

Oh, the farmer (therapist) and the cowman (clergy) should be friends.

by: Cherylann Ganci

With apologies to Rodgers & Hammerstein's "Oklahoma," and in answer to Caz Moffat's question in December's newsletter, I agree that spirituality belongs in Marriage and Family Therapy. Admittedly, there are pitfalls in the integration of spirituality in therapy: chief among them is the danger of unintended repercussions occurring when the therapist overtly claims or covertly hides his or her spirituality in the therapeutic context – and not just from the therapeutic perspective but also from the religious perspective. As MFT practitioners, how might we lessen the perception that when we integrate spirituality in therapy, we trespass on our brothers and sisters of the cloth? How might we proactively include spirituality in ways that are both honoring of and beneficial to clients, therapists, and clergy?

Age-old strains between science and religion can cause therapists and clergy to eye each other with suspicion. In his book, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Carl Jung called for "the clergyman and the psychotherapist to join forces." His patients were "torturing themselves with questions which neither present day philosophers nor religion could answer." Jung felt that a psychotherapist, while also having no answers, could engage the discussion with an ability to admit doubts in a way that clergy might not. Regardless of the client's spiritual position - atheist, agnostic, or theist - the intersection between the human and the universe is where being meets meaning. Subsequently, the quest for meaning becomes a spiritual endeavor.

Big questions are not just pertinent to average persons. Seminary students find big questions difficult to address within the confines of religion. Regarding her work with seminarians, J. E. Vennard says, "When faith and intellect clash, there is a crisis." When beliefs (religious or otherwise) and behaviors clash, people seek therapy. Having space in which one might freely question and examine doctrine and dogma becomes necessary to discover what one truly believes without being limited to the default values of the institutions in which one holds membership: church, nation, corporation, family, human race. As MFTs, we are well suited to hold the tension for this dissonance and to open space for exploration.

ONE MAN LIKES TO PUSH A PLOW

If MFTs open space for the discussion of big questions, then we must see that this space is gracefully and respectfully closed. Our exploration requires that we shepherd new insights back into the context of the client's day-to-day life,

which may also require that the client seek counsel from his priest. I believe that our failure to champion this closing task raises hackles in the clergy.

THE OTHER LIKES TO CHASE A COW

Therapists and clergy till the same ground, frequently staking out 'territory' by raising fences as farmers and ranchers do – some with the intent of keeping one's flock in or the other's flock out. My internship work provided an opportunity to work alongside Pastoral Counseling Interns from Luther Seminary. Initially suspicious of each other, we found our concerns and desires for the clients to be similar. In an "aha moment," we recognized two things. First, we have areas that are easily shared as well as areas that remain discrete. Second, it is in our clients' best interests that we talk and work together toward what is needed by and helpful to the client.

BUT THAT'S NO REASON WHY THEY CAN'T BE FRIENDS

When therapists insist that big questions can be asked outside religion, therapists must also nurture reintegration of the answers back into the client's life. In therapy, we might discuss the implications of a choice the client wishes to make. Should the discussion turn to whether that choice is a sin from, say, a Catholic perspective, I must recognize that I have no say. 'Sin,' in this case, is the province of religion and a discussion for the client and his priest - a discussion for which I must advocate.

TERRITORY FOLKS SHOULD STICK TOGETHER

If reintegration is not encouraged, then the territory becomes restricted as to where, when, and how much access may be had to the 'living water' of which Jesus spoke. These limitations impoverish the flocks and make enemies of the ranchers and farmers who love and work the land. The client's wholeness depends upon reintegration. Reintegration is supported by therapist and clergy through collaboration which, as we know, results from a functional relationship.

TERRITORY FOLKS SHOULD ALL BE PALS

Spirituality is common territory for clergy and therapists. It is imperative that both dwell in this sacred land with reverence for other inhabitants. We must know what and where our territory is, and what and where it is not, if clergy are to begin trusting us, thus opening possibilities for confident referrals between the disciplines.

Spirituality, recognized or unrecognized, is present in the lives of our clients. We must do our best to encourage the questions

and to nurture their yield. Such care not only serves our clients and our fellow laborers in the territory, but also ourselves—all of whom Teilhard de Chardin describes as "spiritual beings on a human journey."

Oh, the therapist and the clergy should be friends!

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Provoked!

by: John Lampert

When discussing general theory, Carl Whitaker once reflected, "My theory is that all theories are bad except for preliminary game playing with ourselves until we get the courage to give up theories and just live." Allow yourself to reread this quote a time or two. I am still rereading the quote and each time I reread, I seem to take on some new aspect of what might be the intended meaning.

Those of you in our readership who have thoroughly studied Carl Whitaker will have rational and valid interpretations of the above reflection. And, I wager, those interpretations will be varied, divergent, and contrary. And, I wager, Carl Whitaker would appreciate and applaud the disparity of interpretations!

As I reread Whitaker's reflection, the common denominator that surfaced with each reading was provocation. One could argue the statement is ambiguous, one could argue it is muddled, one could even argue the statement reflects Whitaker's position, that he preferred not to take a position! So, there we are, left confused, befuddled, and unclear. Yes indeed, we are left provoked.

Our friends at Dictionary.com define provocation as "something that incites, instigates, angers, or irritates." At first blush, those are not qualities which are typically thought as therapeutic – at least by the lay population. Yet, Carl Whitaker was onto something or so his legacy would like to provoke us to believe!

Let's consider 'simple change.' Simple change rarely occurs to an entity or system when that entity or system is mired in a state of dulled boredom. Boredom begets complacency, complacency invites status quo. I believe this logic, though brief, is sound.