

## **On the Experience of Psychoanalysis as Spiritual Practice**

When I talk about the spiritual perspective that has guided my analytic work for many years, I am often asked how the way I practice differs from the usual way psychoanalysis is approached. Two other questions come my way with some frequency as well: Is a spiritual approach to psychoanalysis still psychoanalysis? And: Are there specific techniques that define the spiritual approach? These are provocative questions. I will try to answer them in turn, elaborating along the way on the idea of psychoanalysis as a spiritual practice. Before I do that, though, let me distinguish between two ways I'll be using the term "practice". The first refers to the way analysts work, either in general or individually. The second refers to what has long been called "spiritual practice".

I will stipulate a definition of spirituality as: referring to the experience of a transcendent dimension in life and an embrace of things which are sacred, including deep feelings, values, and moral inclinations. Martsof and Mickley (1998) describe the scope of spirituality as: **Meaning** – making sense of situations; deriving purpose and meaning in life; **Values** – to discover what one believes, and to develop standards and ethics that one cherishes; **Transcendence** – experience, awareness, and appreciation of a "transcendent dimension" to life beyond self; **Connecting** – increased awareness of a connection with self, others, God/Spirit/Divinity, and nature; **Becoming** – an unfolding of life that calls for reflection and experience; including a sense of who one "is" and how

one knows. Spiritual *practices*, therefore, are the disciplines and techniques, many traditional, that an individual follows in pursuit of these goals

Psychoanalysis may be *spiritual* within the scope outlined by Martslof and Mickley (1998) and as defined above. But it is neither inherently. Traditional analytic approaches may serendipitously capture some of the defining characteristics of a spiritual approach, but they do not identify a spiritual goal as its aim.

What makes psychoanalysis a spiritual practice, therefore, is its aim. The goal of psychoanalysis spiritually practiced is not the resolution of neurosis or psychosis or personality disorder. It is not the improvement of the patient's life or relationships, or the attainment of any other outer prize such as career success or more free time. Neither is the goal the adventure of psychoanalysis -- the quest to expand one's understanding of oneself or one's life -- although this is closer to the mark. The aim of psychoanalysis spiritually practiced is to liberate the qualities of the self that are wise, inspired, and moral -- the qualities that, ultimately and paradoxically, transcend the distinction between self and not-self. This transcendence enables a powerful empathic appreciation of the other as a separate being, and at the same time the mystical experience of unity with that other. When the liberation of this core self is the focus of treatment, psychoanalytic practice transcends the usual, the conventional, and the traditional, and can be considered spiritual.

## **The Core Self and the Psychoanalytic Tradition.**

Both psychoanalytic and spiritual traditions recognize in the existence of a core self and within it a dynamic tension between intrinsic coherence and stability, and between firm and fluid boundaries between self and other. This paradoxical balance accounts for the characteristic transpersonal qualities of the core self. When the dualities of self and other are not denied, but bridged, there is a simultaneous capacity for empathic identification and clear perspective- and ecstatic union of affect and visions that makes for a rich wisdom and ethicality. Malevolence, parochialism, selfishness, vanity, and other such other-denying character traits are experienced through extended identification as hurtful to the self. This clarity of vision permits malevolence, parochialism, selfishness, vanity and other such character-denying traits to be seen for what they are, and experienced through extended identification as hurtful to the self. When real understanding and empathy are possible, appearances become less important, and rules and laws are secondary to the dictates of the heart.

I want to make it clear that the transpersonal position of the core self is not the same thing as a loss of self; it is not due to weak ego boundaries, or to poor reality testing in an ego impaired by overwhelming negative affects or negative internalized objects. On the contrary; liberation of the core self depends on ego strength. An overwhelmed ego defends itself as long as it can and then capitulates. Only when self-defensive anxieties, impulses, and wishes have been significantly resolved can the ego surrender itself to the core self, with its firm but fluid boundaries between self and everything else. The psychoanalytic literature to some extent recognizes these distinctions; it does not however, address the matter of volitional surrender to an elemental personality structure analogous to a core self as I describe it here.

## Psychoanalytic Perspectives Analogous to the Core Self

Marion Milner (1952) in her early work gives play to the notion of self / non-self fluidity, considering it not a pathological regression, but a state of abundance with provisional aspects {life affirming and restorative properties} that aid in self and object transformation (p. 188). Marion Milner was herself something of a psychoanalytic mystic who actively pursued what I am calling spiritual goals. She always looking to overcome the boundaries between self and other and was able to articulate the self/other paradoxical overlap at a much earlier time than most analysts.

Michael Eigen (1983) offers the term *dual union* to refer to the simultaneous presence of these two aspects of the self/other experience -- the experience of distinction, and the experience of union. Eigen believes that this basic experiential structure of dual union is characteristic of the self across all of its developmental levels.

Therefore, neither separateness nor union are bedrock constructs of human experience. It is perhaps more appropriate to speak of a two-in-oneness or one-in-twoness. Pure merger and isolation are abstract terms which do not characterize living experience. Areas of union and distinction occur together, with one or the other more emphasized in a given situation. In this context, Christian conceptions of a triune God or communion (co-union) appear to reflect a genuine advance in mystical and psychological description. Here a sense of division and union coexist fully, neither possible without the other. Whatever its theological function, it would seem this kind of formulation expresses basic structural requirements a theory of the self (or ego) must meet (Eigen,1983 pgs 423, 424).

Winnicott's notion of the *true self* and the core self have many elements in common. Both selves have in common that they are authentic and a seat of inspiration that belies and transcends the defensive experience of the lesser or, to Winnicott, false self (1965).

Winnicott also suggests that the true self is fundamentally morally compassed; that is, that it “carries a tendency for the development of guilt (1965, p. 25).” Winnicott's conception of aggression also supports the spiritual view that the core self is ethical and benign. For Winnicott (in contradistinction to the dual instinct theory of the later Freud), aggression was not an independent instinct. Winnicott equated it with activity and the life force and considered its primary function a benign one except to the extent that it is distorted into destruction by a less than facilitating environment. As Greenberg and Mitchell (1983) describe his view, “Aggression is a need for something in the external environment for the self to struggle with and bump up against. The aggression or "destruction" in Winnicott's late work on object usage is thus an innocent, nonbelligerent desire for engagement,” (p. 206). For Winnicott, therefore, the core self is not a dark and seething cauldron but a lively seeker out of connection.

Winnicott envisioned fluidity of self / non-self engagement through his concept of potential or transitional space. Transitional space is a metaphor for two simultaneous experiences- the experience of the self and the experience of evoking the other within the self. Because it is neither purely subjective nor purely objective but contains elements of both qualities, Winnicott recognized the transitional realm as inherently paradoxical. In his persistent focus on this paradox, he was seeking a perspective that could transcend the dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity, and honor “a third area of human living, one neither inside the individual nor outside in the world of shared reality” (1971, p. 110). Going on to discuss his version of a healthy self Winnicott states, “*This is the place I have set out to examine*, the separation which is not a separation but a form of union” (1971, p.115).

Christopher Bollas is another psychoanalyst who addresses issues of the core self. Bollas speaks of the *human idiom*, which he sees as the directional compass built into our existence, the progressive articulation of the true self through the use of objects in our environment. He defines the human idiom thusly: “The idiom of a person refers to the unique nucleus of each individual, a figuration of being that is like a kernel that can, under favourable circumstances, evolve and articulate (1989, p. 212).”

Bollas echoes a thinker that many do not consider a true psychoanalyst—Carl Jung. Jung’s influence has long had to be dissembled lest it offend the psychoanalytic gatekeepers, but even so his ideas have insinuated themselves over time into the work of “acceptable” writers such as Bollas (1989, 1999), Eigen (1992, 1993, 1998), and, even earlier, Bion (1970). Perhaps now he can be accepted more openly, and those who are trained as Jungians more readily accepted into our psychoanalytic societies. This, I might add, is probably more to our benefit than theirs.

Jung’s (1953) correlate of what I am calling the core self was the *Self*, with a capital S. Jungian archetypes are inherited, innate, and a priori modes of perception, linked to instincts which regulate perception and are common to all mankind. The Self is an archetype and the organizing center of the personality. It organizes, orders, and directs the personality toward self realization. It balances the conscious and unconscious minds, and is responsible for the transcendent function of harmonizing opposing trends within the personality. Open to an influence by the collective unconscious, which can be described as the matrix of inherited mythology and thinking processes in general, the Self is deeply interconnected with others and with all of life while still maintaining its individuality. The ultimate goal of the developing personality, Jung believed, is to educe and embrace the *Self*.

Jeffrey Rubin (1999) emphasizes the non-self aspects of the self / non--self paradox. He does not entirely repudiate the fixed or coherent facets of selfhood, but he values and concentrates on the fluid aspects of the self. "Psychoanalysis needs different theories of self--theories that elude reifying and reductionistic trends; that value emergent and evolving as well as fixed and determinate facets of selfhood; and that are polyphonic or many-sided, rather than monological or one dimensional (p. 153)". He discusses a *non--self centered subjectivity* that is reminiscent of what I am calling the fluidness of the core self's boundaries. "Non--self centered subjectivity . . . is a psychological/spiritual phenomena implicated in a wide range of adaptive behaviors ranging from art to psychoanalytic listening to intimacy. It is an unconstricted state of being , a non--self preoccupied, non-self-annulling immersion in whatever one is presently doing in which there is heightened attentiveness, focus, and clarity. Action and response are unconstrained by self concern, thought, or conscious effort, and restrictive self identifications and boundaries are eroded" (p, 118).

Heinz Kohut (1984) also had a version of the self which is analogous to the core self, that he called the "healthy self". The healthy self is also sometimes called by Kohut the nuclear self. Kohut posits a developmental progression in humans that proceeds toward fulfillment unless interrupted by traumatic experience (1984, 1977). He suggests that the healthy self will, in spite of traumatic experiences, "mobilize its striving to complete its development, that is, that it will try again to establish an uninterrupted tension arc from basic ambitions, via basic talents and skills, towards basic ideals. The tension arc is the dynamic essence of the complete, non-defective self; it is a conceptualization of the structure whose establishment makes possible a creative-productive, fulfilling life" (1984, pp. 4, 5).

As in Bollas and Jung, in Kohut's view there is a human essence that strives to be productive, creative and fulfilled. The healthy self is a structure that exists from birth, a fundamental aspect of the self, a human essence. It is sturdy and resilient and not easily subject to fragmentation or disruption. A healthy self, Kohut says, "is a structure that – except perhaps as an outcome of the most severe forms of traumatization such as prolonged confinement in concentration camps and other protracted dehumanizing experiences—is not prone to become fragmented, or disharmonious during maturity, at least not severely and/or for long periods of time" (Kohut 1984, p. 70).

Kohut's notion of a healthy self contains the idea of a fluid and empathic boundary between self and other. Kohut speaking of analysis and the liberation of the healthy self states that "The third step -- the essential one because it defines the aim and the result of the cure -- is the opening of a path of empathy between self and object, specifically the establishment of empathic in-tuneness between self and self object on a mature adult level. This new channel of empathy permanently takes the place of the formerly repressed or split-off archaic narcissistic relationship...(1984 pp, 65-66.)

### **Varieties of Core Self formulations in Spiritual Literature**

These psychoanalytic formulations have many correlations with the concepts of the self as they have come down through mainstream spiritual traditions. In Buddhism, for example, what I call the core self may be called by different names -- the "True Self," "The Diamond Self," or the "Great Self." By whatever name, this idea of the self contains the paradox of the self / no-self distinction. The Buddha Matrix within this tradition

implies the experience of boundarylessness between self and other. Meister Eckhart the Christian mystic spoke of internality as externality and that inherent in our deepest nature is the interconnectedness between each of us, the other, and all of life. Martin Buber's I – thou stresses the mutual holistic, existence of union between two beings.

In Gnosticism, the deeper self is the “pearl beyond price,” which awaits liberation from the bonds of the “demiurge,” or lesser god, that keeps us enslaved in materialism and other negative character faults.

Similarly, the Kabala teaches that we all have a divine spark that is obscured by the negative character traits of the “lower self,” and that the spiritual task is to liberate the divine spark from this shroud.

Other spiritual schools maintain similar concepts of a core self struggling to free itself from the encumbrances of character defects and compulsive attachment. Sufism has the “essential self,” Hinduism the “atman,” Taoism the “greater self.” It is not necessary to belabor the point further, only to point out the ubiquity of the concept across spiritual disciplines. Always the goal is to drop into, unify with, or liberate this core self.

Ubiquitous, too, are the spiritual practices aimed at furthering this goal. The traditions above teach disciplines intended to wear away such character flaws as dependency, malevolence, arrogance, envy, and materialism, and to release the kind, loving, moral, and inspired self that is imprisoned by them. This liberated self then is able to surrender itself to the greater other.

The goal of Buddhism, for example, is the attainment of Nirvana, the state of peace or bliss that accrues from nonattachment to egoism, worldliness, craving, and hate.

It can also be seen as a nonattachment to the self which results in the no-self experience or the surrender of the self to emptiness of self concern.

A problem arises due to various uses of the term attachment. In eastern philosophy attachment means being compulsively identified with negative character traits or a view of the self as better than or even other than the other. So the various eastern spiritual schools emphasize detachment from these perspectives and identifications. In the west attachment means the bonding experience between self and others. These are very different uses of the word. The Eastern usage often elicits indignation in Westerners who are not aware of the alternate use of the term. I do not know of any Buddhist (or Christian or Jewish) mystic who would suggest you shouldn't feel bonded with others. In fact paradoxically when you are detached from an egoistic overidentification with your self you can more easily merge into bonding with others.

These are universal concerns. Many spiritual traditions over the generations have developed practices for liberating the divine spark; they include the ones I've mentioned above, and range beyond them from such familiar endeavors as rigorous study of the Torah and meditation to less well-known techniques like Kabbalistic numerology. Psychoanalysis itself, as Freud practiced it, is thought by some (Bakan, 1974) to have sprung from the mystical Jewish cultural heritage -- steeped in Kabbalistic lore and practice -- out of which Freud came.

Given the number of spiritual schools, and now the number of psychoanalytic theorists, who recognize an essential core self, it does not seem like much of a reach to suppose that we are talking about something powerfully real in human experience. The core self may not be viewed identically in all these traditions, but there are large areas of commonality and overlap in the characteristics attributed to it: wisdom, inspiration,

creativity, empathy, ecstatic sense of reality, and ethicality. Buddhism's "eight-fold path," Taoism's "middle way," and psychoanalysis can all be techniques for liberating the core self by decathecting attachments to the character faults that cripple it --greed, envy, spite, materialism, and any form of malevolence that clouds our love. Psychoanalysis, when practiced spiritually, aims at ever greater liberation of the core self. The resolution of a conflict or a neurotic defense is a stepping-stone on the way to this goal.

The second of the questions I posed earlier was: Is psychoanalysis spiritually practiced still psychoanalysis? Freud and Jung differed greatly over this concern. Although the departure of Jung left a spirituality vacuum in psychoanalysis, abandoning the field to Freud's "scientific" ideas, it is important to remember that it was not over matters of spirituality that Freud and Jung essentially came to grief, but over instinct theory. And that it was Jung who left traditional psychoanalysis, not Freud who kicked him out. To reject all spiritual concerns in psychoanalysis would be to preclude much of the work of Bion (1970), Bollas (1989, 1999), Milner (52), and Eigen (1999, 1992, 1993, 1995) and other theorists of their stripe as well as Jung (1953). Jung believed that many of the dilemmas of life have roots in spiritual questions about the meanings that one finds and embraces (or does not find or embrace) in life. I think his sentiment still echoes today in an underground yet emergent fashion.

My position is that when one uses psychoanalytic tools and techniques, one is practicing psychoanalysis. The techniques of religious or contemplative traditions (such as meditation and prayer) while beneficial practices are, at present, something different, and have not been woven into the fabric of psychoanalytic practice. The psychoanalytic and spiritual traditions may to some extent share a goal, but their means to the goal differ. Contemplative practices do not usually lead one into the exploration of unconscious

negative material but do promote detachment from conscious problematic identifications and negative character traits. Detaching from problematic material is different from working problematic material through by unraveling and challenging basic pathogenic beliefs, conflicts, and deficits. The associative process in psychoanalysis leads the patient into pathogenic beliefs, reenactments, and ineffective compromise formations drawing them out and making them conscious. It is possible that both traditions may be able to be harmonized. The detachment sought after in contemplative practices may sequentially follow an elaborative psychoanalytic process. Whether the practice of psychoanalysis and contemplative practices could be effectively harmonized and still be psychoanalysis remains an open question. Perhaps a new category of contemplative psychoanalysis will someday be birthed, but that is another question.

Finally, my third question; is there any compliment of techniques that defines a psychoanalytic approach as specifically spiritual? My answer is no. Analysts from just about every theoretical school can approach the liberation of the core self by way of a preferred theory and practice, be it classical, Kleinian, Bionian, Kohutian, or relational. But some theoretical approaches lend themselves better to the project than others. Ego psychology would be the most difficult to reconcile with a spiritual approach. Freudian psychology with its darker view of human nature is not an easy fit with psychoanalysis as a spiritual practice since Freud's ego has to manage or modify the "cauldron" of the instincts. But with the theoretical accommodations of Heinz Hartmann who formulated the notion of the matrix of ego and id with its conflict free functioning, ego psychology is more easily adaptable.

The relational perspective lends itself to spiritual aims most readily, since it starts from a two-person psychology. The relational view emphasizes the mind itself as a

relational construct, which can be studied only in the context of interaction with other 'minds' (Aron, p. 52). Even here, however, the aim of relational psychoanalysis is not inherently the liberation of a core self with an innate proclivity to expand beyond itself. It is more narrowly focused on the changes imparted through a dialectical mutual interchange between analyst and analysand. However, since the relational perspective inherently privileges the self-other matrix, it seems the easiest fit with a spiritual aim.

At times both the analysand and the analyst hold the intention to of liberating the core self from the shackles of negative intentionality, character faults and dysfunctional psychological defenses. There are times when the patient doesn't share this aim. It is still possible for an analyst to hold the spiritual aim in reserve, much the same way we may hold in reserve other aims for an analysand until such time as the analysand is ready to address them -- if he ever does. It works the other way, too. At times the analysand waits for the analyst to allow spiritual aim. Sometimes it never comes. Sometimes the analyst will allow it.

Accepting that psychoanalysis as spiritual practice cannot be tied down to any particular technique; I will try to give a picture of what a spiritual approach might look like. Any analysis that helps heal psychological ills is a step toward the spiritual goal of liberation of the core self. There are points, however, when analysis approached as a spiritual practice may take a decidedly different turn from a traditional analysis.

## **Barry**

Barry is a young psychiatrist in analysis with me. He holds the idea of approaching psychoanalysis spiritually in his mind. He frequently talks about a longing to

break down his separating walls that keep him emotionally separated from others and deprive him of what he believes to be meaning in his life.

*Barry:* I feel there is this wall between me and others. I am on one side where I feel strong and secure. I feel competent and I can handle others. But I have to be on guard, cautious and aware, so that I can deal with their criticisms and competitiveness. On the other side I am with people. It seems more peaceful and like I like people and I want to believe they like me. But there is a strange anxiety, like I will lose myself or float away.

*Franklin:* This might be just the place where traditional analysis ends and a spiritual outlook begins. You are strong, assertive. You can accept your aggression now, and your competitiveness. Your relationships work. But you feel cut off -- that you are in a place where you have to be *against* others, managing yourself and managing them. This cut-off defensiveness is beginning to feel foreign to you. On the other side, you begin to surrender. But with the emergence of peace and connectedness, you have an admixture of anxiety like you will disappear.

*Barry:* That's right. Being on this side, where I am against others, managing them feels safer in a way. But empty, cut off, not alive in the same way.

*Franklin:* Anytime you feel you are against anything, at war with anything you are under the spell of your defensiveness and fear. From the core of you, you know you don't have to feel this way. From your core, life can fit you like a glove, and relating to people can be expansive--not fearful. When you have to manage others you are still under a spell.

*Barry:* You know, I feel like I am floating -- floating away. Somehow I believe you but I feel I am losing myself to feel this way--to believe things are so benign.

Franklin: This is often how it feels. It feels like we will lose ourselves, so we resist it -- the flow, the melting. Really, life can feel like a stream that you float on rather than one you have to paddle against. Relationships are life, and you can float with them or fight them.

An analyst not working from a spiritual perspective might have approached Barry differently. The analyst might have considered Barry's defensiveness and tendency to manage a defense against his own aggression or perhaps a "reality situation" in which people were being aggressive toward him. In my interpretation I reflected back to him that he was now in a good position to relate differently to his aggression and competitiveness. "You are strong, assertive, and can accept your aggression and competitiveness". He had spent a great deal of time in fact years accepting, regulating and even embracing aggressive aspects of himself. This was a new choice point in his therapy. We could stay with affect regulation and awareness of aggression or we could move in this direction which his aggression and fear had prohibited-a joyful surrender to a union of self with others.

This is just one way that the spiritual approach can go. There are transitional places in the analytic work that contains this ecstatic feeling of being beyond oneself; at first it may seem unsettling or frightening. On another occasion I was running a group that included a man who was very frightened of relationships with women. During one group he therapeutically ventilated his rage at a particular woman. As she stood in front of him he ranted you bitch, you nasty bitch I hate you and every one of you. You stand there and are smug and cut off, I hate you so much... then he broke down and began to cry. You could see him melt into softer feelings, they were very hard for him to handle. As he was crying he began to say over and over again, "You are so beautiful, it hurts, I

can't handle it. You are just so beautiful, so beautiful" He sobbed and sobbed. It was visible that he was able to make a profound feeling connection to and appreciation of this woman who seemed to be emblematic of all women to him. The breakthrough from his separateness into a rapturous amorous connection with this woman was very powerful but very difficult for him to experience.

Traditionalists might view this passionate embrace of a hated other as a defensive retreat from rage, but it is worth noting that this man was expressing his rage fully and passionately; I do not believe that this man had a problem embracing the full extent of his aggression. I think on the contrary that experiencing his aggression fully had opened him up to the possibility of going beyond his defensiveness, and surrendering to the ecstatic amorous experience with this woman. Many analyses contain these points of new possibility, and the analyst must always make a decision about how to handle them. The traditional way is well known, this is another.

A woman in her mid thirties has been working on her masochistic orientation in life for a number of years. She has come to the point where she grasps that this position of suffering and martyrdom in her life is a self imposed prison. An understanding of the detrimental effect this has on herself and her relationship has been woven together and elaborated. She has realized it is an attempt to punish others and life by her suffering, but she has found actually changing her life position very difficult. One day she brings in a dream featuring the Missouri River. The germinal theme of the dream was the double entendre of the Missouri River being the "Misery River". Some the connection of the dream symbolism resonated from surface to depth in her in a way that was felt to be deeply meaningful. The next day she came into therapy and reported a deeper acceptance of

herself than she had ever experienced and a rather peak experience that transcended her “normal” conscious experience.

Betty: I was walking last night and thinking about how I didn't have to be imprisoned in my misery anymore. I felt “you know Betty you don't have to spoil your happiness and relationships anymore it's a trap you don't have to be that way. Then the leaves on the trees started to rustle and I had the strangest feeling they were saying hi and that everything is ok. I felt sort of in love with everybody and everything. I saw an old man working and I thought-I love him”.

This rather transcendent experience seems reminiscent of Freud's “oceanic feeling”. Freud however pathologized the state and suggested, “feelings of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole”-is a regressive flight from reality and pathological return to maternal unity (Freud, 1930, p. 39, cited in Spezzano and Gargiulo, 1997, p. 11). It is clear this feeling for Betty was not a regressive flight but was a liberating experience that helped free her of defensive misery which was fought for by painstaking psychoanalytic work.

These experiences of union are not always as dramatic as Betty's or the man in the group. At times they do seem to transcend "normal" consciousness, but at other times they just simply feel peaceful and right, allowing the patient to feel more grounded in a benign embrace of self and other. This deeply felt sense of caring and appreciation never fails to manifest a felt sense of ethical valuing of the other in its wake.

I do not wish to suggest for a minute that psychoanalysis *should* be practiced spiritually by anyone, or that practicing psychoanalysis spiritually is a “higher calling” than other kinds of analytic practice. Nor do I mean that it has to be one or the other. Any analyst could practice "traditionally" with some patients and "spiritually" with those

others who, as Kohut might say, seek liberation from a tragic life (1977 p. 238). I simply wish to suggest that it is possible to approach analysis spiritually without diminishing its rigor, its objectivity, or its empirical outlook -- if we mean by "empirical" the construction of hypotheses about specific defenses, conflicts, or relational enactments and the testing of these the hypotheses by the analysand's responses to our interventions.

I am not concerned with deities here, nor with individual beliefs in immortality, I will leave those questions to theologians. A spiritual approach does not require that the analysand or the analyst take any prescribed religious perspective, either theistic or atheistic. The aim of liberating the core self may be embraced by those who maintain a secular humanistic worldview as well as by people of more conventional casts of mind or of other competing outlooks. Spiritual development is not the sole purview of religion, and can be approached from a scientific and psychological point of view. Perhaps this article will speak to psychoanalysts who share my interest in the possible syncretism of psychoanalysis and spirituality, and may serve as a support for their work.

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