

SPIRITUALITY & PSYCHOLOGY: CONNECTIONS AND INTERSECTIONS

An Interdisciplinary Conversation at

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Participants:

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Ed Sellner, Theology

Catherine Michaud, Theology

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Moderator:

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Susan

Welcome to this conversation sponsored the Center for Women and Spirituality. We have four participants who have agreed to talk about spirituality & psychology from their perspectives: David Schmit, from psychology, Ed Sellner and Catherine Michaud from theology, and Mary Ann McLeod from the College's Counseling Center. Welcome to the four of you.

I recently heard an interview with Louis Menand, who wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning book called *The Metaphysical Club: The Story of Ideas in America*. It's about four people who got together in the last part of the 19th century to have conversations – four people from very different perspectives: Oliver Wendell Holmes, William James, John Dewey, and a man I hadn't heard of named Charles Sanders Pierce. What was most interesting to me was that it was an interdisciplinary conversation carried on for quite a period of time. The interviewer asked if there is anything like this in our world today – if such a conversation could even be possible. Menand replied that he didn't think so because our universities have become so compartmentalized. Obviously this is not entirely true at the College of St. Catherine.

David, I asked you to talk about the current and the historical relationship between spirituality & psychology in the United States. I chose the title "Spirituality &

Psychology: Connections and Intersections” because I know that there are places where the two connect and where they seem to be at cross-purposes. How did that happen?

David Schmit, Psychology

Thank you. This topic, Spirituality & Psychology, makes me think that some clarification needs to be made between being religious and being spiritual. I hope that one of our speakers addresses that topic. One of the ways to think about spirituality in terms of its history in the United States is that it seems like periodically there are times when religious feeling spills out beyond churches. They are called “Great Awakenings,” when lay people, people of different backgrounds, and people who are not religious become involved in questions of ultimate concern. There have been several of these according to American religious historians, and apparently we are in one right now. It’s seized a portion of the baby boomers. It does tend to operate, apparently, in generational waves. The very fact that we are having this conversation is a backdrop, to a degree, to the current Awakening. When you bring the question of psychology to the topic of spirituality, it can clarify and in some ways, unfortunately, obfuscate it as well. To understand this point, it’s a good idea to take a look at the history of psychology.

In the middle of the 19th century when psychology began, the concurrency of psychology was the study of the soul. The soul was seen as having a spiritual element and a mental and a physical element. Psychology at that time was seen as the scientific investigation into this full array of the human psyche. But later on in the century, when psychology became organized within academia, it started to change. In part, due to the drive to become scientific, psychology moved in certain directions. At the time, science was moving into an arena where there was an increasing emphasis on measurement and establishing scientific certainty. Physicalizing phenomena – focusing on events that could be studied with our sensory apparatus became the focus. So psychology found the whole question of the soul, with its ineffable and mysterious quality, unacceptable. It was pushed away from the arena of psychological discourse that was forming within the academy at that time. William James was, in those early years, very much a part of this debate that was going on within psychology. Then, as psychology continued to mature as

a scientific discipline, and kept trying to find its way into the scientific academy, they discovered that the mind was difficult to study quantitatively, empirically, and naturalistically, as well. So by the 1918's –20's they even decided to push THAT out of the equation. We went into a period when we were dominated by the study of behaviors -- the study of animals--which resulted in very reductionistic models. Not only was there no place for a mind and spirit, but people who embraced these thoughts were actually humiliated – excommunicated from the academy so-to-speak. So if we look at the arc of this story we can say that psychology lost its soul and then it lost its mind!

When we look at the evolution of this field there are three things that we have to consider. One is a concept that has been laid out by historian of the Enlightenment Ray Porter. He has introduced the notion of the Enlightenment Crusade. The founders of this unintentional movement were people such as Voltaire, David Hume and others. They proclaimed that religion and superstition and spirituality were all of a piece -- irrational. The sooner we drive this away from our growing and modernizing world, the better off we all are going to be. So this is still very much part of our academic institutional history – this belief that you can divide the world according to rational and irrational, secular and religious. Unfortunately, spirituality frequently appears to be serendipitous, difficult to put your fingers on, very difficult to measure – so this gets shoved aside.

A second thing that happened is this movement toward physicalism was assuming that the human being is, in its sum total, something that can be measured and quantified in terms of brain function and so forth. Powerful discoveries that have influenced our medicine and helped put scientific discoveries on the map have treated intangibles within the human psyche in a very reductionistic way. So this enters into the equation as well.

The third piece has to do with the whole structure of our higher educational institutions and the way they're aligned with our governmental agencies, which separate church and state. People who are trying to obtain funding or who are within our academies trying to do research in spirituality and psychology are up against a tough obstacle. It's not surprising, then, that the view of human nature that comes out of the scientific academy

feels somewhat “off” to people who have developed an inner-life and have cultivated some sort of a spiritual inner-dimension to their existence. It feels like it’s flattened out or reduced human nature. Something is missing from this equation. There are tremendous riches there, powerful insights into human nature, wonderful in many ways. But when it comes to this question of the connection between spirituality and psychology, the academy’s treatment of the topic leaves something to be desired.

The good news is this: In the history of psychology there have been (I call them rebel psychologists) people who have thumbed their nose toward this movement that I have been describing and decided, “We’re going to just look at the human being the way we deem fit. Let’s incorporate features of the psyche, people’s personal reports of their inner experiences and so forth, into the discourse that had previously been discounted because of the rationalizing effects of the Enlightenment Crusade.” There are four rebel psychologies. One is Jung’s Analytic Psychology, a second is Maslow’s Humanistic Psychology, a third is Transpersonal Psychology, and a fourth I’d say is parapsychology. Each of these has an interesting and illustrious history, and they all, in one degree or another, have danced around, explored, addressed, embraced, and questioned the spirituality within psychology from a psychological perspective.

An interesting study was done of psychologists in the 1980’s. They asked them to what extent are they open to humanistic ideas? Humanistic psychology, of course, was a tremendous movement within psychology. It humanized psychology. It helped create a counterpoint to the animalistic models that were coming out of Behaviorism and the very pessimistic view of human nature that was coming out of Psychoanalytic thought. Maslow identified states of being he called peak experiences wherein people often have spiritual experiences. He deemed them important features of human existence. They were powerfully transformative. He said, “We’ve got to embrace these too. We’ve got to look at these and try to make sense of these experiences.” So there is a lot of interesting dialogue going on there. In this survey of psychologists, they found that the more the psychologists were in the big powerhouse academic institutions, the more scientific-minded and materialistically-minded they were in their orientation. They were

less willing to engage in the question of spirituality – much more in love with the scientific methodology than this other image of the psyche. On the other end of the continuum, as you move away from this viewpoint, toward psychologists that are more and more involved with applications, working in the real world, in educational settings and mental health settings, then they seem to be more and more liberal in their orientation - more willing to engage questions of spirituality – more willing to accept Maslow’s basic premise that religiousness is central to the human psyche. You cannot give us a true view of human nature without somehow making this part of the discourse. So if you look at psychologists and you see what their opinion is on this matter of spirituality and psychology you can see how they are spread across this array.

This is my last point. It’s illustrated very clearly in a recent scientific discovery: there exists a correlation between people who have religious and spiritual beliefs and mental health and physical health. This is a major finding, I believe. The fact that people who have powerful spiritual, religious values, etc. are often times physically healthier than those that don’t. What are you supposed to make of this? One thing that I can say is that for 500 years now, religion has been in retreat before the onslaught of scientific inquiry. Here is perhaps the first -- one of the earliest -- signs that we are shifting in some way. And it’s coming right out of the academy.

What to make of it? Well, this extreme physicalist view would say, “If someone has spiritual beliefs that somehow are helping their health then somehow it’s an illusion created by the brain to make them feel better.” A more psychological perspective might say, “We are not going to engage in questions of ultimate concern here about spirituality, but we will say that somehow this is making people feel more secure, making people feel more happy. They have to take fewer antidepressants. This is a good thing.” Then those people, who are farther out on the continuum might say, “Of course it’s like this.” For these individuals, spirituality is a living, breathing presence in their life. It’s inexplicable, it’s powerful, it’s potent, and it’s healing. So of course you’d be more happy and more healthy!

That's my background treatment on this topic (and of course, filled with my perspectives and biases on the matter). Of the important psychologies that have addressed spiritual questions – one of them is Jung's Archetypal Psychology. We are very fortunate to have a person here who has spent years thinking about this, so I'll turn this over to him now.

Ed Sellner, Theology

That was a very comprehensive overview and a very helpful look at psychology and the different approaches to it. My interest in psychology goes back to when I was in college. I was thinking of majoring in psychology but I was also interested in history and theology and other matters. I decided to begin reading as much as I possibly could outside of the organized courses. And when I was in graduate school at Notre Dame I had the fortune of having a number of teachers that were Jungians: Morton Kelsey for one. He wrote a lot of books about the importance of Jung in terms of helping religious leaders rediscover some of the richness of the great western (and eastern) Christian tradition that scholars had gradually abandoned. This richness includes the symbolic value of myth and what today we term "paranormal" experiences, including dealing with dreams and visions and voices. Our religious traditions are rich in all of those elements. However, gradually, by the turn of the 20th century at least, there was increasingly an examination of scripture from a much more scientific view and, I think, an attempt to eliminate a lot of these experiences or discredit them as superficial if not superstitious. When I was studying at Notre Dame, I was already interested in the different theological traditions, Jung opened up for me some of these stories in scripture and the lives of the saints--and the many theologians who are moved by these somewhat mystical experiences. We're trying to explain a mystery with words. All these traditions have a mystical element to them-- Martin Luther, for example, and his interpretation of Christianity as justification by faith goes back to an overwhelming experience being accepted by God.

So, as I started to study this Jungian tradition at Notre Dame I had a supervisor who was a trained Jungian analyst and he got me into the world of dreams. I'd been dreaming before this, but I came out of a family, and certainly a culture at that time, that didn't acknowledge any significance with dreams. I remember I was in clinical training up in

Hazelden before I went to Notre Dame and my supervisor was talking about Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist and how he was interested in what dreams meant. I remember that the hair on the back of my neck stood up. I had, when I was growing up, very significant, vivid dreams – what Jung would speak of as big dreams – those that come at certain turning points of our lives. I didn't know what they meant yet, but intuitively I knew they meant something. It was at Notre Dame that I began to study with different professors and a supervisor who helped me enter my own dream world and I've been studying that ever since. In my doctoral dissertation I investigated Jung in terms of helping to interpret religious experience – conversion experience. Then I spent two different Januarys at the Jung institute in Zurich, which were phenomenal experiences. For two weeks analysts gave papers, presenting themselves and their issues and inviting our participation. These were very powerful experiences for me.

What I see Jung offering, in terms of the world of spirituality and theology, is a number of insights I think that were no so much his alone but somewhat of a rediscovery of what was already part of many ancient traditions.

I appreciate David's suggestion about the difference between religion and spirituality. Before I studied theology I worked with recovering people at Hazelden. So I came out of clinical experience, which suggests a somewhat humorous aspect of the distinctions between religion and spirituality: that religion is for people who are afraid of hell and spirituality is for those who have already been there. There's a certain wisdom in that humor but I think it divides things up too quickly, too easily. In my teaching I'm trying to make some distinctions between religion and spirituality – to talk about religion as something to do with rituals, beliefs, spiritual practices; in itself it is associated with certain groups, organizations – sometimes nationality. Spirituality is definitely a part of that.. I think you're going to find a definite loss of meaning in religion if there's not a living spirituality associated with it. Otherwise religion will be very empty and eventually quite destructive. Spirituality for me is all about recovering a sense of the sacred, the acknowledgment of the great mystery of our lives.

Last night I was teaching about Native Americans' spiritual traditions. They call the Great Spirit the great mystery and a lot of other traditions speak about this mystery. I just came across a book that's been getting good reviews: Wendell Berry's *Life is a Miracle*. It has to do with the difference between the scientific approach to life and, from his perspective, taking the mystery out of it and trying to quantify life experiences. I think that may be unfair to a lot of scientists. I don't want to be derogatory about their work. Wendell Berry, however, is talking about going back to recovering this sense of mystery. There is much that we cannot know about our origins but there's a sense of being able to value mystery and acknowledge it and honor the mystery of our lives. I think that's what spirituality is all about, discovering the sacred and having a relationship with the sacred. That can be very personal and I think it needs to start with the personal.

From my perspective as a Christian, spirituality is all about community too and about belonging to a circle of friends, associates, colleagues, and religious groups. I think that Jung was pointing back to some of these traditional resources that are already there, that in many ways I think were lost. For example, I have a great interest in the sacrament of reconciliation in the Roman Catholic Church – which is one of the great experiences going back to the early church. It's about asking forgiveness and seeking forgiveness from others. That whole process presupposes some sort of guidance either from a community or from an individual, someone trained in the soul and the world of spirituality. Gradually, however, the sacrament became divorced from spirituality and guidance. It became something of an empty ritual. I think that Jung helped church people, church leaders, rediscover the value of spirituality guidance – not only the sacrament but also in their own ministry. He talked about the unconscious – how each of us has a conscious world and an unconscious world and how to bring the two together. It's really about developing a more holistic and, I would say, a holier people. I think that was his major contribution. That's what I learned from Morton Kelsey, my teacher at Notre Dame, and he in turn had learned it from Carl Jung. When Jung was first beginning to practice and write about his insights, a lot of church people, Christian people, were seeking his guidance.

I value the way in which the unconscious reveals itself through the movement of dreams and visions. Jung was one who, I think, provided a map into the great mystery of our inner life. In many ways today we are trying map our universe by looking outward. Jung was the one who started pointing inward and reminded us of the need to name some of those inner energies, archetypes. He provides something--not a final map at all, but a map. His own followers, the people who are following his tradition, are continuing to contribute to that map and the reading of symbols. There's a great deal in Jung about the inner life. It includes the collective unconscious and the role of ancestors. With my students I speak about the need to trace our ancestors because they live within us. I ask them, "What is your family of origin like?" "What are your family's traditions – those tribal memories?" That's an important aspect of this recovery.

Jung presupposes the importance of dialogue in psychology and spirituality. I think it was something in his own vision that attracted people to continue exploring the value and meaning of symbols. Ancient people saw symbols in their dreams and visions. Native Americans talk about vision quests, for example. If you depend on a rationalistic mindset, you miss out on so much of the non-rational aspect of reality and of ourselves. Looking at the value of symbols – the meaning of them in our dreams, for example, or in our history, can provide a much more holistic and wholesome view.

I'll just close with the interest I had in exploring stories. I'm into Celtic spirituality but when I first began to read the stories of the Celtic saints, or the saints in general, some of the historians were saying, "These are superstitions. There is no value to them whatsoever." From the Jungian perspective, however, when I began to explore the stories I of course found they are full of symbols. And what they are talking about? From my perspective, at least, it is the world of the inner life rather than whether the people actually did everything "out there." But of course knowing what they're describing in terms of symbolic language is to know that that inner-life has its effect on their outer-world

Catherine Michaud, Theology

Two things have struck me as I was listening to both Ed and David. I really appreciate your integration and appreciation of the integration of these two disciplines. Ed, yours is deep. As you were speaking I was thinking of a quote from Jung that I like so much from *Man and His Symbols*. He says, “Within the Roman Catholic church there is still the care of the soul’s welfare.” He was thinking about specifically dealing with that in our world and dealing with it symbolically. And he was speaking about the sacrament of reconciliation specifically. But he said that what was happening in our world – and he wrote this some time ago – is the drift away from the religious experience connected to those symbols – to the psychological. He said there are more Jews and Protestants that go to psychiatrists than there are Catholics. I would wonder about that today.

In dealing with spirituality with my students there are three problems that I see. One is a kind of utilitarianism that characterizes our culture. We’re very practical and we think immediately in terms of fixing things. So spirituality necessarily gets lumped into one more self-help technique. And, in fact, to help my students not to think of spirituality as something that is useful is a mind-bending experience. It usually doesn’t work.

The second problem that I see or at least challenge has to do with the relationship between spirituality and religion. I am more and more distressed by that disconnect. Because I think what happens with spirituality that is disconnected from religion is a loss of tradition – a loss of the very roots that supply tools for interpreting those inner experiences. I didn’t even think of it until Ed was talking. I carried this book from my graduate course, *Doors of the Sacred*, because I need to work on it this afternoon, and it’s a wonderful historical introduction to the sacramental system. What he deals with, in depth, is the whole symbol system that the tradition carries and uses. So, built into this religious system are some mechanisms for mental health as well as spiritual growth and integration. Therein is the problem with the separation of spirituality from religion.

The third difficulty relates to that and I think is very much being illustrated for us today is a church that was separated from good mental health practices. So when David talks about the discipline of psychology losing its mind and its soul – well, in a way the church was doing something similar – of losing its psychology. When is re-integration going to happen and how – I don't know. But I think there was a point in time when there was a little more health in certain pockets within Christendom. I'm thinking, for example, of St. John of the Cross-whose ascent of Mt. Carmel with its description of the two dark nights, does such a fine psychological analysis. He directs the director in how to deal with people who are coping with what we would call depression today. And we would medicate it because we're very practical and rather utilitarian and not too trusting of those experiences that take us into the dark where symbols are.

So the question is what do I try to offer my students in this course that I teach regularly – Christian spirituality? There is a point in the course in which we deal with the relationship between mental health and spirituality. I try to keep it simple and clear by dealing with five major components or facets of mental health that ultimately affects the health of one's spirituality. Those five components really flow out of anthropology. They flow out of the understanding of the human person as the image of G-d – as infinitely valuable – as waiting to be, throughout life, guided into the full acceptance of that identity. None of come from fully perfect families and so, of course, there are situations in which that affirmation doesn't really happen fully. So, what does the child do but adapt? And they carry those adaptations into adult life. Those adaptations end up being, in some sense, malfunctions. This is where I talk about the five components.

The first one is the ability to just treasure oneself. And someone who has adapted to a world that does not embrace her as fully valuable is probably going to come into adulthood as something of a control freak – managing everybody else's opinion of her and their feelings. That's where her value is – in what others will think of her because she hasn't quite come to that full comfortable acceptance of herself. The healthy move is – and in spirituality we always are hopeful – that indeed, if one takes on this project, of growing spiritually, this really can – “I really can do something about my own personal

integration and growth. So I have to learn what it means to take care of myself so that I don't have to manage everybody else's perceptions of me."

The second point has to do with – it's an adaptation as well and it has to do with the ability to maintain healthy personal boundaries – being able to contain oneself and protect oneself physically, psychology, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, and sexually. Indeed if that younger person isn't valued for who they are, which is vulnerable at its beginnings – If that vulnerability is not treasured, is not respected – then indeed the adaptation that comes into life (into adult life) is poor boundaries. And that can end up being a problem with victim/offender issues in its exaggerated forms. To learn how to practice putting on, consciously, and maintaining healthy personal boundaries, has something to do with spirituality because it has to do with the containment of rejection of the self – that sacred being.

The third component is probably the core of it all – of mental health. It has to do with being able to own one's own reality. We are being realistic, in other words, of being able to honestly perceive and know who I am physically, intellectually, spirituality, emotionally, psychology, sexually. And that means, really, being able to accept the fact that I am not perfect, that my imperfections are part of who I am, that my humility is not shame – it's simply to be grounded in my being and in this world – and I have a right to be here. It means having the ability to experience my own vulnerability. This one is so important to spirituality because if I cannot own my own reality – if, in fact, I have to hide my imperfections – how am I going to stand before the transcendent, before the being that knows me deeply? So this particular component is kind of a hinge aspect for spirituality.

The fourth one (which is kind of a sad result of a male adaptation or an adaptation one has to make when those early beginnings are not the smoothest) has really to do with knowing how to take care of myself -- to meet my own needs – to get my needs met legitimately. If I don't get that on straight then, often what happens, I either end up with physical ailments or with addictions because coming into this world, not getting my

needs met, means I probably have a backlog of feelings that are not attended to. And so I'm going to want to medicate those things and somehow figure out ways to cope with them. And some people don't have good coping mechanisms. They actually become mentally ill. So this self-care has to reach into all those areas of the self as well – intellectual, spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional. And how is that done? What I tell my students is (and this leads us into the area of discernment of spirits)... I tell them that the beginning place is to learn to value your feelings – to listen to them – that they alone are gifts from G-d to tell you how to take care of this person. Your body tells you when you're hungry – your stomach hurts. Listen to it. It tells you when to eat. Spiritually and psychology – listen to the feelings. Each feeling will give you a gift of wisdom about what you need to do to take care of that self. When that self is taken care of, she wants to be healthy -- she will tend toward health.

The final concern has to do with one's capacity for intimacy. I think it flows probably from just difficulty maturing. If a child isn't allowed simply to be a child and to do the business of a child, they come into the world with kind of a foggy understanding of who the self is and can be erratic in the expression of that self -- and in fact doesn't know moderation in the expression of self. Consequently, entering into relationships with other people can be a very stormy thing where one experiences mood swings from raging to hiding. None of this facilitates intimacy. Intimacy itself is the key component for spirituality. What we understand in our Christian tradition is that the G-d we know is an intimacy hound – a G-d who is closer to us than we are to ourselves – a G-d who is in connection with that inner-self at all times (according to Jung).

Susan

What a great way to lead into what Mary Ann does, working one-on-one with students in the counseling area where you do kind of come up against that intersection of psychology and spirituality. I'm curious about that.

Mary Ann McLeod, Director, Counseling Center

Catherine, this sounds like what my everyday life is meant to do – to deal with the issues of mental health that you described so beautifully. I'm going to speak here from a

practical perspective, not drawing on theory as much as the others of you have. When students come to see us in the counseling center they come because they are in pain. We see that as an opportunity, because the very fact that a student has come in to the counseling center indicates that she is aware that there is something wrong in her life, something she is not satisfied with. There is something she is in pain about, something she is not happy with. On our intake form we ask students the reason for their visit. We have about 28 different reasons and some students check them all. Frequently students check one or two primary things. Examples are academic difficulties, difficulties with relationships, self-esteem, stress or anxiety, depression, eating concerns and spiritual concerns.

When they come to the counseling center, many students do not check spiritual concerns. But when you actually begin speaking to them, when you meet them as individuals – as human beings—you find they frequently are dealing with questions of meaning in their lives, feelings of emptiness, feelings of discontent. They may not frame it in this light. They may come in with a diagnosis and – you were talking about utilitarianism –I think this happens so often because of how the whole healthcare system has evolved and the way is treating mental health. In many of the professional organizations I belong to there has been a great deal of discussion about whether we have sold our birthright (in a sense) for insurance money. The way mental health concerns are put into diagnostic categories in the medical model is often inimical to dealing with the underlying malaise or pain. But students do frequently, or most frequently, come in with a desire for us to fix a symptom. “I am anxious. I feel anxiety. I feel depression. I don’t want to feel it, this is uncomfortable. I don’t like it. It’s messing up my life. I can’t do the things that I am supposed to do. Please fix it.” And the most frequent suggestion that they have about fixing it, of course, is medication. They frequently come to us already having medication prescribed by other healthcare practitioners Sometimes they come in and say, “I have this medication but it’s not helping me much. Give me another medication.” Often our work is just to engage the student. Our students range in age from 18 to 60, in very different periods of readiness to examine some of the deeper issues in their lives. They often also frame their lives as pursuit of happiness or success. So they want us to help them find

some secret to be successful -- often in a materialistic sort of frame. "Make me a more effective student. Make me a better competitor. Make me -- what have you."

I don't mean to sound as though medication is never appropriate. There are some mental illnesses in which medication is extremely helpful in controlling symptoms so that the individual can function and can address the more profound questions. But in my opinion, I think that the pendulum has swung way too far in the direction of medicating dissatisfaction -- medicating spiritual rumblings, spiritual feelings. I read an article not long ago written by a clinician, a Unitarian. Its title was "Sacred Anxiety." He was writing about something I have felt for many years: Looking at the symptom is one thing, but it's very important to form a "holding environment" so that the individual is able to endure the symptom, or endure the anxiety, endure the feeling enough to be able to look more deeply so they don't stop at that level and can ask the questions about their lives. Questions about meaning but not in the way that our culture often suggests--I want to know why I'm like this--which in their mind means, "I want to fix blame," and therefore fix the feelings. I mean actually honoring the spiritual needs underlying anxiety or the depression, the sadness, the addiction. It is difficult working in our culture today to find students who are willing to do that. And, of course, the whole structure of our counseling center here works against deep exploration because we offer short-term counseling. Short-term counseling can be very effective for many concerns. On the other hand, we are not collecting insurance and we have a wonderful environment here at the college, which does value spirituality and wholeness. Therefore if a person is interested and wanting to explore more deeply we do have some opportunities to work with them longer-term, which allows time to address some of the deeper questions of meaning.

Ed, when you were talking about spirituality and religion--I really don't have any authority to speak about this--I think a difference is that sometimes religion seems to be the container and spirituality the contents. The form or the structure needs the living contents or, as you said, the living spirit within. It should be (one hopes) that the container is somewhat flexible but still offers form. And in some ways I think

psychotherapy is similar. In fact, many theorists have talked about it as “holding environment.”

Catherine, when you were speaking about valuing the self and also being able to be intimate – I think that’s also extremely important in psychotherapy because most of our effort is to enable the person to explore their feelings and to create a bond or an alliance – an intimacy with a counselor. It takes time and resources. It is becoming somewhat harder to fund.

Susan

What I have been hearing here is really the effect on all of our lives of this scientific approach, the swing toward measurement and the physicality of psychology and mental health. The practical piece of it is what Mary Ann faces in the work she does. We have this disconnection--I’m hearing the desire to make some connections -- the connections that you talked about Ed in the ability to look at dreams and the work of the soul. And Catherine, you’re working with your students and helping them see what the possibilities are.

David

You mentioned the Metaphysical Club, William James, John Dewey, etc. The philosophy that grew out of that group is called pragmatism, which is directly connected to utilitarianism, which goes back to the 18th century Enlightenment, which in turn started the Enlightenment Crusade. It’s considered America’s homegrown philosophy. Two other really quick points. I’m hearing two processes that I found very useful to think about in terms of the dynamics between spirituality & psychology. One is secularization; for example, the tendency to take a disorder like hysteria that used to be in the domain of religion, and might be known as holy madness or some other term, and turn it into a secular phenomena connected to mental health. You were alluding to this, Ed -- a more ancient way where images and dreams were actually used to facilitate growth in mental health. Now people that have these experiences are often medicated. The growth in the

influence of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychological Disorders) encroaches on areas that used to be the bane of the soul.

But there's a second process just as interesting and that's sacralization--taking phenomena that were previously secular (or defined in a secular way) and then imbuing them with spirituality. Jung sacralized the unconscious by rooting it in the spirit. I hear this in Catherine's descriptions of taking mental health concepts and sacralizing them by placing the self – rather than in a materialistic framework – in a spiritual framework. In wonderful ways, she is weaving mental health concepts into a spiritual and religious process. For those of us who look at secularization and feel like we're losing something, there's this other process accomplished by people with spiritual lives, who are reclaiming this material. Currently, with the DSM, several psychologists keen to these issues are trying to wrestle a new diagnostic category called spiritual crisis. It's a little bit of a step – recognizing there's a connection between spirituality & mental health. It's another step toward sacralizing a world that many feel has become too secular.

Ed

My sense with all of this is that we do have an appreciation of science and its contribution as well as spirituality. I know from the students I encounter in the Masters programs in theology and the M. A. O. L. program here at the college there's something missing in current practice of counseling or therapy. If they can't talk about spirituality or acknowledge its presence in the healing process they're feeling that something is being left out. There are a lot of people in the work force who are looking for spiritual resources in making career or vocation choices.

The culture we come out of assumes a utilitarian, pragmatic approach to things. The problem becomes this: only if something works do we consider its significance. The other side of it is that there are practical implications for spirituality. It enriches lives. From ancient traditions we know it's not just for personal integration of the individual, it's for the tribe. A person who's in touch with these sources is going to be making significant contributions to the health and spirituality of the tribe.

Catherine

I find myself thinking about how we think about knowledge because of this whole thing about the connection between spirituality and wholeness and the discussion about higher education. Higher education and science, and reductionism, and specialization – how do we think about all of this in terms of our own work – our own selves? How do we not give up expertise – because I think it’s an important thing? But expertise has often become equated to reductionistic – over-specialized, sometimes – versions of knowledge. The people around this table are creatively addressing it, but it’s a huge societal problem.

Mary Ann

It’s important to name the ways people here are doing it. Because I see that we have it going on here but we don’t always know, institutionally, what to do with it or how to claim ourselves that way.