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Excellence & Innovation in Psychological Education

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Welcome



Rhiannon Murphy

Dear Students and Graduates,

We are almost at the end of another calendar year with only 2 weeks to go until Christmas. This time of year can be a time of reflection when we look back at our achievements and start thinking ahead for the New Year.

PCI College have implemented many different changes over the last year, working hard to improve our services to our students and prospective students.

One of the big development projects of the year has been an overhaul and look at our electronic systems. Having many students located around the country means the Internet and our WebPages are a key source of information for our students.

Thus recent developments include the new PCI College website; this provides the ability to apply for all courses online and an expansion of the Student Intranet. As part of these developments the Student Intranet hosts all current handbooks, course information and now includes a Student Notice Board page where students can email PCI College notifications they wish to be available to their fellow students. PCI College have also launched access to relevant academic Journals online, which will provide an important resource for research; this should mean some very interesting reading for those lecturers marking these assessments this coming year.

Also being introduced for all first year degree students is electronic assignment submission, which PCI College aim to roll





out to the whole student body in 2013-14. This will allow for electronic tracking of all assessments; therefore no more stamps and visits to the post offices for students. In conjunction with these developments a new Student Portal is under design, which will also allow PCI College to provide important handouts and key module information online. There have also been a number of changes to our administrative systems, including streamlining of information and processes to improve our speed in answering questions and queries. This has included some changes in staffing and indeed some expansion in areas where staff are developing new systems.

In line with these developments, there have also been changes in the academic area with the introduction of Year Heads for each academic year of the degree course. The Year Head's responsibilities include liaising closely with Core Tutors to monitor how our students are progressing throughout their studies. This allows PCI College to truly monitor and assist students through their educational experience and provides the opportunity for students to access support throughout the year. In line with current academic standards and to ensure transparency throughout our procedures, PCI College have moved to a system of academic penalties for all late assignments. Any student with a mitigating circumstance will not be subject to these penalties; however any student who sends in an assignment late with no valid reason will be subject to a reduction in marks. Although some may feel this is harsh, this system allows for students with valid reasons to be treated fairly and also means there are no longer any financial costs to students, which is always good news in this economic environment.

PCI College is delighted to announce our new City Centre Campus based on Burgh Quay in the heart of Dublin City Centre. You may have already seen our new campus, however if not please do not hesitate to visit.

PCI College has been looking for the right premises, to provide our students with a true campus feel. Burgh Quay Campus has just that, in the heart the city with light airy rooms, plants and small areas for practising counselling skills.

This campus also has a canteen available during most days together with a student recreational area. Being in the heart of the city means we are also only a stone's throw away from many attractions and museums which are a delight to wander



around and a break from the hustle and bustle of the city.

While we've been looking at this current year, we also have many plans ahead for next year and onwards. PCI College will be further developing its electronic submission, launching the MA in Integrative Counselling and planning the launch of an online/distance learning Certificate in Counselling & Psychotherapy. In conjunction with this we are working on the development of the Psychology Department and the Postgraduate Diploma in Child and Adolescent Counselling and Psychotherapy. PCI College is working with both Middlesex University and the University of Worcester to advance in these areas and is also a registered HETAC provider.

We hope that you are enjoying the changes and developments at PCI College and will continue your journey with us in your adult education. PCI College strive to provide the best student experience possible and deliver Excellence & Innovation in Psychological Education.

Rhiannon Murphy
College Manager



Is Your Therapist any Good? - Some questions to ask yourself, and them.



Eoin Stephens
College President

By Eoin Stephens

Nowadays, we are all encouraged to be educated consumers, and to be able to tell whether or not we are getting a good service. Sometimes this is difficult, because we see the service provider's expertise as barring us from questioning the work they do. Common examples of this are when we consult a doctor or a solicitor, though this is changing. While the professional we are consulting is of course the "authority" in the situation in a very specific way (otherwise there would be no point in our consulting them), it is often useful to remember that we are employing them to provide a service and that we are therefore in the position of "employer" and they are in the position of "employee".

Another example of this in our professional area is the Supervisor/Supervisee relationship. In this contractual situation the supervisee is the employer and the supervisor is working for them, though it often doesn't feel that way.

Of course, the example which is of most interest to us is Counselling/Psychotherapy. How can a client know if they are getting a good service? I think clients should be encouraged to ask themselves questions along the lines of the ones listed below, and where necessary to ask their therapist for clarification.



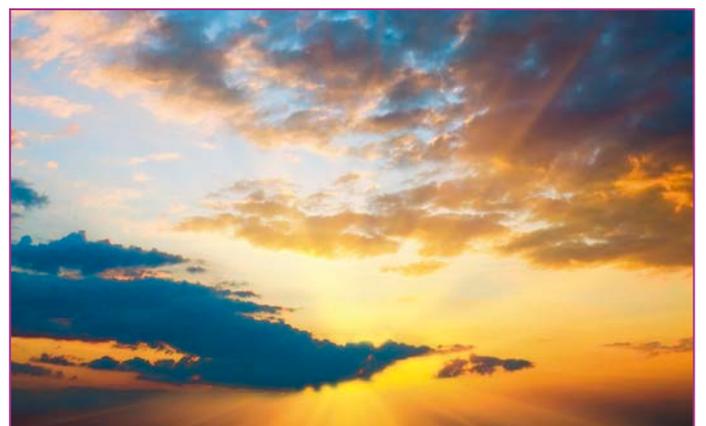


1. Is the therapist accredited with a professional body?
The main accrediting bodies in Ireland for counsellors/ psychotherapists are the Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy and the Irish Council for Psychotherapy (which acts as an umbrella body for a number of associations).
2. Has the therapist discussed and explained how we will work together to try and achieve change in my life?
Different therapists have different approaches – has this therapist been explicit about their particular approach?
3. Have they clarified the limits of confidentiality? Have I been given an opportunity to respond to this, to ask questions if necessary?
4. Have they clarified other aspects of our working arrangement (cancellation policy, contact between sessions, etc)?
5. Am I encouraged to ask questions about the therapy process? (How long it might last, how I will know if I am ready to finish, etc)
6. Is the working relationship collaborative? Do I feel like an equal partner in the therapy process?
7. Do we set goals together? Do they feel like they are my goals, and not the therapist's?
8. Do I have a sense that there is some direction to the therapy? Do I feel free to change direction if I need to? Do I feel I can trust the therapist to bring me back on track if I need it?
9. Do we review progress periodically together?
10. Am I asked for feedback? Do I feel safe to give it? Is it taken into account?
11. Do I feel accepted and respected by the therapist?
12. Do I feel both supported and challenged as appropriate?
13. Do I feel genuinely listened to?
14. Do I feel safe to get upset, angry, anxious etc if I need to?
15. Does the therapist seem to be bringing some expertise to bear on the issues I am struggling with? Do they seem open to me availing of other forms of help as well if necessary (medication, support groups, etc)?
16. Do they come across as reasonably confident and calm?
17. Does the therapist act professionally (generally start on time, not talk about themselves too much, switch their phone off, etc)?
18. Do I feel I have some clear focus between sessions so that I can continue to work on issues? Does my therapist come back to work that we planned?
19. Is my therapist enthusiastic and encouraging? Do they seem to believe in the therapy process?

And last but not least,
20. Do I like my therapist?

I'm not suggesting that clients necessarily go into a therapist with these questions as a checklist (though any client would be entitled to if they wanted to). What might be useful would be to have greater awareness of these criteria before even trying therapy. And, most importantly, a list like this can be very useful if we are not feeling happy about our therapy experience and are wondering what might be the matter.

This list doesn't claim to cover everything, of course – any suggestions for additions to the list are welcome!





Children, Anxiety & Play Therapy

By *Deirdre Reilly*



Deirdre Reilly

As adults most of us can look back on the worries of childhood and laugh at how insubstantial they now appear. We've all had life experiences that have given us the broader lens through which we can examine everyday worries and keep them in perspective. Unlike adults, children do not have those mental capabilities or that experience.

It is natural that children experience fear when they perceive a threat that may be real or imaginary. In fact a moderate amount of fear can motivate children to learn new things. Whether the threat takes the form of a dentist, a witch or a monster all children encounter stressful situations and these circumstances change as the child matures into adolescence.

In the simplest sense, anxiety is the feeling that one's safety or wellbeing is threatened. Social scientists have come to the conclusion that anxiety always results from three factors: Biological, Psychological and Social.

From the moment a child is conceived they are subject to biological influences which affect their level of anxiety. Some babies are tense, have an irritable temperament or have erratic sleep patterns. Other factors may be hormonal imbalances and abnormal brain activity.

Psychological causes of anxiety result from an interaction between biological forces and disturbing experiences. Children who are anxious also become hyper-vigilant, which is a heightened state of sensitivity to the possibility of danger or threat.

Social factors typically involve the child's interactions with their family and friends and others in their life. These people may contribute to a child's anxiety in various ways, and their influences change as the child matures.

Fearful children are often very resourceful when it comes to modes of flight and withdrawal, all designed as desperate

attempts to make the unsafe world feel safer. Some children stop talking and retreat into silence, trying to defend themselves from the demands of the outside world. Others retreat into the fantasy world of imaginary friends. Some fearful children hide from the world in very overt ways, spending hours on their own in their bedrooms, or in front of the computer (computers being far safer and more predictable than people). Others literally run away from home or school, because it is just too painful to stay. Reality is experienced as far too difficult to tackle head on.

Many frightened children do not know that it is fear they are feeling. They only know they have a strong and desperate need to avoid new situations so their protest is usually one of "I don't want to" instead of "I'm scared to". Similarly some adolescents do not realise that what they are feeling is fear, they just know they have an overwhelming desire to stay in bed.

Fear incapacitates children. It can kill a child's capacity for play, spontaneity and creativity. Some children who feel, or have felt, unbearable levels of fear and impotence move into a manic defence of pseudo-potency, which can come out in all manner of bravado. These are children whose fear is often accompanied by self-hate. They hate themselves for not being more assertive, more courageous. They start to hate anything wimpish in others, as they loathe it in themselves. These are the children who are attracted to sports like Wrestling, Kung Fu, etc., as a way to feel big and powerful, when inside they feel quite the opposite. They may join gangs or bullies as a defence against their sense of themselves as they feel terribly isolated and fearful. While some children do this in reality, others do it only in fantasy. Ian Fleming created the fictional James Bond character, one of the most able and powerful men imaginable, when he is said to have experienced himself in childhood as weak and feeble. In a similar vein, some fearful children have become counter-phobic. This means that unconsciously they are drawn to scary situations as an unconscious attempt to deal with their fear.



Play Therapy is a place where children can play out their fears without judgement from adults; they use the sand and toys as an adult in therapy would use words. They may re-enact or play out traumatic or difficult life experiences in order to make sense of their past and better cope with their future. The proven outcome of Play Therapy is a reduction in anxiety and raised self-esteem, there is also a change in behaviour and improved relationships within the family and with their peers.

Play is the natural medium for children's expression of their feelings. Children often have feelings that they cannot put into words. Play therapy gives a child a vital opportunity to "play out" his feelings and problems – his fears, hatred, loneliness and feelings of failure and inadequacy (Axline, V. 1974).

Reference

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Deirdre Reilly M.I.A.C.P. is a professionally trained integrative therapist, who works with both adults and children, working with a range of emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. She is a graduate of PCI College, where she is a part-time lecturer on the Post Graduate Certificate in Child and Adolescent Counselling and Psychotherapy. She has been employed as a school counsellor for the past six years in Primary and Post Primary Schools. She uses a range of creative therapies working with the children, including sand and play therapy, art therapy, therapeutic story writing and telling, along with the use of puppets. Where "talking" therapies may feel too challenging, children and adolescents feel free to express themselves in these mediums.





The Evolution of Human Consciousness and Spirituality

By Barbara Dowds



Barbara Dowds

The constant need of human beings in civilization to create ideologies, religious beliefs, political hierarchies, and the like, investing these with meaning so as to feel mirrored, real, validated, part of some larger transcendent reality is largely the product of dependency and sedentism and does not appear in societies that value autonomy and mobility. (Berman, 2000:168).

Between this sky and the faces looking up to it there is nothing on which to hang a mythology, a literature, an ethic or a religion; only stones, flesh, stars and those truths which the hand can touch. (Camus, 1970: 89)

Abstract

This article outlines a theory of the historical evolution of human consciousness and spirituality from the time when we became self-conscious and aware of a painful and alienating gap between self and the world. It is postulated that mankind has taken various attitudes to this gap: from accepting it to attempting to bridge it by ecstatic fusion with a transcendent god to numbing out from it. We carry the genetic inheritance which makes any of these strategies possible. In a groundbreaking work, Morris Berman argues that transcendent religion emerged in response to the stress of settled life but that we have retained – mostly in dormant form - the capacity for the earlier immanent 'paradoxical' spirituality of our pre-agricultural nomadic ancestors. What we should do with this knowledge is discussed.

Introduction

What is wrong with modern man – and woman? Particularly in the West, we are constantly dissatisfied, striving, looking for more, whether it is consumer goods, fame, fortune, power, a longer lifespan or spiritual kicks. As Anne Wilson Schaef (1987) has pointed out, we are living in an addictive society. Morris Berman is a cultural historian who has attempted

to make sense of our malaise in a remarkable trilogy about the evolution of Western consciousness. These volumes are aimed at demonstrating that our current alienation - with its attendant economic chaos and ecological disaster - is not an inherent part of being human, but is a product of certain social and historical changes. His prescience is revealed by noting that the first part of the trilogy was initially published in 1981 and the losses he mourned then have become only more extreme in the intervening 30 years. In *The Reenchantment of the World* (1981), he traces our distancing from nature back to the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries. In *Coming to our Senses* (1989) he explores the relationship between our physical experience of the world and the larger culture. In Western society, we have lost our senses – not our minds, but our bodies. Finally, in *Wandering God* (2000), he contrasts the consciousness, power relations and spirituality of our hunter-gatherer ancestors with later settled human beings, the originators of our present-day urban societies. He argues that with the shift from nomadic to sedentary life, relative social equality and secular/sacred immediacy gave way to power hierarchies and spiritual transcendence.

In this article, I want to examine what Berman has to say about the evolution of spirituality, a topic on which I couldn't have imagined any available evidence until reading his book (Berman, 2000).

The Basic Fault

During the Upper Paleolithic era 35,000 years ago, cave painting originated, there is a sharp increase in artefacts such as personal ornaments and grave goods and there is evidence of goal orientation in the form of advance planning (see below). There is general agreement amongst archaeologists that this suggests a 'theory of mind' (Mithen, 1998: 104, 174): i.e. the emergence of self-conscious awareness (Berman, 2000). This generates a painful and alienating split between self and world.



In our physical growth, ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny: i.e. the development of the embryo mirrors in its stages our evolution from more primitive life-forms. So it is with our psychological development. This split that arose in mankind in the Paleolithic era is seen to appear during the psychological birth of the infant. The beginning of self-awareness typically occurs around the third year of life and creates what Lacan called "the gap" and Balint called the "basic fault" (Gomez, 1997). This is the pulling away from a primal unity with mother and the world into our awareness of Self as a separate entity in a world of Others. Here I want to document how the human race may have grappled with this alienation historically.

The Upper Paleolithic

Based on evidence from the archaeological record as well as studies of today's remaining hunter-gatherer tribes, Berman argues that our Paleolithic ancestors lived in a state of 'paradoxical' consciousness, so named because it is simultaneously focused and nonfocused, a state of attentive waiting: 'It is hovering, or peripheral (horizontal perception), rather than intense or ecstatic' (p.9). The person accepts the world as it presents itself, including the split between Self and World. Spirit is not separate, but is immanent within the world: it is 'the smell of the forest after rain, the warm blood of the deer' (p.11). In this way of being, the secular is the sacred.

The Neolithic

With the beginning of our dependence on agriculture about 10,000 years ago (the Neolithic period), our consciousness began to change. Berman believes that by going sedentary, we shifted from a direct experience of life to the pursuit of substitutes and that a certain kind of mental flexibility got lost as well. In this delayed-return economy with its accompanying insecurity, trust in the world declines and fear of death takes on a prominent place. Where hunter-gatherers dealt with conflict by fission and fusion of groupings, settled communities had to create rules and authority structures: i.e. vertical power relations. The sacred which was formerly located in the world is now projected upwards, in what Berman calls the vertical or ascent model of spirituality. This 'sacred authority complex' is typified by the theocracies of Egypt and the Near East. The pharaoh was God's representative on earth and through him security was relatively assured. Paradox has been replaced by certainty and vertical spirituality is accompanied by vertical power relations.

2000 B.C. until recently

Sometime, around 2000 B.C. or later, verticality became more pronounced as the 'ascent' phenomenon emerged. These unitive trance or ecstasy experiences generated temporary psychological security by healing the split. 'All of this served to offset the pain of ego-consciousness by means of a mystical experience that merged the psyche with the rest of creation' (p.4-5). Freud called this the "oceanic experience" and regarded it as regressive, whereas Jung saw it as progressive in contacting primitive wisdom. Apart from this mystical ascent out of our bodies, erotic energy is channelled into specific experiences that we now regard as the norm, e.g. romantic love, heroism or great ambition. The social background to this form of spirituality is quite different from our Paleolithic ancestors. There is narrow birth spacing, dyadic mothering, increasing population density, gender and class inequality, fear of death and adherence to ideology in the pursuit of certainty (see p.150).

Industrial Societies

The current way of dealing with ego-consciousness is what Berman calls 'dullardism', in other words, spacing out. The goal here is to become unconscious - with perhaps a short-term high - by means of our favourite addiction: alcohol, tranquillisers, TV, spectator sports, busyness, workaholism, etc.

Those who try to bring inspiration into our current culture and challenge the dominant analytical, scientific, rational, materialist paradigm in Western thought, tend to shift to Gnostic insight, some form of mysticism or transpersonal spirituality: i.e. a return to the ascent model. Berman believes that mankind has gone through a 'progressive loss in spiritual intelligence' (p.188) and tries to offer an embodied alternative to the ascent model by reintroducing the concept of paradox. Years of bodywork and meditation have convinced him that the vertical model, indeed the addiction to paradigm-shifts, is rooted in denial of our somatic experience. He is highly critical of Jung and transpersonal theorists who, 'despite some valuable insights, were (are) cut off from bodily experience; they created a larger mind than the dominant intellectual paradigm, but when all is said and done, it was still a mind' (p.15). In *Coming to our Senses*, Berman argues that we need a renewed corporeality if we are not going to repress the body and make a fetish out of a supposedly new spirituality. He also believes that the need for certainty that arose with sedentary life overlies a deeper need for the world to be unpredictable, surprising and alive.



Some Evidence

The case that Paleolithic Hunter-Gatherers were Non-Religious. It is impossible in a short article to do justice to the wealth of evidence Berman finds in archaeology, anthropological studies of extant hunter-gatherer and nomadic tribes as well as power relations in non-human primates. Berman is aware that his analysis runs counter to most anthropological thinking about religion. He disagrees with James Frazer, Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade that primitive man 'was up to his eyeballs in trance, myth and shamanism' (p.19). He argues in detail for a much more parsimonious and practical interpretation of Paleolithic cave art than the traditional religious/shamanic view. He cites hunter-gatherer societies today that do not worship anything; they 'merely' regard their forest, their universe as alive and friendly. Berman shows with many examples that hunter-gatherer peoples cope with inter-personal conflict by leaving the community and re-grouping and suggests that the induction of altered states of consciousness may be a response to the stress of living in large sedentary communities – addiction in embryo. Berman further believes that our ancestors may not have viewed death as something terrifying or mysterious, as is in fact true for some hunter-gatherer societies today.

The counter case is put by the archaeologist, Steven Mithen, who convincingly argues that 'we can be confident that religious ideologies as complex as those of modern hunter-gatherers came into existence at the time of the Middle/Upper Paleolithic transition and have remained with us ever since' (1998: 202).

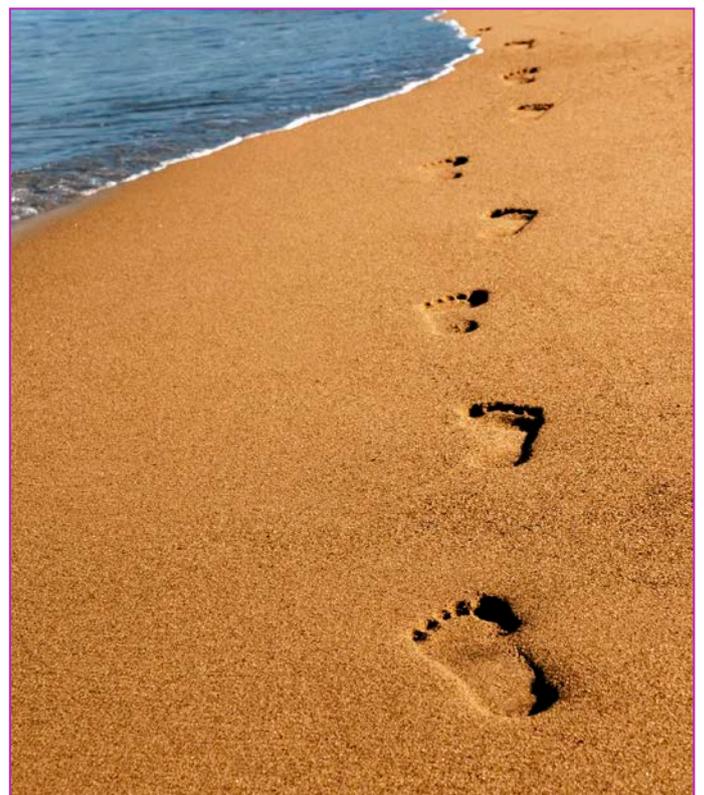
The Origins of the Split between Self and World

After 35,000 years ago, evidence of developing advanced planning appears in the archaeological record in the form of carving, polishing and repair of tools, storage of tools at the home base and the advent of big game hunting. The events of the Upper Paleolithic – technology, burials, adornment, hunting and artistic/symbolic representation – all indicate a shift from the exterior world to the mind. It is thought that before this period, man's cognitive ability was limited to thinking about physical reality, but that later, it encompassed abstract ideas such as death or personal identity. This is paralleled in the cognitive development of children today as demonstrated by Piaget. By the time we arrive at the Neolithic with the planting of grain and the domestication of animals

which involve enormous depth of planning, our capacity to feel at home in the world by paradoxical thinking is virtually lost. The split between Self and world needs mending. We now require religion – and attachment.

Mothering in Hunter-Gatherer Tribes

Hunter-gatherer societies in the present and probably in the past have/had to space their children; and with a typical 4-year period of nursing at the breast, HG children do not develop attachments to transitional objects, but cathect the whole environment instead. Erikson (1968) makes explicit the link between unitive trance and the bond between mother and infant. He suggests that we repeatedly try to recapture the dyadic, numinous experience of infancy through later experiences of fusion such as romantic love, immersion in a leader's charisma or religious observance. In this way we transcend our separateness. However, as Berman shows, other cultural versions of child-rearing are possible and 'in them romantic love, religion, war, vertical spiritual experience and charisma seem to be absent, aberrant, or muted because infants in those societies are not the object of such exclusive (narcissistic) intensity' (p.46).





Nomadic 'Religion'

Berman suggests (following Bruce Chatwin) that for nomads and hunter-gatherers, it is movement that makes religious ritual superfluous. 'Movement across the landscape is such a vivid, immediate experience that the need for anything more complicated than paradox is largely obviated' (p.166). Among many others, he cites the Basseri nomads of Iran for whom the spring migration is the highlight of the year. 'The search for pasture was of secondary importance to the symbolism of the event, which revolved around spatial mobility, the freedom to migrate' (p.167). Chatwin (1988) believes that religion is a response to anxiety and that movement, by catharting this anxiety (something that body therapists will recognize), removes the need for religion. I wonder if the real point of the Christian pilgrimage was movement rather than holy sites, journey rather than destination, though of course part of the thrill and holding of any journey is the prospect of arrival.

Berman acknowledges that there are many hunter-gatherer and nomadic groups today who do espouse vertical, ecstatic religions. It is not known whether their distant ancestors worshipped in the same way or whether their ascent-model of religion was acquired from settled neighbours. However, what is important for Berman's argument is that it is possible – and there are many current or recent tribal examples – to live deeply engaged, non-alienated lives without transcendent religion. These tribes are more embodied and have an ongoing trusting acceptance of their world and of themselves and others. They are not trying to escape from their lives.

The Nomadic Personality

One of the most comprehensive studies of nomadic personality (cited p.172-174) involved interviews with four East African peoples, each of whom had agricultural and nomadic wings, making for a total of eight groups. There was a clear difference in personality structure, not along ethnic lines, but along ones of subsistence. The pastoralists expressed emotions, including anger, directly, whereas the farmers suppressed them. The farmers hated others, whereas the pastoralists did not harbour hostilities (though they relied on the option of fission and fusion in the event of conflict). Fear of poverty, jealousy of wealth and desire for friends were dominant in the agrarian psyche, whereas pastoralists prized independence and self-reliance above everything else and their networks of interdependence were not person-specific. Even their cognitive abilities differed

in terms of the nomads' tendency to see parts of a perceptual field as separate from the whole, a necessity for survival in that way of life.

In general, nomadic society is less specialised and more egalitarian, and when hierarchies do develop, it is due to interaction with sedentary states rather than from their own internal dynamics.

Berman's Conclusion

We all carry within us the genetic legacy of immanent spirituality. If Berman is right and this was mankind's way of life from the dawn of self-consciousness 35,000 years ago until we settled in agricultural communities 10,000 years ago, then a much greater part of our evolutionary history was spent in paradoxical consciousness than in the relatively recent ascent model of being. All we need is to remove our blinkers and realise that the vertical model is not the only one. So, where does all this lead us? Clearly with the current world population, there is no possibility that we can return to a nomadic existence. Nor does Berman want to add to paradigm-shift addiction by creating a new false god for us to pursue. He concludes: 'there is an alternative to this paradigm-shift addiction, but because it is not addictive, it is much less exciting. This is to recognise that what we need is not a dramatic transformation of reality and culture, but simply the willingness to live in this culture and reality as we work on the intelligent repair of present problems, without hype or bombast, and let the future take care of itself' (p.229). He believes that there are two elements of HG living that modern individuals could adopt: one is the cultivation of silent spaces and the second is the radical acceptance of death. At a social level, we must tackle the population problem.

He cites Bernadette Roberts (1993) who has made the transition he talks about from the unitive experience of the sacred to the paradoxical: "I quit wandering around looking for life". She gave up on the "false expectation that some ultimate reality lies hidden somewhere behind, beneath or beyond what is."..."How many can appreciate the triumph of being common and ordinary? Who can understand what it means to learn that the ultimate reality is not a passing moment of bliss, not a fleeting vision or transfiguration, not some ineffable, extraordinary experience or phenomenon, but insteadas simple as a smile?" (p.232). In reading this, I am reminded of the journey of the spiritual teacher,



Catherine Ingram (2003). After decades of Buddhist striving, she became depressed and has moved away from Buddhism to a non-affiliated teaching of what she calls "awakened awareness". This is a relaxed present attention that is not something to be attained but rather something to be noticed and honoured. Most of the qualities she helps awaken in her students are those that Berman advocates: silence, embodiment, genuineness, delight and wonder.

What About Me?

Having spent most of my word space attempting to summarise Berman's argument, I begin to wonder where I fit into all of this. I was drawn to the book because of my fascination with the same subjects: psychology, anthropology, archaeology, etc. But, at a deeper level, I know in my body-spirit what he is talking about. In my childhood, I was fortunate enough to cathect nature more than the numinous (m)other. Yet my childhood experiences of nature may not have been entirely of the immanent variety and may have had moments of ecstatic fusion that I have spent my later life seeking to repeat. But, in my adult life, spiritual striving has brought me a sense of failure and emptiness, with a constant seeking after a fusion that may be impossible for me without extreme physical deprivation. I need to learn to recognise and give thanks for the more ordinary pleasures such as I have experienced on walking holidays with a different destination each day. There is a joy and satisfaction beyond words in the moods of the ever-changing landscape and weather, the soothing physical exercise, the genuine hunger at the end of the day and the holding provided by the need to reach the destination with its attendant food and shelter. If the life of a nomad was an option, I would take it.

And yet, I don't share Berman's disquiet about out-of-body experiences or altered states of consciousness. Can we not work against some of the unacceptable faces of the ascent model of consciousness while retaining transcendent religion? If I was graced with the experience of ecstatic fusion with God, I certainly wouldn't say no. At the same time, I have got the message from Berman that it is time to stop searching above, behind and beyond and value what is here.

What still needs to be explored is to what degree we are becoming nomads again in a globalised world and whether our technologised, internet identities are becoming more diffuse and therefore, ironically, open to paradoxical consciousness.

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Book Review

All Blacks Don't Cry A Story of Hope (2010)

by John Kirwan

Reviewed by Donagh Ward, PCI College Lecturer

"One of my biggest goals with this book is to save lives."

John Kirwan is a hero in his native New Zealand for more than one reason. As a rugby player he played for the famous All Blacks 96 times between 1984 and 1994, scoring a total of 67 tries during this decade – a record which stands to this day. As a rugby fan myself I was only vaguely aware of him from his time as coach of the Italian rugby squad a few years ago. It was only while reading this book that I became fully aware of how famous he is in New Zealand – in terms of sporting fame he would be the equivalent of Roy Keane or Brian O'Driscoll here. The other reason that Kirwan is a hero in New Zealand is because of the enormous amount of work that he does both there and globally to raise awareness of mental health issues and his efforts to reduce the stigma around depression and anxiety.

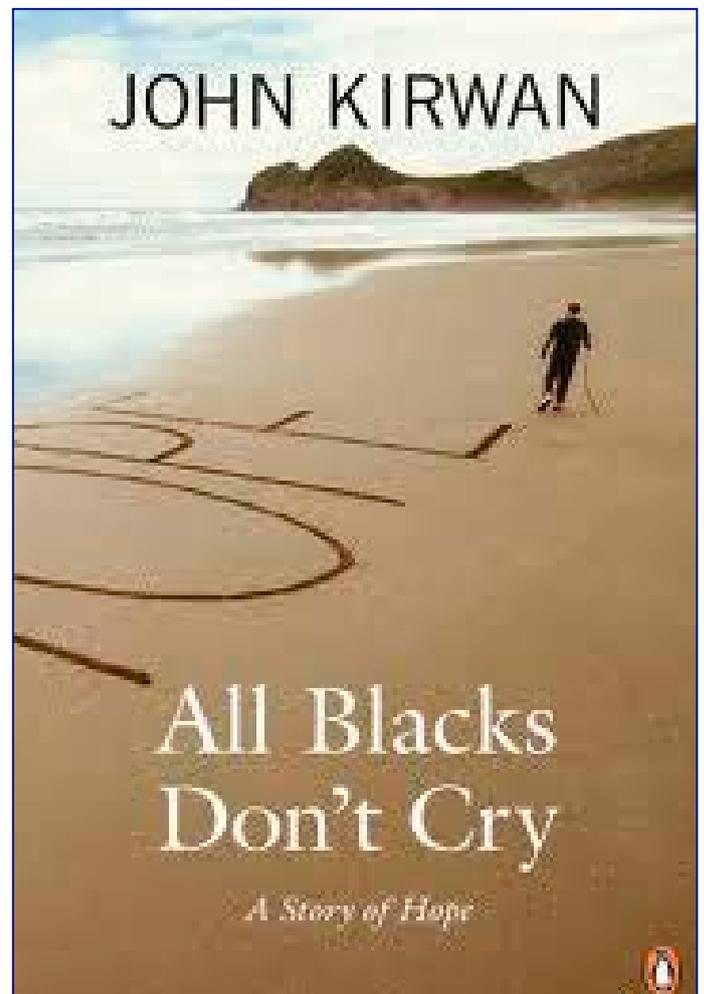
In "All Blacks Don't Cry" he documents his own struggles with crippling depression and anxiety. His nadir arrived in August 1991 when, after returning from an All Blacks tour of Argentina, he broke down while staying at his sister's house in Auckland. He describes the event vividly and movingly thus:

"By the time the morning came, I was completely in the grip of my darkest thoughts and feelings. The deep messed-up thoughts I'd grabbed hold of – that I was going to do real harm to somebody – had become completely real to me and I was in bed physically shaking and sweating and continually crying. I tried to get up and I don't know what I was going to do, I was just going to run and keep running. My brother-in-law came and he held me there and rubbed my head as if I was a sick patient or a little child."

For the previous three years prior to this episode Kirwan had been experiencing worsening anxiety attacks and deepening depression. John was an internationally renowned rugby player (he was a key member of the All Blacks team that won the World Cup in 1987) and he seemingly had it all – fast cars, nice

clothes and a great social life. So, when he had his first panic attack the year after the '87 World Cup he thought: "I'm going to go nuts. I'm going to be locked up. My whole life is going to be out the window."

In hindsight, Kirwan admits that his biggest mistake then was not opening up to someone about how he was thinking and feeling. That didn't seem to be an option for him though. For one thing, he feared being judged insane and facing a lifetime in psychiatric care; and also in the macho, fearless culture of the All Blacks guys like him never showed anything that might be perceived as





weakness or vulnerability – hence the book title. As Kirwan says himself: “All Blacks put their head down and run through their problems. We run through weakness. We gobble it up.”

Kirwan embarked on a lonely battle for the next three years – years of fear, irrationality and depression. He still managed to perform at the highest level in his sport, continued to score tries at will, however inside he was a shell of a person, terrified that he would go crazy on a plane, open the door and cause the plane to crash, killing himself and his teammates. He was afraid that he would hurt or even kill a loved one, petrified that he might kill himself – even though he didn’t want to die. He was deeply despairing and felt utterly hopeless. And still he kept it to himself, “too scared to do something about it. I was in denial from day one.” There was a constant battle going on inside Kirwan’s head: “It was my ugly mate – always there, whispering evil things in my mind and I would beg, ‘Just please leave me, please just give me a break.’”

When his total collapse eventually happened in 1991, Kirwan felt relieved that his ‘secret’ was out. His family and friends rallied around and saw that he got the support and professional help he needed. He saw a psychiatrist, was prescribed a course of anti-depressant medication and began therapy. He found it difficult to form a good therapeutic alliance with the first therapist (“this guy just didn’t get me at all”) so got a referral to another counsellor whom he found to be really helpful.

After a number of months he was feeling much better and began to come off the medication and ceased therapy. He soon went back to old ways of negative, irrational, anxious thoughts and the depression returned. Returning to therapy he soon realised that things had turned negatively for him again because he wasn’t paying attention to his psychological and emotional needs and was taking on too much again without making fundamental changes to his life. He compares the human mind to a hamstring: “Run too much and the hamstring pulls. The brain’s no different. If you learn to recognize those little warning signs, you know you need to lessen your load, remind yourself it’ll pass. It’s nothing to be scared of.”

John recovered again and has now been free of overwhelming depression and anxiety for the past 17 years. He details how he now – without the help of medication – maintains his psychological wellbeing throughout the book. Of the importance

of talking therapy and the reduction of stigma he has this to say: “It’s really important to know that there are people out there – mental health professionals – who have expertise in helping you deal with depression. And also to know that there should be nothing weird or mysterious about seeing them.”

He now volunteers his time in raising awareness around mental health issues and appears on TV and radio ads in New Zealand urging others to keep an eye on their emotional wellbeing. At a corporate event a number of years after the ads began to air a young lawyer approached him: “Then he said the thing that changed my life: ‘If it wasn’t for you I’d be dead.’ I was gobsmacked. He just said ‘Thanks very much for what you’re doing about depression because it saved my life.’”

‘All Blacks Don’t Cry’ is a superb and inspirational book which brings home how mental health issues can affect anyone – even a ‘fearless’ Kiwi rugby player. More importantly, it also sends out a message of hope to others that recovery is possible. I’ve recommended this book to a number of my own clients and each one of them has found it to be a good resource in aiding their own recovery.

John Kirwan is a survivor. At the time of writing he has just taken up the position of head coach with one of New Zealand’s premier rugby clubs, the Auckland Blues. Before he took over they finished 2012 on a low note following a season of untypical under-achievement. Kirwan’s job now is to help them to turn that around. I’ve no doubt that he’ll succeed. He has overcome greater challenges.





Lecturer Profile

Tom Ryan



I once met a man who told me he had resolved to watch one film every day. My immediate internal response was 'why only one?' I was born in Mitchelstown in 1961 and, for much of my childhood we had two cinemas in the town. Since the night, when I was about four years old, that my big brother (now a PCI graduate) brought me to see *Mary Poppins*, I resolved to spend as much time as possible in the dark, watching magic. Later, during my adolescence we only had one cinema in the town but the programme was organised much differently to the way cinemas are run now. The films would change every two nights with a separate show on Sundays. One could therefore see four shows a week, and some of those were double bills. And, yes, I did pretty much get to them all – my parents were tolerant and the price of admission was low. I count myself so lucky to have been around in the Seventies which was a golden age in cinema, especially for the thriller genre. (Age restrictions were not taken at all seriously – I saw everything.) I remember coming to Dublin for a few days and being very impressed with the then new Dolby sound system – I saw *Three Days of the Condor* and *Jaws* on consecutive days. At around this time Watergate was happening and the Vietnam War was drawing to a close. It would have been easy for an adolescent to become cynical but, paradoxically, paranoid thrillers like *The Parallax View*, *The Conversation* and *Chinatown* brought hope – a way of connecting with a wider community of sceptics.

I did a Social Science degree at UCC but this was really only a cover story for seeing more films. The thing that excited me most about UCC was the opportunity to join the film society and see foreign films on the big screen (well, a fairly big screen, in the G1 lecture theatre). I began to see the work of people like Bergman, Truffaut and Fellini. Around this time also a new invention was beginning to take hold – the video recorder. This allowed one to acquire films and watch them repeatedly. And, yes, I did.

When I left college I did a variety of jobs (a wide variety) none of which I was much good at and, not surprisingly, I did not feel very fulfilled. I somehow managed to make it as far as 1990 before succumbing to panic attacks, anxiety and depression. I took the tablets and they may well have helped. I remember getting hold of M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Travelled* and reading it in one day – hope began to stir in me. I kept pulling on that particular thread and worked my way (with some diversions into theology, philosophy and the pub) as far as Jung. With Jung I felt I had found something which would supply meaning and motivation in my life. I resolved to study psychotherapy and eventually completed an MA at UCC. The course I did was integrative but had a strong bias towards the psychodynamic. Studying psychotherapy somehow validated my misspent youth; I began to find meaning retrospectively in all the images that had fascinated, inspired and dazzled me in the cinema (did I mention that I was quite a consumer of novels also?).

I enjoyed practising for a few years and felt I had things pretty well sorted. Then life events happened (the usual stuff) and I realised I wasn't that sorted at all. Having to reluctantly admit that I still had very little understanding of myself, I decided there might be some perverse logic in turning to something else I had virtually no understanding of, namely Lacanian psychoanalysis. I have been reading Lacanian material for some time now and have attended a number of lectures and seminars in Dublin and London. (There is a thriving Lacanian tradition in Dublin). While I still can't say that I understand it I am getting a feel for it and I find it inspiring in many ways; not least because it has made me reread and rethink Freud's work.

In parallel with all of this I have enjoyed teaching with PCI over the past few years. Because I teach a variety of modules I have a chance to get back in touch with various theoretical approaches regularly. And I always find that there is something of value in each approach. In fact, if I could not become enthused by a



particular theory, I don't think I could teach it. The real joy of teaching for me is in seeing people take the material and begin to look at their own lives through the various lenses.

Whether it is private practice, my work on the Outreach Service for Adults with Asperger's or teaching at PCI, for me there has to be an element of play involved. I believe (following Winnicott) that even when we are dealing with the darkest aspects of our humanity, we need to find some 'play' - in every sense of that word. As Winnicott says:

Psychotherapy takes place in the overlap of two areas of playing, that of the patient and that of the therapist. Psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together. The corollary of this is that where playing is not possible then the work done by the therapist is directed towards bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play.

Now I need to go and prepare some play for my Certificate students ...



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News and Moves

Burgh Quay Opening:

To those of you who don't already know, we are delighted to announce that PCI College have secured our very own premises in Dublin City Centre. The campus is located in central Dublin just a short distance from O'Connell Bridge and Trinity College, with easy access to all forms of public transport and a variety of local amenities. Within the building students have access to the student canteen area, Wi-Fi including computers to check email and a student recreational and relaxation area. Full Address: PCI College, 7 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2.



Des Bishop

To celebrate this acquisition we will be holding the official opening of PCI College Burgh Quay at 6.30 pm on Wednesday 30th January 2013. To help us celebrate, comedian Des Bishop will be there to say a few words, and we hope you will join us too. If you would like to attend, please call us on 01 464 2268.

Year Heads & Core Tutors:

We are also delighted to announce that we have now introduced an added service to our students in the form of a Year Head structure. Our PCI College Year Heads are dedicated faculty members who will be available to ensure that you receive the best possible experience whilst attending our courses.

On the frontline we also still have Core Tutors for each class in each venue. These tutors will visit with students on a regular basis to supervise their progression and answer any questions they may have about the course, the college or your time with PCI College. If you are a student you will find details of your Core Tutors/Year Heads on the student area of the PCI College website (www.pccollege.ie). We pride ourselves on offering students the best services possible and we hope that this latest development will only benefit our students throughout their studies.





Liam McCarthy Scholarship

We are now accepting applications for the Liam McCarthy Scholarship for our Counselling & Psychotherapy degree course beginning in October 2013.

Liam McCarthy, who is sadly no longer with us, was one of the founding members of the Personal Counselling Institute (now PCI College) back in 1991. In honor of his hard work and dedication we will offer one lucky applicant the opportunity to study with PCI College right through to degree level. The winning applicant will receive Full Fees for our Middlesex University BSc (Hons) in Counselling & Psychotherapy and the Certificate in Counselling & Psychotherapy if necessary.

This is an amazing opportunity for anyone who may be considering becoming a qualified counsellor.

For full details on how to apply, please visit the PCI College website. We look forward to receiving your applications.



Liam McCarthy

Staff

We would like to welcome some new members to our staff. We have Donna Kealy and Lynn Hanley in our Burgh Quay venue and Paul Guidon in Corrig House. All three have come on board as part of our administration and admissions team and we hope that they enjoy every minute with us at PCI College. We are thrilled to have them with us.

A big congratulation to Rhiannon Murphy who has now taken on the role of College Manager. Rhiannon has been with PCI College for the past two years and looks forward to working with staff and students alike in preserving PCI College approach "Excellence & Innovation in Psychological Education".

Another congratulation to Nicole Lynch who has been promoted to Executive Academic Officer. Nicole previously worked within our Student Services Department and will now be overseeing the important task of organising academic administration for students. We wish Nicole the best of luck and we are positive she will be perfect for the role.

We would also like to welcome Tom Ryan (see tutor profile) and Gael Kilduff to our Counselling & Psychotherapy Faculty Team. Tom and Gael have been lecturing with PCI College for a number of years and are now part of our core academic team.

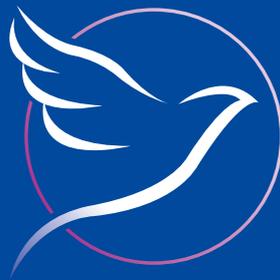
We wish the best of luck to everyone on their new endeavours.



Rhiannon Murphy



Nicole Lynch



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Established 1991

FOR MORE INFORMATION

about our programmes, courses, free lectures, workshops and events
please call 01 464 2268 or email us at info@pcicollege.ie

Information can also be found on our website, www.pcicollege.ie



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