

**SPIRITUALLY SENSITIVE SOCIAL WORK:
KEY CONCEPTS AND IDEALS**

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ABSTRACT

Social work is in the process of recovering from collective soul loss. Compassion, justice, and helping with are traditionally spiritual ways of living. Spirituality is soulful living but social work has largely become disconnected from its spiritual roots. Spirituality involves understanding the interconnectedness of all people; compassionate concern rises from soulful awareness of interconnectedness and the realization that self and others are inseparable. Compassionate help is a natural way of life, and human birth right. Attempts to formalize, systematize and employ natural compassion through large scale social institutions is a dangerous undertaking that has cut social work off from the traditions of healers and helpers of all cultures. The move towards technocracy has divorced social work from natural helping. But the renewed interest in spirituality suggests that social work maybe rediscovering its soul. Spiritually moves us towards the realization of integration of all our aspects while being in connection and communication with all others.

Spirituality inspires a sense of mutual responsibility. The spiritually sensitive social worker is in harmony with the many stages and types of changes in human existence and is not close minded or confused by conflicting ideas. He/she realizes one must take responsibility for the effects of one's actions. Spiritual sensitivity fosters an ethic of mutual benefit and social justice rather than selfish one sided gain. The spiritually sensitive social worker is socially active and lives and acts in harmony with the processes social change.

This article will focus on the development of spiritually sensitive social work in the United States. One of the distinctive characteristics of the American situation is that people from many different religious and nonreligious spiritual backgrounds interact within the social service systems. No one religion is promoted by the state and all people are given the right to free exercise of religion. The social work profession has come to realize that we need an inclusive understanding of spirituality that respects its diverse religious and nonreligious expressions. Further, insights for theory and practice of social work come from many different secular and religious perspectives.

In part one, I will give an overview of historical trends in the connection between spirituality, religion, and social work in the United States. Then I will give brief definitions of the terms religion and spirituality, as commonly used in American social

work, and some implications for creative revisioning of the mission of social work. In part two, I will draw on key ideas about the nature of social change in Western and Eastern philosophies in order to provide a view of a person who is personally prepared to provide spiritually sensitive social work and social activism. This is not meant as a rigid prescription or sectarian belief. Rather, it is meant to serve as a thought provoking set of ideals and possibilities.

THE SOUL OF SOCIAL WORK

I will use the metaphor of "soul loss and soul retrieval." Many shamanistic spiritual ways identify "soul loss" as one of the major causes of physical and mental illness. Soul loss involves feelings of identity confusion and disorientation. One feels as though a crucial part of one's self has been lost. The soul has become detached, due to disharmony within oneself and between oneself and the universe. The soul wanders off, confused and lost. The remaining body and psyche lose their spiritual clarity, orientation, and balance. The person becomes half-dead psychologically if not also physically. Though alive, the person is nearly inanimate. Literally, from the Latin root, to be animated means to be enlivened by soul.

Most often, soul loss occurs because of some trauma that shocks the soul out of the body. For example, Cambodian (Khmer) and Hmong shamans in the United States have sometimes diagnosed refugee patients who feel severely distressed and

hopeless as suffering from soul loss or soul sickness, caused by the experience of mass destruction, rupture from homeland and ancestors, and break from sacred traditions. Sometimes soul loss may occur because of one's own failure to keep in proper relation with one's sacred ways, the spirits of ancestors, and the spiritual powers of earth and sky. In any case, soul loss involves a fragmenting and dissociation within the self and a feeling of alienation from spiritual sources of support and meaning. The cure is for the shaman to go on a soul journey to find the person's lost soul, to enlist the help of spiritual supports, and to bring the soul back to the person.

The profession of social work in the United States is in a process of recovering from collective soul loss. Many social work practitioners and scholars are now promoting this recovery of professional soul. I will recount some of the historical reasons for this loss of soul, the movement to retrieve the soul, and I will suggest some principles and ideals that might be able to guide our continuing work.

SPIRITUALITY, COMPASSION, AND SERVICE

All cultures have systematic ways of compassion, justice, and helping. Traditionally, these were based explicitly on spiritual ways of living. Most cultures do not have a separate word for religion or spirituality. Spirituality is just the way of life; it is the way people find meaning, moral guidance, and proper relationship between themselves,

all our fellow beings, and the great Mystery that infuses all. One might say that spirituality is soul-full living. Soulful awareness and living naturally yield a sense of compassion, the underlying motive for social work service.

The Navajo (Dine) people traditionally pray that people may walk in beauty, beauty within us and all around us. Walking in beauty means that the inherent beauty and sacredness of every being is recognized, enjoyed, and respected. Further, like the strands in a web, all things are woven together in a net of beauty. During traditional sings, or healing ceremonies, the distressed person is placed on a painting made of colorful sands which depicts the deities relevant to the situation. The sacred powers become one with this person and the other participants, restoring the balance and beauty that were lost.

Buddhism teaches about the interconnectedness of all by using the image of the god Indra's net. In this cosmic net, every strand is interconnected, with resplendent jewels at each connection point. The jewels reflect the glory of every other jewel. Every being is a jewel in this wondrous net. Compassionate concern for all these beings naturally arises from such a soulful awareness of beautiful, sacred interconnectedness. One's own self and all others are inseparable; the benefit of one is the benefit of all. The harm of one is the harm of all. With similar intuition, the Chinese Confucian sage, Chou Tun-I, said that the sage should regard all beings as brothers and sisters and

should reach out lovingly to help those in need.

Jesus said, feed the hungry, relieve the poor, visit the imprisoned, hunger for peace and righteousness. Someone asked Mother Teresa how she could tolerate working with lepers, the destitute, and the dying in seemingly insufferable conditions without complaint. She said that this was no problem as she saw Christ in each one's eyes. Mahayana Buddhism applies this ideal to all beings through the image of the Wisdom Being of Compassion, known in Chinese as Kwan Yin. Sometimes Kwan Yin is depicted as having a thousand eyes in order to see the suffering of all beings, a thousand hands in order to reach out to help all beings, and eleven heads depicting the myriad responses of compassion.

I mention these examples to give a brief glimpse into the experience that compassionate help is our natural way of life. Ways of compassion existed long before professional helping. Spiritually inspired compassion is the source of all genuine helping, whether informal or professional. Social work, medicine, the ministries, and other helping professions do not have a monopoly on helping, though often they try to legislate it, control it, license it, package it, and sell it. Natural compassion is our human birthright. Mencius said that if any person with a humane heart sees a baby dangerously close to falling into a well, that person will automatically go to save that child. That natural response, arising from our sense of

fundamental connectedness and commiseration with all else, is the heart and soul of social work.

SOCIAL WORK'S LOSS OF SOUL

Social work is an attempt to formalize, systematize, and apply natural compassion on a large scale through social institutions. This is a worthwhile but dangerous undertaking. Although compassion is the soul of social work, the very attempt to legislate, control, license, package, and sell it runs the risk of violating the soul. Lao Tze, the Chinese founder of Taoism, paradoxically said that immorality and cruelty came into being when codes of conduct and social control were invented. That is because we become dependent on social constructs of morality and lose our true nature. Natural compassion is reduced to artificial, bureaucratized, technocratic intervention as we become role-bound, rule-bound, categorized and socially controlled. Think for a moment about the metaphor of intervention, used so commonly to describe social work practice: an outsider enters a client's life and manipulates it. This is a militaristic metaphor, like paratroopers dropping out of the sky into a combat zone.

Professional social work in the United States clearly originated out of a soulful response of Jewish and Christian people to help the poor, the homeless, and distressed immigrants. Principles of charity, compassion, and community

preservation informed the Charity Organization Society, the Settlement House Movement, and the Jewish communal service movement. The spiritual aspect of human need and helping was acknowledged in the Council on Social Work curriculum policy statements as late as the 1960s (Canda, 1997).

The urge to professionalize and compete with other helping professions has led the social work away from its spiritual foundation. One reason was an understandably negative reaction to the tendency of some religiously based helpers to impose their own agendas on vulnerable people, through proselytization and moralistic judgmentalism. Another reason was a hope that supposedly scientific bases for helping would lead to social and behavioral remedies that had eluded the theological approaches. Further, the strong link forged between social work, government social welfare programs, and insurance companies pressured toward greater separation between anything that seemed to compromise church and state separation. These trends continue. We have unwittingly allowed ourselves to throw out the baby of spirituality with the bath water of sectarian rivalry.

We have cut ourselves off from our ancestors, the healers and helpers of all cultures who understood helping as a natural response and a sacred imperative. We have often denied or split off the spiritual aspects of ourselves and our clients. Now many social workers, are forced to find neat categories of pathology to label clients—and to

be sure that these are insurance reimbursable! In response to legitimate concerns with accountability, we are adopting capitalist, consumerist, fast food approaches to helping—the helping roles must be clearly and narrowly defined, the objectives clearly stated, the outcomes empirically measured, and all this within ten or less sessions. To complete the capitalist paradigm for helping, now the client is often called a consumer.

This move toward technocracy, the common professional allergy to spirituality, and the divorce from natural helping has gone far. Licensing boards in some states try to restrict traditional healers within religious and cultural groups who don't have the board-required academic degrees and licenses. Some state licensing boards have attempted to prohibit explicitly spiritually oriented social work. Some students have reported being ostracized by teachers and practicum instructors for trying to address spirituality with clients. Some academic colleagues have been forbidden to do research in this area. The social work profession has surely had good intentions in all these changes. But by cutting ourselves off from our spiritual roots and purpose, we have dehumanized ourselves and our clients. We create a living hell when we cut ourselves off from our souls and we deny the souls of our clients.

The Jewish existentialist theologian, Martin Buber, said that the way of love between people, mirroring the love between the divine and the human, is one of unconditional

love, a way of regarding each other as full and complete persons, with inherent worthiness of respect. Clients are not diagnostic categories or bundles of problems or dysfunctions. Each client, like each of us, is divine, soul-full. We have come to this condition of loss and confusion of soul largely because of an unwitting drift into self-denial, self-estrangement, and dispiritedness. Partly this was due to legitimate concerns with past mistakes and abuses of religiosity. But, some was due to a greedy impulse to compete for professional prestige, turf in the consumer market, and access to third party reimbursement from insurance companies and government programs.

But maybe this assessment is like blaming the victim. We are all victims of an industrial and post-industrial way of life that has driven us toward commodifying not only each other, but also the planet. Urban anonymous living, mass production and consumption patterns, breakdown of extended family and communities of support, and the craving for quick fixes, cheap highs, and personal gratification are social trends familiar to all of us in industrial and post-industrial societies. To a great extent, we have been traumatized by a planet-wide mass movement of spiritual alienation. An ecopsychologist, Chellis Glendinning (1994), speaks of recovery from western civilization. The American social work profession, and each of us impacted by modern spiritual alienation, needs to go through a process of recovery from the destructive aspects of Western Civilization.

RETRIEVING THE SOUL OF SOCIAL WORK

Now let me depart from this negative tone. While spiritual self-neglect and societal trauma have led to our profession's soul loss, the purpose of assessing soul loss is to opt for healing, not to dwell on the disease. There are many positive signs that suggest a recovery of soul is under way in social work. Many people are already recognizing the need to retrieve the soul of social work; courses on spirituality and social work such as those offered at the Interniversity Center for Post Graduate Studies show our common commitment to do this.

Marilyn Ferguson referred to an Aquarian Conspiracy, a trend in many disciplines and sectors of society to shift toward holistic and spiritually-attuned perspectives. During the 1980s, social work scholars such as Max Siporin and Sister Vincentia Joseph said that we need to consider not only the bio-psycho-social but also the spiritual aspects of human needs and development. There were calls for a return to spirituality in social work together with a recognition that we need to avoid the past mistakes of partisan religiosity. The Society for Spirituality and Social Work and was organized in 1990, articles on spirituality and social work are appearing in both specialized and mainstream journals, and presentations at national and regional social work meetings are becoming common-place. Recent Council on Social Work Education (US) curriculum policy guidelines recognize religious and spiritual diversity as

legitimate topics for social work education. More social work departments are offering courses on this topic. Many state licensing boards are supporting spiritually-sensitive approaches to continuing education and practice. And agencies around the country are requesting workshops on spirituality and practice. We can work with the momentum of these developments to continue this spiritual healing of our profession of social work.

DEFINITIONS OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

There has been a shift in the way that the terms spirituality and religion are commonly used in social work. During the early 20th century, writing about spirituality and social work did not often make a clear distinction between the two terms. Spirituality was often equated with sectarian religious beliefs and practices, usually of a Christian or Jewish form (Canda, 1997). As the profession moved toward models of practice based on respect for human diversity, we recognized that we need to develop an approach to spiritually sensitive practice that respects diverse religious and nonreligious forms of spirituality. Now it is common for social workers to define spirituality as a basic aspect of human experience and development, common to all people, cultures, and religions. In this sense, spirituality involves the search for a sense of life purpose, meaning, and morally fulfilling relationships between oneself, other people, the universe, and the ultimate ground of reality, however one understands it. Spirituality is an aspect of the person, along with the biological,

psychological, and social aspects. So we have a bio-psycho-social-spiritual model of the person.

Some people view spirituality as more than an aspect of the person. In a holistic sense, spirituality can be said to be the wholeness of what it is to be a person-in-relation. Spirituality moves us toward realization of the integration of all our aspects into a whole being in connection and communion with all other beings. Spirituality as *wholeness* is our fundamental, irreducible humanity that cannot be broken down into parts, roles, or labels. It is our transcendent aspect that some call holy or divine. The words whole, holy, and heal are all related; to achieve well-being (health) involves moving toward realization of wholeness and our essential holiness. We are tacitly acknowledging this irreducible holy wholeness of the human being when we say that, we grant unconditional positive regard to clients and that we refuse to reduce them and box them into dehumanizing labels, we are tacitly acknowledging this irreducible holy wholeness of the human being.

Religions are institutionalized and organized patterns of belief, morals, rituals, and social support systems that have spirituality as their central concern. Religions are shared by groups of people and are formed and transmitted over time. Spirituality may be expressed through religions, but it may also be expressed through nonreligious, nonsectarian, and even atheist forms. Spirituality is personal and it may

also be shared in communities and religious organizations.

We are coming to reenvision our mission as social work explores the implications of this expansive and inclusive understanding of spirituality. The National Association of Social Workers proclaims that our mission is to promote the fulfillment of individuals in the context of social justice. From the standpoint of spiritually sensitive practice, individual fulfillment has the potential to include realization of our wholeness, not only as individuals, but in communion with other people and the entire cosmos.

Therefore, there is growing interest in transpersonal theories of human behavior that identify the possibility that human fulfillment means developing a clear sense of self-identity and integrity, and then transcending that ego-bounded self in relations of love and communion with other people and the universe (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 1998). For some people, transpersonal or transegoic experiences are described in religious terms such as enlightenment, cosmic-consciousness, harmony with the universe, or communion with God.

Transpersonal awareness inspires a sense of mutual responsibility. Individual well being is not separable from collective well being. Individual fulfillment must ultimately be linked with social justice on a global scale. Social justice on a global scale must be linked ultimately with environmental justice for the entire planetary ecology of all beings. And, human impact is already moving beyond the planet with space

exploration. So we must be mindful of our impacts wherever we go. This realization gives an amazing mind-expanding vision of our traditional commitment to helping the person-and-environment. From the powerful peaceful social justice work of Mahatma Gandhi, we learned that social workers must act locally, but think globally.

PORTRAIT OF AN IDEAL PERSON IN SPIRITUALLY
SENSITIVE PRACTICE

EQUILIBRIUM AND DYNAMIC CHANGE IN GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY

What are the ideal characteristics of a person who is well prepared to engage in spiritually sensitive social work practice and social activism? This portrait of an Ideal Person draws on insights from general systems theory and transpersonal philosophy, both of which are influential for many contemporary social work scholars. The central theme is how a person relates in equilibrium and harmony with the process of social change.

The process of dynamic change in living systems is named homeokinesis. This concept can be related to many schools of philosophy that emphasize process, for example, George Herbert Mead's philosophy of symbolic interactionism and Ludwig Von Bertalanffy's general systems theory (Bertalanffy, 1968; Canda & Imbrogno, 1988; Mead, 1964). General systems thinking emphasizes that: the individual exists within

complex systems, including the family, groups, organizations, communities, nations, the planet's ecological system, and the cosmos (Anderson & Carter, 1984; Laszlo, 1972). The person can only be understood correctly by examining the interactions between all these systems as they relate to the individual. All systems are continually in a process of change. General systems philosophy recognizes that many variations of gradual or sudden change can and do occur in the development of human social systems. By understanding the concept of homeokinesis, social activists can relate with these varieties of change while avoiding acting according to harmful extremes of rigid coercive control or chaotic violent disruption.

Homeokinesis can be described as the dynamic interaction between two universal properties - morphogenesis and morphostasis. Morphostasis refers to a system's capability to maintain stability and continuity of process and function. Morphogenesis refers to the system's capability to renew itself, increasing in complexity and creativity. These are complementary principles (like *yin* and *yang*) which together produce dynamic change. If neither principle is dominant to an extreme, then change can occur in balance. This allows for periods of relatively quiet and slow change as well as periods of rather sudden and drastic change. The concept of homeokinesis includes both homeostasis (morphostasis) and dialectic (morphogenesis), but it is not limited to either extreme. The philosopher of science, Fritjof Capra, openly borrows from the Eastern *yin/yang* theory to explain this concept (Capra, 1975 & 1982).

The ideal social worker or activist is one who lives in harmony with the process of homeokinesis. Like the concept of the sage in the *I Ching (Chinese Book of Changes)*, the ideal person learns to live in harmony with the many stages and types of change that occur in human existence (Wilhelm & Baynes, 1967). The person does not become close-minded, nor does the person become confused by conflicting ideas. The person realizes that one must take responsibility for the effects of one's actions that ripple out through the environmental systems. Therefore, an ethic fostering mutual benefit and social justice, rather than selfish one-sided gain, is encouraged.

EQUILIBRIUM AS WHOLENESS IN TRANSPERSONAL THEORY

The concept of equilibrium as wholeness is derived from the school of transpersonal philosophy that has developed in the past 20 years. Transpersonal philosophy can be traced back to mystical philosophies and religious traditions as well as humanistic and transpersonal schools of psychology. For example, Western transpersonal philosophers have borrowed many ideas from Hindu Vedanta philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, and *I Ching* philosophy. The ideas made a widespread impact on Western thought through the writing of the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1967; Progoff, 1973). The attempt to converge insights from Eastern and Western philosophy has become widespread. Even in the popular culture, these ideas have

gained acceptance through the so-called New Age movement. The following discussion will draw on the ideas of three contemporary transpersonal philosophers: Swami Ajaya, an American psychologist who became a disciple of an Indian Vedanta master; Ken Wilber, a philosopher of human development who practices in the Vajrayana Buddhist tradition; and Michael Washburn, a philosopher of human development who is attempting to refine Wilber's ideas (Ajaya, 1983; Washburn, 1988; Wilber, 1995).

The term transpersonal means beyond the individual self. Transpersonal philosophy and psychology are primarily concerned about spiritual experience in which the person feels profoundly connected or unified with others, the universe, or the divine ground of being (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 1998). Such experience is often described as union with God, cosmic consciousness, enlightenment, or unitary consciousness. Transpersonal philosophy does not imply that a person should believe in any particular religion. However, it claims that the highest level of human development is attained through experience of unitary consciousness. The fundamental philosophical proposition is that ultimate reality is monistic, only one without division. Sometimes the terms Brahman (from Vedanta) or Buddha-nature are used to describe this Ultimate Oneness. The realm of the personal is inherently dualistic, based upon thinking, feeling, sensations, and desires. All dualistic activity involves separation between a subject (the experiencer) and an object (the

experienced). Therefore, in order to experience unitary consciousness, a person must transcend the personal realm. Various forms of meditation and spiritual disciplines are often prescribed as the means to accomplish this. It is important to note that this monistic principle does not exclude dualism; rather it includes and transcends dualism. From the standpoint of human existence, reality appears to be dualistic. Transpersonal philosophy accepts the dualistic description of general systems theory (and *yin/yang* theory) with regard to the existential level of phenomena. Yet from the standpoint of the essential nature of the universe, dualism is only a limited (not ultimate) reality. Monism (unitary consciousness) is all that is. Paradoxically, it manifests existentially through dualistic phenomena. It is significant that the dualistic phenomena operate according to an interaction of complementary principles. Indeed, each quality must seek its opposite, and transcend the separation, in the process of returning to unitary consciousness. Unitary consciousness is the origin of all. It is the goal of the development of all beings. And it is the true nature of all beings in all times and all places.

We need to examine two levels of equilibrium, the dualistic and the unitary. At the dualistic level, transpersonal philosophy accepts the concept of equilibrium as homeokinesis, described in general systems philosophy. As the Ideal Person moves forward in realizing unitary consciousness, the opposite aspects of his or her personality and social relations are brought into harmony. For example, rationality is

complemented by feeling. Physical sensation is complemented by intuition. Male and female qualities are brought into harmony, both within each individual and in social relations.

At the unitary level, the Ideal Person realizes that his or her own true nature is the same as the true nature of the universe. Often the Vedantic formula is used to describe this: Atman (the true self) equals Brahman (the true nature of the universe). So equilibrium as wholeness has two aspects. The first is completeness or harmony between opposites within the individual. The second is oneness or unitary consciousness. It is assumed that the Ideal Person who realizes this wholeness will naturally have a profound feeling of compassion for other beings. Therefore, an ethic of compassionate help for human beings and other beings is encouraged.

QUALITIES OF THE IDEAL PERSON

The qualities of the Ideal Person as represented by transpersonal philosophy, which, as I have explained, also include principles of general systems theory. These qualities are summarized in the diagram in Figure 1. This interpretation of the transpersonal implications for the Ideal Person is based upon ideas I developed in collaboration with Salvatore Imbrogno (imbrogno & Canda, 1988).

The diagram represents a person who has attained unitary consciousness, and has

also attained harmony between opposites (a both/and perspective) at the dualistic level. Further, this implies that the person has thoroughly integrated a unitary mode of awareness with ongoing daily life at the dualistic level. So, to use a Neoplatonic expression, The One and The Many (phenomena) are One.

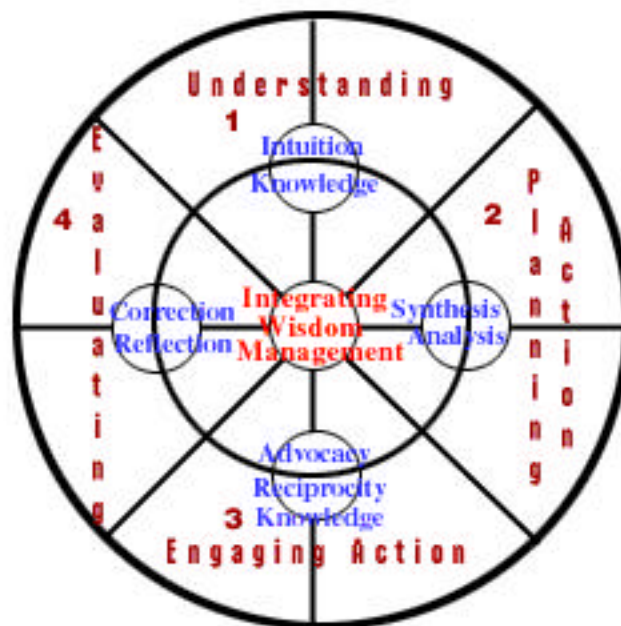
The outer circle of the diagram represents unitary consciousness. It is undivided and all-embracing. It cannot be described because all descriptions pertain to dualistic conceptions. It can be called The Mysterious; The Ultimate; The One; The Source, Process, and Goal of all beings. However, it transcends all these labels. The Ideal Person realizes that this Ultimate is also the True Nature of the self. By practicing awareness of this Ultimate, the person experiences the self in relationship and unity with all beings. Cultivation of this unitary awareness in daily life provides the inspiration and energy to reconcile all opposites within daily life. Therefore, the connection is symbolized by the way the outer circle penetrates all directions of the diagram with cross-lines.

The aspect of the diagram that represents harmony at the dualistic level of the self includes five modes of activity. All five modes of activity are necessary for a complete and balanced way of living.

DIAGRAM OF THE QUALITIES OF THE IDEAL PERSON IN EQUILIBRIUM

figure 1

Unitary Consciousness



Modes of Activity

1. Understanding
2. Planning Action
3. Engaging Action
4. Evaluating

Constituent Qualities

- Knowledge and Intuition
- Analysis and Synthesis
- Advocacy and Reciprocity
- Correction and Reflection

The modes of activity represent a cycle. Equilibrium is defined here as the completion of all modes of activity in a manner that balances the complementary qualities within each mode. Further, all activity occurs in the context of the person's awareness of the unitary nature of the universe. In the terms of the Confucian classic, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, the balance of opposites during activity is called "harmony"; the transcendence of opposites in unitary consciousness through quietness of mind is called "equilibrium." The transpersonal concept of equilibrium includes both of these meanings.

The first mode of activity is *Understanding*. Complete understanding requires a balance of *Knowledge* and *Intuition*. Knowledge is based on discursive intellectual activity. In order to know, a person must isolate empirically observable or conceptually distinct parts of a system. Knowing is a dualistic activity of the mind in which the world is dissected into conceptual parts which are then related logically, according to cause

and effect. Empirical-logical knowledge is necessary but not sufficient for complete understanding, since the complexity of reality transcends any conceptual representation of it. Therefore, knowledge needs to be complemented by intuition.

Intuition is defined as a disciplined nonrational apprehension of reality. This is not mere guessing or a hunch. Intuition arises from experiential participation in the system that one wishes to understand. The involvement must be characterized by deep rapport. In contrast to knowing, which specializes in understanding parts, intuition grasps the gestalt of wholes. R. G. H. Siu (1957) described this as gaining no-knowledge which transcends the rational dissection of wholes into parts. In the most profound type of intuition, the experiencer and that which is experienced are one in consciousness (Luoma, 1998). This is the point at which understanding becomes transpersonal.

Knowledge and intuition must be converged, so that intuitive insights can be cross-checked with empirical observations and logical evaluation. One mode of understanding is not superior to the other. Both are complementary and mutually supportive. Indeed, both the processes of knowing and intuiting should arise from the ground of unitary awareness.

The second mode of activity is *Planning Action*. In the light of understanding, one

plans how to act in a manner appropriate to any situation. Understanding must be applied in a practical manner according to a moral commitment to compassionate service. Planning involves examination of various alternative courses of action and selecting the action that fits both accurate understanding and moral commitment. In examining alternatives, two complementary processes need to be engaged, *Analysis* and *Synthesis*.

Analysis continues the discursive activity of examining the alternatives and their possible consequences in a logical and empirically-based manner. Analysis can identify possible cause-effect relations that predict outcomes of decisions. Yet, reality transcends simplistic cause/effect models. Even the most sophisticated analytical prediction will fall short of actual events in many important situations of human life. Further, analysis may be conducted in a logical manner without moral content. Therefore, synthesis must also be utilized. In synthesis, alternatives that are based on explicit value assumptions and differing understandings of events are brought together in constructive interaction. Open dialogue between competing views is encouraged so that a more complex and complete plan, and anticipation of its consequences, can emerge. In balanced planning, competing analytical perspectives are synthesized in the context of an explicit moral concern that the outcomes of one's actions will benefit the people and other beings involved.

The third mode of activity is *Engaging Action*. In this phase of the cycle, the person directly acts. Every action has results that effect the immediate situation and also ripple out through other systems. Therefore, it is a great responsibility to try purposefully to change someone or something. Action needs to be well prepared by understanding and planning. It is not unusual that a person's actions, even though well-intentioned, may disrupt the harmony of the situation in an inappropriate manner. In order to avoid inappropriate intervention, it is important to converge actions based on principles of *Advocacy* and *Reciprocity*.

Advocacy is a commitment to work primarily for the well being of the person or group who requests help. Their well being, rather than the self interest of the helper, must be the guiding principle for action. Yet the perspective of the person needing help may not be complete. It is quite possible that by helping to satisfy one person, others will be harmed. Therefore, the principle of reciprocity should be applied. In reciprocity, the person engaged in action is aware of the perspectives and needs of other people and beings, as well as one's own moral commitments. An attempt is made to act in such a way that advocacy for one person or group will benefit others who will be affected as well. Superficial hatreds and conflicts based on an attitude of "us against them" cannot lead to true resolution of problems. Convergence of advocacy and reciprocity open the possibility of nonviolent conflict resolution. It generates action based on peace of mind that is conducive toward peace in the world.

The fourth mode of activity in the cycle is *Evaluating*. The primary purpose of evaluating is to determine whether direct action has benefited according to plan. Evaluating needs to be an ongoing process of considering the results of actions as they occur. It also needs to be formally conducted at the conclusion of a plan of activity, so that the outcomes can be evaluated. Evaluating involves the interaction of *Reflection and Correction*.

The person needs to reflect upon one's actions and their consequences. This reflection should arise from a mind that is clear, peaceful, and rooted in unitary consciousness. The reflective person considers all the modes of activity, their degree of success, and their quality of harmony. Outcomes of action are compared with intentions and moral commitments.

Reflection needs to be complemented by correction of errors. Reflection gives insight into the quality and success of one's actions. Correction changes the course of one's actions whenever necessary. The Ideal Person is not rigidly fixed in any plan, but flows with the changing circumstances, like water that flows throughout the winding river bed. The convergence of reflection and correction helps the person's action to flow in harmony with the Tao of any situation.

The final mode of activity in the cycle is *Integrating*. Integrating is the activity of organizing all the other modes of activity. It is not a separate phase of the cycle. Rather, it is the ongoing process of regulating, coordinating, and linking all phases of activity. It has a central place in the diagram because it is the mode of activity that connects with and organizes the entire cycle into a harmonious whole. In fact, none of the modes of activity are entirely separate from each other. The various modes generally follow in the sequence indicated, but there can always be reversals, re-evaluations, and applications of qualities associated with the distinct modes. Indeed, the fully integrated person will often act spontaneously, without any obvious divisions between phases of decision and action.

Integrating needs to include both *Management* and *Wisdom*. Management is the technical and practical aspect. It organizes and supervises all activities. It operates according to the rules of rationality and order. Technical management needs to be complemented by wisdom--a comprehensive vision of the total situation, the cycle of activity, its moral implications, and its judgment from the standpoint of unitary consciousness. Sometimes wisdom may guide one to actions that do not seem practical, yet they may be more profound and beneficial.

CONCLUSION

In this presentation I have given an overview of the development of connections between spirituality and social work in the United States. I advocated for an approach to spirituality that respects its diverse religious and nonreligious forms. I also proposed an ideal portrait of a social worker or social activist who lives and acts in harmony with the dynamic process of social change. But these ideas are really just like evaporating mist in relation to our real moment-to-moment experience. I hope that our discussions throughout the remainder of this course help us to see through the mist of our various ideas so that we can encounter each other directly and learn from our varied experiences and perspectives.

It is my hope that our time together will support the wish expressed in the Confucian classic, *The Doctrine of the Mean*. "Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish" (p. 351-352).

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See Carl Jung's commentary on the I *Ching*, *ibid*

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