

# The Intersection of Spirituality and Psychology

Pulse of Spirit

July 17, 2024



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Considering humankind as a whole, we usually think of it as composed of individual selves. Individuals are grouped in families, cultures, and nations. But still, the common way to see people is as separate, distinct selves, identified by individual characteristics and the characteristics of a group they are part of. And for most of us, we see ourselves that way. In that state of consciousness, what is usually left out is a vivid awareness of who we are together. There may be the idea that we are global citizens. But I am speaking about something more than that. I am speaking of a global sense of self.

Generally speaking, the usual conception of humankind is reflected within the individual. There are facets of the human psyche, and a sense of self that tends to identify with one of those facets in any given moment. These parts of ourselves form sub-personalities that are all part of the human psyche and are often activated by the circumstances that arise in a person's life. So the person finds themselves identifying as *the worrier*, *the achiever*, *the nice*

*person*, or as some other sub-personality within their overall make-up.

Is there anything “wrong” with this state of affairs? Thinking of how our human psychology functions, the fabric of it is all intrinsic to how we are made. So there is nothing inherently wrong about any of it. Someone might be thinking about what is transpiring in their life to ensure that it goes well. If that becomes obsessive, we might call it *worrying*. The person might become a *worrier*. But there is nothing inherently wrong with that part of the human make-up that pays attention to what is happening and what is about to happen. There is nothing wrong with that dimension of ourselves that achieves things, or with the experience we have when we do. And there is nothing inherently wrong with being nice to others.

So what does go wrong for people? The sub-personalities that make up the human psyche can, to lesser or greater degrees, become an obsession and take over the person's ultimate

sense of self. Then the person becomes identified in their own mind as *the worrier*, *the achiever*, or *the nice person*, or something else, and that experience can displace an over-arching sense of who they are. What is meant to be a part of who the person is takes over as if it is the totality of who they are.

Psychologists attempt to describe how and why this happens in the course of a human life. They describe how a child can feel at risk for whatever reason, and therefore develop facets of their persona to deal with the situation. And then they learn to identify with that part of themselves that has stepped into action. Sometimes that is described as *parentification*. Some dimension of the child rises to the occasion to provide a parental influence when that is otherwise missing. But a child acting as a parent does not make a real adult. Looking at our world scene, it is easy to see this phenomenon played out by emotionally immature adults attempting to appear strong and competent.

The study of how people learn to identify with a sub-personality could be massive. It would involve not only the life story of individuals but cultures that develop over millennia. And ultimately, it involves humankind as a race. Studying it all and cataloguing it would be a huge undertaking.

Tracking one's own tendency to identify with a sub-personality can be part of a person's awakening, growth, and development. And having some insight into how it happened can be part of that process. But still, what is the big picture related to this tendency to identify with some aspect of who we are that is not integrated in a larger sense of self and the creativity that goes with the reality of who we are?

Without a higher sense of self, all the sub-

personalities that comprise the human psyche have nothing into which they can integrate. And when there is a knowledge of self that transcends all the sub-personalities, it calls all the facets of the human psyche into wholeness and healthy function. The higher sense of self becomes the means of integrating the human persona.

For this to occur, there has to be the intersection of the spiritual and the psychological because the higher self is spiritual in nature. That doesn't tell us very much about what is. But it is clear that the home of the higher self is beyond the psychological. And for it to affect the psychological, the higher self has to have contact with it. It has to enter the human psyche.

Religion doesn't always help with this. Often, it teaches that the higher self—God, by whatever name—is separate from the human being. If that is what a person believes, that belief blocks the intersection of spirituality and psychology. It prevents the person from experiencing the higher self in a way that is relevant to their psychology.

There are many names for the individualized aspect of the Divine within a human being—the One Who Dwells, Higher Self, the Angel, the Wonderful One Within, God Being, the Lord, and many others. All these names can help illuminate the intersection of the spiritual and the psychological. They personalize the spiritual, acknowledging that it is immediately relevant to our human soul.

Often religious doctrine and sacred scripture are interpreted in a way that denies this intersection. And if it is denied intellectually by the belief of the individual, then the reality of the experience is blocked subconsciously as well. That is why there is such a profound need for a spiritual understanding that allows the intersection to

occur. Such an understanding welcomes the Higher Self into the human psyche to take the role of the sovereign self in the person. And when that happens, the sub-personalities don't try to take the throne of selfhood. The throne is already taken by the truth of who the person is. The sub-personalities can then go on to play their rightful role in the psyche of that person.

The intersection of spirituality and psychology is an issue of conscious understanding, and if a person believes things that are contrary to that intersection, it can disrupt it. But belief *in* that intersection alone does not accomplish it. Human emotion has to be engaged by the spiritual, not only by the person's conscious and subconscious mind. The power of the spiritual to transform, heal, and create doesn't enter human psychology without a heart that is open to be activated by that power.

While sacred scripture and how it is interpreted sometimes blocks this experience for a person, some sacred scripture can also be read in a way that empowers it. Consider these verses from the Song of Songs, depicting the intersection of the spiritual and the human psyche as a love story:

*The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*

*My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.*

*My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

*The Song of Songs, 2:8-10*

The voice of *my beloved* is the voice of the Higher Self. As these verses portray, that voice invites all the dimensions of the human psyche to leave whatever destructive patterns of thought and emotion they have entered into and integrate with the Higher Self.

As it is within an individual, so it is for humankind. While the individuals who comprise humankind are holonic entities unto themselves, they are not just that. Just as the subpersonalities of the human psyche are part of a reality of selfhood established by the God Being within, the people who comprise humankind are part of a reality of selfhood established by the God within us all.

The first verse of the 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm declares this reality.

*The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*

Even though human personality has largely taken over human culture without reference to the God within us all, that doesn't change how we are made. And it doesn't make anyone inherently bad. It's just that we, the body of humanity, don't function well without the intersection of spirituality and psychology—without the Higher Self for this body on the throne of selfhood for humankind.

Would a theocracy accomplish this? If we all became Christians, would that do it? Is this something the Pope could pull off?

The answer to all these questions is clearly *no*. The God of religion doesn't have the ability to integrate all the facets of the human psyche, and it certainly doesn't have the ability to unify humanity. Only the reality of the Higher Self

known, heard, and experienced by people can do that. As John prophesied in Revelation:

*And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

*Revelation 21:3*

Not the God of religion. Only God himself has the power to integrate humankind.

In Richard Schwartz's book *No Bad Parts*, he says that parts of the human psyche lose touch with the Self, and that it can help for a person to speak as the Self to parts of their psyche. He says that parts of who we are can be unaware of our maturity and act out of a memory of who

we were as a child. So he suggests that we address such a part of ourselves and ask if they know how old we are.

Understanding the Higher Self as an aspect of God, we understand the essence of who we are as eternal. From that perspective, we can declare to our own human psyche, *Do you know how old I am? I am eternal.* And speaking for the Higher Self to the whole body of humanity, we can say the same: *Do you know how old I am? I am eternal.*

Surely, there must be the voice of the eternal spoken to the human psyche. That voice has the ability to integrate it. It has the power to integrate people around the globe.

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July 14, 2024*



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