

Last But Not the Least

An Integrative and Transformative Way Forward

Healing is not merely about symptom reduction but is a holistic journey involving emotional awareness, spiritual awakening, and relational restoration. This should prompt us to reflect on how we approach interventions in the future. Often, practitioners, formators, and counsellors view success as the ability to set healing aside while remaining personally or professionally functional. There is sufficient evidence in the literature suggesting that this form of functioning has a long-term negative impact on the individual. The last thought for this edition is a reflection of the intersections between psychology and spirituality, presenting a holistic model for emotional healing and personal growth. Insights from the book *Journeying into Healing and Self-Transformation: A Psycho-spiritual Perspective* (Pinto, 2021) by psychologist and spiritual counsellor Gregory Pinto is reviewed. The book emphasises cooperation with God as central to personal growth and authentic living. The book argues that true healing requires both psychological insight and spiritual grounding, rooted in the Word of God, while highlighting the importance of divine cooperation in personal growth.

Integrative Approach

Pinto combines Western psychological theories—particularly humanistic and transpersonal psychology—with Eastern spiritual practices. The book emphasises that authentic healing requires attention to both the psyche and the spirit, proposing exercises and reflections for emotional release and self-awareness. It draws on mindfulness, meditation, and compassion-based methods to promote wholeness. Practices like meditation and prayer have been shown to

lower cortisol (stress hormones), regulate heart rate, and improve immune function, demonstrating a physical “bridge” between spiritual practice and psychological health.

This is not a new thought. Carl Jung, a pioneer of this approach, argued that the drive for “wholeness” is the primary human motivation. He believed psychological symptoms often arise when an individual is disconnected from their soul or spiritual dimension. For example, Active Imagination is a Jungian technique where a person enters a meditative state to “dialogue” with parts of their unconscious or inner symbols, fostering deep self-awareness and resolving internal conflicts. A psycho-spiritual practitioner can combine such techniques with exercises like “Somatic Yoga” to help release “stagnant” or repressed emotions trapped in the body as physical tension. Here, the practitioner would encourage dialogues to foster deeper self-awareness, while using mindful focusing on internal sensations to release chronic tension and trauma stored in the body.

Psycho-spiritual Framework

The book’s central framework rests on the idea that personal suffering often signals deeper spiritual disconnection. Pinto articulates stages of self-exploration that lead from awareness of pain to self-acceptance and, ultimately, to transcendence.

In clinical practice, this progression is often described as a journey from “suffering” to “meaning,” where self-exploration acts as the vehicle for moving through distinct stages of psychological and spiritual development. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) identifies that many psychological issues stem from “experiential avoidance”—the effort to fight or hide from pain. Research shows that simply acknowledging pain as a normal part of the human experience, rather than trying to eliminate it, is a primary predictor of long-term functional improvement. Self-acceptance is also central to the Humanistic psychology as seen by Carl Rogers. Rogers argued that “the curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change”. Authentic self-acceptance involves embracing one’s current reality, including vulnerabilities and limitations, without judgment.

Transcendence is also another concept deeply rooted in psychotherapy. Frankl proposed that humans have a “will to meaning” and that true well-being is found in self-transcendence—shifting focus from one’s own ego to something larger, such as a cause, a loved one, or the

sacred. Empirical studies on Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy demonstrate that self-transcendence functions as a significant “resilience factor,” helping individuals endure profound suffering by integrating it into a broader perspective. Neuroscientific research also shows that self-transcendent states (like awe or compassion) deactivate the “Default Mode Network” (the brain’s self-focused centre), leading to increased receptivity and well-being.

Healing As a Journey Rather Than an Event

Pinto emphasises that transformation unfolds gradually through self-awareness, acceptance, and openness to grace, where healing is a journey rather than an event. This aligns well with psycho-spiritual intervention, which must move beyond quick-fix models and instead embrace long-term accompaniment. Both pastoral care and psychological practice need to adopt a process-oriented approach—one that respects the pace of individual growth and the complexity of human experience.

Another important theme is the integration of the wounded self and the graced self. Pinto highlights how individuals often carry emotional wounds that shape their identity, relationships, and spiritual life. However, these wounds are not obstacles to spirituality; rather, they become the very spaces where divine healing can occur. This insight can be incorporated into the editorial to caution against spiritual bypassing, particularly in contexts such as priestly formation or pastoral leadership. Instead of ignoring psychological struggles, psycho-spiritual intervention must help individuals in their woundedness with compassion.

The book also underscores the role of self-awareness and inner dialogue in the healing process. Developing awareness of one’s thoughts, emotions, and patterns is presented as a prerequisite for genuine transformation. In the editorial, this idea can support the argument for incorporating reflective practices—such as guided introspection, journaling, and spiritual direction—into intervention models. This is particularly relevant in formation settings, where individuals are called to grow not only in knowledge and discipline but in interior freedom and authenticity.

A further contribution of Pinto’s work is the emphasis on relationship as the context of healing, both human and divine. Healing occurs in the presence of a compassionate other, whether it is a therapist, spiritual

director, or community. At the same time, the relationship with God provides ultimate meaning and sustenance. This dual relational framework can enrich further discussions on pastoral strategies and community-based interventions, and understand that psycho-spiritual care is not an isolated activity but a relational and communal process.

Conclusion: A Vision of Wholeness

The way forward for psycho-spiritual intervention is not merely about combining two fields but about re-envisioning what it means to be human. It calls us to recognise that psychological healing and spiritual growth are deeply interconnected processes that together lead toward wholeness.

The articles in this volume offered glimpses of this integrated vision in action—through the quiet guidance of spiritual directors, the resilient faith of children and families, and the courageous leadership of pastors in difficult times. They challenge us to move beyond fragmented approaches and to embrace a holistic paradigm that honours the complexity and dignity of the human person.

As we look ahead, the task is both demanding and hopeful. It requires commitment, creativity, and collaboration. Yet, it also holds the promise of more compassionate care, more authentic leadership, and more meaningful lives. In a world searching for healing and purpose, psycho-spiritual intervention stands as a vital pathway toward light, integration, and transformation.