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Article

# Did Freud Miss the Discovery of Our Spiritual Core?

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**Abstract:** A specific framework of spirituality is presented to direct this dialog between psychoanalysis and religion. The focus is on spirituality as a common and important area of interest. A cognitive-behavioral-theory-based exploration of spirituality identifies experiences of self-worth and dignity as keys to opening a spiritual core that is present in all people. This spiritual core has mystical and numinous characteristics believed to be the foundation of religious traditions. It is elaborated with many specific relationships to the psychoanalytic theory and practice of Freud, Kohut, and Jung, as well as to modern neuroscience and various religious traditions. The personal journey of the author is used to illustrate its foundation, development, and relevance for psychoanalytic, religious, and life experiences, demonstrating how all can work toward a common goal.

**Keywords:** psychoanalysis; spirituality; religion; self-worth; dignity; neuroscience

My psychiatric residency at NYU-Bellevue Hospital included a profound experience during psychoanalysis with a training analyst from the Columbia Psychoanalytic Center that awakened me to a new world of awareness.

*“I awoke one night from a sleep disrupted by dreams of many women sexually pursuing me in an overwhelming chaotic frenzy. Upon returning to sleep after various releasing activities, I awoke in the morning severely paranoid. I was afraid to go outside. I went to work and completed my day with few social interactions until I could barely make it to my analyst’s office with my back pressed against the walls of the buildings in NYC to protect myself from attack. Hesitantly trusting my analyst, as I thought he would call the police or that cameras were in his office, he guided me to understanding this as a breakthrough into Oedipal feelings triggered by my recent love of a new girlfriend. The ending of the paranoia and emotional roller-coaster after 3 days revealed my deep identification with Jesus Christ who was my emotional brother sitting at my table during daily devotions with my devout minister father in a world where sex was sin. I too had just been banished to hades for 3 days and had risen from the dead!”*

Intense dread, interpreted dreams, psychosis, paranoia, Oedipus, archetypes and religion—the start of a lifetime journey for understanding. This awareness directed me through the years to the discovery of a science-based “Framework of Spirituality” (FOS), adding to the dialogue between psychoanalysis and religion.

The original draft of this paper was to pursue a dialog with a sole focus on Freudian psychoanalysis with the question, “Did Freud miss the discovery of our spiritual core?” as reflected in the title. As I delved deeper into ideas, the draft expanded to include later psychoanalysis with the self-psychology of Heinz Kohut, leading to the question, “Did Kohut open the gateway to our spiritual core with self-language and understanding of ‘narcissism’ but failed to step through, maybe because of a focus on pathology?” Further reading of a recent book, *Working with Mystical Experiences in Psychoanalysis* (Stein 2019), suggested there should be an expansion of this dialog to include Carl Jung. His detailed psychoanalytical description of the mystical or numinous experience led to the question, “Did Jung capture the depths of human experience with his inclusion of the mystical and collective unconscious and its healing powers, but continued to attribute its source to a mysterious ‘hidden indescribable power?’” This paper will discuss these questions with



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the goal of demonstrating how psychoanalysis and religion/spirituality can powerfully work together to support common goals. The focus on spirituality is chosen as this is a common and important interest to both endeavors.

My first job after training landed me in the Oz-like world of addiction psychiatry (being lost, finding the way out, good vs. evil, stopped by a poppy field), where I saw spiritual awakenings powerfully heal very traumatized adolescents. Following this, with a group of adult religious Humanists, we explored the nature of spiritual experience and faith and discovered a specific FOS, which was published ([Chatlos 1999, 2021](#)) and brings me to write this today.

We identified a process that opens a spiritual core that is within us and appears to be the source of mystical experience at the center of most religious traditions. It functions like an extension of what Freud and psychoanalysis labeled the “unconscious” and “preconscious”. It appears that Freud had discovered elements of this spiritual core as the foundation for psychoanalysis and did not fully recognize the extent of his own discovery, as is discussed later. This paper describes in detail the process of this framework and some of its characteristics. It is interspersed with dialog about psychoanalysis and includes a specific focus on the four basic components of psychoanalysis using a summary paper by Otto [Kernberg \(2016\)](#)—interpretation, transference analysis, technical neutrality, and countertransference analysis. As I am not a trained psychoanalyst, this paper is not exhaustive in explanations and correlations but is illustrative with the hopes that more experienced readers will work toward a fuller integration of these ideas and experiences into a field that I refer to as “Applied Spirituality”.

I do, however, have 30 years of experience studying spirituality in a psychiatric and addiction clinical setting. In the spirit of dialog for this paper, I have included some personal experiences (in italics) to illustrate how the dialog of psychoanalysis and religion has widespread personal and community relevance beyond our profession and the analytic setting. A model for including personal experiences was Heinz Kohut, whose introduction of self-language directed me to look in the “self-system” for spirituality as I focused on the experience of self-worth. Additionally, attempts to use language familiar to readers within the psychoanalytic field and also to those from a religious/spiritual field to engage in true dialog may have resulted in oversimplification or incompleteness that I hope will be tolerated.

The premise of this paper and dialog is to be made explicit at the outset. The focus is primarily on spiritual experience that may or may not be connected with religious experience. These are the descriptions that I use as a foundation for this dialog, derived from [Koenig et al. \(2012\)](#):

- Religion—the institutional aspect of beliefs and practices related to the sacred or divine, as held by a community or social group.
- Spirituality—a personal dimension of human experience related to the transcendent, the sacred, or to ultimate reality. Spirituality is closely related to values, meaning, and purpose in life. Spirituality may develop individually or in communities and traditions.
- Religiousness—systems of beliefs and practices related to the sacred or divine that may or may not be related to a specific religious tradition or social group.

Spiritual experience is presented as a fundamental experience available to all persons that has become associated with religious traditions in various ways. Other terms in this dialog relating to spiritual experience include mystical and numinous with their specific relationships and overlap to be part of the discussion. As noted above, a premise in this dialog is the belief that spiritual, mystical, and numinous experiences are the foundation of most religious traditions in the manner described in wonderful detail by Wayne [Teasdale \(2001\)](#) in *The Mystic Heart*.

In brief, this FOS presents a science-based method using cognitive behavioral theory (CBT) to explore, understand and apply knowledge about the spiritual experience from a Western secular, religiously pluralistic perspective. It has been driven by the search for

an “unseen order”, as referred to by William James (see quote later). This process uses the CBT-described perceptions of thoughts, feelings, and actions to phenomenologically explore experiences of self-worth and dignity (both specifically operationalized) that are key to opening this new world of spiritual awareness. Remarkably, this process led to a spontaneous emergence of characteristics associated with spirituality that include the following 50 concepts that are included in this paper in a clearly organized framework: thoughts, feelings, actions, self-worth, dignity, reason, choice, wisdom, empathy, compassion, caring, justice, honesty, courage, giving, generosity, immanence, transcendence, supreme, ineffable, noetic/revelatory, meaning, purpose, divine, higher power, higher self, veil of illusion/Maya, honor, love, truth, faith, mystical, intuition, beliefs, values, habits, practices, shame, guilt, suffering, attachment, religion, spirituality, religiousness/religiosity, religious identity, spiritual attitude, brain function, unconscious, implicit bias, neuroscience, gratitude, self-compassion, forgiveness, self-acceptance, healing, spiritual core, soul, being, I-Thou relationship, connectedness, vitality, wholeness/integrity, peace, serenity, awe, wonder, happiness, joy, and bliss, among others.

The process is predictable, has been replicated, and is now being pursued with scientific research using psychological assessment and neuroimaging to demonstrate its characteristics as part of this newly proposed field of Applied Spirituality. These principles have been applied clinically for people with addiction and trauma and have demonstrated the healing source of spiritual experience. Work is being pursued to define a specific biopsychosocial–spiritual model for medicine (especially psychiatry) to focus on health, well-being, and human happiness beyond a usual focus on pathology. This process indelibly links the scientific method and understanding of spiritual experience in a concise framework suitable to guide future research efforts.

## 1. Background

As noted above, this work has been driven by a quote from William James ([1902] 1970) as he describes that the life of religion

“consists of the belief that there is an *unseen order*, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto. This belief and this adjustment are the religious *attitude* in the soul”. (Italics added, p. 59.)

James continues further to identify this religious experience as ineffable (hard to put into words), noetic (having revelatory significance), transient, and passive. In this context, James uses “religious” as roughly equivalent to our use of the word “spiritual”. “Unseen order” in this regard is likened to the situation within the history of science, whereby the laws of motion and gravity were present but not “seen” or identified until Isaac Newton identified their order with the laws of motion and gravitation. Newton pursued this unseen order within the objective world. This work identifies a previously unseen order in the subjective world of experience. It is proposed that this unseen order is the description of a spiritual core that is present in all people that is opened by this process. This spiritual core is represented with the Greek  $\Sigma$  (sigma) to designate the “addition” of a new awareness that includes but is beyond Freud’s concepts of conscious, unconscious, and preconscious elements and has a noticeable relationship to Jung’s collective unconscious.  $\Sigma$  is used symbolically as it is yet to be thoroughly defined, has no historical or personal connotations as the words spiritual, mystical, and numinous. Additionally, it is used to distinguish it from  $\Phi$  (phi), the measure of consciousness (Tononi et al. 2016);  $\Psi$  (psi) for psychical phenomena (Goertzel 2017); and  $\Omega$  (omega) the pinnacle of human striving (Teilhard de Chardin 1959). Explorations of  $\Sigma$  intersect with these other areas within the broader realm of “consciousness studies”.

*My late adolescent and college years included doubts about many Christian religious beliefs with which I was raised by my Protestant small-town minister father. The small town was suffused by history as being where Elizabeth Ann Seton figure conducted her work in developing education and establishing her Sisters of Charity to become a world order. A large golden statue of the Virgin Mary auspiciously overlooked our town from the mountains nearby, which contained a replica of the*

*Grotto of Lourdes and Italian-tiled depictions of the 13 Stations of the Cross. It was also next to Gettysburg where events and consequences of the greatest divide in our history, the Civil War, were visited regularly.*

*My doubts led me to the little-known religious organization of “Ethical Culture”, founded by an ex-Rabbi in New York City in 1877. Their “Statement of Purpose” included a “commitment to the worth and dignity of every person”, and they were guided by the “Ethical Imperative” of “Act to elicit the best in others and thereby in yourself”. These were beliefs that I could try and live.*

*Despite this being a good dictum, it left unanswered the questions of “What is best—for others and for ourself?” and “What does a commitment to the worth and dignity of every person look like?” Several years were spent in pursuit of the answers, with many interminable debates about the beliefs and values of ethics and religion with no clear solution. During this time, there came a confluence of connections as the Humanist affiliations of Ethical Culture introduced me to Albert Ellis (1996), founder of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), and I began my psychiatric training with a Freudian psychoanalytic/psychodynamic foundation. Both of these frameworks guided my training until 1984, when it all converged with the release of two books—Heinz Kohut (1984) published “How Does Analysis Cure?” and Bruno Bettelheim wrote “Freud and Man’s Soul” (Bettelheim 1983). Kohut moved my interest and knowledge of self-psychology into an area of “healing”, and Bettelheim confirmed my work in addiction and its relationship to the “soul” within psychoanalysis.*

*My CBT/REBT language now became framed within a self-system language à la Kohut, my work was now with the soul and “spirituality” à la Bettelheim, empowering worth and dignity became the “best in others and self” à la Ethical Culture, and psychoanalytic/psychodynamic therapy was now curing or healing. Out of this convergence came the FOS.*

## 2. Framework of Spirituality

This FOS is presented in detail elsewhere (Chatlos 2021) and is summarized here to orient this discussion. Readers can have direct online access to this paper as included in the References.

The FOS is a framework for working with both individuals in one-on-one encounters and with groups and can be utilized in both analytic/therapeutic encounters and religious/spiritually promoting settings. The process begins with the recognition of the basic CBT/REBT elements of perceptions of thoughts, feelings, and actions/behaviors actively experienced as thinking, feeling, and doing. It expands to include the global, or integrated, experience of Being (capitalized to refer to the ontological experience of life) labeled self-worth—operationalized as self-confidence in the domain of thinking, self-esteem in the domain of feeling, and self-competence/self-efficacy in the domain of doing. Each of these has been defined and measured in the social psychological sciences (Bracken 1996) with a developmental progression from self-competence/efficacy (age 1–2 years), progressing to self-esteem (3–4 years), self-confidence (5–8 years), and becoming integrated as self-worth (8–10 years) (Harter 1990). Note that this concept of self-worth emphasizes integrated experiences of self, contrasting it with the reductionist focus on self-object understanding of much psychoanalytic work. Developing on the foundation of self-worth is the integrated experience of Being identified as the expression of dignity. Dignity in the FOS is an active expression of self, delineating it from almost all other uses of the word dignity as a noun or something that we have (Pellegrino 2008; Rosen 2012; Hicks 2018). Dignity is operationalized in the domain of thinking as reason, in the domain of feeling as compassion, and in the domain of doing as courage. Conceptual details and rationale for its operational components are presented later.

Processing injury or hurt to experiences of self-worth and dignity *spontaneously* leads to an opening to spiritual experience, which is functionally defined as a “quality of our relationship to whatever or whomever is most important (*supreme*) in life” (Bjorklund 1983, italics added).

The opening to spiritual experience occurs with the next level in the FOS of the Creative Forces/Creative Openings (Figure 1). These experiences are described as “openings” as there is an increased opening of awareness and are described as “forces” because the



experience of them is forceful. They include opening to the expansive love described by the Greek agape; truth as used by Mahatma Gandhi’s truth-force or Satyagraha (Erikson 1989) as the integral foundation of common human morality; and faith as an action, not a belief (see below).

| Framework of Spirituality |                              |   |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Domain of Being           | Experience of Self-Worth     | Expression of Dignity                   | Creative Forces/ Creative Openings |
| Think                     | Self-confidence              | Choice / Reason/Wisdom                  | TRUTH                              |
| Feel                      | Self-esteem                  | Empathy/Compassion/<br>Caring (Justice) | LOVE                               |
| Do                        | Self-competence/<br>efficacy | Honesty/Courage/Giving<br>(Generosity)  | FAITH                              |

**Figure 1.** Each of the elements of this framework is described in the text. This illustrates the full FOS, including the expansion of the expression of dignity socially as wisdom, justice, and generosity. The expansion to the Creative Forces/Creative Openings occurs as the spiritual core ( $\Sigma$ ) is opened.

### 3. Structural Model and the Triune Brain/Dual Process Model of Cognition

This dialog of psychoanalysis and religion/spirituality occurs within the large context underlying these frameworks: the structural model of personality, as developed by Sigmund Freud, and the triune brain/dual process model of cognition that underlies the understanding of  $\Sigma$ .

#### 3.1. Structural Model of Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud popularized the understanding of human personality to include domains of conscious, unconscious, and preconscious. Within these domains were structures of id, ego, and superego.

**Id**—the unconscious source of psychic energy from instinctive drives, primarily sex and aggression, which strive for the gratification of desires, wants, and needs.

**Ego**—mostly conscious and deals with reality as it mediates between external reality and the internal person.

**Superego**—conscious, unconscious, and preconscious, with the latter being experience out of conscious awareness that can become aware with a specific focus. Superego includes the internalization of the conscious mind with rules and standards for good behaviors and morals, an ego ideal, and the conscience with a judgment of good and bad, guilt, and punishments.

The general idea is that the conscious ego mediates internal impulses for gratification from the unconscious id. The superego, the internalization of conscious rules and morals of behavior, guides the person’s actions consistent with personal and social rules and norms. Superego works to suppress unacceptable urges of the id and struggles to move the ego to act toward idealistic standards. The competing forces lead to conflict that is experienced by the ego as anxiety. To deal with this anxiety, the ego has developed specific “defense mechanisms” that may occur consciously or unconsciously to avoid becoming overwhelmed. Through the process of “free association”, these conflicts are brought to awareness from the preconscious and unconscious, and through proper “interpretation”, lead to insight with resulting awareness of and resolution of the anxiety and its underlying conflict. This insight leads to a decrease or resolution of symptoms and greater happiness and success at “love and work”. Defense mechanisms that may occur include denial, repression, regression, sublimation, displacement, intellectualization, rationalization, reaction formation, projection, and projective identification (Freud [1920] 1955, [1923] 1961).

### 3.2. Triune Brain/Dual Process Model of Cognition

An explanation of what may be happening with brain function with the FOS grounds the framework in the physical and natural world. Paul MacLean (1982) postulated that humans have a “triune brain” developed through evolution with a reptile part, including the brain stem, which operates for the survival of the animal; a mammalian part or limbic brain where emotions, memories, and decisions occur; and the neocortex or human part, which deals with reason and language. The reptilian part is generally instinctual and is essentially unconscious. As to the mammalian and human parts, Jonathan Evans (2008; Evans and Stanovich 2013) describes two brain processing systems (Figure 2) occurring simultaneously. A newer, slower, linear, logical, and possibly conscious cortical system defaults to the older, faster, nonlinear, associative, and possibly unconscious limbic system. Evans suggested that the cortical system may be unaware of actions, including decisions of the mammalian part but can become aware and may or may not intervene.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Type 1 process (intuitive)</b><br/>                 Does not require working memory<br/>                 Autonomous</p> <p>Fast<br/>                 High capacity<br/>                 Parallel<br/>                 Nonconscious<br/>                 Biased responses<br/>                 Contextualized<br/>                 Automatic<br/>                 Associative<br/>                 Experience-based decision making<br/>                 Independent of cognitive ability</p> <p><b>Old mind</b><br/>                 Evolved early<br/>                 Similar to animal cognition<br/>                 Implicit knowledge<br/>                 Basic emotions</p> | <p><b>Type 2 process (reflective)</b><br/>                 Requires working memory<br/>                 Cognitive decoupling; mental simulation</p> <p>Slow<br/>                 Capacity limited<br/>                 Serial<br/>                 Conscious<br/>                 Normative responses<br/>                 Abstract<br/>                 Controlled<br/>                 Rule-based<br/>                 Consequential decision making<br/>                 Correlated with cognitive ability</p> <p><b>New mind</b><br/>                 Evolved late<br/>                 Distinctively human<br/>                 Explicit knowledge<br/>                 Complex emotions</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Evans &amp;<br/>Stanovich, 2013</p> |
|---|---|

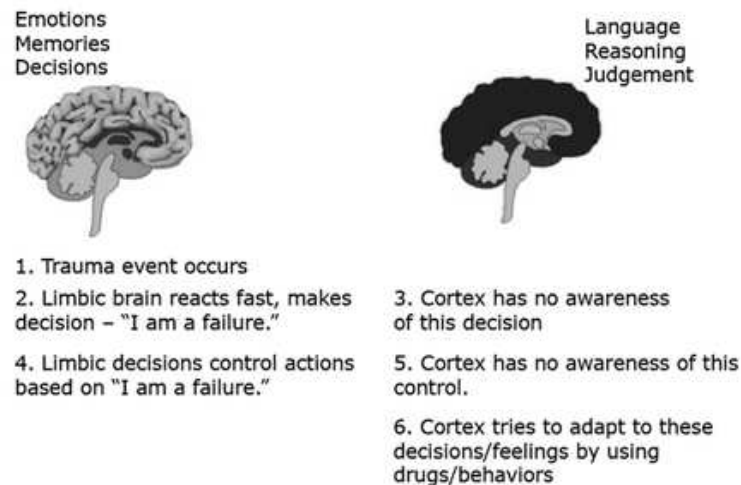
**Figure 2.** Dual process theory of cognition. Fast Type 1 processing generates intuitive default responses on which subsequent reflective Type 2 processing may or may not intervene (Evans and Stanovich 2013).

Note that this is a simplification as these brain structures are used to represent functional aspects of the brain. The details of this processing are not confirmed and may also include right-brain and left-brain functional relationships (Taylor 2009) or a combination of yet-to-be-determined functional connections. There is evidence to suggest that spiritual experience or  $\Sigma$  includes cortical (pre-frontal cortex), parietal lobe, and limbic (amygdala, hippocampus, thalamus, hypothalamus) structures (Miller et al. 2019). Evidence from psychedelic research of neurobiological function, spiritual/mystical experience, and Freudian ideas is consistent with the FOS (Carhart-Harris and Friston 2010, 2019).

This theory of brain function with the FOS can be explained more clearly with an example of trauma, as shown in Figure 3. If we consider an assault on a young person, the mammalian brain reacts with emotions, stores memories, and makes a decision such as “It’s my fault” or “I am broken or worthless”, with no awareness by the conscious cortex. Decisions made by this mammalian part are often not logically rational but associative, using primitive processing. This “implicit” decision then controls life and actions, with the cortex often unaware of why this is occurring. The cortex and conscious “explicit” part of the brain may even invent rationalized explanations, as demonstrated by split-brain experiments (Gazzaniga 2018). The conscious cortex is always trying to “calm” or

“fix” the emotions and impulses from these memories and uses behaviors and habits, including drugs, alcohol, material possessions, control, sex, power, and also rituals and religion. Defense mechanisms result from various interactions of the two simultaneous brain processors.

### Example – Trauma / Addiction



**Figure 3.** Example of trauma/addiction. The emotions and decisions made by the mammalian brain with trauma take place without awareness of the cortex. As described in the text, the cortex/conscious brain will attempt to manage or respond to these in ways that may lead to addiction.

In many ways, this functional organization is similar to the psychoanalytic structures of conscious, unconscious, and preconscious. However, the FOS does not include correlations with the psychoanalytic proposed structures of id, ego, and superego.

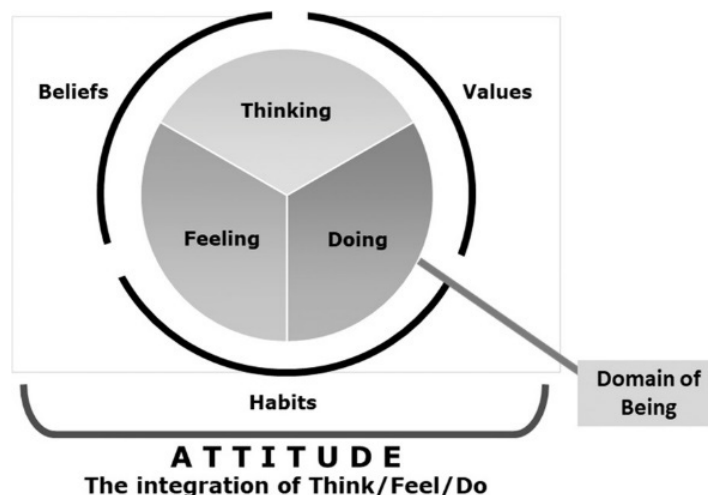
Instead of using free association as in psychoanalysis, in the clinical setting as well as through personal growth experiences, participants will use mindfulness meditation to quiet the judgment of the cortex and, with directed self-inquiry, allow recall of the memories and feelings of the past. The FOS focus is on the restoration and strengthening of self-worth and dignity. This may include elements of “insight” similar to psychoanalysis but is focused specifically on the acceptance of these feelings and memories without judgment. When this occurs, there is an extinction of hurt and suffering, and self-compassion and forgiveness empower self-worth and dignity, opening a new self-awareness and enhanced spiritual experience. A powerful experience of gratitude is often a sign that this has occurred.

#### 4. Functional Details of FOS

##### 4.1. Cognitive Behavioral Theory Foundation

Beyond direct sensory experience, subjective experience can be described with the CBT/REBT perceptions of thoughts, feelings, and actions/behaviors (Figure 4).





**Figure 4.** The integration of thinking, feeling, and doing (the domain of being) opens awareness of the experience of being, which is captured by the focus on “attitude”. See text for description of limitations of beliefs, values, and habits in discussions.

The religious experience becomes included when these descriptors are incorporated into concepts of beliefs, values, and habits. Over time, beliefs, values, and habits may become solidified developmentally into the commitment to a religious identity with identification, attachment, or engagement with a specific religion or religious tradition or may be developed independent of religion.

Therapeutic work with traditional CBT/REBT occurs at this level. The terms beliefs, values, and habits have a hidden complexity to be considered. In general usage, each of these terms may only include two of the three elements of thoughts, feelings, and actions (Chatlos 2021). As a result, these terms may include both explicit and implicit components. *Explicit cognition* is described as reflective, deliberative, time-consuming, conscious, and articulate, and *implicit cognition* is described as intuitive, automatic, instantaneous, unconscious, and nonlinguistic (McCauley 2020). This incomplete integration of experience in our language and awareness is often what leads discussions of religion, philosophy, ethics, spirituality and psychoanalytic theories that focus on beliefs, values, and habits to be limited in resolution if not interminable. Freud (1961) recognized this problem as “discrepancies between people’s thoughts and their actions, and to the diversity of their wishful impulses”. Much of CBT/REBT work occurs at this level with a focus on identifying and processing irrational beliefs, dysfunctional feelings, self-defeating habits, and automatic judgments (shoulds, oughts, musts) (Ellis 1996).

#### 4.2. Importance of Attitude

The FOS guides awareness from the individual elements of the experience of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (which always occur simultaneously) into an integrated experience with a focus on attitude. An attitude is an integrated experience of these elements. For example, an attitude of pessimism may include a thought of “life never works out”, a feeling of discouragement or hopelessness, and an act of withdrawal or avoidance. This attitude may contribute to the symptom development of depression or anxiety. An attitude is the orientation, direction, or relationship that our whole being has in relation to the world—including toward objects, self, and others. In boating, attitude is the relationship between the bow and stern angle to the water. Webster (Neufeldt 1997) defines attitude as “a manner of acting, feeling, or thinking that shows one’s disposition”—integration of feeling, thought, and behavior.

Introduction to the FOS often begins with addressing a prevalent attitude about these elements—that we are what we feel, or we are what we think, or even we are what we do. Necessary progress must occur for a person to choose and adopt the reality attitude that

we have thoughts, we have feelings, and we have actions/behaviors . . . and . . . we have the capacity to make a *choice* as to which of these we empower.

This work addresses specific attitudes toward self-awareness and self-expression—“boys don’t cry”, “don’t share feelings”, “suck it up”—and attitudes toward spirituality and religion to open our work. Eastern religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism are familiar with the “veil of illusion” from Vedic texts. This veil of illusion, or *Maya*, separates our usual awareness of the world from a deeper spiritual awareness toward “Enlightenment” or *samadhi*, or the well-being and happiness of *eudaimonia* (Aristotle 1962). Within the FOS, attitudes appear to be similar to this veil of illusion and also very similar to what psychoanalysis would term “resistance”. We highlight that *spirituality is an attitude of our being in the world*. Spirituality is about a specific relationship of our awareness and *connection to the self, others, and to the world*. Transforming these initial attitudes, or piercing the veil of illusion, results in opening to a new level of awareness and subsequently to spiritual experience.

Within the FOS, the functional definition of spirituality presented earlier highlights three main characteristics of spirituality—quality, relationship, and supreme/ultimate reality. It explains the ineffable (hard to put into words) nature of spiritual experience as being a “quality”. A quality such as soft is absolutely real. Its ineffability can be experienced as we try to describe soft using words. This definition also includes the idea that a relationship is critical to spiritual experience, though it is a relationship of non-ordinary experience. It is an experience that is trans-personal or goes beyond usual personal experience and may be interpreted as immanent (connection within oneself) or transcendent (connection outside of oneself) as it occurs within a social setting. Finally, supreme connects spirituality with supreme/or ultimate reality, as per the opening quote from William James.

In working with this definition of spirituality, the qualities (not exclusive or exhaustive) that this framework heuristically associates with spirituality are:

1. Connectedness/Unity: An experience of connection with something beyond our usual awareness of self or beyond our usual awareness of others. This connection may have characteristics of immanence or transcendence.
2. Aliveness/Vitality: An energy and alertness that was not present before the experience.
3. Wholeness/Integrity: A sense of wholeness that may be with the world and with ourselves, including experiences in our present and acceptance of experiences in our past.
4. Peacefulness/serenity/joy/awe: An emotional response that may include peace or serenity, but it may include joy, awe, or other strong emotions depending on the situation.
5. Meaning/Purpose: A result of this new experience is a new perception of meaning or purpose within life.

Opening to this awareness can be mild and gradual, such as insight; dramatic, such as conversion experience (James [1902] 1970; AA 2001); or more modern spiritually transformative experiences (STEs; Kason 2019), often depending on the nature of a person’s attitude to spirituality and personal experiences of self-worth and dignity. These are also qualities that are associated with mystical or numinous experiences, discussed later. Of note, dramatic opening to these experiences may occur spontaneously and due to the intensity or lack of comprehension may progress to what Grof (2016) describes as spiritual crises or spiritual emergencies. These may be misdiagnosed as part of a psychosis of bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

#### 4.3. Distinctions of Self-Worth and Dignity

Since spirituality is an integrated experience of being and not just an experience of individual elements of thoughts, feelings, and actions, the process of making “distinctions of Being” is necessary, such as the well-known distinction of balance (Chatlos 2021). There appear to be two important distinctions related to spiritual development—the distinctions

of worth and dignity (Figure 1). A connection between spirituality, worth, and soul is present in many religious and spiritual traditions. It may include traditions in which the word soul is associated with an entity (God, Allah) or used to represent a certain depth of experience, awareness, or connectedness (Atman in Hinduism and Buddhism).

A closer look at the meanings of worth reveals the “worth of Being” and the “worth as an experience of Being”. Worth (of Being) can be expressed with the phrase, “All people are worthy of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. This is an unprovable axiom that occurs from having been created as a person. The question of “Would humans have worth if we were not human?” has an answer as enigmatic as “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” Just as clapping of one hand cannot be understood since the definition of clapping includes at least two hands, the human worth cannot be understood outside of the experience of being human.

Distinguishing worth as an experience of Being is experienced as self-worth and begins with the definition:

Worth = that quality of a person or thing that lends importance and value that is measurable by the esteem in which the person or thing is held (Neufeldt 1997, emphasis added).

Note that the definition identifies worth as a quality contributing to the ineffability of spiritual experience. Additionally, this process reveals that *shame* is not just an emotion but an ontological reaction (affects all of Being) to injury of self-worth, resulting in being “unworthy”, which is what makes shame have such a profound impact on all of Being.

From this perspective, empowered self-worth is a positive and important goal for early childhood and the latency years. It is believed that there is a biologically based capacity for distinguishing self-worth and dignity that matures through childhood and adolescence. Details of this development related to spirituality are yet to be studied. Empowered self-worth would ideally prepare children for the upcoming almost magical transformation of adolescence with puberty involving unprecedented hormonal and body changes, an architectural overhaul of brain pruning and reconstruction, intense emotions, and expansive cognitive abilities, with novel social opportunities. Work with FOS has described how adolescence is critical to the development of dignity and spiritual experience (Chatlos 2022). A detailed alternative was presented to engage young adolescents into being aware of and taking advantage of the upcoming transformation metaphorically similar to the caterpillar (pre-adolescent) entering the chrysalis of adolescence and emerging as a butterfly! A truly spiritual experience as the mystical and seemingly magical transformation can make this happen. A key to the spiritual development and transformational experience of adolescence is the foundation of empowered self-worth expanding into the distinction of dignity.

Distinguishing and operationalizing dignity (Figure 1) in this framework begins with the definition:

Dignity: the quality of being worthy of esteem or honor (Neufeldt 1997, emphasis added).

Again, note that dignity is also a quality of Being, and the critical characteristic distinguishing it is honor. The inclusion of worthy in this definition demonstrates the close relationship of distinctions of dignity developing on an empowered foundation of the experience and distinction of self-worth.

Reason (thinking), compassion (feeling), and courage (doing) are what we honor most about being human in their respective domains (Chatlos 2021). Note that dignity includes three aspects in each domain (Figure 1)—a defining characteristic (i.e., reason), its initial expression (i.e., choice), and its expansion to social expression (i.e., wisdom)—since dignity has both personal and social connectedness. These additional characteristics are used in the personal engagement of the FOS. Work with this process reveals that *guilt* is also not just an emotion but is an ontological reaction of injury to dignity that is related to a disempowering or powerlessness of self-expression in each of its domains. For instance, guilt results from a disempowering insult or injury to dignity associated with the judgments related to each domain—“I should have made a choice with better reason”, “I should have been more

empathic and compassionate”, or “I should have been more honest and courageous to do what needed to be done”.

Pride is a result of the experience of empowered self-worth and dignity. Kohut’s exploration of narcissism and narcissistic injury provided some insight into injury to self-worth and dignity. An extreme example of this injury is narcissistic rage, which is a reaction of injury to an experience of ungrounded pride. The powerful source of transformation of the FOS comes from the discovery that empowering a person’s experience of self-worth and dignity leads to a spontaneous opening into a new awareness of true spiritual experience. This new awareness is described by phenomenology (Winnicott 1953; Bauer 2018) and thousands of years of Eastern religious traditions (Kaza 2018).

Honor, not just pride, is what has the FOS connect with experiences of the transcendent or trans-personal as it is an emotionally powerful, usually non-ordinary experience that, when sufficiently elevated, can embrace “sacred” and “holy”. The power of pride, with all its good and bad expressions, maintains clear limits when grounded in reason, compassion, and courage. In fact, true commitment to worth and dignity as operationalized, due to the inclusion of true compassion, precludes the excesses of religious or authoritarian fanaticism. The problem is that the motivating and intoxicating power of  $\Sigma$  is available to all and can give a misguided, even delusional attraction for acts of terror and martyrdom related to narcissistic rage. True dignity separates good and evil!

Kohut (1971) influentially introduced self-language into psychoanalysis along with his focus on self-object relationships. However, though he used the term self-esteem, he did not identify an integrated experience of self-worth that included not only self-esteem but also self-confidence and self-competence/self-efficacy. It appears that these terms were developing simultaneously but in a separate field of psychology rather than psychoanalysis. Kohut’s exploration of narcissism struggled with dignity without identifying it in an integrated manner. He brilliantly clarified and elaborated on the experience and role of empathy in psychoanalysis. He describes his struggle with a patient that engaged his own questioned compassion beyond technical neutrality and led to insight and resolution (Kohut 1984, p. 158) but “caring” crossed the boundaries of technical neutrality of psychoanalysis. He even included a section on wisdom (Kohut 1971, p. 324) as “one of the peaks of human development” and at termination with self-acceptance “enables the patient to maintain his self-esteem”. His fascination with narcissism was partly due to its two-sidedness, destructive prideful actions from injured self-worth and dignity, and his statement that healthy narcissism in a mature personality was characterized by “empathy, creativity, and wisdom”.

#### 4.4. Opening to the Creative Forces and Characteristics of $\Sigma$

Successful strengthening of self-worth and dignity leads to the experience of spirituality with the opening to the Creative Forces/Creative Openings. As described by Chatlos (2021), keys of open-mindedness, open-heartedness, and open-handedness that occur when judgment is suspended, leading to a spontaneous opening to these creative forces: Love, as with the Greek “agapé”, an expansive experience of communion with love of God, the divine, life, or love of self; Truth, as with Gandhi’s Satyagraha or truth-force as the intense viscerally fundamental source of our common human morality that is activated when violence occurs to human worth and dignity; and Faith, not as a belief but as an “action”, taking the courageous leap across a chasm without proof or guarantee of outcome with a powerful sense of freedom and clarity of purpose.

Processing past injuries to self-worth and dignity occurs similarly to the psychoanalytic process. Meditation with self-inquiry (Dahl et al. 2015) leads to awareness of feelings of shame and guilt that indicate injury to self-worth and dignity, respectively. Recalls of past memories, emotions, and unconscious decisions are processed in a manner similar to the psychoanalytic process. This mixture of emotions with shame and guilt, memories, unconscious decisions, and attitudes are part of what Stanislav Grof (2016) describes as complex dynamic constellations using the term “COEX systems” (short for condensed experience).

Persons are guided to identify and suspend judgments to increase open-mindedness, open-heartedness, and open-handedness. Recognition that a person's unconscious past reactions to events were part of a mammalian/limbic system process assists in the release of shame and guilt. This frees them from past needs for defense mechanisms and self-defeating behaviors and symptoms that were used to adapt to these painful memories of events. Unique to the FOS and possibly making it more consistent with spirituality and religion beyond the analytic setting is the primary focus on transformative experiences of self-worth and dignity.

It is conjectured that in the FOS, the source of many injuries to self-worth and dignity comes from the unconscious irrational mammal/limbic decision-making. On a side note, irrationality is postulated to have developed from mammal/pre-hominid social organization of a hierarchical alpha-dominant society. The decision-making process was most likely associative rather than rational, with learning based on classical and operant conditioning. The faster speed of this brain processor may account for its unconscious nature. Evidence for this comes from experience with trauma in which a young person's reaction to unprovoked trauma by an adult is associated with irrational decisions of "I am a failure", "I am bad", and "I am worthless", and the resultant shame if self-worth was injured and guilt if dignity was injured. Shame is associated with deference and submission with being "un-worthy" and guilt is associated with avoidance or withdrawal related to a disempowering insult or injury to dignity. It can be imagined that this irrational decision was necessary for survival in the face of an alpha-dominant pre-hominid that is causing injury to self-worth and dignity. Full assertion of self, consistent with the expression of self-worth and dignity in the face of a more powerful male/female, would most likely end in death or expulsion from the group. Reactions of shame and guilt would be a small emotional price to pay for survival.

This injury to self-worth and dignity is the conflict that is not seen as coming from competing impulses and drives of sexuality or aggression that are managed by structures of ego, id, and superego. In fact, sex and aggression are the main powers that are used to attempt restoration or achievement of self-worth and dignity. They can either be successful in their purpose if they are used wisely, or they can become misused and lead to excesses and become habitual. They can even develop as defenses (attitudes with behaviors, emotions, and thoughts) to avoid awareness of hurt to self-worth and dignity, and even be caught up in the addiction process as seen in sexual addiction and habitual violence, antisocial personality disorder, and other character patterns. Most likely, they originate in the limbic brain with an unconscious/preconscious awareness that the cortex, which is only partially aware, must learn to manage.

It is postulated that  $\Sigma$  is a homeostatic equilibrating system to restore persons to empowered self-worth and dignity. The insight and "healing" within the FOS come from the empowerment of self-worth and dignity and a return to the homeostatic/equilibrium of the integration or integrity of restored self-worth and dignity. This homeostatic/equilibrium drive is always present as the drive to fulfillment, happiness, joy, and, eventually, bliss. The restoration to empowered self-worth and dignity is experienced as the Creative Openings/Creative Forces of  $\Sigma$  open and are associated with powerful experiences of mystical knowledge. In this way, the  $\Sigma$  part of the "soul" can be seen to be self-healing in the same manner as body tissues have self-healing properties. This understanding of  $\Sigma$  provides an explanation for the source of Stanislav Grof's (2016) "holotropic" states (holotropic = moving toward wholeness). This is in significant contrast to the Freudian view that human nature is controlled by base instincts of sex and aggression that must be controlled by mechanisms of ego and superego. The  $\Sigma$  drive to fulfillment suggests that this is the natural or optimal state for human functioning as promoted by religious traditions, especially Eastern traditions, where the union of Atman (the personal) with Brahman (the universal) is the ultimate experience of self-worth and dignity—enlightenment.



#### 4.5. Mystical Experience and the Nature of $\Sigma$

Mysticism is defined as “any doctrine that asserts the possibility of attaining knowledge of spiritual truths through intuition acquired by fixed meditation”, and intuition is defined as “the direct knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning” (Neufeldt 1997).

Previously noted mystical characteristics of spiritual experience in the FOS include connectedness, vitality, wholeness, emotions of peace, serenity, joy, awe or wonder, and a new meaning or purpose. As described, connectedness may occur with expansive love, self-acceptance, and an extreme sense of self-worth and worthiness. Another term that was popularized by Jung and associated with mystical experience is “numinous”, derived from the word numen as a “nod” to divine power with qualities of awe, wonder, mystery, and transcendent majesty (Stein 2019). Other characteristics of  $\Sigma$  that are part of this mystical knowledge and numinous experience include:

- There is no clear distinction between inner and outer as a non-dualism of experience and thought is presently associated with increased feelings of union, communion, and connection of self with others in an embrace of love. Feelings of union may embrace and remove the experience of the separateness of self and others.
- Non-locality and non-dualism allow this experience to be interpreted as both immanent (inner) and/or transcendent (outer).
- A sense of timelessness and spaceless with its extremes of eternal, infinite, omnipresent, and immortal.
- A certitude of noetic/revelatory import that this is “right”, “good”, or “truth” of being on the right path. It appears that this certitude is a direct part of the nature of  $\Sigma$ .
- Vitality is often experienced with a sense of power with its extreme omnipotence.
- Clarity of thought with experience of “awakening” and enhanced creativity with its extreme omniscient.
- Gratitude that may include being alive, being part of this world, and part of this universal experience, with its extreme result being the loss of fear of death.
- Increased happiness, joy, and even bliss.
- Synchronicity of events, patterns, and ideas that may feel as if there is an external “higher power” guiding.

The closest that Freud came to the exploration of mystical experience was in *Civilization and Its Discontents* with a discussion in response to a friend stating that Freud, in *The Future of an Illusion* (Freud [1927] 1961), had “not properly appreciated the true source of religious sentiments”. This referred to “a sensation of ‘eternity’, a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, ‘oceanic’ . . . .it is the source of the religious energy which is seized upon by the various Churches and religious systems . . . ”.

Freud directly admitted that “I cannot discover this ‘oceanic’ feeling in myself” and “I could not convince myself of the primary nature of such a feeling . . . . The only question is whether it is being correctly interpreted and whether it ought to be regarded as the *fons et origo* (source and origin) of the whole need for religion”. “The idea of men’s receiving an intimation of their connection with the world around them through an immediate feeling which is from the outset directed to that purpose sounds so strange and fits in so badly with the fabric of our psychology that one is justified in attempting to discover a psychoanalytic explanation of such a feeling”.

Thus was his starting point for an explanation of this feeling as derived from the regressive experience of “infantile helplessness” that “became connected with religion later on”. His continued discussion does hint at the role of love in human happiness and mentions St. Francis of Assisi, who brings it into connection with religion. However, his acknowledgment of “this readiness for a universal love of mankind and the world represents the highest standpoint which man can reach” is followed by his judgment that “A love that does not discriminate seems to me to forfeit a part of its own value, by doing an injustice to its object; and secondly, not all men are worthy of love”.

Freud's lack of personal experience of this feeling limited his ability to recognize that a characteristic of our spiritual core is this oceanic, or what Jung associated later as the "numinous" feeling. What Freud could not fathom was that this experience itself occurs with a certitude that it is "right" or "good", which "sounds so strange and fits in so badly with the fabric of our psychology". Acceptance of this feeling would allow Jung to develop analytical psychology that recognized specific characteristics of this spiritual core, such as the collective unconscious, synchronicity, shadow, and archetypal phenomena similar to the experience that began this paper.

## 5. Dialog with Classic Psychoanalytic Theory

Otto Kernberg's paper "The four basic components of psychoanalytic technique and derived psychoanalytic psychotherapies" (Kernberg 2016) provides a simple, clear, and limited focus for our continued dialog. It can be found in a direct online link in the References for ready access while continuing.

"Four aspects jointly determine the very essence of psychoanalytic technique: interpretation, transference analysis, technical neutrality, and countertransference analysis".

For brevity, the following dialog assumes that the reader has simultaneous access to Kernberg's paper so that its specific contents will not have to be duplicated here.

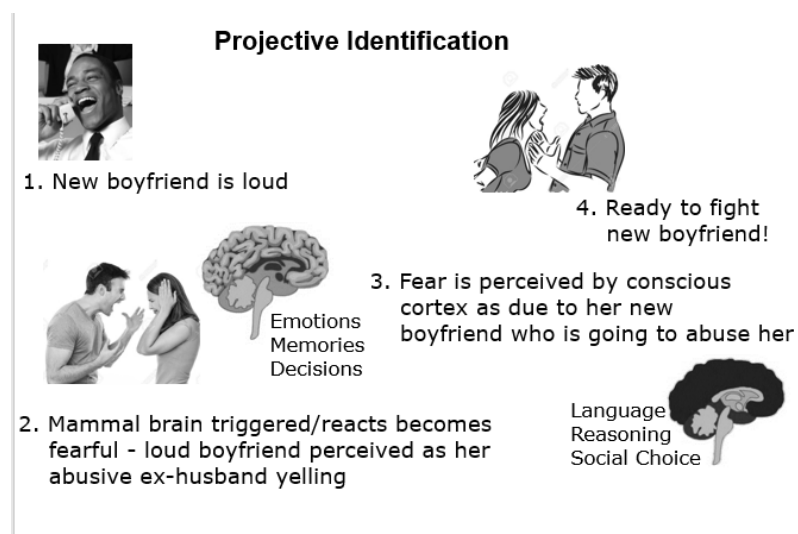
### 5.1. Interpretation

"is the verbal communication by the analyst of the hypothesis of an unconscious conflict...".

It consists of clarification, confrontation, and interpretation proper with the connection of the conflict in the here and now to the genetic past. A proper interpretation leads to "insight" with a resolution of the conflict and a lessening of anxiety and resolution of symptoms if present.

As noted earlier in work with the FOS, mindfulness meditation can be performed in a number of ways, and there are several identified methods of mindfulness (Dahl et al. 2015). FOS primarily uses the method of deconstructive meditation with a focus on self-inquiry. We guide mindfulness to identify distress, often with feelings of shame and guilt. We work with the judgments that block openness. We identify what is blocking open-mindedness to true reason, open-heartedness to compassion, and open-handedness to courage. As previously noted, judgments are often the source of attitudes that may block awareness, similar to "resistance" in psychoanalysis. We may intervene in a similar manner as clarification and confrontation to assist awareness of their attitudes, identifying their behavior in the here-and-now relationship. Personal attitudes toward self-awareness and self-expression are processed to open a person to a new level of subjective awareness and begin to pierce the veil of illusion mentioned earlier. Attitudes are intertwined with defense mechanisms, as both develop to protect the ego/conscious from awareness of conflict/anxiety/injury to worth and dignity.

An example of how defense mechanisms can be part of the attitudes and can be explained by the dual processing system is illustrated in Figure 5. Unconscious memories and emotions are stored in the older processor that may be limbic. When they are triggered or reach a certain level of intensity, they become partially aware, as in the preconscious, and the cortex/conscious becomes aware but without understanding. The cortex attempts to provide an explanation that may fully be rationalization and have little bearing on reality. Other defense mechanisms can also be illustrated using this dual-processor model.



**Figure 5.** Illustration of the defense mechanism projective identification using dual-processor model.

A judgment of “I can’t trust you” with an attitude of “I only trust myself” may cover awareness of past hurt to self-worth and dignity. For instance, this could come from abusive events with parents critical of choices and use of reason that were non-empathic/non-compassionate and threatening to honesty and courage. Encouraging a change in attitude requires a person to strengthen dignity—by acting with courage to take a risk and share openly and honestly, opening to empathy and compassion with the facilitator/therapist/guru, and making a new choice from thinking and reason rather than from past emotional hurts. Unlike in psychoanalysis, detailed processing of past events is not always necessary and primarily occurs when a person is unable to change their attitude and demonstrate further openness. The inability to change an attitude suggests severe shame and guilt from past injury to self-worth and dignity and will be processed as described in the next section on transference. Notably, a change in attitude is both associated with spontaneous awareness of those past events and simultaneously empowers a new sense of self-worth and dignity, leading to a resolution of “conflict”, a decrease in anxiety, and relief of anxiety-related symptoms. This is the equivalent of insight in psychoanalysis but has the added result of an already achieved action of change.

In the FOS, the curative element is not just insight as in psychoanalysis but is the body/mind restoration to its homeostatic/equilibrium of empowered self-worth and dignity. This has major implications regarding the psychoanalytic belief that the id is a base, impulse-driven function that has to be held in check by the ego and superego. The FOS would suggest that the fundamental human drive is toward an integrated wholeness of self-worth and dignity which spontaneously opens to the wider spiritual experience and powers of love, truth, and faith. This provides a much more empowering and hopeful perspective of the human condition. Contrast this with Kohut’s continued focus on pathology, as noted by [Randall \(1984\)](#) from discussions with Kohut before his death in 1981 “religion and psychology need to experience a transformation of their archaic narcissistic structure”.

### 5.2. Transference

“the unconscious repetition in the here and now of pathogenic conflicts from the past and the analysis of transference is the main source of specific change brought about by psychoanalytic treatment”.

Initially, in psychoanalysis, the transference was conceived as only occurring in the analytic situation but later became recognized as also being present in the person’s external life. This allowed the expansion of the concept of transference to include a larger community domain where spiritual life is usually expressed.

*One of my first experiences of this occurred early in my analysis as I did not recognize my distrust of the analytic situation, as evidenced by my always keeping my legs crossed while on the couch in a manner of self-protection. During an extended group therapy experience with the American Group Psychotherapy Association and Dr. Anne Alonso, I was confronted on how I always moved to argue and disagree with other group members. With their support, I recognized that my “transference” was an “attitude” with my expectation that interaction with others was always coming from their judgment and dislike of me, against which I had to act defensively. A first great insight was my recognition that people would not make an effort to engage with me in such intensity if they did not, to a large degree, like me and judge me to be important enough to engage in an argument. The idea that their intense engagement with me may actually be coming from caring was almost mind-blowing and overwhelming in my freedom from anxiety. In retrospect, that was one of my first great experiences of empowered self-worth and dignity coming from their empathy/compassion, courage to confront me, and communicating with reasoned explanations of their actions. From that day forward, my life was dramatically changed, and I uncrossed my legs in my analysis. This occurred as I became conscious of my unconscious transference/attitude to my analyst that was an expression in the here-and-now of my problematic relationship with my seemingly critical, judgmental, and perceived non-accepting father.*

*I was beginning to be aware that what would later be experienced as part of spirituality was present in my analysis as well as everywhere else with my interactions with people in the world. Spirituality was recognized as a positive, empowering attitude toward life and the world coming from a personally empowered self-worth and dignity.*

This psychoanalytic “corrective emotional experience” with the group and facilitator in the here and now, with compassion, courage, and reason, empowered the resolution of my conflict/injury to self-worth and dignity, with a decrease in anxiety and anxiety-related symptoms. In a mature group with openness to their spiritual core or a spiritually mature religious group, a person experiences the expression and presence of the Love of the Creative Force/Opening and the spiritual connection of an I-Thou nature (Buber 1958). This was recognized by Freud in Bettelheim’s (1983) introductory quote from a letter to Jung of “Psychoanalysis is in essence a cure by love”.

Could it have been that Freud’s attitude about religion interfered with his ability to see that psychoanalysis involved opening our spiritual core, whose essence is the Creative Force of love? Did Freud’s religious background as Jewish provide the structural framework of psychoanalysis in a Talmudic-like manner with the fighting of impulses with the ego as contrasted with Carl Jung, who was raised in a Christian tradition more likely to emphasize the divine nature of love?

Character analysis—“defensive characterological patterns tend to become dominant transference resistances and lend themselves to systematic analysis for characterological modification”.

The FOS views character pathology as repeated patterns of reaction that have been shaped by the vicissitudes of trauma and are due to limits of coping skills to return their self to a state of empowered self-worth and dignity. Repetition compulsion is understandable when it is viewed as a limited repertoire of coping skills to empower self-worth and dignity. When faced with increasingly difficult situations, without proper skills, there is a progression from distraction to avoidance, maybe denial and dissociation, to coping with money, sex, power, drugs, addiction, etc. As there is no new learning, new awareness, or new coping, the person can only use the same limited skills over and over again, trying to achieve a different result—trying to achieve more empowered self-worth and dignity.

The FOS addresses these patterns by identifying injury and weakness in self-worth and dignity and guides persons to new skills for making choices with reason, opening to increased empathy and compassion for others as well as self-compassion, self-honesty, and courage to take new action. Characterological patterns are not seen as pathological but as a person having limited knowledge and skills for empowering their own and others’ self-worth and dignity, providing a much more hopeful perspective. As noted earlier, sex

and aggression are powers that attempt to restore self-worth and dignity and, without proper skills or guidance, may become excessive and out of control.

Limits to classic psychoanalytic character analysis, such as with narcissistic personality disorder, were partly limited by an unwillingness to recognize the healthy aspects of narcissism. Even though explored by Kohut, the limits still did not connect with the spiritual core and strivings of the individual. The key to this is the spiritual experience of faith. More severe character pathology is indicative of a greater loss of faith—faith in self, faith in others, and faith in the world. This is often where wrestling with their soul becomes necessary with the intense hurt, murderous rage, annihilating humiliation and shame, and debilitating guilt from the gravest actions of harm to self-worth and dignity. This is seen with violence to the truth force, such as physical murder against the fundamental sense of human morality built into us, violence to the creative force of love with vicious hatred, and violence to the creative force of faith with destroying the source of courage and fundamental experience of honesty and maybe even of basic reality with severe early childhood trauma. This has been described (Shengold 1991) as destroying the human “spirit”, with soul murder often the source of narcissistic rage.

### 5.3. *Technical Neutrality*

“refers to the analyst’s not taking sides in the patient’s activated internal conflicts, remaining equidistant, as A. Freud put it, from the patient’s id, ego, and superego, and from his/her external reality”.

Moreover, “technical neutrality implies a natural and sincere approach to the patient within general socially appropriate behavior, as part of which the analyst avoids all references or focus upon his/her own life interests or problems”.

The FOS encompasses technical neutrality with its emphasis on dignity being an individual’s unique expression. The non-judgmental expression of empathy, using Kohut’s marvelous descriptions, is extended further to compassion with a personal connectedness and progression to caring and openly expressing the love of the other person and ultimately a commitment to protect with its further expansion into justice. The FOS is designed for experience in the world, with spirituality being a mutual engagement. The use of reason to distinguish the realities of a person’s reactions is the FOS alternative to technical neutrality. “What is my part of the interaction and what is your part of the interaction?” “What part of their (or my own) reaction is coming from the present real relationship vs. triggering of past feelings and memories?” The process is more openly acknowledged to be a mutual exploration. It is taught that uncomfortable and distressing reactions on a scale of 7 of 10 (maximum) suggest a triggering of past events. Issues of countertransference, as discussed below, are identified within the framework of a caring, loving spiritual connection coming from the dictum “Act to elicit the best in others and thereby in yourself”. This is a mutual growth process of increasing spiritual openness where each person contributes to the growth of the other.

### 5.4. *Countertransference Analysis*

“the analyst’s total moment-to-moment emotional reaction to the patient and to the particular material that the patient presents”.

“...co-determined by the analyst’s reaction to the patient’s transference, to the reality of the patient’s life, to the reality of the analyst’s life, and to specific transference dispositions activated in the analyst as a reaction to the patient and his/her material”.

Stereotyped illustrations of psychoanalysis portray countertransference as a hindrance to the analytic process, both for patients and the analyst. “Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar!” In a typical underwhelming analytic fashion, Kernberg describes the depths of countertransference processing to continue proper transference analysis and successful analytic completion. He succinctly describes the presence of chronic distortions (which FOS



would refer to as attitudes) of the analyst that is to be explored with full internal tolerance (non-judgment as per FOS), including regressive fantasies that may be present and must be processed.

*I recall the years when I recognized the opportunity of countertransference exploration as I opened my practice to patients with severe trauma and borderline and narcissistic personality organization. Any break in the empathic connection during sessions led to the exploration of the depths of my own trauma, losses, and a deep injury to my self-worth, dignity, and loss of faith. These patients had some of the greatest injuries as their spiritual core was longing for wholeness of self-worth and dignity, and fulfillment of faith in themselves, others, and even reality itself.*

The FOS incorporation of countertransference can be best captured by the more overwhelming attitude expressed by Valarie Kaur's "Revolutionary Love" (Kaur 2020) with a quote from the Guru Nanak scripture of the Sikh tradition "You are part of me I do not yet know". This spiritual attitude entreats us to be with another person with revolutionary love that requires an expanded empathy and compassion with self-exploration and often a self-transformation to achieve. It is the ultimate expression of "Act to elicit the best in others and thereby in yourself".

Thus, in the FOS, countertransference is part of the spiritual call to greater love and compassion for all people. With this spiritual expansion, the benefits of psychoanalysis become the opportunity for the entire community to find more freedom, compassion, love, and grounded faith. A question arises "To what degree and in what manner does this attitude and approach already guide much work in psychoanalysis?"

## 6. Dialog with FOS

This dialog begins with a look at the fundamentally different understandings of the unconscious. The  $\Sigma$  unconscious has a positive "goal" of empowering self-worth and dignity due to this being its homeostatic center. To reiterate, this is very different from the Freudian psychoanalytic idea of the unconscious being base, impulse-driven id strivings whose nature is aggressive and sexual, with bounds having to be set by the ego and superego. Jung's conception, with more acceptance of the mystical experience of the unconscious, involves opposing forces of good and evil that could be united by an archetypal God image. In fact, for Jung, the psychic goal is the replacing of the conscious ego with the powerful, numinous forces that he calls "God" (Stein 2019).

The FOS directly uncovers the fully positive striving and goal of this unconscious  $\Sigma$ . The empowering of self-worth and dignity opens  $\Sigma$ , which includes the multiple mystical characteristics of the numinous as described. We saw how  $\Sigma$  includes many of the aspects of enlightenment noted in various religious traditions. As suggested above, the FOS embraces Jung's integration and acceptance of spirituality by the conscious ego into a greater experience of wholeness, clarity, power, and higher self. This demonstrates how psychoanalysis and spirituality/religion can be seen as an exploration of self-worth and fulfillment to the greatest expression of human dignity with the full powers of reason, compassion, and courage. Ultimately, I do not think that Freud, Kohut, or Jung would disagree with this goal.

Could  $\Sigma$  be these numinous "God" forces that the ego/conscious/cortex surrender to in spiritual awakening, such as described in addiction recovery with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA 2001)? The FOS would explain this as the conscious ego's increasing awareness and surrender to the "higher power" of  $\Sigma$  and spirituality with embracing it to promote the full wholeness of recovery. The opening of  $\Sigma$  with mystical experience and yet-to-be-known powers is an experience of our collective unconscious and evolutionary heritage. In Galatians 2:20, "...it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me ...", or from Patanjali (Coward 1979), a yoga psychologist, "mystical experience is a case of the direct supersensuous perception of reality, with various levels of mystical impurity being caused by obscuring emotions not yet purged from the perception".

The FOS has no specific religious tradition attachments and can be considered a Western approach to understanding and exploring the mystical aspects of life, compatible

with the mystical aspects of all other religious traditions. It is particularly compatible with the Vedanta tradition of Hinduism, which provides extensive practical applications of the core of the FOS to fully integrate body, mind, and spirit into the world. Important to this is the contrast between the life goal of psychoanalysis being optimal function to “love and work” in the world and the often disparaged goal of Eastern religious Enlightenment to become a monk and withdraw from the world. This betrays a stereotyped and limited understanding of Hinduism and the Eastern religions, as the Four Spiritual Paths of Yoga provide an opportunity for the inclusion of both—and then more. One does not have to retire seclusively to a mountaintop to experience enlightenment.

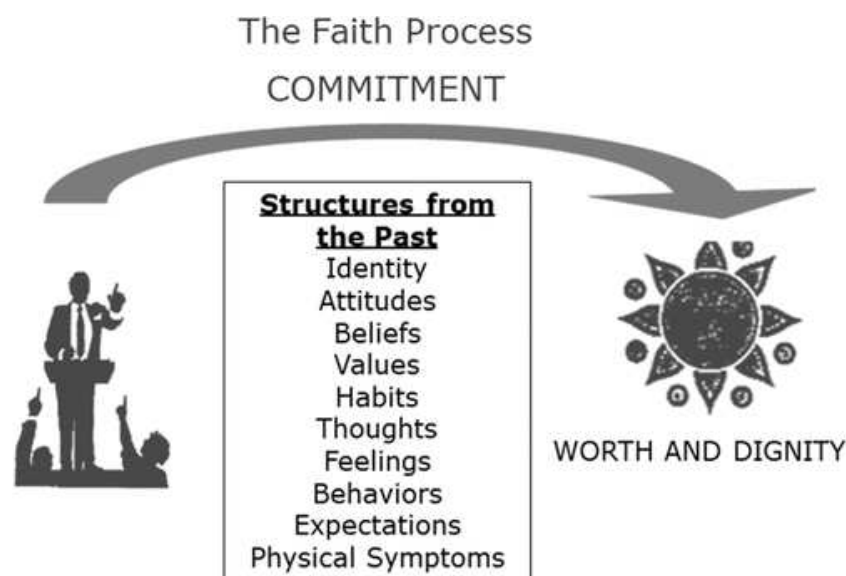
Yoga (the union of body, mind, soul, and spirit) is rediscovering who we are and returning to a life of joy, bliss, and freedom. Vedanta, recognizing that we each have different personalities and preferences, offers us four Paths of Yoga, or sets of spiritual practices, to help us reach this goal. Related to our foundation of CBT, we can think, we can feel, we can act, or we can master it all. To think is Gyana Yoga, to feel with devotional love is Bhakti Yoga, to act in the world is Karma Yoga, and to master it all is Raja Yoga with samadhi being the goal of all Yoga (Coward 1979). A representative person with an emphasis on each might include, respectively, the Dalai Lama, Valarie Kaur of Revolutionary Love, Nelson Mandela, and yoga guru Patanjali—though expressions overlap, and any person can develop their unique expressions through these yogas.

At present, the urgency for the transformation of our relationship with the world calls many people to develop a path of Karma yoga which in Buddhism is identified as a “bodhisattva” (one whose goal is awakening)—an enlightened person that courageously and compassionately lives in the world to empower awakening and enlightenment to all people (Flanagan 2011). This path is very consistent with the psychoanalytic goal of love and work that is directed as spiritual enlightenment expressed through love and selfless service in the world.

### 6.1. The Faith Process

The FOS has incorporated a unique process for spiritual exploration and development that does not have a counterpart in psychoanalysis. This “Faith Process” (Figure 6) engages one with the FOS and immediately invokes a spiritual attitude by a person making a commitment to the worth and dignity of every person, including oneself. As elaborated in Chatlos (2021), this commitment is initially a possibility, and only with discipline becomes an actuality. As persons make and practice personal commitment to the worth and dignity of every person (including themselves), a spiritual opening occurs as described but is limited by specific blocks identified as “Structures from the Past”. Given the extremes that we are seeing in the polarization of the world today, “faith” is probably no understatement of what is needed.

Faith is a topic that directly bridges psychoanalysis with religion and spirituality. Psychoanalyst Bronheim (1994) astutely states that “man’s ills . . . flow directly from his disconnection with God!”, and “faith does not require a belief in God but does allow for one”. He astutely presents a case and identifies how faith in God, self, and the analyst initially converge. With analysis, leaps of faith in the analyst and process occur sequentially with the following: (1) initial acceptance of the analyst and analytic situation; (2) when distressing (often intimate or erotic) feelings are processed in the transference; (3) when very intense (often aggressive) feelings are processed without rejection or termination; (4) healing occurs with increased faith in self; (5) termination occurs with confidence in self and the belief and feeling of having been faithfully loved. Explanation of cure with the drive/ego/conflict model occurs with the interpretation of conflicts brought to awareness in the transference, and in the developmental self-model occurs with internalized empathic experience where insight and interpretation are not necessarily primary. Bronheim notes, “Faith is the eventual outcome of the extensive work done within the relationship and ...the analyst...must also have faith—first in the patient and then in oneself and one’s skills.”



**Figure 6.** Making a commitment to the worth and dignity of every person creates increased awareness of blocks (aspects of past personal experiences) that prevent individuals from keeping this commitment. Processing these blocks increases a person’s self-worth and dignity as it opens the spiritual core.

Analogously, with the FOS, Structures from the past are blocks to keeping this commitment to the worth and dignity of every person. These include in decreasing order of complexity or abstraction—identity, attitudes, beliefs, values, habits, thoughts, feelings, behaviors, expectations, and physical symptoms, which all require processing. This processing may be performed in a therapeutic setting (e.g., mental health or psychiatry), a religious setting (Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, or Christian), a growth setting (Alcoholics Anonymous or SMART Recovery), or a learning setting (through work, academics, community education). As this occurs, there becomes a greater faith in self, others, and the world as  $\Sigma$  opens further.

In accordance with the process described above by Bronheim, the person/patient transforms their self in a similar progressive manner to keep their stated commitment to the self-worth and dignity of self, analyst, and others by increasing reason, compassion, and courage to strengthen self-worth with similar progression: (1) processing identity issues (sex, race, age, SES, etc.) that block openness with the facilitator/analyst; (2) transforming attitudes about certain (i.e., intimate or erotic) distressing feelings; (3) challenging habits and values about intense (i.e., aggressive) feelings; (4) empowering self-beliefs related to self-confidence and self-esteem; (5) increased self-acceptance and openness to the creative force of love with self and other/analyst—termination with openness to the creative force of faith in self, others and a higher power of God, the divine, or higher self.

Repeated experiences with the processing of these blocks in continued life situations increase faith as hidden powers of  $\Sigma$  occur that are not generally included in the analytic situation. When acting with faith (i.e., having no conscious plan or solution) in boldly taking on life challenges, unconscious  $\Sigma$  is a surprising source of creativity and problem solving that guides one to create successful solutions. This can be profound and experienced as an external force guiding and having your best interest at heart. Evidence of this process occurring is described later by Jung and is often associated with the appearance of synchronicities (Jung [1961] 1973, chp. VI).

Fully engaging in this faith process with daily practice in new situations that trigger the emergence of other structures from the past that block empowerment of self and others’ self-worth and dignity opens  $\Sigma$  further to mysterious, yet to be explored, mystical experiences. The “passive” aspect of spiritual experience, as previously noted by James, now has an active promotion. The “transient” aspect now becomes more continuous, leading to a profound experience of joy, happiness, and even blissful states. Part of the

profound experience occurs as this process uncovers the dharmic/karmic meaning and purpose of a person's life—their mission—more often a part of religious/spiritual discourse than the psychoanalytic lexicon.

## 6.2. Meaning and Purpose

In pursuing meaning and purpose, knowledge of dharma and karma concepts is useful. These words have different meanings in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, as well as in various traditions or schools, and also vary over time.

Dharma—righteous behavior in accord with the order of nature/the divine—a right way of living.

Karma—intent and actions of an individual influence the life that they leads-sometimes simply related to cause and effect.

As one becomes attuned to and follows the guidance of this  $\Sigma$ -driven “higher power”, a new Self-awareness occurs as if an old ego self is being set aside, integrated, or transcended. As with psychoanalysis, these periods of enlightened awareness follow a developmental regression—blocks occur from developmentally earlier events from the past. These blocks will occur with increasingly intense emotions, often shame, guilt, and grief. Continued self-inquiry with thoughtful reason recognizes that these emotions have little and possibly no connection with the here-and-now experience. They are signs of past hurt to self-worth and dignity with  $\Sigma$  striving for fulfillment. As processing continues as previously described, events and memories are from earlier and earlier in life, with fewer cognitions, more subtle emotions, and less imagery of memories and may require increasing bodywork as deeper, possibly pre-verbal memories are contained in the body (Van der Kolk 2015; Grof 2016).

Jung ([1961] 1973, p. 170) described a similar process in his life in his search for his purpose following his break from Freud “as though a message had come to me with overwhelming force . . . I ceased to belong to myself alone, ceased to have the right to do so. From then on, my life belonged to the generality . . . I was being compelled to go through this process of the unconscious. I had to let myself be carried along by the current, without a notion of where it would lead”.

Part of Jung's search was a conclusion that the key to the collective unconscious was the self, foreshadowing Kohut's later work “I began to understand that the goal of psychic development is the self . . . I understood that the self is the principle and archetype of orientation and meaning. Therein lies its healing function”.

His struggle in pursuing this healing function led to his conclusion that it was “the central concept of my psychology: *the process of individuation*” (italics in the original). His use of the word individuation connoted an integrated unitive experience, not as a self-object individuation process that leads to separation of self and other for independence. This unity was the integration of the duality of conscious and unconscious awareness that, with psychoanalysis, becomes more unified. Jung knew that the healing function was within us with this individuation process.

As the faith process practice continues, there begins to appear patterns of repeated emotions—such as feelings of failure, feelings of sadness, or self-doubt. Even though the recurrent emotions may be similar, they are connected with different events and memories such that recognition of life patterns occurs. Awareness of different events with repeated similar emotions/actions/decisions suggest a karmic pattern through life.

*With some self-revelation, whatever good would happen to me would immediately be followed by self-doubt from my own internal critical judgment—automatically. This karmic pattern would creep up over and over with a recall of different past events. What I (my  $\Sigma$ ) had done (unconsciously) in earlier times of my life had a similar karmic effect or consequence—over and over, as if my life were controlled by this karmic pattern.*

Sometimes it takes an intense event such as tragedy, trauma, accident, or severe loss to force into awareness of the more shadow side of life. In my case, the tragic death of my wife with the loss of all planned future and contact with past memories was the jolt.

Following this, the karmic pattern was recognized as not being consistent with  $\Sigma$  striving for righteous behaviors toward fulfillment of worth and dignity as part of the dharmic natural order for happiness.  $\Sigma$  is a higher power essential part of the dharmic guide. Evidence of this was the frequent synchronicities increasingly appearing as if being guided by an unconscious source.

*Associated with the processing of these karmic patterns and transforming myself to become more in line with my dharmic order, the spiritual/mystical experiences became more intense and more global on the order of extreme joy, happiness, and even bliss. Extended blissful experiences at times became an almost overwhelming experience of happiness. With continued practice, transforming karmic patterns, and living more consistent with my personal dharmic order, a clearer sense of meaning and purpose in life was revealed. There appeared to be a point in awareness when a critical karmic pattern was transformed such that the proper or righteous order for my life was revealed.*

*“It was a moment that is the stuff of dreams. All of a sudden, the events of my life fell into place. It was as if the world opened up to give me all of the important answers to my life’s questions. All of the loves, the losses, the broken hearts, the struggles with religion, my parents, the loss of aunt Mabel, the farmer’s wife who cared for me until I was 2, the struggles with sexuality, and its connections with spirituality and how it all got confused. It was all necessary—it all had to happen. There was a love, even for those that hurt me as they made me stronger and better able to deal with life’s changes. My fears and outrages and embarrassments, and doubts all didn’t seem to matter—in fact, it was as if they HAD to happen to get to this moment. I could embrace the good and the bad—the love and the hate—it all was part of life.*

*I felt things more—the sunshine, the rain, the colors, music—as if the music and songs I heard were sending me messages along my journey. It was as if there was something in—or even outside- of myself, guiding my thoughts, my feelings, and just throwing creative ideas in front of me to capture.*

*My mind was on overdrive and could barely stop to get sleep. It was as if my old self had finished, completed its purpose and there was a new self being revealed. I had reached a point that I never even imagined was possible.*

*In a short time, there was such joy that had not been felt since I was a carefree boy of 7 years old living safely in the country surrounded by the always present serenity of nature. ‘I lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.’”*

*At this point, a meaning and purpose for my life were revealed that, when transformed into action, totally fulfilled the  $\Sigma$  strivings for a fulfilling and whole sense of self-worth and full expression of dignity. It appeared as if my old self surrendered or was set aside for the pursuit of this dharmic order, and my mission in life was revealed. I was no longer in control. My mission as fulfillment of my  $\Sigma$  was in control. The ecstasy was almost more than I could contain, and it lasted for several months, during which the creativity, writing, ideas, energy, and happiness were figuratively “unworldly”.*

*The FOS was discovered 25 years ago. My karmic pattern of self-doubt was deeply embedded with memories from as early as 2 years of age. Continued pursuit of the process of the FOS was necessary to reveal the shadow of life and to realize a mission that was a mantra that had directed me more than 30 years ago: “To be joyful and gloriously celebrate the worth and dignity of being alive”. As is probably obvious, this paper is being presented by  $\Sigma$  with experience of Freud’s conscious, unconscious, and preconscious, Kohut’s narcissistic self, and Jung’s collective unconscious.*

Theoretically, this dharmic homeostatic fulfillment of  $\Sigma$  strivings is present in everyone and can be discovered by exploration with the Framework of Spirituality. My faith is that the  $\Sigma$  of readers of this dialog will join in the exploration.

The highest spiritual practice is self-observation without judgment.

~Swami Kripalu

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