

The Decolonization of Psychology or the Science of the Soul

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Since the inception of psychology as a distinct field of study in the modern West, it has been widely regarded as the only valid form of this discipline, supplanting all other accounts of the mind and human behavior. The modern West is unique in having produced the only psychology that consciously severed itself from metaphysics and spiritual principles. The momentous intellectual revolutions inaugurated by the Renaissance and the European Enlightenment further entrenched the prejudices of its purely secular and reductionist approach. Yet, across the diverse cultures of the world, we find spiritual traditions that embrace a fully integrated psychology, unsullied by the limitations of the modern scientific method. It is only by grounding psychology on a foundation of sacred and universal truths – found in all traditional civilizations – that we can begin to restore a true *science of the soul* that addresses the entire gamut of human needs and possibilities.

“[P]sychology as it is understood today – that is, the study of mental phenomena as such – is a natural product of Anglo-Saxon empiricism and of the eighteenth century mentality [note: of the European Enlightenment project], and ... the point of view to which it corresponds was so negligible for the ancient world that, even if it was sometimes taken incidentally into consideration, no one would have dreamed of making a special science of it, since anything of value that it might contain was transformed and assimilated in higher points of view.”

– René Guénon (2004, 50)

“[T]he metaphysics of the universal and unanimous tradition, or ‘*philosophia perennis*,’ is the infallible standard by which not only religions, but still more ‘philosophies’ and ‘sciences’ must be ‘corrected’ [note: correction du savoir-penser] and interpreted.”

– Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1988, 37)

“What modern psychology lacks entirely is criteria enabling it to situate the aspects or tendencies of the soul in their cosmic context.”

– Titus Burckhardt (1987, 48)

It has become increasingly clear to many around the world that *rethinking psychiatry* is an imperative task and, yet, what is often overlooked is that *rethinking psychology* is also essential (see Bendeck Sotillos 2019). That the foundations of contemporary psychology are giving way is by no means a new insight: “*Psychotherapy is today in a state of disarray, almost exactly as it was two hundred years ago.*” (Zilboorg 1956, 108). Decolonizing the human psyche is needed more than ever today. The apparatus of oppression and control in modern Western psychology is inseparable from its impoverished scientific *Weltanschauung* and has become increasingly more nuanced and subtle. It privileges its own methodology above all other modes of knowing the world and appears oblivious to its own unquestioned theoretical assumptions. This tendency first became apparent when Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) triumphantly announced: “[I]t was no small thing to have the whole human race as one’s patient.” (Freud 1925, 261). He actually admitted that his role was to be a colonizer

← Sigmund Freud



About the lead author

Samuel Bendeck Sotillos, LMFT, LPCC, NCC, CPRP, CCMHC, MHRS, is a practicing psychotherapist, who has worked for years in the field of mental health and social services, focusing on the intersection between spirituality and psychology. His works include *Paths That Lead to the Same Summit: An Annotated Guide to World Spirituality*, *Dismantling Freud: Fake Therapy and the Psychoanalytic Worldview* (previously published as *Psychology Without Spirit: The Freudian Quandary*), and *Behaviorism: The Quandary of a Psychology without a Soul*. He edited the issue on *Psychology and the Perennial Philosophy* for *Studies in Comparative Religion*, and his articles have appeared in numerous journals including *Sophia*, *Sacred Web*, *Parabola*, *Resurgence*, and the *Temenos Academy Review*. His email contact is samuelbendeck@yahoo.com.

of the human psyche: *"I am actually not at all a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, not a thinker. I am by temperament nothing but a conquistador."* (Freud 1985, 398).

The field of mental health can no longer turn a blind eye to the inescapable fact that *"modern Western psychology – is a secular and largely culture-bound discipline"* (Badri 2018, 1). It avows that modern science alone holds the key to knowing truth and reality, but this dogmatic arrogance prevents it from noticing its own blind spot. It must be made crystal-clear that *"[m]odern science is not – and never has been – the 'disinterested quest of truth'"* (Smith 2019, 61). Many practitioners today readily acknowledge these serious limitations: *"[Note: Modern] Western psychology and medicine are incomplete both in their understanding of human nature and in their ability to promote health and well-being."* (Welwood 1985, vii). Although the situation is more dismal than this statement suggests, it nonetheless distills the inherent errors of the discipline as practiced today.

We need to completely re-envisage modern Western psychology and psychiatry in the context of addressing mental health issues. At the root of the problem is *"the inherent limitation of the original epistemological premises of modern science"* (Nasr 1989, 206) and the only way to overcome this is to expose the *"epistemological fallacies of Occidental civilization"* (Bateson 2000, 491). The impasse that faces modern Western psychology and its destructive consequences are clearly laid out by Gill Edwards (1998, 194–99):

[Note: Modern] science has claimed a monopoly on truth, seeing the scientific method as the only valid path towards knowledge ... as recent products of their culture, modern psychology and psychotherapy were built upon the shifting sands of Cartesian-Newtonian assumptions – with devastating consequences ... [note: and] many therapists are still clinging to the scientific tradition ... and refusing to open their eyes ... the old paradigm gave birth to a positivist, materialist psychology which values objectivity, rationality and empiricism ... The mechanistic, reductionist, determinist assumptions of the Cartesian-Newtonian world view are endemic in psychology and psychotherapy.

Without considering the historical antecedents and their connection to the development of modern science, this plight will continue unabated. Compelling mental health professionals to work in a theoretical and clinical vacuum will only perpetuate this crisis. Modern psychology is simply not prepared to accept valuable insights that differ from its own worldview, but which are sorely needed if we are to offer more integrated and holistic treatment options for individu-

als. It is time, therefore, to challenge the ideological tyranny of psychology as practiced today and to consider how its pernicious influence can be curtailed.

The tendency of modern science to assert itself as the sole arbiter of what we can know about the human mind negates the crucial dimension that makes it conform to a true metaphysical order as found in many of the world's sapiential traditions. This reductionism of modern psychology has rendered null and void any fuller understanding of what is still understood by many as the soul: *"[P]sychology, having first bargained away its soul and then gone out of its mind, seems now, as it faces an untimely end, to have lost all consciousness."* (Burt 1962, 229).

That spirituality and metaphysics are deemed irrelevant by modern science is the reason for the disarray in which contemporary psychology finds itself. This claim will strike many as ludicrous because it suggests that we need to turn back the clock to the dark ages of knowledge. Yet it must be understood that the exclusion of metaphysics from science goes to the heart of modernism's deviations. As Titus Burckhardt (1908–1984) presciently observed, psychology can only be authentic when it relies on metaphysics: The *"[note: perennial] psychology does not separate the soul either from the metaphysical or from the cosmic order. The connection with the metaphysical order provides spiritual psychology with qualitative criteria such as are wholly lacking in profane [note: modern Western] psychology, which studies only the dynamic character of phenomena of the psyche and their proximate causes."* (Burckhardt 2008, 26–27).

The belief that only the scientific method gives access to valid forms of knowledge is not only flawed but totalitarian, having its roots in the European Enlightenment or the so-called *Age of Reason*. Without question, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018, 181) rightly points out, the *"understanding of the world far exceeds the Western understanding of the world."*

This dogmatic outlook is not science, but an ideology known as *scientism*, which has nothing to do with the proper exercise of the scientific method. Renowned scholar of Islam and Sufism, William Chittick (2009, 48), underscores how dominant scientism is within modern intellectual discourse, even though many may be oblivious to its overreach: *"It is very difficult to characterize the modern worldview with a single label. One word that has often been suggested is 'scientism,' the belief that the scientific method and scientific findings are the sole criterion for truth."* As the American psychiatrist M. Scott Peck (1936–2005) astutely noted (1985, 257–58), contemporary

science is largely relegated to dealing with approximations; in doing so, it is always modifying its understanding and thus is in no position to declare what can be finally known with certainty:

[W]hat is paraded as scientific fact is simply the current belief of some scientists. We are accustomed to regard science as Truth with a capital 'T.' What scientific knowledge is, in fact, is the best available approximation of truth in the judgment of the majority of scientists who work in the particular specialty involved. Truth is not something that we possess; it is a goal toward which we, hopefully, strive ... the current opinion of the scientific establishment is only the latest and never the last word ...

The hegemony of modern Western science has become so dominant and commonplace that its implications are barely discerned today. American psychologist Amedeo Giorgi points out that, “[t]he perennial crisis of ... [note: modern Western] psychology is due to the fact that it does not see that the problem lies in the meaning of science it adopted.” (Giorgi 1997, 19; see also Koch 1999; Koch and Leary 1985). If we are truly going to speak about the importance of culture and human diversity in a way that is still meaningful, other modes of knowing must be recognized as valid (see Bendeck Sotillos 2016; 2018).

Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), the Romanian historian of religion, provides a salutary caution that remains unheeded (1960, 8–9):

Western culture will be in danger of a decline into a sterilizing provincialism if it despises or neglects the dialogue with other cultures ... [T]he West is forced [note: one might almost say, condemned] to this encounter and confrontation with the cultural values of 'the others' ... One day the West will have to know and to understand the existential situations and the cultural universes of the non-Western peoples; moreover, the West will come to value them as integral with the history of the human spirit and will no longer regard them as immature episodes or as aberrations from an exemplary History of man – a History conceived, of course, only as that of Western man.

A true postcolonial psychology or rather *perennial psychology* (see Bendeck Sotillos 2013a) would be grounded in an authentic metaphysical framework that reflects the diverse religious and spiritual traditions of humanity. This approach draws on the universal principles that disclose all levels of reality and buttress all modes of knowledge. In order to be efficacious, a true psychology or *science of the soul* requires

that we assent to the rights of spiritual truth: “*Psychology, we must remember, is the study of the soul, therefore the discipline closest to the religious life. An authentic psychology discards none of the insights gained from spiritual disciplines.*” (Roszak 1972, 414). Through a more integral framework, our real identity *in divinis* can be realized: “*The ultimate reality of metaphysics is a Supreme Identity in which the opposition of all contraries, even of being and not-being, is resolved*” (Coomaraswamy 1978, 6) as “*pure Being by its very nature comprises All-Possibility*” (Schuon 1995a, 69). This traditional approach to the sacred, which is uncontaminated by modernism, includes a tripartite understanding of the human being consisting of Spirit, soul and body [1]. Accordingly, Burckhardt (1987, 173) remarks that, “*man in his integral nature ... is not only a physical datum but, at one and the same time, body, soul, and spirit*” [2].

According to sacred science, the human microcosm mirrors the macrocosm: “*Man is a little cosmos, and the cosmos is like a big man.*” [3] In the same way “*the cosmos at large proves to be ontologically trichotomous: that even as man himself is made up of 'corpus,' 'anima,' and 'spiritus,' so is the integral cosmos*” (Smith 2019, iii). Without the inclusion of Spirit, soul and body it could not be a cross-cultural psychology as these ways of knowing are found throughout the world’s civilizations – “[*p*]ure metaphysics is hidden in every religion” (Schuon in Casey 1996, 75).

Metaphysics as understood in this sense has nothing to do with modern Western philosophy: “*The 'philosophia perennis' possesses branches and ramifications pertaining to cosmology, anthropology, art and other disciplines, but at its heart lies pure metaphysics, if this latter term is understood ... as the science of Ultimate Reality, as a 'scientia sacra' not to be confused with the subject bearing the name metaphysics in postmedieval Western philosophy.*” (Nasr 1993, 54). Sacred science, which is found at the heart of all sapiential traditions, provides an effective, comprehensive and valid mode of knowing that is not subject to the findings of modern Western psychology. Influential Muslim scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains that “*'scientia sacra' is none other than that sacred knowledge which lies at the heart of every revelation and is the center of that circle which encompasses and defines tradition*” (1989, 130). It was this outlook that prevailed prior to the emergence of modernity with its materialistic and reductionist worldview [4]. In fact, prior to the onset of the modern world, there were no secular civilizations to be found and no science divorced from its origin *in divinis*.

Eliade (1996, xvii) challenges reductionist methodologies as follows:

[A] religious phenomenon will only be recognized as such if it is grasped at its own level, that is to say, if it is studied as something religious. To try to grasp the essence of such a [religious] phenomenon by means of physiology, psychology, sociology, economics, linguistics, art or any other study is false; it misses the one unique and irreducible element in it – the element of the sacred.

The Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution and the European Enlightenment – like modernism and its postmodernist prolongation – have fomented the desacralized outlook of the present day. This has given birth to the modern world, whose intellectual posture is unprecedented among human civilizations of the past:

It was the emergence of modernity that provided both the scientific concepts and the political language underlying the idea of race. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, Europe underwent a series of intellectual and social transformations that laid the basis of the modern world. It was the period in which the modern idea of the self, and the individual as a rational agent, began to develop; in which the authority of custom and tradition weakened, while the role of reason in explaining the natural and social world was vastly expanded; in which nature became regarded not as chaotic but as lawful and hence amenable to reason; and in which humans became part of the natural order, and knowledge became secularized. The culmination of this process came in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment ... (Malik 2008, 73).

What is not commonly understood is that prior to the end of the Middle Ages, the West shared with the East a common mindset which was shaped by an awareness of the sacred. Since the Renaissance, Christendom has seen a decline in its fortunes. This culminated in the so-called Enlightenment which well and truly stamped a modern mentality on the West, thus giving it its characteristic outlook. This development, in turn, gave rise to scientism and the hegemonic worldview that leveled any notion of transcendence. *“The ‘great chain of being’ of the Western tradition ... survived in the West until it became horizontalized.”* (Nasr 1989, 197). This loss created the conditions for scientism to flourish. *“Since the Great Chain of Being collapsed with the rise of modern science, something in scientific aims and methods must be inimical to it.”* (Smith 1993, xviii). Through these events, the conviction that modern Western civilization was superior to all others had become entrenched.

While the eclipse of the sacred began in post-medieval Western Europe, this crisis has since spread throughout the

world and humanity is now grappling with its destructive consequences. *“[W]ith the collapse of metaphysics, natural theology, and objective revelation, the West is facing for the first time as a civilization the problem of living without objectively convincing absolutes.”* (Smith 1967, xiii). It is apt to recall the catastrophic and enduring impact that this has had upon our understanding of the human psyche as we contemplate *“the culturally inherited scars from the battle of the last of the nineteenth century when psychological science won its freedom from metaphysics”* (May 1958, 8). The discarding of metaphysics in the modern West by scientific materialism has led to the occlusion intellect becoming obscured from our noetic faculty. This has caused a fissure in consciousness, severing the mind from its transpersonal center. This bifurcation has created a void in the human psyche that has proven to be profoundly traumatic (see Perry 2012).

The seemingly endless therapies found in modern psychology today are, in essence, by-products of this truncated discipline, which has shown itself unable to provide integrated modes of healing. These ideas have become so deeply assimilated into the modernist mindset, that we can truly say: *“Their work is in our bloodstream”* (Allport 1968, 14). At its core, the loss of a sense of the sacred has degraded not only the human psyche but our vision of the cosmos, and it continues to have a devastating impact on our well-being: *“[O]ff all that has thus been forfeited, the loss of the sacred is beyond doubt the most tragic of all: for that proves to be the privation we cannot ultimately survive.”* (Smith 2018, 36; see also Nasr 1968). A consequence of undermining the centrality of the Spirit in our lives is the rise of imbalances in the human psyche: *“[M]ental disorder today exists everywhere”* (Guénon 2001a, 124). Whitall N. Perry (1920–2005) supports this view: *“The loss of religion as Center in the world has left a hole which [note: contemporary] psychology is trying to fill.”* (1996, 200).

If the rehabilitation of psychology should occur, and if we are to move into a truly perennial psychology, then the foundations of modern psychology – especially those of behaviorism and psychoanalysis – need to be understood for what they are: namely, an unbridled assault on what it means to be fully human.

As influential psychologist Rollo May (1909–1994) has emphasized, we cannot overlook the seminal influences of modern psychology (1964, 23):

[W]e [note: need to] confront directly the work of Sigmund Freud. If we try to bypass Freud we shall be guilty of a kind of suppression. For what Freud thought, wrote and performed in therapy, whether we agree with it or not,

permeates our whole culture, in literature and art and in almost every other aspect of western man's self-interpretation. Freud obviously had more influence on psychology and psychiatry than any other man in the twentieth century. Unless we confront him directly, consciously and unflinchingly, our discussions of therapy will always hang in a vacuum. We cannot, furthermore, dismiss Freud simply by stating our disagreements with him.

The same could be said of behaviorism and its principal exponents John B. Watson (1878–1958) and B. F. Skinner (1904–1990).

Modern Western psychology – as a field of science distinct from philosophy and physiology – is thought to have officially commenced in 1879 with Wilhelm Wundt's (1832–1920) establishment of the first experimental psychology laboratory at the University of Leipzig in German. It is a little-known fact that across the Atlantic, William James (1842–1910) had established a similar laboratory four years prior to Wundt, in 1875, at Harvard University (see Harper 1950). However, others trace its beginnings to German psychologist Franz Brentano (1838–1917), who asserted in his *Habilitation* (1866) that empiricism, not metaphysics, is the basis of modern psychology: “[T]he true method of philosophy is none other than that of the natural sciences.” (Dewalque 2017, 226).

Wundt, regarded as the “father of experimental psychology,” warned of the ill-fated consequences should psychology divorce itself from philosophy in his 1913 essay *Psychology's Struggle for Existence* (2013, 197):

Leafing through the first section of this work, one might be inclined to view it as a provocation. But one who decides to read through to the end will be convinced that, on the contrary, the work could well be regarded as a peace offering. In the opinion of some, philosophy and psychology should divorce from each other. Now, it is well known that when a married couple seeks a divorce, both members usually are at fault. In these pages it will be shown that the same is true in this instance, and that if this matter takes the course that both parties want, philosophy will lose more than it will gain, but psychology will be damaged the most. Hence, the argument over the question of whether psychology is or is not a philosophical science is for psychology a struggle for its very existence.

James (1908, 467), often considered the “father of American psychology,” makes a curious yet troubling observation:

When ... we talk of 'psychology as a natural science,' we must not assume that that means a sort of psychology that stands at last on solid ground. It means just the reverse; it means a psychology particularly fragile, and into which the waters of metaphysical criticism leak at every joint, a psychology all of whose elementary assumptions and data must be reconsidered in wider connections and translated into other terms.

In fact, he reached the following conclusion regarding the limits of his discipline: “Psychology [note: is] a nasty little subject – all one cares to know lies outside.” (James 1920, 2). Although James refused to consider modern psychology as a science, properly speaking, he was nonetheless optimistic and suggested that: “This is no science, it is only the hope of a science.” (1908, 468). The fate of psychology would have been very different if more individuals had taken heed of Wundt's or James's wise words of caution.

That said, it has been suggested that modern psychology's inception began even earlier with John Locke (1632–1704), one of the most influential of thinkers of the European Enlightenment to whom was attributed the doctrine of empiricism and the associated notion of *tabula rasa* – “clean or erased slate” [5].

According to American psychologist Gordon W. Allport (1897–1967), there are essentially two epistemological approaches in Western psychology: “Virtually all modern psychological theories seem oriented toward one of two polar conceptions, which, at the risk of some historical oversimplification, I shall call the Lockean and the Leibnizian traditions respectively.” (1969, 7).

Locke's influence has weighed heavily and endures up to the present day. His ideas have paved the way for modern science to dissociate itself from sacred principles and from what lies beyond the limitations of the empirical ego: “Locke insisted that there can be nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses – ‘*nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu.*’” (Allport 1969, 7). He thus turns the transcendent intellect on its head, inverting its function and leaving only sensorial experience as the sole means of verifying the truth of reality (but only as conceived in narrowly materialist terms).

Accordingly, we can now see that modern psychology privileges sensorial experience above the noetic faculty of the Intellect as illustrated in an often-cited statement by Fritz Perls (1893–1970): “Lose your mind and come to your senses” (1969, 69). Swedish historian and philosopher Tage Lindbom (1909–2001) remarks that “[w]hen John Locke affirmed

that a pre-rational consciousness, given by God and innate in man, does not exist, he not only denied the 'intellectus.' At the same time, he enclosed man in subjectivism." (1983, 51). As St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) maintains, it is the Intellect that is connected to metaphysical insight. As such, it pertains to a transpersonal mode of knowing which supersedes our sensory perceptions while, at the same time, fully informing them: "[T]he activity of the body has nothing in common with the activity of [note: the] intellect." (Aquinas 1905, 127).

The overthrow of the Intellect by modern science and its psychology is due to their myopic and reductionistic vision of what constitutes a human being. This is made worse by the fact that this subversion has taken place largely unbeknownst to contemporaries. Guénon makes this clear: "[M]odern man has become quite impermeable to any influences other than such as impinge on his senses; not only have his faculties of comprehension become more limited, but also the field of his perception has become correspondingly restricted." (Guénon 2004b, 101).

Since the materialist ascendancy that began with the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution and the so-called Enlightenment, the human psyche and its essential link to the metaphysical order has steadily lost ground in psychology. References to the human *soul* were increasingly expunged and replaced with the *mind*. Modern Western psychology, for the most part, has not only completely abandoned its metaphysical origins; first, by rejecting the Spirit and then, by denying the human *psyche* [6]. Modern psychology has, in fact, gone to the opposite extreme of undermining the role of traditional wisdom on this subject: "Metaphysics should confessedly, as it does really, rest upon psychology instead of conversely." (Hall 1912, 320). Freud (1989a, 330) went as far as to conclude: "One could venture to explain in this way the myths of paradise and the fall of man, of God, of good and evil, of immortality, and so on, and to transform 'metaphysics' into 'metapsychology.'" It now seeks to *cure* the mind taken in isolation – it cannot see that separating the human soul from the spiritual domain is the root of the problem. "The word 'mental' is often used to indicate the domain which has been explored by [note: modern] Western psychologists and which is often expressed by the word 'psyche,' so as to avoid metaphysical and religious inferences suggested by the word 'soul.'" (Klein 2006, 94; see also Reed 1997). This becomes clear when we consider the momentous intellectual currents that emerged during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which fundamentally changed the Western outlook: The "Enlightenment, when defined as the rational acquisition of knowledge, deals with only one limited aspect of human consciousness – the mental." (Metzner 1998, 160). By distorting the original

meaning of the term *psyche*, modern psychology has fractured our understanding of *soul*, a calamity which it has only recently begun to realize in some quarters.

James (1913, 348) appeals to the modern secular mindset when he says: "The Soul-theory is, then, a complete superfluity, so far as accounting for the actually verified facts of conscious experience goes. So far, no one can be compelled to subscribe to it for definite scientific reasons." James (1913, 1) thus defined psychology by embracing the notion of *mind* but eradicating the soul: "Psychology is the Science of Mental Life, both its phenomena and of their conditions." However, the figure who first formulated the notion of a *psychology without a soul* (Lange 1881, 168), which forged the secular foundations of modern psychology, was Friedrich Albert Lange (1828–1875), a German philosopher and sociologist.

The perennial psychology is diametrically opposed to scientific materialism and the reductionistic treatment of the human psyche. Exponents of modern psychology in many cases still harbor the view that religion and spirituality are unreal, consigning them to the prescientific age of myth and superstition: "Mediaeval tradition has kept psychology from becoming a science. Psychology, up to very recent times, has been held so rigidly under the dominance both of traditional religion and of philosophy – the two great bulwarks of mediaevalism – that it has never been able to free itself and become a natural science." (Watson 1924, 1). To reject the medieval worldview is, essentially, to discard the role of metaphysics in properly understanding psychology and science. It is to renounce the timeless wisdom of all religions and the perennial psychology: "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21), "I am seated in the hearts of all" (Bhagavad Gītā 15:15), or "Heaven and earth cannot contain Me, but the heart of My faithful servant containeth Me." (Hadīth Qudsī).

What is necessary in rehabilitating a *science of the soul* is to remember that, prior to the emergence of modernism, the vital link between the human and transpersonal orders of reality had been accepted in all times and places. Eliade (1987, 15) states that "[t]he man of the traditional societies [note: and civilizations] is admittedly a 'homo religiosus.'" He adds that "'homo religiosus' represents the 'total man'" (1969, 8). Modern psychology reduces the human being to *homo natura* devoid of what transcends his empirical ego and psycho-physical identity. In response to this deviation, a reawakening of what it means to be human needs to be undertaken (see Bendeck Sotillos 2015). Philip Sherrard (1922–1995) writes (1991, 100):

Man can be truly human only when he is mindful of his theomorphic nature. When he ignores the divine in himself and in other existences, he becomes sub-human. And when this happens not merely in the case of a single individual but in the case of society as a whole, then that society disintegrates through the sheer rootlessness of its own structure or through the proliferation of psychic maladies which it is powerless to heal because it has deprived itself of the one medicine capable of healing them.

A crucial distinction needs to be made between premodern or traditional science – which is sacred and is always linked to metaphysics and modern science, which divorces itself from spiritual principles. Catholic philosopher and physicist Wolfgang Smith (2003, 21) has astutely noted that “[t]he fact is that every ‘bona fide’ premodern science is rooted in an integral sapiential tradition.” Any science that does away with metaphysics or spirituality cannot be a complete science; this does not mean that modern science cannot be beneficial in understanding the manifest order as long as it does not trespass beyond its own realm of competence. This is supported by the German-American psychologist, Hugo Münsterberg (1863–1916): “Psychology would learn too late that an empirical science can be really free and powerful only if it recognize(s) and respect(s) its limits.” (1901, 111).

Modern science and sacred science can be distinguished by the former’s purely empirical method of knowing (through observation, measurement, prediction and manipulation) and the latter’s basis in sapiential knowledge (a supra-sensory, direct and unmediated apprehension of Reality). The world’s wisdom traditions speak of a transcendent faculty known as the *Eye of the Heart* or the *Intellect* – *Intellectus* or *Spiritus* in Latin, *Rūh* or *Aql* in Arabic, *Pneuma* or *Nous* in Greek, *Buddhi* in Sanskrit. It is this intuitive way of knowing, to which Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) refers (1986, 270): “The eye in which I see God is the same eye in which God sees me. My eye and God’s eye are one eye.” Within the Shin Buddhist tradition, a similar principle is found: “[T]he eye, with which I see Amida, is the same with which Amida sees me.” (Kanamatsu 2002, 12–13). Another example of this can be found in a poem by the Sufi Mansūr al-Hallāj (858–922): “I saw my Lord with the Eye of the Heart. I said: ‘Who art thou?’ He answered: ‘Thou.’” (Lings 1977, 49). This spiritual organ is also taught by the religion of the First Peoples and in the Shamanic traditions. The remarkable sage of the Lakota Sioux, Hehaka Sapa or Black Elk (1863–1950) remarked as follows:

I am blind and do not see the things of this world; but when the Light comes from Above, it enlightens my heart

and I can see, for the Eye of my heart (Chante Ista) sees everything. The heart is a sanctuary at the center of which there is a little space, wherein the Great Spirit dwells, and this is the Eye (Ista). This is the Eye of the Great Spirit by which He sees all things and through which we see Him. If the heart is not pure, the Great Spirit cannot be seen, and if you should die in this ignorance, your soul cannot return immediately to the Great Spirit, but it must be purified by wandering about in the world. In order to know the center of the heart where the Great Spirit dwells you must be pure and good, and live in the manner that the Great Spirit has taught us. The man who is thus pure contains the Universe in the pocket of his heart (Chante Ognaka). (Schuon 1990b, 51).

Modern science willfully ignores the limitations of empirical verification: “We make our observations in all natural sciences by the aid of our sense organs” (Watson, 1924, 25). Put more succinctly, “whatever evidence there is for science is sensory evidence” (Quine 2004, 263). This approach is evidence-based but its truths are subject to any new findings which can lead to a revision of what was previously assumed to be true. The notion that empirical knowledge admits of little or no error, precisely because of its reliance on the senses, does not hold up. Rather, it has led to what is known as a “cult of empiricism” or the “tyranny” of evidence-based practices (see Toulmin and Leary 1985). By contrast, principial knowledge, which is grounded in metaphysics, includes (but is not confined to) what is perceivable by the five senses as it extends to what lies beyond the constraints of mere sense experience:

[T]he premier instruments of investigation supporting the scientific method are no one other than the five senses that on their own, or in tandem with the recently developed rarefied pieces of scientific equipment that attempt to document at the quantum level and through empirical evidence the true nature of reality. In the end, we still rely on seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching in order to declare what we believe to be an objective reality. (Herlihy 2011, 1).

Empiricism was known in the ancient world, but it was not held to be the most authoritative way of knowing as it is today: “[W]ithout going further back than what is called ‘classical’ antiquity, everything concerned with experimentation was considered by the ancients as only constituting knowledge of a very inferior degree.” (Guénon 2001a, 107). Empiricism remains vulnerable to the charge that it rejects modes of knowledge that lie beyond the scope of its restricted techniques. Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998) speaks to this misguided attitude (1995b, 29):

[T]he empiricist error consists not in the belief that experiment has a certain utility, which is obvious, but in thinking that there is a common measure between principal knowledge and experiment, and in attributing to the latter an absolute value, whereas in fact it can only have a bearing on modes, never on the very principles of Intellect and of Reality; this amounts to purely and simply denying the possibility of a knowledge other than the experimental and sensory.

“According to empiricists, all knowledge is derived from sensory experience” (Schuon 2009, 30). It is somewhat of a paradox that modern science, although secular in outlook, has its foundations in metaphysics even though it has broken away from its roots [7]. What is paramount here is that “[m]etaphysical evidence takes precedence over ‘physical’ or ‘phenomenal’ certainty” (Schuon 1990a, 15). Indian philosopher Jadunath Sinha (1892–1978) points out that Hinduism, known as the *sanātana dharma* (eternal religion), also advocates this truth: “There is no empirical psychology in India. Indian psychology is based on metaphysics.” (1986, xviii) [8]. Modern science and, by extension, modern psychology have not come to terms with this critique. The quandary of modern Western psychology persists: “To postulate a science without metaphysic is a flagrant contradiction.” (Schuon 1984a, 131).

To ignore traditional modes of knowledge that are of supra-individual origin is to do a grave injustice to what psychology truly is. “[I]n metaphysics there is no empiricism: principal knowledge cannot stem from any experience, even though experiences – scientific or other – can be the occasional causes of the intellect’s intuitions.” (Schuon 1991, vii). It is this kind of knowledge that allows us to traverse the intermediary world of the human psyche, when participating in a revealed spiritual form.

Since its inception modern Western psychology has never been neutral, nor can it be. On the contrary, “[s]cience ... is based on presuppositions” (Bateson 1980, 27) – it has a definite belief system from which it arises and it – rarely questions its own assumptions. Bishop Kallistos Ware makes the following point: “[M]odern science is not value-neutral. It does not offer merely an ‘objective’ account of the ‘facts,’ but it makes a series of assumptions that have far-reaching consequences on the spiritual level.” (Ware, 1998, xlii). It needs to be remembered that “[t]he concept of mental health depends on our concept of the nature of man.” (Fromm 1955, 67). In the same way, psychopathology requires a concept of health, and without knowing in what health consists, an adequate diagnosis and treatment of psychic maladies cannot be made. As Gai Eaton

(1921–2010) points out (1990, 8): “To diagnose the ills of the time one must possess standards of health.”

Rescuing the human psyche from the clutches of modern Western psychology requires challenging the widespread acceptance of *scientism*, “the belief that the scientific method and scientific findings are the sole criterion for truth” (Chittick 2009, 48; see also Sheldrake 2013). Freud (1989b, 71) declared his allegiance to scientific fundamentalism as follows: “No, our science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us we can get elsewhere.” This overwhelmingly narrow interpretation of science is reminiscent of another well-known scientific assertion by Bertrand Russell (1872–1970): “[W]hat science cannot discover, mankind cannot know” (Russell 1997, vii).

Science, according to Freud (1933, 196), represents the only legitimate means of obtaining true knowledge: “[T]here are no sources of knowledge of the universe other than the intellectual working-over of carefully scrutinized observations – in other words, what we call research – and alongside of it no knowledge derived from revelation, intuition or divination.” The reason that scientism endures, as the American historian and social critic Theodore Roszak (1933–2011) points out, is that it has been adopted as the new faith of the modern world to replace religion: “Science is our religion because we cannot, most of us, with any living conviction see around it.” (1972, 134–35). What is altogether misunderstood regarding the phenomenon of scientism is that its totalitarian claims contradict its essential assertions, as the renowned scholar of comparative religion, Huston Smith (1919–2016), perceptively observed (1992, 16): “[T]he contention that there are no truths save those of [note: modern] science is not itself a scientific truth; in affirming it scientism contradicts itself.” Scientism thus confines the scope of psychology to what is exclusively horizontal, denying its most important facet, the vertical dimension, of the Spirit: “[S]cientism encourages man to stop his search for inwardness at the level of psychic contents” (Needleman 1976, 131). An important qualification needs to be added here: “There is no conflict between science and religion when the rightful domain of each is honored.” (Smith 1995, 203).

Swiss psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger (1881–1966) offered an acute criticism of the fragmented mentality that undergirds modern Western psychology: “[T]he cancer of all [note: modern] psychology up to now [note: is] ... the cancer of the doctrine of subject-object cleavage of the world.” (Binswanger 1958, 11). A key figure responsible for this pervasive dichotomy in modern science is René Descartes (1596–1650), who put forward his own brand of mind-body dualism, which continues to have an enduring influence on the development

of modernity's *Weltanschauung*. Guénon (2004c, 68) speaks to how extensively this fundamental scission has permeated today's intellectual climate: "[T]he Cartesian duality ... has imposed itself on all modern Western thought." [9] Descartes (2003, 58) compared the human body to a machine:

I might consider the body of a man as kind of machine equipped with and made up of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood and skin in such a way that, even if there were no mind in it, it would still perform all the same movements as it now does in those cases where movement is not under the control of the will or, consequently, of the mind.

Comparing the human body to a machine is assuredly not a neutral position, as modern science purports to adopt. In fact, we need to remain constantly vigilant in the face of these Promethean forces. Rollo May (1960, 686) took very seriously "the dehumanizing dangers in our tendency in modern science to make man over into the image of the machine." By equating the human body with a machine, Descartes (1997, 17) hoped to devise "a system of medicine which is founded on infallible demonstrations." He appeared to predict the future of modern science, including modern psychology, seeing as current mental health practices by and large push exclusively for treatments that are exclusively confined to empirically validated techniques. The Cartesian divide between *res extensa* (extended entities) and *res cogitans* (thinking entities) makes no allowance for overcoming this bifurcation, thus reducing all human experience to the private, subjective realm and obliterating any notion of objective reality.

This mind-body dualism lives on in modern science, especially in the fields of psychology and psychiatry, where this notion is deeply embedded in its epistemological framework. It is especially to be found in the *medical model* of clinical diagnosis and treatment of mental illness, which separates the psychological (*psyche*) from the biological (*soma*). R. D. Laing (1927–1989), the Scottish psychiatrist, acknowledged how widespread the medical model is, calling it the "set of procedures in which all doctors are trained" (2001, 39). This model remains the dominant schema within these disciplines and is thoroughly reductionist as it views mental disorders as solely the product of physiological factors and treats them, accordingly, as physical diseases; it generally divorces itself from broader psychological and transpersonal realities and becomes fixed in a schema based only on a disease's etiology (see Elkins 2009).

Due to concerns with the excessively narrow outlook of the medical model, the biopsychosocial model emerged to

encompass more dimensions of human reality, such as the social and cultural with a view to gaining a fuller understanding of illness and health. It was George L. Engel (1913–1999) who popularized the biopsychosocial model when he observed a "medical crisis" that he thought was derived from the medical model; that is, an "adherence to a model of disease no longer adequate for the scientific tasks and social responsibilities of either medicine or psychiatry" (1977, 129). In this attempt to overcome mind-body dualism, he asserted that all three of the following levels need to be taken into account: "the social, psychological, and biological" (Engel 1977, 133). It was the pioneering work of influential psychiatrist Adolf Meyer (1866–1950) and American psychiatrist and neurologist Roy R. Grinker, Sr. (1900–1993) that contributed to the further development of the biopsychosocial model first established by Engel.

With the limits of the medical model having been recognized, the biopsychosocial model was also found to have its limitations because it could not adequately explain the various factors that determine psychopathology (see Ghaemi 2009a, 2009b). Even though the biopsychosocial model is more inclusive than the biomedical one, it still falls short in failing to situate the spiritual dimension at the heart of the human condition. Some have advocated for a four-dimensional model or a biopsychosocial model that embraces spirituality and, while this is certainly more satisfactory, its assumptions are still *ad hoc* and are not properly integrated into the vertical dimension. What is not acknowledged here is that the spiritual domain transcends (while fully embracing) brain functioning, psychological dispositions, and social influences among other factors. This corresponds to the tripartite structure of the human being, although Spirit alone can fully bring into balance and harmonize all these aspects of our human nature.

Nasr (1996, 259–60) makes an important point about modern medicine and its reliance on a mechanistic worldview:

[T]he truncated understanding of the body in modern medicine [note: is] based on reductionism, which finally sees the human body as a complicated machine and nothing more than that ... although the modern scientific and medical understanding of the body certainly corresponds to an aspect of its reality, it does not by any means exhaust its reality. The body, in fact, has its own intelligence and speaks its own 'mind,' reflecting a wisdom ...

Yet this misconceived division does not appear in traditional healing methods found throughout the world's religions, which includes the spiritual heritage of the First Peoples

and Shamanic traditions. Nasr adds (1996, 259–60), “[i]n all traditional civilizations, medicine has been closely related to the basic principles of the tradition in question. Its origin has always been seen to be divine ... The psyche was seen to affect the body and the spirit the psyche.” For example, Guénon (2004c, 26) illuminates the essential metaphysical principles found in traditional Chinese medicine and how anything comparable is completely lacking in modern Western medicine:

Traditional Chinese medicine in particular is based more or less entirely on the distinction between ‘yang’ and ‘yin’; every illness is due to a state of disequilibrium, that is, to an excess of one of these two in relation to the other; this must then be strengthened to re-establish the equilibrium, and in this way one reaches the very cause of the illness instead of being limited to treating more or less outward and superficial symptoms, as is the profane medicine of modern Westerners.

Coomaraswamy (1997, 335) outlines the distinctions between the understanding of health in modern psychology and that found in traditional or perennial psychology:

The health envisaged by the [note: modern] empirical psychotherapy is a freedom from particular pathological conditions; that envisaged by the other [note: traditional or perennial psychology] is a freedom from all conditions and predicaments ... Furthermore, the pursuit of the greater freedom necessarily involves that attainment of the lesser; psycho-physical health being a manifestation and consequence of spiritual wellbeing.

Descartes’s dictum “*I think, therefore I am*” (Lat. *cogito ergo sum*) (2003, 68) situates human awareness in a fully enclosed sense of Self and sets this up as the criterion for existence. This is totally opposed to human identity as understood by the plenary traditions. In contrast, the transpersonal modes of knowing recognize a plurality of levels in our human nature, which are rooted in a universal and timeless wisdom that can be found around the world. According to Hindu metaphysics, as found in the ancient text *Tripurā Rahasya* (2002, 132), consciousness has no beginning as it is always already existent: “*Therefore you cannot escape the conclusion that there must be consciousness even to know its unawareness also. So, there is no moment when consciousness is not.*”

Thought, being, knowledge and reality are all interconnected and unified in traditional modes of knowing. This requires a consonance between the knower and the known; as Guénon writes, the “*Knower, Known, and Knowledge are truly one only*” (2001b, 92). Medieval epistemology defined

knowledge as “*adaequatio rei et intellectus*’ – the understanding of the knower must be adequate to the thing to be known” (Schumacher 1977, 39). Parmenides (515–445) emphasized something similar: “*To be and to know are one and the same*” (Coomaraswamy 1989, 35). This is to say that, in the traditional or premodern world, there were modes of knowledge, with their corresponding levels of reality, by which one could realize the Supreme Identity. In this understanding, a distinction was always made between relative knowledge and knowledge that was Absolute.

The transcendent or noetic faculty of the Intellect, immanent within the human being, enables us to know the fullness of what can be known. Sherrard (2013, 29) describes the quandary that modern science faces seeing as it cannot know higher levels of reality beyond itself: “*Nothing can be known except according to the mode of the knower.*” Shankara (788–820) also made this clear: “*Only the Self [note: Ātma] knows the Self [note: Ātma]*” (Shah-Kazemi 2006, 207) [10]. Within the Buddhist tradition, the same idea can be found: “*A Buddha alone is able to understand what is in the mind of another Buddha.*” (Suzuki 1961, 49). This principle is also discernible in the Christian text *Theologia Germanica* (1874, 153), in which it is written, “*God can be known only by God*” [11]. No matter how broad an outlook modern science adopts, its perspective is inevitably vitiated by a dualistic framework that tries to grasp consciousness as an object of empirical study: “*The highest mode of consciousness, or consciousness in itself, is that in which there is no dualism between knower and what is to be known, observer and what is to be observed, consciousness and that of which consciousness is conscious.*” (Sherrard 2013, 30). Again, “[t]he soul, like every other domain of reality, can only be truly known by what transcends it.” (Burckhardt 1987, 47). This is captured in the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad: “*He who knoweth himself knoweth his Lord.*”

Duo sunt in homine – “*There are two [note: natures] in man*” (Aquinas 1980, 336) was an axiom in the West that recognized an outer and inner man, at least prior to the emergence of the Renaissance. “*In any definition of Man, his inner and outer aspect are both to be considered.*” (Ibn al-‘Arabī 1980, 73). Our theomorphic essence is unconditioned and unaffected by the activities of the mundane self: “*Everything a man does in the lower part of active life is necessarily exterior to him, so to speak, beneath him.*” (*Cloud of Unknowing* 1978, 72). This is articulated a little differently here: “[O]ur Inner Man is in the world but not of it, in us but not of us, our Outer Man both in the world and of it.” (Coomaraswamy 1977, 371). Modern Western psychology focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of the outer human being unaware that, by definition, its materialism excludes the possibility of an “*inward man*” (Romans 7:22)

and thus it has no framework by which to comprehend the reality of our *two natures*.

The ancient wisdom found in all times and places perceived a correspondence between the unseen world and that of the visible one. The former corresponds with the notion of *essences* that connect us to the realm of Spirit, which pervades the whole of Reality. “[T]he things, which are seen, are temporal; but the things, which are not seen, are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:18) This metaphysical correspondence is also to be found in Taoism, when Lao Tzu (2017, 46) remarks: “All things under heaven are born of the corporeal: The corporeal is born of the Incorporeal.” As a paragon of Islamic spirituality, Rūmī (1207–1273) captures this idea poetically (Glassé 2002, 235):

Every form you see has its archetype in the Divine world, beyond space; if the form perishes what matter, since its heavenly model is indestructible? Every beautiful form you have seen, every meaningful word you have heard – be not sorrowful because all this must be lost; such is not really the case. The Divine Source is immortal, and its outflowing gives water without cease; since neither the one nor the other can be stopped, wherefore do you lament? From the moment that you came into the world a ladder was put before you ...

In reviving the primacy of metaphysics, sacred science and its spiritual principles of psychology can return to their transcendent roots. According to this vision, everything observable in the phenomenal world can be traced “back to its source, to its archetype” (Corbin 1980, 3). Brown (2007, 104–5) explains how traditional peoples understood and perceived the divine Unity behind the created order where no bifurcation exists:

It is often difficult for those who look on the tradition of the American Indians from the outside, or through the “educated” mind, to understand their preoccupation with the animals, and with all things in the Universe ... But for these people, as of course for all traditional peoples, every created object is important simply because they know the metaphysical correspondence between this world and the real World. No object is for them what it appears to be, but is simply the pale shadow of a Reality ... [I]t is for this reason that every created object is wakan, holy, or has a power, according to the level of the spiritual reality that it reflects. Thus many objects possess power for evil as well as for good and every object is treated with respect, for the particular ‘power’ that it possess can be transferred into you. Of course, they know that everything in the Universe has its counterpart in the soul of man ... The Indian hum-

bles himself before the whole of creation [note: especially when ‘lamenting’] because all things were created by ‘Wakan-Tanka’ [note: Great Spirit] before him, and deserve respect, as they are older than man. However, although the last of created things, man is also first and unique, since he may know ‘Wakan-Tanka’.

The divided mentality of the modern West will come to an end only by returning to a tripartite understanding of the human being, consisting of Spirit/Intellect, soul and body. This will restore the fragmented condition of the contemporary psyche in order “[t]o see all things in the yet undifferentiated, primordial unity” (Lao Tzu in Cooper 2010, 37), as additionally expounded in the *Heart Sūtra (Prajñāpāramitā Hridaya Sūtra)*: “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness.” (Lopez 1988, 57).

The myopic scope of modern science has proven to be incapable of delivering itself from its erroneous theoretical foundations: “In falling under the tyranny of a fragmentary, materialistic and quantitative outlook modern science is irremediably limited by its epistemological base.” (Oldmeadow 2011, 122). Guénon (2004d, 96) comments on the limited scope of modern psychology that is devoid of a transpersonal dimension:

As for modern Western psychology, it deals only with a quite restricted portion of the human individuality, where the mental faculty is in direct relationship with the corporeal modality, and, given the methods it employs, it is incapable of going any further. In any case, the very objective which it sets before itself and which is exclusively the study of mental phenomena [the empirical ego], limits it strictly to the realm of the individuality, so that the state which we are now discussing [note: the Self – Ātma] necessarily eludes its investigations.

The postcolonial challenge offers the potential to correct the historical errors of modern Western psychology by providing an integral framework for understanding the *science of the soul* as conceived by all traditional civilizations.

The sacred science of the perennial philosophy recognizes that there are many ways of being and knowing, which are all embraced by the fullness of Reality. This universal wisdom affirms that “[t]he ontological situation of man in the total scheme of things is forever the same” (Nasr 1973, 93), and its ways of knowing are inseparable from this transpersonal dimension. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007, 47) illustrates this paramount concern with respect to the split in human knowledge and understanding, writing that there is an “abyssal invisible line that separates science, philosophy, and

theology, on one side, from, on the other, knowledges rendered incommensurable and incomprehensible for meeting neither the scientific methods of truth nor their acknowledged contesters in the realm of philosophy and theology.” For this reason sacred science, metaphysics and its spiritual principles remain within the “*realm of incomprehensible beliefs and behaviors which in no way can be considered knowledge*” (Santos 2007, 51). This attack on traditional modes of knowing, coupled with the repudiation of metaphysics, has had devastating consequences: “[W]hile nineteenth century materialism closed the mind of man to what is above him, twentieth century [note: modern Western] psychology opened it to what is below him.” (Guénon in Coomaraswamy 1943, 61).

It is the integrated metaphysics of the perennial philosophy and its corresponding psychology that can facilitate a framework for metaphysical renewal. In re-establishing the principles of a universal sacred science, we may be able to recover the equilibrium that has long been lost to us [12]. As we now see, the theoretical trajectories that have led to the emergence of modernism and postmodernism are essentially bankrupt and destructive. These movements, which have spellbound contemporary man, have failed to give us the deeper understanding of reality and consciousness that we so desperately need today.

Some have gone so far as to suggest that a synthesis between modern science and the spiritual traditions can be accomplished; however, this is to miss the point. Such a synthesis is not possible, as the former is premised on an erroneous epistemological foundation and is lacking a proper ontological basis (see Bendeck Sotillos 2013b). It completely overlooks the fact that modern Western psychology has emerged due to a crisis of the modern world, of which it itself is the flawed consequence [13]. We are reminded about the ill-fated prognosis that confronts the shaky foundations of modern psychology: “*Psychoanalysis is the disease of which it pretends to be the cure.*” (Szasz 1976, 24) [14].

Secular science and its offspring, modern psychology, are at an impasse due to their crippled means of knowledge and the absence of an immutable foundation as illustrated by Nasr (2001, 489):

Modern philosophy, psychology, or science are simply not able to explain perception, which they always reduce to one of its parts or something else because the participation of the human intellect in the Light of the Divine Intellect is simply beyond the truncated worldview within which all modern thought, whether it be philosophical, psychological, or scientific operates. The rediscovery of the

real significance of the perception is only possible in light of the ‘sophia perennis’ and is itself a key for the discovery of the metaphysical universe depicted by the perennial philosophy in its vastness and wholeness.

While points of contact may be made between traditional forms of psychology and its benighted current manifestation, the former does not need the insights of a profane science in order to validate its truths. Beyond our corporeal and psychological dimensions, the perennial psychology holds that we are able to occupy multiple states of consciousness. This is evident in the work of Toshihiko Izutsu (1914–1993), who stated (1984, 79): “*Existence or Reality as ‘experienced’ on supra-sensible levels reveals itself as of a multistratified structure.*” As Buddhist writer Marco Pallis (1895–1989) explains (1949, 127): “*Man is but one of an indefinite number of states of the being.*” What is preventing modern Western psychology from being “*integrated into higher orders of knowledge*” (Nasr 1989, 207) is that its science has jettisoned its metaphysical roots. It needs to be clear that while this sacred science admits diverse modes of knowing, it also recognizes the corresponding levels of reality: “*Each higher world contains the principles of that which lies below it and lacks nothing of the lower level of reality.*” (Nasr 1989, 199).

Without a fully integrated framework, one cannot discern between different levels of being, including the transmuted. “*Any truth can in fact be understood at different levels and according to different conceptual dimensions, that is to say, according to an indefinite number of modalities that correspond to all the possible aspects, likewise indefinite in number, of the truth in question.*” (Schuon 1996, 1). Additionally, “*one has to understand that there are different degrees, different points of view, different levels of reality which have to be taken into consideration*” (Lings 2014, 80). It is the metaphysical order that allows the necessary aptitude by which these distinct modes of reality can be recognized. Schuon (1993, 1) writes: “*Any truth can in fact be understood at different levels and according to different conceptual dimensions, that is to say, according to an indefinite number of modalities that correspond to all the possible aspects, likewise indefinite in number, of the truth in question.*” This understanding of Reality goes far beyond the materialistic science of the medical or biopsychosocial models as it is situated on a transcendent and more inclusive foundation of reality.

It is time to acknowledge that the world’s spiritual traditions have complete therapies to offer. The perennial psychology can provide not only valid and effective, but integral healing modalities, which leave behind the pernicious fallacies of the

scientism that is itself the damaged legacy of modern Western psychology and its dehumanizing ideology.

Properly rehabilitating an adequate *science of the soul* requires it to be unshackled from the scientific point of view that denies the very existence of Spirit and the human soul. What is needed is to restore our true identity back to the earth and the Spirit, which is to say to its geomorphic and theomorphic origins. This can be facilitated by reflecting the Divine unity in our diverse societies and civilizations. What is crucial is the rediscovery of metaphysics, sacred science and its spiritual principles, all of which inform the fullness of any enduring *science of the soul*:

It is also crucial for creating a new understanding between religion and science, and, with the help of traditional metaphysics, for integrating modern science into a hierarchy of knowledge wherein it could function without claims of exclusivity and without disrupting the essential relation between man and the cosmos, which possesses a reality beyond the realm of pure quantity and even beyond the empirical and the rational. (Nasr 1996, 275).

American philosopher of science Thomas S. Kuhn (1922–1996) has astutely pointed out that a new paradigm will not take place through individual conversions, here and there, in the scientific community but rather through a developed consensus over time that establishes a new paradigm “until ... the last holdouts have died” (1996, 152). This speaks directly to the predicament facing contemporary psychology; any kind of *metanoia* will not be sudden even when its errors are admitted. That we are currently experiencing the “last holdouts” is suggested by the following: “*The contemporary ‘Weltanschauung’ – which implicitly assumes bifurcation to be a scientific fact – has been disproved.*” (Smith 2019, 16).

Some might argue that even though abundant evidence has been provided to demonstrate the fissures in the so-called scientific underpinnings of contemporary psychology, this has no direct impact on how practitioners today work with people. For example, they may point out that they’re – not operating from its – cramped theoretical assumptions. For them, research has demonstrated the efficacy of psychotherapy regardless of the type of therapeutic modality or technique being employed. Indeed, it has been argued that the effectiveness of psychotherapy does not depend on one modality or technique being preferred over any other (see Smith and Glass 1977; Landman and Dawes 1982; Seligman 1995). As clinical psychologist Bruce Wampold (2001, 209) concludes, “[c]learly, the preponderance of the benefits of psychotherapy are due to factors incidental to the particular theoretical approach

administered and dwarf the effects due to theoretically derived techniques.”

For this reason, it has been proposed that the *human relationship* itself is what has primacy in the encounter and makes any treatment effective rather than the clinical methods used. American psychiatrist Irvin Yalom (1980, 401) has emphasized that the single most important lesson for a novice mental health therapist to learn is that “*it is the relationship that heals*”. Elsewhere, he has stressed his own personal *mantra*: “*It’s the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals – my professional rosary.*” (Yalom 2012, 112). At the same time, some may try to sidestep the issue by identifying an *integrative* or eclectic therapist that does not associate with a given therapeutic approach. “*Integration suggests that the elements are part of one combined approach to theory and practice, as opposed to eclecticism which draws ad hoc from several approaches in the approach to a particular case.*” (Martin and Margison 2009, 57).

We need to note that this outlook arises due to the battle between the incompatible theoretical systems of behaviorism and psychoanalysis. Yet it is important to realize that, while these approaches suggest openness and inclusivity, they do not resolve the fundamental dilemmas at hand: “*These methodological considerations produce general agreement on the rules of the game rather than general acceptance of a specific theoretical position. They produce, as it were, a modus vivendi without cordiality.*” (Williams 1954, 115). All of this is yet another example as to why the field is in crisis. This impasse clearly demonstrates that the present-day paradigm of contemporary psychology is now largely dysfunctional and slowly giving way.

The situation is not as simple as it might appear, seeing as what constitutes a relationship is a much more complex and nuanced question. Furthermore, there are inherent obstacles implicit in the psychotherapeutic relationship that cannot be ignored (see Schofield 1964). It is that the phenomena of *transference* and *countertransference* – comprising a two-way, transactional process – are in fact unavoidable as these are challenges implicit in the horizontal realm of the human psyche that cannot be transcended or integrated without the presence of a vertical dimension. The very means by which the empirical ego perceives the phenomenal world is itself problematic, as its very starting point is an impediment to truly understanding oneself and the other (as both are unavoidably rooted in dualism). Our identification with the ego is rooted in a fictional, if not distorted, sense of Self that assumes an underlying split between the subject and object or the Self and the world. The dilemma of a self-divided from

that which is other can only be understood within a metaphysical framework. Schuon (1981, 32) points out that, “*the ego as such cannot logically seek the experience of what lies beyond egoity.*”

Relationships, as informed by metaphysics, comprise both horizontal and vertical dimensions, yet the horizontal is always subordinate to the vertical, that is to say, “*the relationship between man and the world is premised on the primary relationship between God and man*” (Lakhani 2010, 85). An effective and fully integrated psychology requires both dimensions. Relationships encompass an indefinite number of states of consciousness and levels of reality – a sacred unity both within the created order and of what lies beyond it, as the Lakota saying discloses: *Mitakuye oyasin* – “all my relatives” or “we are all related.” The Hindu tradition has as what is known as *satsang*, or an association with truth or reality, which consists of being in the company of saints and sages; however, it also signifies our ultimate encounter with the Self or the Supreme Identity. This is never truly the human confronting the human, but the Divine encountering the Divine; it only appears as the former from a relative point of view. However, from the aspect of Ultimate Reality or the Absolute there is none other than the Divine Itself. In other words, the pure Subject as the Self realizes the object within itself and its inherent oneness.

If psychology returns to its origin in metaphysics, sacred science and spiritual principles, it can again become worthy of being called a *science of the soul*. The following verse frames the predicament in which contemporary psychology finds itself: “*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.*” (Psalm 118:22). This is the primacy of the Spirit that psychology needs in order to return to its origins *in divinis*. Coomaraswamy (1977, 378) not only urges us to adopt a framework based on humanity’s ancient wisdom traditions, but further adds, “[i]n conclusion, let us emphasize again that the perennial psychology is not a science for its own sake, and can be of no use to anybody who will not practice it.” This includes mental health professionals alike, who also need to engage in their own inner work as instructed in the following: “*Physician, heal thyself.*” (Luke 4:23). Again, without metaphysics no psychology can be a true psychology or a *science of the soul*. This confirms something that Schuon (1984, 14) has perceptively discerned: “*There is no science of the soul without a metaphysical basis to it and without spiritual remedies at its disposal.*” [15] We need to be vigilant about therapeutic modalities that do not treat the whole personality, seeing as they cannot provide a comprehensive diagnosis or treatment in keeping with our deepest human needs; rather, they can only offer ineffectual counterfeits: “[A]n illusory

medicine to cure an equally illusory disease.” (Ta Hui 1977, 24). It is only metaphysics that allows for spiritually complete diagnosis, treatment and cure of “*the diseases which affect the soul, indicate their treatment, and point out their remedies*” (Alī Ahmad ibn Muhammad Miskawayh in Nasr and Aminrazavi 2008, 325). Anything less would not be a postcolonial or, rather, a perennial psychology – without which the modern West will never recover what it has long forgotten. As the old paradigm falls apart before our very eyes, no equally impotent replacement is required; what is needed to restore a *science of the soul* is to urgently turn to the universal and timeless wisdom that has reliably guided all humanity, for millennia, in its quest for true knowledge of who we really are. We ignore this remedy at our peril.

Notes

- [1] *"In [note: modern] Western experience it is common to separate the mind from the body and spirit and the spirit from mind and body."* (Duran and Duran 1995, 15).
- [2] *"The distinction of spirit, soul, and body is moreover that, which has been unanimously accepted by all the traditional doctrines of the West."* (Guénon 2004c, 68). *"May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
- [3] Sufi adage quoted in Ibn 'Arabī (1975, 11).
- [4] *"[M]odern science not only eclipsed the religious and traditional philosophical understanding of the order of nature in the West, but it also all but destroyed the traditional sciences."* (Nasr 1996, 126).
- [5] *"Locke, [note: is] the founder of modern psychology"* (Guénon 2004b, 92). *"Our business here is not to know all things, but those, which concern our conduct. If we can find out those measures whereby a rational creature, put in that state, which man is in in this world, may and ought to govern his opinions and actions depending thereon, we need not be troubled that some other things escape our knowledge."* (Locke 1879, 4). See also Westaway (1931).
- [6] *"[M]odern psychology is eager to throw metaphysics to the winds."* (Lings 1991, 17–18). See also Albert G. A. Balz (1936, 337–51), and Bendeck Sotillos (2013b).
- [7] *"[T]he traditional conception ... attaches all the sciences to the principles of which they are the particular applications, and it is this attachment that the modern conception refuses to admit. For Aristotle, physics was only 'second' in its relation to metaphysic, that is to say it was dependent on metaphysic and was really only an application to the province of nature of principles that stand above nature and are reflected in its laws; and one can say the same for the cosmology of the Middle Ages."* (Guénon 2004, 45). See also E. A. Burtt (2003).
- [8] *"[I]n metaphysics there is no empiricism; principial knowledge cannot stem from any experience, even though experiences – scientific or other – can be the occasional causes of the intellect's intuitions."* (Schuon 1991, vii).
- [9] *"Cartesian bifurcation created a dualism between mind and matter, which has dominated Western thought since the seventeenth century, a dualism which has led many to choose the primacy of mater over mind and to establish the view that in the beginning was matter and not consciousness."* (Nasr 2007, 224).
- [10] *"Self realizes the Self"* (Tripura Rahasya 2002, 163).
- [11] *"[T]he things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."* (1 Corinthians 2:11).
- [12] *"A civilization is integrated and healthy to the extent that it is founded on the invisible or underlying religion, the religio perennis."* (Schuon 1984a, 143).
- [13] *"[I]t is often suggested that ... modern psychology ... has developed in parallel with modern science, is working in the same direction as that pursued by traditional sages and philosophers and by the few who still seek to follow them, and that it is thus making an approach to the same goal. That is not so."* (Northbourne 2001, 17).
- [14] *"Psychoanalysis is an illness that pretends to be a cure"* (Perls 1993, 8).
- [15] *"There is no science of the soul without a metaphysical basis and spiritual remedies"* (Schuon 2009, 11).

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