

*A PSYCHOLOGY THAT RESPONDS TO
OUR TIMES*

Transforming Inner Oppression Into Awakened, Aligned and
Liberated Spirit

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AN AGE OF INFINITE OPPORTUNITY

Universal education

Technological revolution

The knowledge emerging from the social, physical, and environmental sciences and humanities

Integral spirituality

A systemic Bahá'í Revelation that renewed religious & social thought in mid-19th century, and merits serious study for the benefit of all

Converging to create unprecedented opportunity

For the majority of people to no longer be swept along by historic change
but to adopt an intentional approach to building human society

AN AGE OF COLLECTIVE ADULT DEVELOPMENT

By the second half of 20th century, the psychological field of Adult Development took shape around the work of Carl Jung, Erik Erikson, Robert Kegan, Lawrence Kohlberg, Mary Bellenky, Daniel Levinson, and others.

Systematic descriptions of how
adult structures of knowing and being can evolve in the lifespan

For the first time in human history
within the reach of every adult to become intentional in the quality of
personal and community life we create

THIS SYSTEMIC STRUCTURAL APPROACH

First emerged in mid-19th century

In the teachings on individual and societal transformation of
A Persian nobleman who later became known by the name of *Bahá'u'lláh*.

His Writings spoke to the essence of the religious teachings of the past, and articulated universal principles and a comprehensive philosophy of modern life, pointing to the essentials for establishing a divine economy on this planet, for building institutions that can safeguard peace, and for achieving the organic and spiritual unity of the body of nations.

His Teachings released fresh energies into a world at the threshold of a global era,
and propelled dramatic developmental forces and processes...

SYSTEMIC APPROACHES IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Some sociological systems thinking began in late 19th c (Emile Durkheim) – how societies can maintain their integrity and coherence in modernity in the absence of traditional social and religious ties

General Systems Theory (Ludwig von Bertalanffy) – paradigmatic way of thinking about the emergent properties of living systems; brings together ontology, philosophy of science, physics, biology, engineering, computer science, economics, psychology, political science

World Systems analysis (1970s, Immanuel Wallerstein) – macro approach to history, where world system is the unit of analysis, retrospective

Learning Theory (Jean Piaget) – evolving internal structures of thinking

SYSTEMIC APPROACHES IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Characterized by
Interdisciplinarity &
Quest for integrative principles

Shadow side:

Totalizing approaches to societal re-ordering (e.g. Karl Marx)
(communism, nazism, genocides, forced assimilation...)

***STRUCTURAL PRINCIPLE THAT PROTECTS
AGAINST TOTALIZING SYSTEMS***

Bahá'u'lláh:

Complementarity of scientific and religious knowledge

(both relative and emergent)

In solving problems.

The viability of any solutions to the problems of a global age depends on the *actual* degree of complementarity between these equally legitimate sources of human knowledge and understanding.

HARMONY OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Bahá'u'lláh declared that religion is in complete harmony with science and reason. If religious belief and doctrine is at variance with reason, it proceeds from the limited mind of man and not from God; therefore, it is unworthy of belief and not deserving of attention; the heart finds no rest in it, and real faith is impossible. How can man believe that which he knows to be opposed to reason? Is this possible? Can the heart accept that which reason denies? Reason is the first faculty of man, and the religion of God is in harmony with it. Bahá'u'lláh has removed this form of dissension and discord from among mankind and reconciled science with religion by revealing the pure teachings of the divine reality. (*Promulgation of Universal Peace* 231)

***WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR A DISILLUSIONED
HUMANITY?***

In our current context
Of inter-religious genocidal wars,
Religious extremism,
clashing religious and secular ideologies,
and rampant materialism,
Amidst which ordinary people are disillusioned and find
it less and less possible to believe in anything?

***INNER OPPRESSION:
OUR RELATIONSHIP TO MEANING IS BROKEN***

The rational soul
is by nature an active participant in the social order.
We are social beings,
And meaning-making is our most fundamental activity.
In the context of increasingly meaningless,
Tangential and expedient social relationships amidst global
corruption,
We cannot thrive...

AN EFFECTIVE PSYCHOLOGY HAS TO SPEAK TO SYSTEMIC INNER OPPRESSION

We are oppressed by our unconscious beliefs, fears, and expectations, and the appearances we try to project.

We live in contexts that disempower because they define us as purely biological beings stuck with our impulses and with no greater purpose to life than competing in social contexts to consume and meet our needs.

We are subject to a flattened language, which, with consumer culture, has lost depth, imagination, and become crudely materialist. It distorts the soul's aspiration for truth and meaning into ideological -isms.

We are constantly claimed by competing and corrupt ideologies. We *feel* that something is missing and so we become easily drawn to ideological pseudo-truths that march as inspired answers.

***AN EMERGENT MEANINGFUL PSYCHOLOGY IN A
GLOBAL ERA***

A vast, poorly acknowledged, yet comprehensive process under way in the social and physical sciences and humanities of finding that convergence of scientific and spiritual understanding about human mind and society

Which can

inform the applied spheres and translate into rational collective governance and decision-making, fostering pervasive evolution of collective consciousness

***DIALECTICAL APPROACH TO RE-STRUCTURING
THE LIFE OF MIND AND SOCIETY***

Since all human knowledge and social experience is an interconnected and evolving living system, processes and solutions need to be subject to scrutiny and infusion from both core scientific and core religious understanding, where each serves as a corrective to the other, and both evolve in the context of the dialectical tension between them.

First ever opportunity in collective human history to approach processes of society-building in a conscious and deliberate way, without totalizing (either/or) solutions.

***PSYCHOLOGICALLY-INFORMED APPROACH TO
MIND AND SOCIETY***

Developmental shift under way –

From being the objects of the waves of an on-going historical
process since the beginning of human history –

To becoming the subjects of history

(understanding and choosing to direct our own evolutionary
process)

The acme of adult development...

THE NEED FOR A SYSTEMIC RESPONSE

To

the complex, interdependent, and increasingly daunting web of economic, political, social, technical, spiritual, and environmental challenges facing humanity in our current global context

Implies each of us...

And each field of collective endeavor...

IN THE ABSENCE OF A SYSTEMIC APPROACH

WE ARE FUNDAMENTALLY MORALLY INCOHERENT

therefore *unhealthy*,

Both individually and as societies.

Moral incoherence has become the norm

From leaders and institutions of governance to Nobel Peace
Prize recipients,

To ordinary 'consumers'...

HEALTH – INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE

The experience of *coherence* between our body, mind, heart, and spirit in our concrete socio-historical contexts and communities.

Health is the coherence of meaning that synchronizes and optimizes functioning on every level.

If the meanings we ascribe to different parts of our lives do not cohere as part of a larger meaning, or are in conflict with the health and wellbeing of others, we experience stress, anxiety, and depression – symptoms of *incoherence*.

SIGNS OF GLOBAL INCOHERENCE

A deepening disintegration
of the socio-moral fabric of life on the planet,
characterized by a rising incidence and prevalence of psychosomatic
diseases, mental disorders, anxiety and neurosis, prostitution, crimes,
political corruption, and a variety of sexual diseases, including AIDS;
the alienation of large segments of society and the depersonalization of
individuals, with large groups of people living precariously on the periphery
of society

(Social Breakdown Syndrome, WHO, Lambo, 2000).

EARLY EFFORTS AT SYSTEMIC APPROACH

Epidemiological research on

Social Determinants of Health (WHO 2008)

Economic stability (critical issues: e.g. poverty, employment status, access to employment, housing stability)

Education (high school graduation rates, safe learning environments)

Social and community context (family structure, social cohesion, perceptions of discrimination and equity, civic participation, incarceration/institutionalization)

Health and health care

Neighborhood and built environment (quality of housing, crime & violence, environmental conditions, access to healthy foods)

(U.S. Report *Healthy People 2020* – focus areas for national and global policies)

GLOBAL TENSION – THE SPIRIT LEVEL

Research in 23 developed countries shows that
The greatest predictor for psychological wellbeing (beyond
attaining a basic material standard of living)

Is

The greater social equality of a society

(in terms of wealth distribution)

(Richard Wilkinson, Professor Emeritus at University of Nottingham Medical School and expert on international research on inequality)

Kate Pickett, professor of epidemiology, University of York, NIH)

GLOBAL TENSION – THE SPIRIT LEVEL

Almost every measure of wellbeing –
from life expectancy to mental illness, violence or
illiteracy –
is affected less by how wealthy a society is
than by how unequal it is!

(Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, 2009)

GLOBAL TENSION

Between emergent systemic understanding

And dominant attitudes,

in which obsolete partial and sectoral viewpoints and interests
continue to dominate governance and decision-making, creating

a deep tension between our actual choices
and the possibility for a sustainable future.

SEARCH FOR A NORMATIVE FRAME OF REFERENCE

The comprehensive collective vision of

UDHR and the Earth Charter –

*Statements of global consensus on moral values and principles for a
sustainable world*

Corresponding search for a template and guiding principles for a systemic approach to socially responsible psychology through analysis of current psychological assumptions vis-à-vis the need for a new level of integrated research, teaching and clinical training

BECOMING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

Acting from a compelling and defining awareness of the moral impact and reverberations of our every choice throughout an interconnected globalizing world –

Implies psychological self-awareness.

That indicates the need for the responsible collaboration of psychology with decision-makers on every level, as well as with communities that are developing their own approaches to addressing issues of social justice.

TOWARD GLOBAL COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

Marsella (1998) raised a call for psychology to grow beyond its ethnocentric assumptions associated with the first 100 years of its development as a science focused primarily on the individual in Western contexts;

and to apply its understanding to the circumstances and challenges of people in different social and cultural contexts in their struggle for peace and justice. Multi-cultural psychology emerged.

GLOBAL MIND CHANGE

By the early 1970s, new perspectives in social thought began to recognize a major cultural crisis in industrial civilization, and to envision profound transformations of human consciousness, culture and global development.

(Willis Harman, 1998, physicist, engineer, futurist, Stanford Research Institute, Institute of Noetic Science)

In 1971, *Apollo 14* cosmonaut Edgar Mitchell, on his return from landing on the moon, watched the Earth float freely in the vastness of space and became engulfed by a profound sense of universal connectedness. In 1973, he founded the Institute of Noetic Sciences to study individual and collective transformation through consciousness research, transformative learning, and engaging a global community.

GLOBAL MIND CHANGE

In 1970, Thomas Kuhn (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*) described a dominant paradigm change as a *change in the basic ways of perceiving, thinking, valuing, and doing, associated with a particular view of reality.*

Roger Sperry, 1981 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine on split-brain studies: *new mind-brain discoveries recognize **the primacy of consciousness as a causal reality*** – beyond materialist view of reality.

***THIS PSYCHOLOGICALLY-INFORMED MOVEMENT
FOR GLOBAL MIND CHANGE***

From fragmentation to integration

And toward an integrated vision of reality,

And systemic restructuring the planet in the direction of
individual and global health,

Began with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh in mid-19th century,

It requires each of us to implement the full range of scientific and
spiritual tools available to examine our fragmented-ness and to work
toward deeper coherence.

THE OPENING OF MODERN MIND – INTERNAL HORIZONS

The birth of modern psychology:
a new appreciation for and understanding of
the depth and complexity of unconscious processes of mind,
as well as of
the power of the conscious regulation of mind to overcome
limiting biases and the inertia of inherited mindsets.
This knowledge has opened *vast internal horizons*.

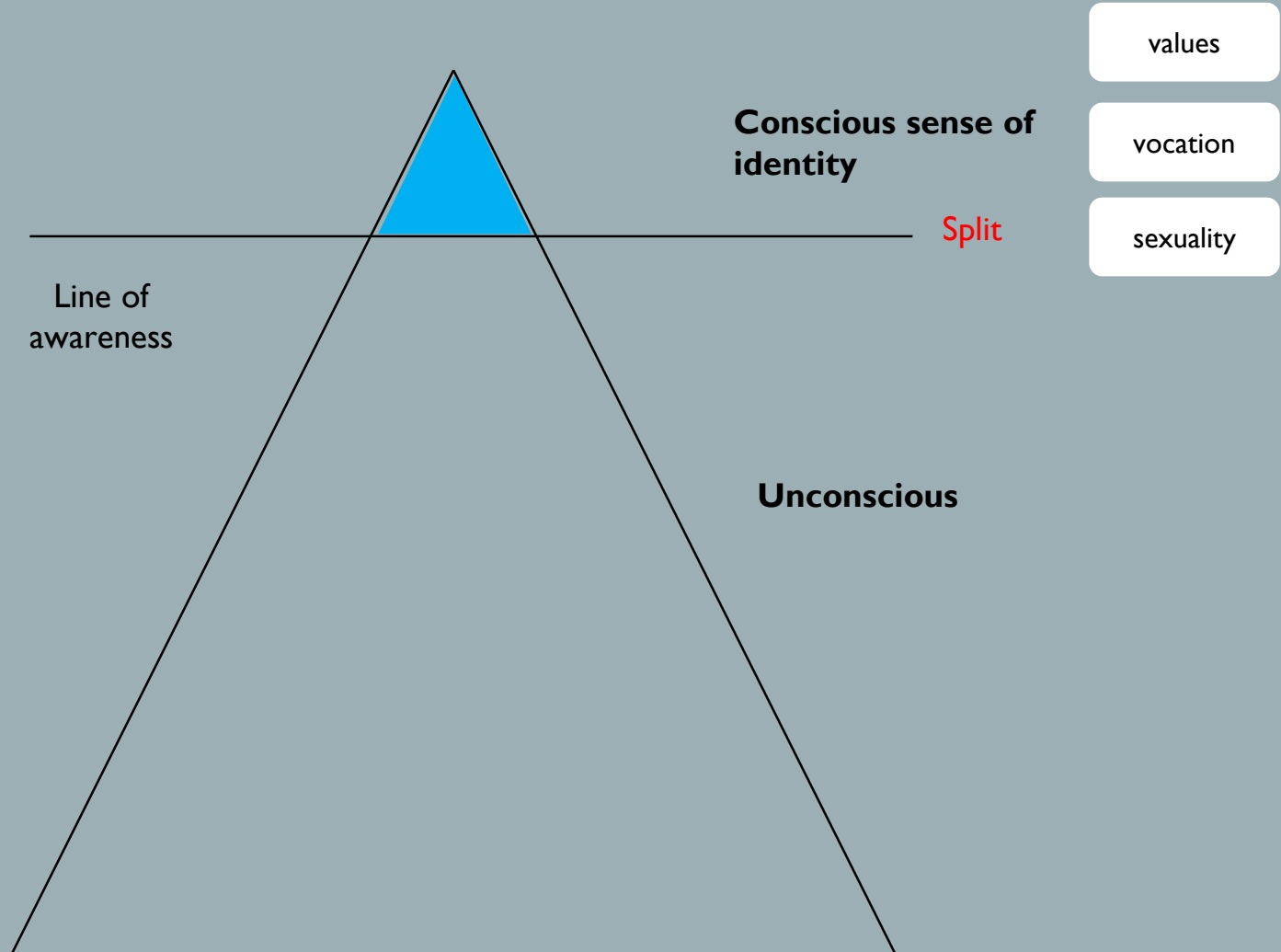
THE POWER OF A PSYCHOLOGICALLY-INFORMED APPROACH

Helps understand and approach systematically the significant challenge of individual and collective inertia of inherited mindsets and our compartmentalized and fragmented ways.

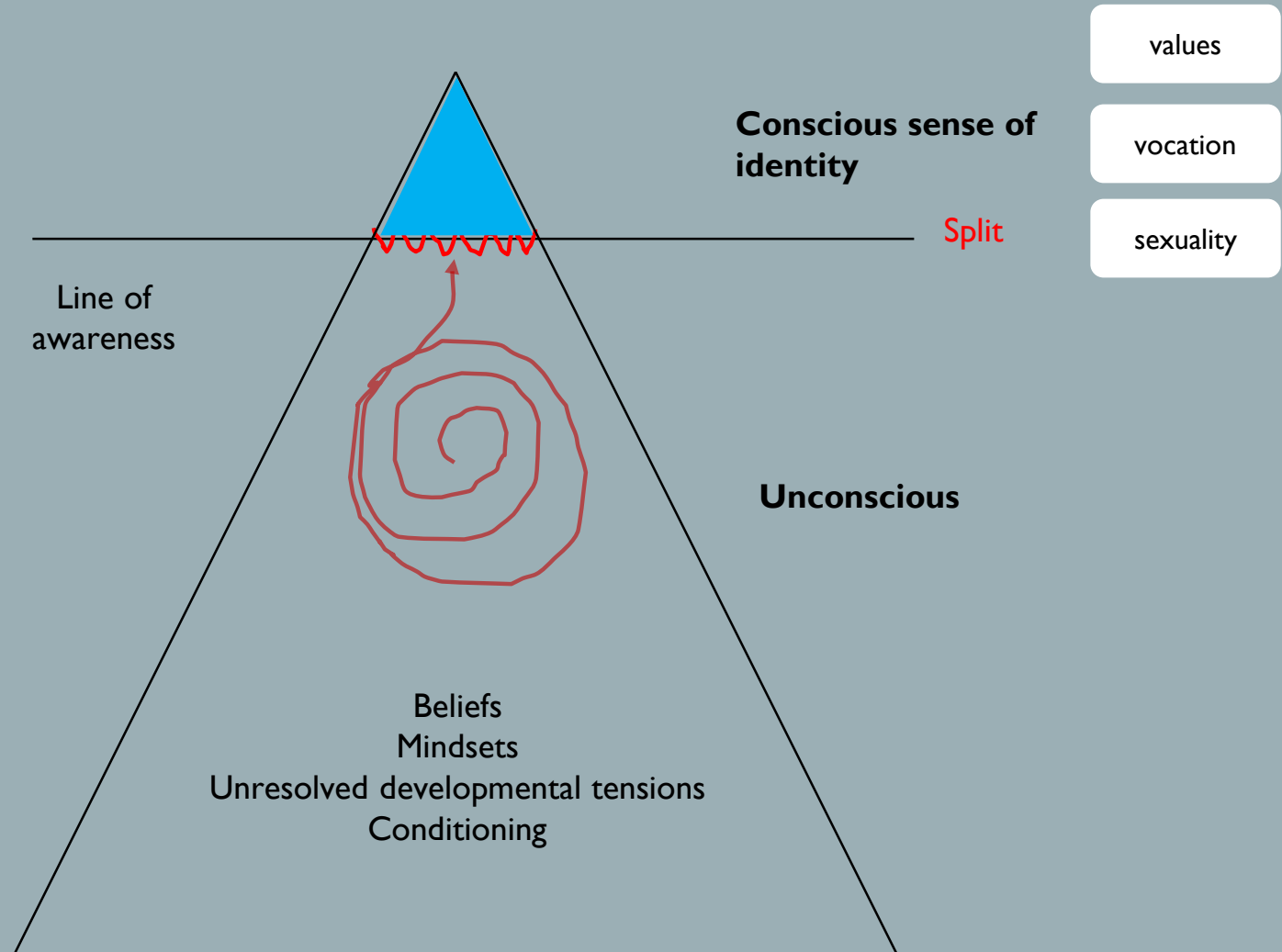
Our view of reality and of ourselves
Is more ***fragmented*** than we realize.

The majority of people unable *to know where to even begin to find coherence...*

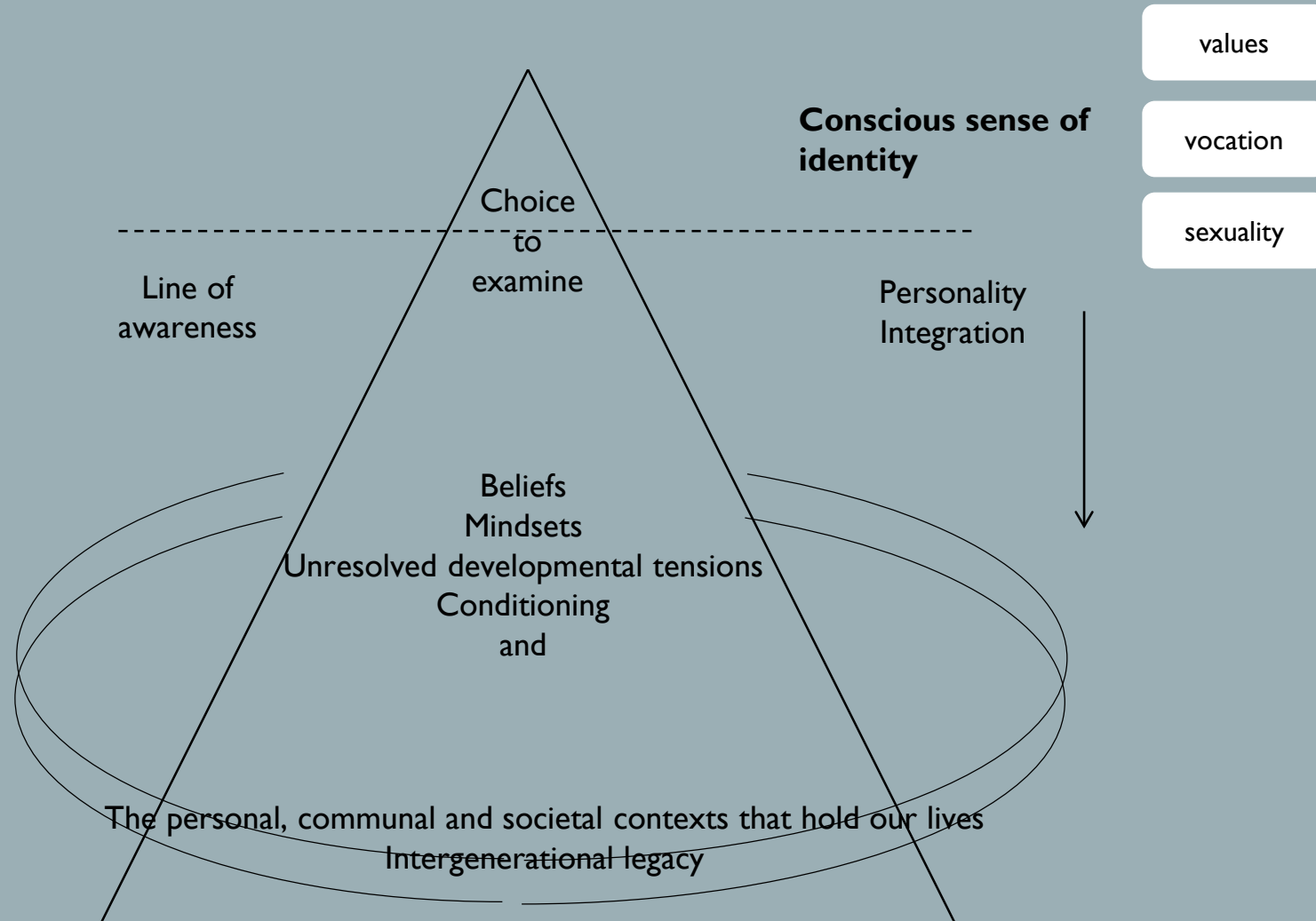
INTERNAL HORIZONS – DEPTH AND COMPLEXITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS



INTERNAL HORIZONS – DEPTH AND COMPLEXITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS



THE CHOICE TO INTEGRATE



THE OPENING OF MODERN MIND – EXTERNAL HORIZONS

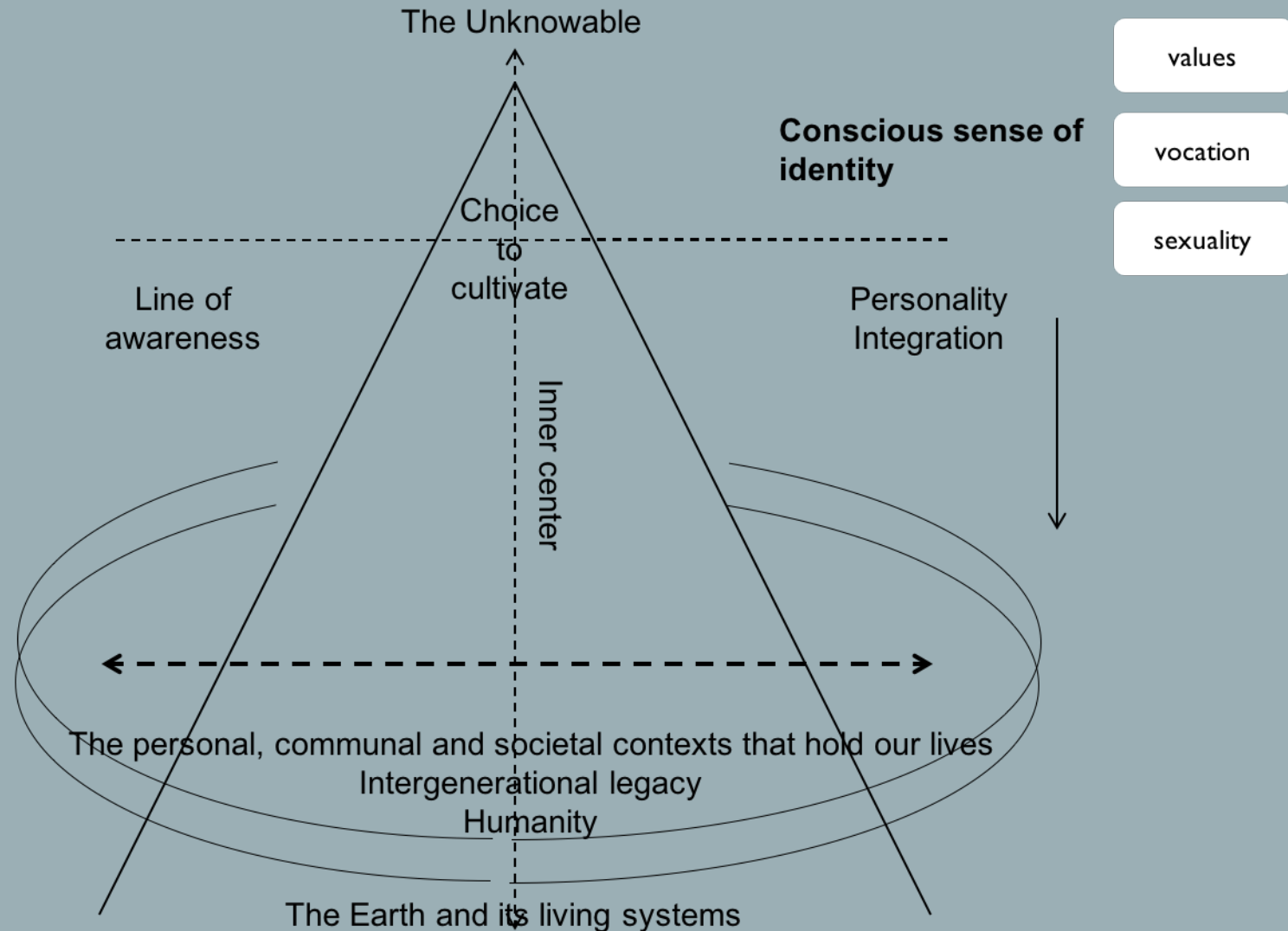
Anthropology and Comparative Religion:

The *common core* of different cultural and religious constructions of reality –

Vertical dimension: connection to the Unknowable Creator, to the Earth that sustains us, and to the generations before us

Horizontal dimension: circles of relatedness, connectivity and social belonging

INTEGRATION AND BECOMING HEALTHY: HORIZONS AND DIALECTICAL TENSIONS



HARMONIZING SCIENTIFIC AND RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

Religion must stand the analysis of reason. (*Promulgation of Universal Peace* 175)

Religious teaching which is at variance with science and reason is human invention and imagination unworthy of acceptance, for the antithesis and opposite of knowledge is superstition born of the ignorance of man.

If we say religion is opposed to science, we lack knowledge of either true science or true religion, for both are founded upon the premises and conclusions of reason, and both must bear its test. (*Promulgation of Universal Peace* 107)

***HEALTH: FROM INNER OPPRESSION TO
RECOGNIZING OUR DEEP RESOURCES***

O Thou Who hast cast Thy splendour over the luminous realities of men, shedding upon them the resplendent lights of knowledge and guidance, and hast chosen them out of all created things for this supernal grace, and hast caused them to encompass all things, to understand their inmost essence, and to disclose their mysteries, bringing them forth out of darkness into the visible world!

(Bahá'u'lláh)

Is this how we understand the purpose of our brief lives here?

How do we model for our children this awakened, aligned and liberated spirit?

COMPLEMENTARITY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

CONSCIOUSNESS

A small part of our total mental activity is conscious (narrow visible spectrum – tip of the iceberg).

The vast portion of it is unconscious – some of it deep unconscious; some accessible through attention to feelings and inner imagery.

Perennial wisdom recognizes a creative and intuitive spiritual intelligence not limited in the ways personal mind tends to be.

Identification with this deep Center facilitated by meditative disciplines – the source of our deepest moral, spiritual, and ecological commitments.

Willis Harman, *Global Mind Change*, 1998

COMPLEMENTARITY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

PERCEPTION

Perception is greatly influenced by conscious and unconscious beliefs.

Unconscious beliefs are shaped by suggestion, expectation, influence of authority, cultural beliefs & experience.

Perennial spiritual wisdom at the core of every religion recognizes as a prime task of adult life to become awakened from unconscious beliefs and come to know our inner reality, and see how we create our experience.

COMPLEMENTARITY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

WORLDVIEW

At the core of

Various ethical and spiritual worldviews that propel people to evolve
toward *unity consciousness*

(authentic and empowered moral consciousness)

a central and defining *love for the true, the good and the beautiful;*

that brings an ever deeper congruence of mind and heart,

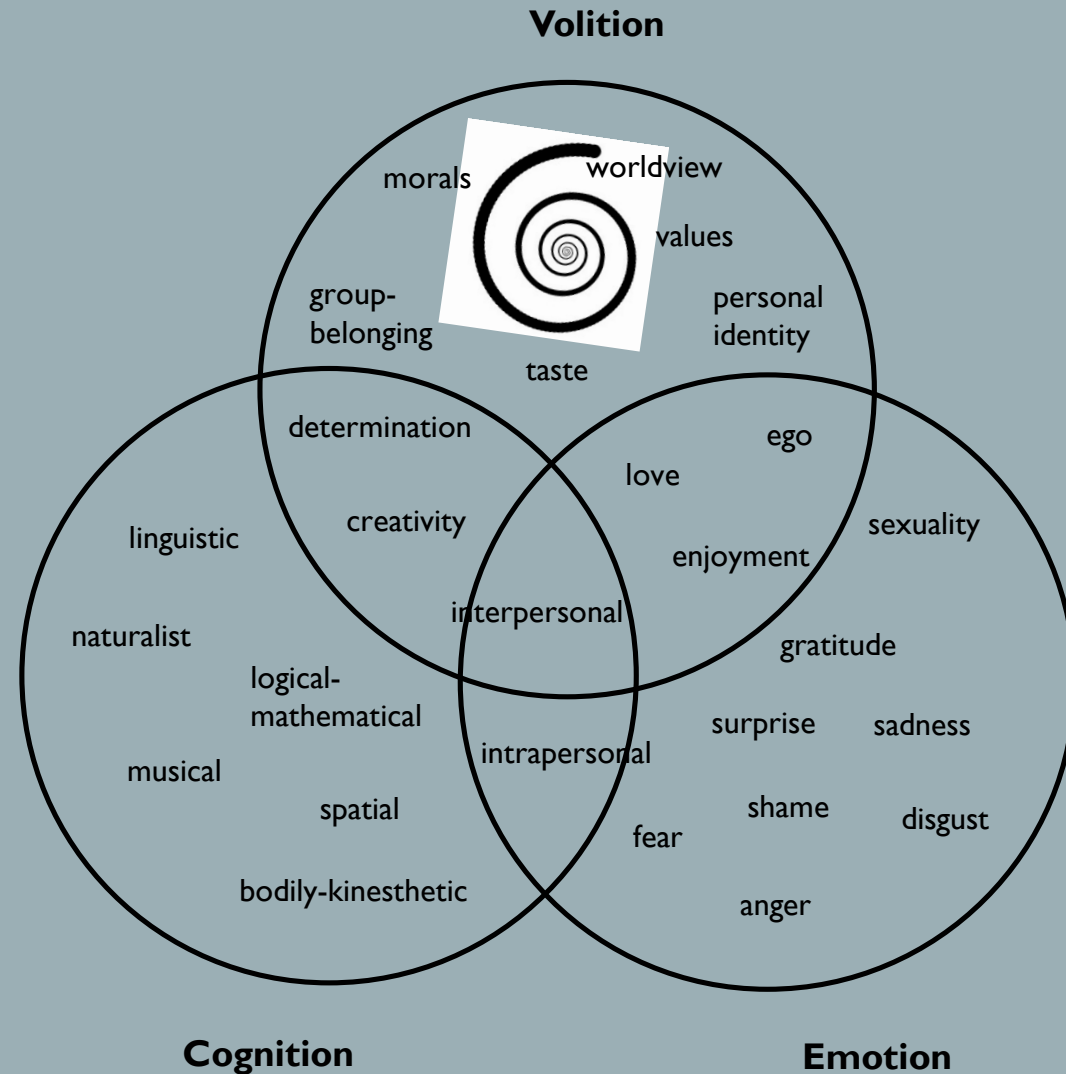
of cognition and affect.

In higher states of consciousness, an awareness of being one with the
universe and all life, and a knowing – *gnosis* - related to the Creator
(expressed in myth, symbol, poetic metaphor, and transcendent insight)

***DEVELOPMENT OF THE THREE STRUCTURES OF
MIND: COGNITION, EMOTION, VOLITION***

Development of the three structures of mind:
cognition, affect, and volition –
a dynamic interdependent process,
with widely varying overlap between the three systems.
With optimal adult development toward more conscious
choices,
the three systems increasingly overlap.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE THREE STRUCTURES OF MIND: COGNITION, EMOTION, VOLITION



ADULT DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON WILL AND VOLITION

In 20th century psychology, the question of human free will and volition was *problematic* :

Hence, issues of *moral action, rational choice, and character* were not fully dealt with.

Now we know that

The ***cultivation of will***

Through awareness, accountability and daily psycho-spiritual practice

Central to the cultivation of a greater love

And a greater meaning

***DEVELOPING BEYOND OUR
COLLECTIVE PARALYSIS OF WILL***

Inner oppression is stopping us from re-examining our worldviews...

Historical experience with totalizing frameworks makes us shy away from endorsing systemic solutions...

1995 Report of Commission on Global Governance: *as the world faces the need for enlightened responses..., we are concerned at the lack of leadership... at national, regional, and international levels, within communities... and in non-governmental bodies...*

(Greg Dahl, One World, One People)

LANGUAGE
WHOSE FUNCTION HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO STRUCTURE
HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Powerful tool for both inner oppression (the flattened materialistic and
meaningless language of daily life)

and liberated spirit

Compare
familiar daily language to this enjoiner

The fruits of the tree of existence
are trustworthiness, loyalty, truthfulness and purity. (Bahá'u'lláh)

What do we notice as the effect of that language
on our sense of dignity and self?

THE ROLE OF ATTENTION IN VOLITION

How and what we attend to
affects what we perceive, which affects
how we interpret our experience, hence the choices we make.

Hence, the ***shaping power of language
and worldview***

(a major influence *on our attention and volition* which provides
the values we attend to, desire, and pursue)

TOWARD GLOBALLY MATURE CLINICAL PRACTICE

Beyond moral relativism in clinical work:

Redefining residue core values of global capitalism –

- fundamental separateness
- primary competition
- scarcity
- contingent worth
- limitless material growth (equating material progress with general benefit)
- essential materialism and self-interest

TOWARD GLOBALLY MATURE CLINICAL PRACTICE

Integrative Approaches to Health

Cultivating capacities for

- a) self-regulation, self-reflection and mindfulness;
- b) self and other compassion;
- c) exercise of moral will and strengthening character;
- d) community engagement, being of service, and mindful participation with an interdependent global world;
- e) reconnecting with our natural environment.

INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR GLOBAL HEALTH

Psychologists need to develop meaningful and socially responsible ways to facilitate the exploration of different worldviews, of paths to making life meaningful through service to a greater good.

They need to be competent to explore with their clients circles of relatedness—current and potential.

They need to explore present and potential figures representing authentic moral authority in an individual's life.

They need to help individuals access and re-construct their deepest moral constructions of self.

They need to engage clients in a thoughtful examination of the culture that provides the context of their struggles.

They need to promote a creative and agentic quest for the kinds of community and relational support that allow people to marshal the resources of their 'minds' and 'hearts' to face challenge, rather than become overwhelmed by it.

TOWARD GLOBALLY MATURE CLINICAL PRACTICE

These grass-root clinical processes have yet to gain enough momentum to become reflected in a systemic shift of clinical scholarship, research, pedagogy, and practice, which study:

The role of a greater love in healing

The role of meaning and life purpose

The role of intuitive spiritual awareness of a collective Center

The role of social systems, structures, and policies

The role of language in connecting to core commitments

INTEGRATIVE APPROACHES ACROSS FIELDS: POINTING TO UNITY

Whether in psychology and the science of mind or in environmental science (*Right Relationships*, Peter Brown & Geoffrey Garver), in agriculture and global economy (*Eleven*, Paul Hanley), or in population health...

The distinctive quality of these approaches illustrates the validity of the structural principle enunciated by *Bahá'u'lláh* for the modern era –

That religious claims without the corrective of science amount to superstition,
And scientific claims without the corrective of religion amount to materialistic
arrogance,

And neither alone can claim absolute truth

As both are evolving interpretations of human minds...

INTEGRAL SPIRITUALITY/UNITY CONSCIOUSNESS

An understanding of reality
that recognizes the meaningfulness and interconnectedness of all life,
and the dynamic evolutionary processes that sustain it.
Those include both vertical and horizontal relationships,
and acknowledge the role of the Unknowable Spirit in the unfolding
of human civilization.

***UNITY PROCESSES IN THE
ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION***

When the holy, divine Manifestations or Prophets
appear in the world,
a cycle of radiance, an age of mercy dawns.

Everything is renewed. Minds, hearts and all human forces are reformed, perfections are quickened, sciences, discoveries and investigations are stimulated afresh, and everything appertaining to the virtues of the human world is revitalized.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 278.

***A TIME OF GREAT OPPORTUNITY:
UNITY CONSCIOUSNESS***

At this time of great turmoil, may we be granted the wisdom to recognize that no individual can correct a system so broken, with so compromised a moral foundation, driven by so much expedience and greed. May we begin to own the need to examine the moral foundations on which our individual and collective decisions are based, and to own our powers of intellect and wisdom as a spiritual endowment which is to be carefully and responsibly cultivated. As a great Teacher from the Middle East wrote a century ago, may “godlike impulses radiate from the conscience of mankind”, and may we resolve together to arise and lay hold of all that promotes “the dignity, value, and station, of the entire human race”. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá)

FURTHER READINGS

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