

Is Spirituality a Master Controller for Human Well-Being?

John Calvin Chatlos, MD^{1,*}

¹Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ 08540, USA

*Correspondence should be addressed to John Calvin Chatlos, chatlojc@rutgers.edu

Received date: April 14, 2024, **Accepted date:** April 29, 2024

Citation: Chatlos JC. Is Spirituality a Master Controller for Human Well-Being? Arch Psychiatry. 2024;2(1):23-29.

Copyright: © 2024 Chatlos JC. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Abstract

The article "Did Freud Miss the Discovery of Our Spiritual Core?" describes how Freud's psychoanalytic theory is a bridge to the long-sought discovery of a science-based explanation of spiritual experience as elaborated by the Framework of Spirituality. This framework has been clinically used to intentionally promote spiritual awakening and developed as CBT-STE (for Self-Transcendent Experience). Implications from this clinical application profoundly affect our worldview of being human providing a universal moral direction and values, explanation of the "How" and "Why" of therapy effectiveness and a method for ongoing personal transformation with a neuroscience basis. The characteristics of this spiritual core suggest that it is a "Master Controller" for overall human well-being. A realistic possibility of achieving human well-being with cooperation, harmony, and peace is proposed.

Keywords: CBT-STE, Freud, Transcendent, Holotropic, Neuroscience, Spiritual core, Ethics

Introduction

The article "Did Freud Miss the Discovery of Our Spiritual Core?" [1] answered certain questions about Freud and spirituality leading to this commentary.

"Yes" Freud opened the unconscious and missed discovery of our spiritual core.

"Yes" there is this oceanic feeling that can be experienced with a certitude of its non-ordinary reality.

"Yes" it is part of our inherent capacity and an opportunity for new awareness.

"Yes" the new awareness comes with opening of a spiritual core with specific characteristics that promote human well-being.

This commentary uses the Framework of Spirituality (FOS) as a bridge from Freudian psychodynamic and more modern therapies to encourage exploration of this science-based understanding of spiritual experience by highlighting

FRAMEWORK OF SPIRITUALITY			
Domain of Being	Experience of Self-Worth	Expression of Dignity	Creative Forces/ Creative Openings
Think	Self-confidence	choice / Reason/wisdom	TRUTH
Feel	Self-esteem	empathy/Compassion/ caring (Justice)	LOVE
Do	Self-competence/ Self-efficacy	honesty/Courage/giving (Generosity)	FAITH

Figure 1. This illustrates the full Framework of Spirituality beginning with the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy elements of thoughts, feelings and behaviors, including the expansion to the distinction of self-worth, and the expression of dignity that expands socially as wisdom, justice, and generosity. The expansion to the Creative Forces/Creative Openings occurs as the spiritual core (Σ) is opened.

significant implications. This process guides opening to a new level of awareness of our spiritual core, designated with the Greek symbol Σ . This is chosen to designate the “addition” of a new awareness that is an unknown yet to be defined, and has no historical or personal connotations as the words spiritual, mystical, and numinous.

The Framework of Spirituality describes the manner in which spiritual experience is psychologically organized in human experience beginning with a CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) foundation of the perceptions of thoughts, feelings and behaviors. The keys to open awareness to spiritual experience are integrated experiences of self-worth (self-confidence, self-esteem, self-competence/self-efficacy) and dignity (choices with reason, empathy and compassion, courage beginning with honesty) operationalized as noted. With processing of injury and resultant empowering of a core self-worth and dignity, Σ opens with mystical-type experiences to a new level of mind function now available for conscious use. The opening to the Creative Forces/ Creative Openings with its moral-truth core, that is open-hearted, loving and compassionate, and acts with indomitable faith with a powerful courage is the functional “soul” experience. This is a real functional entity that when injured is personally experienced as loss of faith. As an example, a child exposed to a parent yelling at them “Do as I say, not what you want!” damages all 3 aspects of dignity. The damage to making choices with reason by this non-empathic, compassionless action with discouragement is experienced as being brain-washed, heart-broken, and soul-crushed. Just as damage to the experience of self-worth is experienced as shame, and damage to the expression of dignity is experienced as guilt, a damage to “soul-worth” is experienced as loss of faith.

These implications below provide understanding and fulfillment such that Σ may deserve to be called a “Master Controller.” Impact on our worldview, opportunity for a universal ethic with yet unexplored creative powers including being a fundamental source of emotional healing is consolidated with being grounded in a biological/neuroscience foundation for human flourishing.

Worldview – Pessimism to Optimism

For over a hundred years, Sigmund Freud’s conception of the nature of being human has influenced psychiatry and culture. According to Freud, fundamental drives of sex and aggression that operate solely for their own self-expression and fulfillment must be controlled for societal adaptation by our conscious ego and superego with the goals of work and love for fulfillment. Yes, additions have occurred with the important power of learning capable of significant change (behaviorism, CBT, etc.) and attempts at a core of moral development have been added with Jean Piaget [2] and Lawrence Kohlberg [3]. But beyond the pleasure principle with the non-specific goals

of work and love, in Freudian theory, a meaning of human life has not been present [4]. An underlying pessimism in this perspective, admits that the goal of humanity is determined by the vagaries of power that take control. This fills our understanding of life with anxieties with unfounded hope and ungrounded faith for a good outcome. After all, we are only animals. This conclusion has been doubly imprinted by our influence from another source - evolution - in which the meaning of life is also the pessimistic “survival of the fittest.”

The Framework of Spirituality that describes the “unseen order” of our spiritual core with holotropic (moving toward wholeness) drive provides a marked contrast of optimism. In this framework the fundamental drives are toward the fulfillment of our inherent capacity for self-worth and dignity to have us open our spiritual core to powerful forces of agape type love, a moral truth-force, and faith as an action, not a belief. This understanding recognizes that “faith” is the expression of our soul experience with an awareness that injury to our self-worth and dignity contributes to depression, anxiety, and associated physical and social malaise.

Sex (connected with love) and aggression (the power of courage) become the tools to empower us to achieve the pursued state of happiness, healing, and well-being for us to create society such that “faith” - in self, others and the world - is the supremely empowering goal. Acknowledging, honoring, and pursuing this goal requires us to pursue and empower the personal/societal values of dignity – reason, compassion and courage- as supremely important. Along the way, success in interpersonal love and work becomes part of our inherent meaning and purpose that is personally discovered as we fully open this spiritual core and heal injury to self-worth and dignity. This opening to our spiritual core and faith releases the creativity of our Being and the opportunity for co-creating our world with harmony, peace, and love as a reality for all people. This is the purpose and meaning of life with the Framework. This is the dignity (honor) of humanity transcending our animal origins and is much more optimistic than a Freudian perspective. In a previous writing [5], the theory of the origin of our spiritual core is described as a result of evolution and indelibly proclaims this optimism to replace the pessimistic influence by Freud and the limited understanding of human evolution.

Universal Moral Direction and Values

Agreement on a universal moral direction and values for humanity has been hampered by the limits attributed to the “naturalistic fallacy” or “is-ought” question. The philosopher David Hume [6] states that just because something “is” doesn’t necessarily mean that it “ought” to be. Since Hume, the conclusion of this has been that moral values cannot be derived from natural properties; therefore, moral foundations on this basis or any basis of material reality are false. Disagreements

about how to address this conundrum are extensive and will not be reviewed here.

However, the Framework of Spirituality provides an alternative approach to this ethics/morality. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, ethics / morality may state that "moral terms, concepts, or properties are ultimately definable in terms of facts about the natural world, including facts about human beings, human nature, and human societies." A major premise as described by John Stuart Mill's [7] version of utilitarian ethics, is that an action is morally right to the extent that it tends to produce happiness (or pleasure, broadly construed) and morally wrong to the extent that it fails to produce happiness or tends to produce unhappiness (or pain, broadly construed). This of course is problematic as there are a multitude of ways to define human happiness – including the often contradictory goals of short and long-term happiness among many others.

A similar but more specific approach is available with the Framework of Spirituality. In this framework, self-worth and dignity have been specifically operationalized making their fulfillment much more defined than "happiness." The extension from Mills' utilitarian ethics would be that an action is morally right to the extent that it tends to empower self-worth and dignity, and morally wrong to the extent that it fails to empower, or even harms, self-worth and dignity. However, this raises the question of why place self-worth and dignity on the pedestal of human values above all others? The answer becomes, because they are what inherently drives human beings to fulfillment as identified by this Framework: the fulfillment of our capacity for self-worth and dignity which leads to a specific internal experience of well-being and happiness. Traditionally, this is discounted by the naturalistic fallacy, that just because we have an order to our psychological organization described by the Framework of Spirituality ("is") does not make it the way it "ought" to be. If the naturalistic fallacy is legitimate, then this precludes ANY moral foundation from being universally adopted that is based on materialistic facts. Is there any way to move ethics/morality beyond the discounting by the naturalistic fallacy argument?

Exploration of the Framework provides a new understanding of this dilemma that is directly related to the spiritual core and thinking associated with it. The is-ought argument is based on our dualistic thinking with judgment of things as being right/wrong or good/bad that has dominated our formal thinking about moral and ethical judgment. This itself is the fallacy. An example of the limits of this may assist, for instance: If evolution leads to development of a characteristic fact that humans have two arms ("is") then humans "ought" to have two arms. This is a typical, and generally non-arguable, conclusion acceptable by all people of is-ought. This is *not* a moral or "ethical judgment" of right or wrong but a "natural

judgment" of how certain material things ought to be. A non-dualistic thinking process would use this natural judgment as evaluative or instrumental (i.e., utilitarian), such as good/better, or even best, rather than the dualistic judgment of good/bad or right/wrong, and the is-ought conclusion is no longer a fallacy. Opening of the spiritual core moves persons into a new awareness of non-dualistic thinking processes about experience. Experience within this spiritual core is not about judgment, good or bad, right or wrong, but is accepting that "all is the way it has to be" as a reality principle therefore "all is good" – and it can be better!

As noted above, the Framework of Spirituality is much clearer about human nature with our optimal function being designed for empowered self-worth and dignity and the opening to the Creative Forces- truth, love and faith. This moral truth-force is the Satyagraha (truth-force) of Mahatma Gandhi, the built in embodied, "gut" reaction to injury to self-worth and dignity that is present. If, similar to the two arms example, the fact that we have this universal moral truth (IS), then our value OUGHT to be empowerment of a person's self-worth and dignity and resulting moral core. This use of is-ought is NOT a fallacy! The "is-ought fallacy" is an artifact of our fundamental dualistic thinking that limits our judgment and skews our perspective in making decisions about ethics and morality. With this conclusion, the elements of the Framework ought to be intentionally pursued or valued, providing a specific universal ethical and moral framework. It highlights the core values of self-worth as self-confidence, self-esteem, self-competence/ efficacy, and dignity with all of its parts of choice/reason/wisdom, empathy/compassion/caring-justice, and honesty/ courage/giving-generosity. These are identified as universal core values that ought to be empowered in our culture. By similar argument, the opening of the other Creative Forces of agape love and faith as an action ought to be valued and pursued as highly as our ethical/moral commitment. The is-ought dilemma IS a fallacy and OUGHT to be discarded. This moral core or "moral truth-force," open-hearted agape love, and this indomitable faith as to move mountains IS the "soul" experience at our spiritual core and OUGHT to be valued supremely.

The opportunity is that these common values and goals are acceptable to both the secular world and almost all religions and can provide a unity of efforts worldwide. This is already verbally supported worldwide by the principles of the United Nations Charter, which "reaffirm faith ...in the dignity and worth of the human person" [8]. However, to be implemented and effective would require new understanding of dignity as operationalized in the FOS rather than the use of dignity that is seen as a "noun" or something that a person has as now universally used as in Dignity Theory [9]. A world moral order can be agreed on that is grounded in the unique nature of being human with a spiritual master controller.

Explanation of Therapy Effectiveness

All therapies address the “common factors” in healing and psychotherapy that account for 50-70% of variance in clinical improvement [10]. The most accepted three common factors are therapeutic alliance and empathy, presenting a conceptual explanation of the problem, and engaging actions for health promotion. The application of the Framework of Spirituality in clinical settings to open the spiritual core has been developed as CBT-STE (CBT for self-transcendent experience). The common factors are present in CBT-STE with its direct focus on empathy (part of dignity), the explanation for problems being injury to self-worth and dignity which are clearly defined, and the processing of these injuries as health promotion.

Specific therapies such as CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy), DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy), ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy), and UP (Unified Protocol), claim added effectiveness through specific techniques though studies suggest that these only account for 17% of improvement [7]. CBT-STE incorporates the multiple elements of these techniques: behavioral therapies that change maladaptive behaviors; cognitive therapies that change maladaptive cognitions; CBT changes irrational thoughts, dysfunctional emotions, and self-defeating behaviors; DBT adds mindfulness, with focus on values, beliefs and habits, adding distress tolerance, and interpersonal and emotional regulation skills in a dialectical exploration; ACT stresses psychological flexibility highlighting non-judgment and cognitive defusion, self-acceptance, self-awareness, focus on the here and now present, and clarifying personal values, with a committed action to specific life goals; and UP addresses neuroticism and negative affect with added focus on identifying and preventing patterns of emotion avoidance and increased physical body awareness with interoceptive and situational aversive memory exposure.

CBT-STE incorporates all of these processes and uses additional elements not included in any of these other techniques. Level 1 uses mindfulness meditation to empower self-efficacy in the awareness, separation and controlling of perceptions of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors/urges to act. The integration of this level identifies attitudes (combination of thought-feeling-behavior) blocking awareness and practices change of attitudes. A person’s continued life suffering is related to the inflexibility of these attitudes with continued unsuccessful adaptation. Level 2 introduces the Framework of Spirituality visually and uses embodiment practices to connect attitudes with injury to a core self-worth (self-confidence, self-esteem, self-competence/self-efficacy) and expression of dignity (reason, compassion, courage) that are specifically operationalized as noted. Injury to self-worth and dignity has led to behaviors of neuroticism and symptoms of internalizing (i.e., depression and anxiety) and externalizing disorders (i.e., oppositional defiant, narcissism, and antisocial)

as maladaptation. Level 2 additional elements demonstrate the process of making and empowering distinctions of self-worth and dignity which are embodied and integrated capacities of Being. As an example, the distinction of “balance” includes a thought of “I’m not falling,” a feeling of usually exhilaration and fear, and the actual act of balancing. Once a distinction has been made, it is embodied in experiential memory as noted when a person returns to ice skating after 20 years of not skating. Part of Level 2 processes injury to this core self-worth and dignity with recall and management of aversive memories, using self-compassion, forgiveness, and acceptance. This leads to opening the spiritual core with mystical characteristics, expanding to the full Framework and connecting with agape love, moral truth-force, and faith as an action. Level 3 now frees the person to transform their relationship to the world and make not just a new commitment to specific goals in therapy, but a larger commitment to adopting a *spiritual attitude* to their life as faith in self, others and the world has newly opened. This is the new spiritual awakening to their life. The success and feasibility of this process has been demonstrated in groups of men with chronic addiction and incarceration (in press). Comparisons with other forms of therapy and studies of the components of effectiveness are yet to be studied.

In this manner, CBT-STE and the Framework of Spirituality not only provide a specific therapeutic intervention beyond other treatments, but it has a theoretical framework that can explain the effectiveness of most of these other therapeutic interventions. This begins to provide answers to the elusive “how?” and “why?” of the effectiveness of therapies [10]. Simply stated, the how is by repairing and strengthening the core self-worth and dignity. The why comes from our having Σ as an inherent spiritual core that is holotropic and drives persons to the fulfillment of this self-worth and dignity and opens to the Creative Forces with a new-awakened happiness, clarity of thought, and well-being. In this comprehensive approach, any level of integration along the way – of thoughts, feelings, behaviors as in CBT, components of self-worth and some aspects of dignity (mostly reason and compassion) as in DBT, ACT, and UP - will provide symptom relief, improvement in function, and greater well-being. It is the further integration and opening of the spiritual core that is unique to CBT-STE that reaches the spiritual or soul level with a greater experience of healing, well-being and happiness.

Personal Transformation with the Faith Process

A somewhat slighted part of the Framework in previous writings, the Faith Process has profound implications often not recognized.

The Faith Process involves adopting a spiritual attitude toward life by making a meaningful commitment to empowering the worth and dignity of every person – including oneself. Making this commitment opens a person to awareness of the blocks

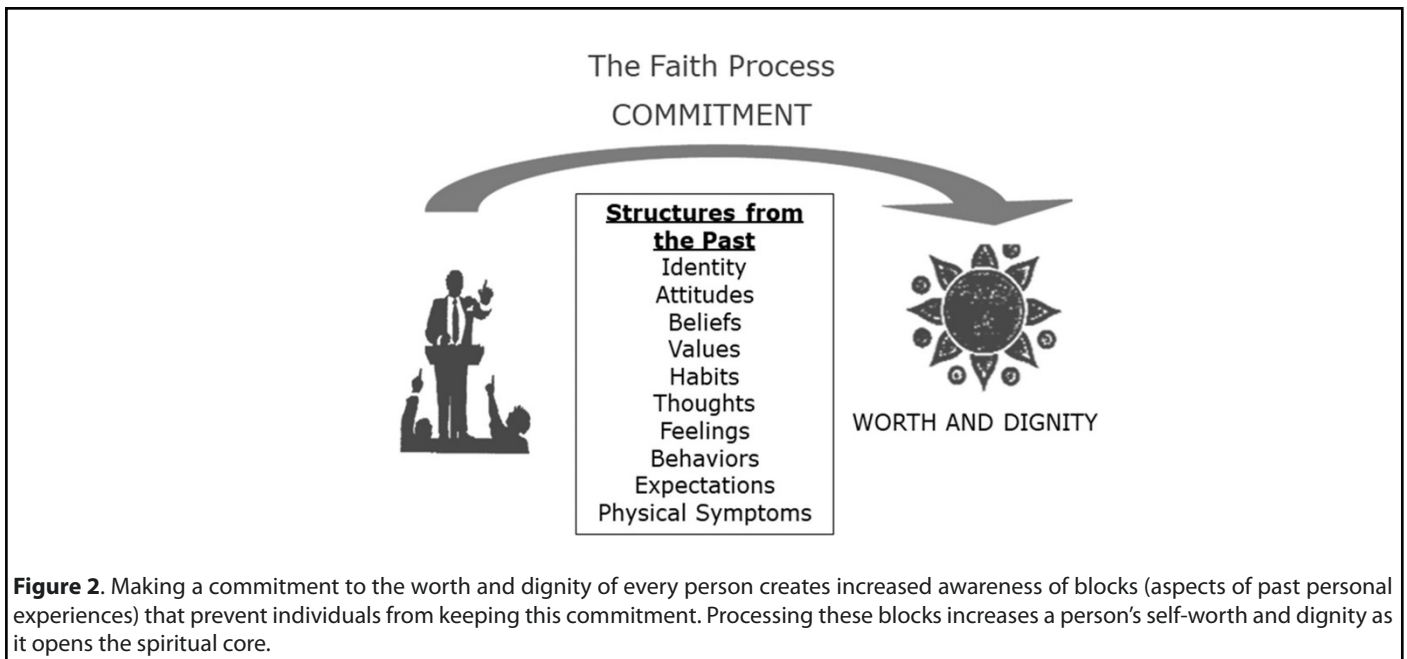


Figure 2. Making a commitment to the worth and dignity of every person creates increased awareness of blocks (aspects of past personal experiences) that prevent individuals from keeping this commitment. Processing these blocks increases a person's self-worth and dignity as it opens the spiritual core.

(structures from the past) to keeping this commitment that are organized by complexity as identity, attitudes, beliefs, values, habits, thoughts, feelings behaviors, expectations, and physical symptoms. Living this spiritual attitude and keeping this commitment requires repeated personal transformations as these interfering structures are processed and removed. Methods such as CBT-STE include recall of past memories and feelings associated with events of injury and emotional, embodied processing moving to an empowerment of self-worth and dignity, identifying the decision that the immature person made at that time about their self, and what was the lesson to be learned.

For not yet explained reasons, adopting this attitude opens a person to the unconscious creative powers of Σ that have been recognized [11]. When this core is opened, a person can take on a project/problem that they have no idea how to accomplish - with faith. By continually processing the structures from the past that block personal relationships, the solution creatively and spontaneously appears, similar to the well-known "Aha" experience. A specific example of this was described in a previous paper [5]. It also often occurs with appearance of synchronicities that "show up" as Σ now has increased awareness and unconsciously recognizes what may have been present many times before. As these structures continue to be processed with deeper openings of the spiritual core, persons become aware of a life purpose that fulfills the space created from the hurt to self-worth, dignity and the Creative Forces. Identifying this purpose is associated with an extreme passion and clarity of thought that empowers the faith against all odds in pursuing that purpose.

This process becomes familiar to many readers as the Faith Process leading from the comprehensive Framework of

Spirituality provides an ontological explanation for many other popular approaches that tap into this power such as are described in *The Secret* [12] with the "Law of Attraction," *A Course in Miracles* [13], and the transforming of the past to be "mind present" and focus on the "now" as emphasized by Eckhart Tolle [14]. Many other similar authors include Thich Nhat Hanh [15], Gary Zukav [16], Carolyn Myss [17], Daniel Siegel [18], Rajinder Singh [19], Pema Chodron [20], Sam Harris [21], Michael Singer [22], Tara Swart [23], Lisa Miller [24], Lisa Barnett [25], Mark Solms [26], and Julia Mossbridge [27].

Each of these perspectives presents a different understanding of Σ with different approaches to engage the spiritual core and the Faith Process. The opportunity is for a person to use whichever of these methods – based on their choice of style – to open Σ and have this openness to the Creative Forces become daily and lifetime practices. Each of these methods is part of the potential transformation possible with awareness and opening of Σ .

Neuroscience Basis

For spirituality to serve as a master controller, Σ , the spiritual core must have function within the brain and nervous system. Research with neuroimaging has shown multiple brain regions that may be related to various types of spiritual experiences. Some regions that have been repeatedly associated with these include the superior parietal lobes and temporoparietal junction associated with peak-experience and feeling of unity, and regions in the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) associated with mystical states [28]. Of particular interest is the inferior parietal lobe (IPL) associated with processes including attention, reasoning, sensory and spatial processing, and sense of self and self-awareness [29].

One of the problems in neuroscience and brain imaging is “What is the functional/experiential correlate for use of this information?” Just to know that the amygdala is where emotional experience is processed or that the inferior parietal lobe is where the self-concept experience is located does not provide information as to how to access this for useful purposes. The Framework of Spirituality provides a framework for the functional use of this neuroscience information. For instance, “What part of the brain manages the experience of dignity?” This may sound like science-fiction until we break it down to that part of the brain that manages the making of choices with Reason for which we have information, primarily the frontal cortex. This continues as it is believed that there is also a functional part of the brain that manages empathy and compassion, very likely including the amygdala, pituitary hormones, and our mirror-neuron system. Even courage appears to possibly have a specific location in the anterior cingulate cortex and possibly hippocampus [30,31] in what is described as a switch control that may account for the sudden action of faith associated with the release of courage.

When considering the multiple functions involved in the Framework and CBT-STE, a functional network of the brain called the Default Mode Network (DMN) appears to be a very likely candidate for the major source of our spiritual core. It includes the MPFC, the posterior cingulate cortex, the parahippocampal cortex and the IPL. In a 20-year review, Menon [32] describes it as a “functional and structural hub in the brain, assimilating and transmitting representations of salient external and internal events through global brain activity patterns.” Some unique characteristics include its being active when at rest, modulating homeostatic control, and creativity [33]. Direct relationship with the Framework of Spirituality and CBT-STE could be considered with the MPFC related to decision making and choices with reason; posterior cingulate cortex, amygdala, and hippocampus related to emotions and emotional injury as well as connection, and compassion; and the IPL related to the transformational change of “self” that when integrated releases a region related to courage to move forward with this new Self. Clinical experience with CBT-STE, suggests that the integration of these three regions/functions leads to a new opening to awareness that may indicate a new level of overall coordinated function of the Default Mode Network. For unknown reasons and yet to be identified is the source of the mystical characteristics that occur with the opening of Σ and the Creative Forces – connectedness, vitality, wholeness, serenity, meaning and purpose – and the soul experience of a person’s moral-truth core, with open-hearted compassion of agape love, and the moving forward into the here and now moment with “Faith” as an action powered by a new release of courage.

These implications of optimistic worldview, universal moral values, understanding of therapeutic interventions, and a yet to be explored faith process are a result of the knowledge that was opened by Sigmund Freud. This yet to be known Σ ,

an “added” awareness appears to be an organized spiritual core with functional “soul” characteristics that operates as a Master Controller. That this may have a specific neuroscience foundation opens to the vision of a world that is truly possible toward achieving human well-being with cooperation, harmony, and peace.

Conflicts of Interest

None.

Funding

None.

References

1. Chatlos JC. Did Freud Miss the Discovery of Our Spiritual Core?. Religions. 2023 Feb 20;14(2):282.
2. Piaget J. The Moral Judgment of the Child. New York: The Free Press; 1965.
3. Lawrence Kohlberg. The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice. Harper & Row; 1981.
4. Lev G. Spiritually Sensitive Psychoanalysis. New York: Routledge; 2023.
5. Chatlos JC. A framework of spirituality for the future of naturalism. Zygon®. 2021 Jun;56(2):308-34.
6. Hume D. Treatise of Human Nature. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Ed.; 2nd ed. Oxford University Press; 1978.
7. Mill JS. Utilitarianism. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books; 1987.
8. United Nations. Charter of the United Nations. 1945. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/>
9. Hicks D. Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict. New Haven: Yale Univ Press; 2021.
10. Cuijpers P, Reijnders M, Huibers MJ. The role of common factors in psychotherapy outcomes. Annual Review of Clinical Psychology. 2019 May 7;15:207-31.
11. Hassin RR. Yes it can: On the functional abilities of the human unconscious. Perspectives on Psychological Science. 2013 Mar;8(2):195-207.
12. Byrne R. The Secret. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster; 2006.
13. Foundation for Inner Peace. A Course in Miracles. Glen Elen, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace; 1992.
14. Tolle E. The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment. Vancouver, B.C.: Namaste Publishing; 2004.
15. Hanh TN. Being Peace. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press; 1987.

16. Zukav G. *The Seat of the Soul*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster; 1989.
17. Myss C. *Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power and Healing*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House LLC; 1996.
18. Siegel D. *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*. New York, NY: Random House; 2011.
19. Singh R. *Spark of the Divine*. Lisle, IL: Radiance Publishers; 2011.
20. Chodron P. *Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change*. Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, Inc; 2012.
21. Harris S. *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality without Religion*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster; 2014.
22. Singer M. *The Untethered Soul: The Journey Beyond Yourself*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications; 2007.
23. Swart T. *The Source: the Secrets of the Universe, the Science of the Brain*. New York: Random House; 2019.
24. Miller L. *The Awakened Brain: The New Science of Spirituality and Our Quest for an Inspired Life*. New York, NY: Random House; 2021.
25. Barnett L. *Your Soul Has a Plan: Awaken to Your Life Purpose through Your Akashic Records*. Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Haniel Press; 2023.
26. Solms M. *The Hidden Spring: A Journey to the Source of Consciousness*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton; 2021.
27. Mossbridge J. *The Calling: A 12-Week Science-Based Program to Discover, Energize, and Engage Your Soul's Work*. Oakland, CA: Reveal Press; 2019.
28. Van Elk M, Aleman A. Brain mechanisms in religion and spirituality: An integrative predictive processing framework. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*. 2017 Feb 1;73:359-78.
29. Miller L, Balodis IM, McClintock CH, Xu J, Lacadie CM, Sinha R, et al. Neural correlates of personalized spiritual experiences. *Cerebral Cortex*. 2019 Jun 1;29(6):2331-8.
30. Nili U, Goldberg H, Weizman A, Dudai Y. Fear thou not: activity of frontal and temporal circuits in moments of real-life courage. *Neuron*. 2010 Jun 24;66(6):949-62.
31. Salay LD, Ishiko N, Huberman AD. A midline thalamic circuit determines reactions to visual threat. *Nature*. 2018 May 10;557(7704):183-9.
32. Menon V. 20 years of the default mode network: A review and synthesis. *Neuron*. 2023 May 10.
33. Raichle M. Creativity and the brain's default mode network. In: Nalbantian S, Matthews PM, eds. *Secrets of Creativity: What Neuroscience, the Arts, and Our Minds Reveal*. Oxford University Press; 2019.