do, but find it equally difficult in practice. Here, the writings of Lyall,[12] Pattison[13] and Campbell[14] have been most affirming of the carer's role. Through its conferences and its newsletters APSCC has valued pastoral and spiritual care, and kept space available for those who care and may counsel as a part of their caring role or work.

Birth

It was in the summer of 1971 that the GAPC&C gave birth to the Association for the Advancement of Pastoral Care and Counselling (AAPC&C) and at the first meeting of the Association, officers were appointed: Desmond Pond to be president, Derek Blows to be chairman and Bill Kyle to be secretary. A constitution was agreed and the objectives of the organisation defined as:

- to facilitate the exchange of information and experience of member organisations
- to co-ordinate programmes and activities of member organisations and others working in this field
- to initiate programmes of education and training, at a community level, in the field of mental health
- to consider the criteria for standards and competence in pastoral counselling and to search for recognition of those standards
- where it is seen to be necessary, to promote further training in pastoral counselling, training oversight and community/group learning processes
- to promote programmes of research in the interdisciplinary study of theology and behavioural studies
- to give guidance in setting up centres for pastoral counselling
- to encourage constant scrutiny of goals, standards, practices and concepts in pastoral training.

It was at about this time that the Constitutional Papers (1973) were published, with contributions from all the leading figures on the family tree, and it was they who led the newly born Association and its member organisations. These were to continue in their aims and activities but also to co-operate with one another wherever they could. In the meantime the Association would perform the following roles – co-ordinating, setting standards for pastoral counsellors and centres, and research in interdisciplinary study. During the first year of its life some 50 members joined, most from the member organisations but some as the first individual members. It was not until 1973 that the word 'advancement' disappeared from the Association's

title and it became simply the Association for Pastoral Care and Counselling (APCC). The minutes of a meeting held in July 1973 disclose two interesting facts which relate to issues of today.

First, the tension between the Association's Executive Committee, which included mostly members of the original organisations, and the membership in general. In reference to the AGM, the minutes say: 'It was felt that there was a danger of a great deal of intense work being undone by such a meeting as there was a continual flow of new members who were completely unaware of the past history and of the need for specialisation in pastoral ministry.' *Therapy Today*, especially in the letters section, keeps us in touch with a similar tension between BACP's leaders and its membership. Second, to recognise quality in pastoral counselling in case the Foster Report deemed pastoral counselling centres and their work not to be of sufficiently high standard to satisfy the Government. This report was the forerunner of the current proposals about registration and its effect on counselling and psychotherapy. Although pastoral counsellors, along with others in BAC, were anxious about the proposed intervention by the Government, nothing actually came of the Foster Report's proposals. Will the same be true of the current plans for national registration? We await the High Court's verdict!

Looking at APSCC's objectives today, it is clear that many of our aims – co-ordinating, communicating, supporting, researching and promoting good practice – remain the same. The Association is in a key position to encourage dialogue between its members, the wider membership of BACP and the many faith communities in the UK and internationally. What are significantly different are the Association's aims in relation to the spiritual in care and counselling, and in its inclusion of all major faiths and none. 'Spiritual' was not a word that appeared in the deliberations of the Association at its inception. Nor were there any relations with the majority of the major faiths. It is good that spirituality as a concept is gradually making it easier for other faiths to recognise their inclusion in our Association. Likewise it is good to see that in our philosophy, we say that, 'We encourage recognition of pastoral care and counselling as distinct, yet complementary practices.' We remain a receptive home for all who practise pastoral and spiritual care and counselling, whether professionally or embeddedly.

In one way, our predecessors showed an open-mindedness ahead of others in care and counselling. From 1972, delegates from the UK attended conferences in Europe[15] and internationally. Some of this was to make or retain links with similar organisations in other countries, and indeed to fortify one another in difficult times. Some of us visited East Germany and Poland before the wall came down, and then the Czech Republic. There, we learnt about care and counselling in socialist states; and more than 30 of us attended the second International Congress in San Francisco. It is helpful in our cosmopolitan world to hear of pastoral and spiritual ministry in other countries and contexts through articles in *Therapy Today* and *Thresholds*, but it would be good if today's generation could find delegates to join in the international movement that thrives, but without our contribution.

Conclusion

Revisiting this story has reminded me about how exciting it all was to be founding something that really affirmed the often difficult work of pastoral care and counselling. Many of the names that appear here from those years are of people who contributed so much to my own ministry and life. Christmas cards from some close friends in Europe and America remind me of the good and the bad times we shared. Chris Jenkins,[2] writing about the APSCC conference in 2009, expresses the same sentiment about meeting, sharing and being affirmed by others in the current Association. Thanks be to God for those days of yore and for today's Association and its members.

John Foskett, President of APSCC.

*This article originally appeared in the spring 2011 issue of *Thresholds*.

**Chris Jenkins, editor of *Thresholds* when this article was originally published, sadly passed away in 2011

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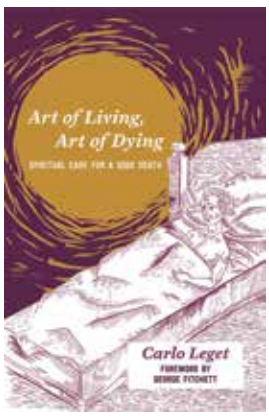
Book reviews



Art of living, art of dying: spiritual care for a good death

Carlo Leget

Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
ISBN 978-1785922114

£14.99

Leget, in this timely and helpful book, addresses spiritual care for the dying and bereaved. He begins by reminding us that everything that lives and breathes will ultimately die and that this inescapable reality of death creates an existential anxiety. We may struggle to contain this anxiety as it feeds into a variety of fears of death and dying which challenge our desire to control death. For those who seek to support the dying and the bereaved, in whatever role, it is easy to become overwhelmed by the feelings and challenges that can arise.

Leget suggests that the medieval *Ars Moriendi* (AM) might provide a helpful framework to assist those involved in the process of dying. However, in medieval times, the focus was on the salvation of the soul as people sought to address the main fear of the dying at that time – the fear of not having time to prepare for death and the risk of eternal damnation. The *Ars Moriendi* was, therefore, primarily a Christian spiritual practice for those preparing for death while still fit and well. This approach was also reflected in the 17th century by Jeremy Taylor's *Rules & Exercises of Holy Living: Holy Dying* which encouraged people to live their lives in preparation for their eventual death. Leget, in this book, reframes the *AM* as a practical guide in our modern multicultural, multi-faith society to enable people to create space for the different ways we may approach dying in our time.

A key concept in his approach is that of 'inner space' by which he means the way our minds can be opened up when we feel heard and understood by another person. This is a concept that will be familiar to counsellors and therapists. Leget describes this as 'a state of mind in which one is able to experience a number of thoughts, emotions, impulses, feelings... Without identifying with them or being swept away by them' (p49). He sees inner space as a way of emptying oneself in order to reflect expressions of the conversation of the other (as a communication technique) or as a way of connecting with one's inner life and discovering the many voices that inhabit us (as a spiritual attitude). Within this space, it becomes possible to discuss and explore existential questions in a way that does not tell people how they should feel but allows them to address the five aspects of the AM model in their own way: Who am I and what do I really want? How do I deal with suffering? How can I say goodbye? How do I look back on my life? What can I hope for?

The concept of inner space becomes a way of integrating spiritual care into the holistic approach of specialist palliative care and therefore central to the development of the updated model of the *Ars Moriendi*. The five aspects of the model are then discussed in Chapters 4–8, with appropriate examples from pastoral care to illustrate the applicability of this approach. The new AM offers a spiritual framework which is integrated into the interdisciplinary approach of palliative care and open to anyone who wishes to reflect on their own response to questions arising at the end of life. In Chapter 9, Leget shows how this approach can be applied in a more clearly religious context and uses the Roman Catholic faith to illustrate the possibilities and limitations.

The book concludes, in Chapter 10, with a discussion of how the five aspects of the model may be helpful in practice and draws on lessons learned through use of the model in the Netherlands and Belgium. Leget suggests five ways of working with the model:

1. As a patient, relative or caregiver to use it as a mirror for ourselves and encourage consideration of the importance of spiritual and existential dimensions in our own lives
2. To use it as a tool to open up conversation – perhaps as a leaflet patients can take home as a way of initiating reflection and conversation
3. As a mirror for our own conversations on the spiritual dimension at the end of life and which may help identify those aspects we avoid
4. As a tool to communicate, report and interpret the concerns of patients and families so that this dimension of care becomes more visible in the care system
5. The AM model can be used for education about spiritual and ethical issues in end-of-life care.

This book is a helpful resource for all who come into contact with the dying, whether at home or in a care home, hospital or hospice. It will be of particular help to chaplains, clergy and others who provide spiritual care, and the many healthcare professionals who find it difficult to know how to engage with this aspect of care.

Preb Dr Peter Speck
(Former healthcare chaplain) Honorary Senior Lecturer Palliative Care, King's College, London

What counsellors and spiritual directors can learn from each other: ethical practice, training and supervision

Edited by The Revd Professor Peter Madsen Gubi

Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
ISBN 978-1785920257

£18.99

When I saw the title of this book in the book review section of *Thresholds*, I was excited at the thought of such a book being in print. At last, a work that considered how a spiritual/religious background and a counselling background could co-exist and complement each other, two standpoints that I am deeply rooted in and that at times I find to be in conflict with each other.

Having read it, I feel that it is what my training incumbent used to call a 'curate's egg' when I had not got things completely right. The best way I feel that I can demonstrate this is by considering four of the chapters. Some very good, some not so good but all written with passion and understanding.

Chapter 1, by Lynette Harborne, on 'Exploring discernment', is a very good explanation of the Jesuit understanding of discernment and how that plays out within Ignatian spirituality. The writer is clearly immersed in the subject and has an engaging way of putting this across. However, the summary underlines the problem I have with much in this book: 'Discernment is not an event: it is a process throughout which we must prayerfully hold in mind our desire to do God's will, and in which we seek to deepen our relationship with God and to explore our true vocation.' While I greatly enjoyed this opening chapter, I am aware that I come from an accepting Christian background in which Ignatian spirituality is meat and drink. My fear is that those from a non-religious background would be somewhat put off by this chapter which is rooted firmly within the Christian tradition. I am left wondering how this will help secular counsellors?

Chapter 2, by Phil Gross, on 'Creative methods in spiritual exploration' attempts to look at how spirituality and creativity can combine to give insight to those, from a wide range of therapeutic understandings, into what may be happening for those who come to them for counselling. Gross defines spirituality 'in its broader sense, to encompass any exploratory process which endeavours to gain insight into the depths of human experience.' Gross considers that a creative and healing power can be found within the medium of the arts. While reading this chapter, I found it difficult to make links between the work of spiritual directors and that of those who have no spiritual/religious understanding in their work. In my experience of being a priest and counsellor in a secular setting, many of the counsellors I have contact with would expect any form of, what many have called, religious bias, to be kept well away from the counselling environment. His talk of spirituality 'in its broader sense' left me to ponder if this understanding had become so all encompassing as to not be spiritual at all?

> At last, a work that considered how a spiritual/religious background and a counselling background could co-exist and complement each other, two standpoints that I am deeply rooted in and that at times I find to be in conflict with each other

Book reviews continued

In Chapter 6, Ruth Bridges is happy to open herself up to the reader from the start. 'This chapter began 25 years ago in the intensive care unit of a small general hospital in the north west of England. I was 23, recovering from an emergency hysterectomy as a complication of childbirth' (p103). Bridges goes on to consider the realisation that one's own mortality can have an impact on those who have gone through significant or life-threatening illness. As someone who very recently was told that I had 24 hours left to live unless I underwent surgery, this chapter grabbed me from the start. Bridges then goes on to reflect on her work as a counsellor/therapeutic accompanier in cancer care against her near-death experience. I believe this chapter reads as being written from a deeply spiritual life.

Bridges considers the ageing process and also the effect of an incurable diagnosis. With skill and tact, she contemplates what she believes can be a spiritual experience for those who face their own death. She also examines what may be demanded of those who accompany others on this final journey. Bridges asks many challenging questions about how we as counsellors may react in the situation we can find ourselves in with those who are facing the end of their lives.

I found this the most moving chapter in the book. It is written from a deeply spiritual perspective and considers a difficult subject well. I believe that many counsellors and spiritual directors working with those who face the end of life would enhance their practice if they read this excellent chapter. It has definitely enhanced mine.

I felt that Chapter 9 by William West in many ways came closest to the title of the book. West explains how he brought two focus groups together to consider 'The relationship between therapy and religion/spirituality'. The first group consisted of Christian ministers and humanistic counsellors. The second group involved Buddhists and Jungian counsellors. Both groups were set the task of working in a 'Goldfish bowl' approach. After each session, a thematic analysis was used to pick out themes. It is in the reflection on these themes that I find some fascinating insights and assessments. Of all the chapters, this is the one that I found the most interesting. I feel it could have been presented earlier in the book.

I think this research has a lot to teach people working in the field of spiritual care and counselling and I would be interested in reading any other research West has undertaken. In a book that I feel has a very Christian slant, West is aware that it is not just Christians who have spiritual gifts as they enter into these encounters, but it can be all people of faith who have spiritual abilities that can enhance the counselling community. This book has helped me as I consider those themes around what gifts people of religious backgrounds can bring to counselling. I believe that part of the message from the authors is that when this is undertaken from a spiritual understanding, based within a humble, compassionate and non-proselytising heart, always putting the needs of the client first, these encounters can have deep rewards, both for the counsellor and the client.

Garry Humphryes
Priest and trainee counsellor

Books for review

If you wish to review – and keep – one of these books, please send your full contact details, including postal address, and any experience/interest relevant to the topic, to thresholds.editorial@bacp.co.uk

Becoming myself: a psychiatrist's memoir
by Irvin Yalom

Counselling and psychotherapy with older people in care: a support guide
by Felicity Chapman

Soulfulness: the marriage of shamanic and contemporary psychology
by David England

Spirituality, religion and aging: illuminations for therapeutic practice
by Holly Nelson-Becker

The access to subjectivity: phenomenology, Buddhism and psychotherapy
by Cesar Ojeda

Open wide the windows of wonder

While out walking last week, I was stopped in my tracks when a sudden shaft of sunlight pierced through the drab dullness of the cold wintry morning. I gasped in awe at nature's illumination – the beauty of bare-branched trees caressing the sunlit sky, frosted leaves glistening around my feet and little birds delighting in the unexpected warmth. Windows of wonder flung open in my soul. Senses heightened, imagination enlivened. As I skipped along, I burst into song: 'Oh my God, it's good to be alive!'[1]

As I continued my walk, I recalled a scene from a short story, *The Windows of Wonder*, that I had first read in secondary school.[2] A newly qualified schoolteacher takes a temporary post in a village school. She is shocked to discover the children in a state of imaginative deprivation, bound by a rigid rational-based curriculum. Through music and myth, dream and legend, she beckons the children to unlock the windows of their imagination.

'Your minds are like rooms all dark or brown devoid of light. But somewhere in the rooms, if we try, we can pull aside the heavy curtains, you will find the windows of wonder. Through these you will see the yellow sunlight or the silver stars or the many-coloured wheel of the rainbow. The windows I speak of are the legends of our people. Each little legend is a window of wonder. Each time you hear a story or ponder upon a story or dream yourself into a story or break or remake a story, you are opening a window of wonder.' [2]

Although the story ends on a sad yet hopeful note (she is dismissed), she receives reassurance that the windows of wonder, once opened in the souls of the children, will not shut easily again.

Our intuitive mind is a 'sacred gift and the rational mind its faithful servant'.[3] However, our way of being in the world more often honours the servant and dismisses the gift. As a consequence, our souls can become weary and our creativity dulled. In our personal and professional lives we need to seek ways to keep the windows of wonder open and expanding.

The wellsprings of spirituality can be a vital resource in the promotion of a healthy balance between the rational and imaginative, supporting wellbeing within communities of belonging. Witness the phenomenal success of the exhibition 'Living with Gods: Peoples, Places and Worlds Beyond' at the British Museum, London.[4] This exhibition illustrates powerfully how stories, objects, images, prayers, meditation and rituals have provided ways for people to cope with their life circumstances, make sense of their worlds and help form strong social bonds. Seeing how people believe, rather than considering what they believe, suggests that humans might be naturally inclined to believe in transcendent worlds and beings. For those of us who live too far away to visit the exhibition in person, there is a suite of excellent resources online.[5]

Spirituality, according to Stein, emerges in therapy through archetypal transferences, dreams, active imagination, silence and synchronicity.[6] The BACP Spirituality division exists to help all members of BACP to work effectively with spirituality in its many forms within the counselling relationship. Our gifts of imagination, intuition, discernment and reason are vital resources when working at the interface of the spiritual and psychological.

Change is afoot for the division in 2018, following BACP's recent Strategic Review. Key questions in reconfiguring the division are: How can we work across the whole of BACP to share our divisional expertise for the benefit of the whole membership? What will we then need to do differently? One thing we are doing differently, in partnership with BACP Events, is to make a webcast of sessions available from our recent highly successful Working with Soul event in Cardiff. We will be working closely with the Events team to plan more CPD and continue to develop a suite of resources in spirituality and counselling for all BACP members to access. With new technological advances within BACP, forming an online community to share clinical expertise, good practice, valuable resources, may not be that far off.

Happy New Year 2018 – with whatever change, challenge and wonder it may bring to us all.

Maureen.

Maureen Slattery-Marsh is Chair of BACP Spirituality. To contact Maureen, please email spirituality@bacp.co.uk

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BACP divisional journals

BACP publishes specialist journals within six other sectors of counselling and psychotherapy practice.

Healthcare Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal

This quarterly journal from BACP Healthcare is relevant to counsellors and psychotherapists working within healthcare settings.

Private Practice

This journal is dedicated to counsellors and psychotherapists working independently, in private practice, or for EAPs or agencies, in paid or voluntary positions.

BACP Children & Young People

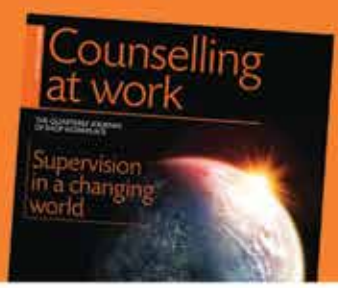
The journal of BACP Children & Young People is a useful resource for therapists and other professionals interested in the mental health of young people.

University & College Counselling

This is the journal of BACP Universities & Colleges, and is ideal for all therapists working within higher and further education settings.

Counselling at Work

This journal is provided by BACP Workplace and is read widely by those concerned with the emotional and psychological health of people in organisations.



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