

Religion, Science and Poetry:
Seeking a Quantum Therapy for Despair

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Abstract

A narrative research that explores stories, sacred texts, journals, field notes, interviews, and life experiences, this thesis asks three questions:

- 1) What do major religions suggest is a required method for finding meaning?
- 2) What do contemporary scientists suggest as the source of meaning?
- 3) Can there be a protocol or therapeutic process for seeking meaning through the combined methodologies of expressive art therapy, with an emphasis on combining religion, science, and poetry?

Presenting samples from ancient sacred scriptures, comments from leading contemporary voices in quantum physics, interviews with a futurist, clinical experiences of this researcher, field notes of award winning botanist-poets and memorable philosophers, the study asks if the treatment of despair, a profound human emotion, is better served by single exclusive modalities or an inclusive method that may better represent the complex nature of the current cosmology. The study suggests the latter and includes an introduction to an original methodology of an inclusive therapeutic treatment for despair management. If there is a future in developing complex inclusive methods for therapy that do not limit the possibilities of what is meaningful to the individual, there is reason to believe it will provide an interesting research opportunity for clinical and applied scientists to explore which combinations of sacred texts, scientific information, and poetry formats lead to the most significant meanings for participants.

Keywords

Bible, Cosmology, Depression, Despair, Expressive Arts Therapy, Gary Nabhan, Haiku, James Pennebaker, Koan, Mahabharata, Meaning, NAPT, Poetry, Poetry Therapy, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Programmed Writing, PTSD, Quantum physics, Religion, Sanskrit, Science, Slam Poetry, Suffering, Torah, Vali Hawkins Mitchell, Viktor Frankl, World Trade Center, Zen

THE PROBLEM

The world, it seems, both natural and constructed, is an endless net of particular lessons, each made of the same compelling thread that is always hiding in the open, simply waiting for our complete attention to reveal itself. By pulling at these threads, I have discovered, again and again, the deep and common way of things that is embedded in everything. (Nepo, 2000, p. 126)

Introduction

On September 11, 2001, New York City took the global stage when an act of terrorism caught the attention of the world. The day after the attacks millions of people experienced an array of complex human emotional reactions. After the initial shocks and horrors of that day, what many people reported was incomprehensible despair. This vibrant destination of global industry and tourism appeared as a hopelessly tangled pile of debris and human carnage. Newscasters, while incapable of technologically bringing the actual scope of the disaster into people's lives, succeeded at the daunting task of reflecting the dire situation to those who only viewed the 16-inch TV screen version of the disaster and could not imagine that this could happen. Those who served physically as responders, helping survivors and walking and sorting through the rubble of the event, had a more visceral experience. Others on the planet who had already survived their own heinous disasters related and resonated from a self-validating perspective. The world stopped for a few moments and looked at New York City and the other sites of the terrorist attack. In those brief hours, the individual and collective quantum units of humanity had emotional reactions. As like other natural and man-made disasters there were responses of wild hope and extreme despair.

Generous people responded sending whatever they had to offer. One particularly sweet example was donations of vast reams of children's art depicting crayon messages of hope in the

face of despair. The sweet and simple artistic renderings and poetry offered intricate visions and dynamic combinations of images, religion, science and poetry. Many representations included religious scriptural texts and icons; and others held carefully rendered sketches of scientists fixing things, body parts falling from skyscrapers, bombs, decapitated heads, engineered drawings of airplanes and architecture. Poems about dead mommies and daddies were heart rendering. Innocent hope was offered in the form of art projects, sculpture, crayons and pencils, pens and paint. It was clear that the one-dimensional presentations seen on TV sets had been perceived by children and translated into their hopeful meanings via artwork. The power of these simple renderings became iconic of love and hope messages from “the world” to residents and victims of the catastrophe.

Although there were heart rendering and ample responses, the scope of the incident made it evident that recovery from an event of this magnitude would require something new and dynamic. The “usual” approaches to helping were insufficient. Psychologists and counselors scrambled to offer services to victims and survivors. Thousands of helpers responded with what they had to offer in terms of therapeutic tools and treatments. Yet what arrived first and endured the longest was simple art and poetry that affirmed a strong message that even in the midst of horror, there is a meaningful way to show care and compassion. These sweet artistic works became sutures that in many cases held people and organizations together. A new picture from a child would come into a fire department, or law enforcement, or charity center and it would be passed from person to person in the same way a personal letter from a beloved would be shared in a foxhole in battle. Walls were covered with “art” and photocopies of favorites were made and distributed. These small hand-made missals became Holy Scripture of hope and hung in cafes, busses, hallways, walls, and inside taxicabs. When holy beads hung from a rearview mirror the

rest of the car was papered with crayon art. Street shrines were erected with candles, photos, icons and children's artwork and poetry. The poetry and art of children sustained the hope and resiliency of countless human beings who stood at the edge of despair. Traditional therapeutic methodologies took a back seat to children's stick figures and poetries of hope.

Disasters and terrorist attacks continue as they always have. Since 9/11/2001 the world has experienced the horrors of mass murder at Virginia Tech University, Hurricane Katrina, the Tsunami's of Indonesia, Earthquakes in Japan with thousands of fatalities, and much more. Individually people have lost spouses, siblings, parents, friends and children to drunk drivers, cancer, diabetes, AIDS, drugs and wars in the Middle East. There seems to be something everyday that could represent an ultimate hopelessness in life. The possibilities for a despair epidemic are ripe. In a world of events that are unprecedented, does it make sense to suggest that any one form of therapeutic intervention could possibly suffice as panacea to manage anyone's personal despair, much less the potential level or complexities of a global epidemic of despair? Yet remembering the form of children's art work that is produced during disasters unsolicited from around the entire planet, there lies a significant clue about where to start in the consideration of finding an appropriate therapeutic response to despair.

Despair is an emotional state in which all hope is lost or absent (Webster, 2011). Viktor Frankl, author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, was an expert in despair. His work was based on a personal and clinical search for meaning in the midst of the heinous atrocities of the Jewish Holocaust of World War II. Upon his internment in a death camp he observed that some individuals in the situation were in morbid despair and others, in apparently the exact same circumstances, were not overwhelmed by this emotion. Although all were suffering there seemed to be some who were not consumed by their pain. He was curious about the reason and he

concluded that the individuals who were able to find “meaning” in the situation fared better than those who did not seek that meaningfulness. After his release he translated his observations into a Theory of Psychology called “Logotherapy” based on his belief and clinical interpretations that man required meaning to transform suffering. He proposed an original formula of $D = S - M$, which stands for Despair equals Suffering minus Meaning. (Diamond, 2011, p.1) According to Dr. Stephen Diamond, writing about Frankl, the “clinical implication here is that despair can be treated by helping the patient attribute to or discover some meaning in his or her personal suffering, misery and symptoms.” (ibid) The next question then must be *How does someone find Meaning?* Any answer to this question is based on the definition of the word “meaning.” One definition, according to Webster, is “something that is important.” (Webster, 2011) Thus, finding something important, thereby meaningful, is the method to therapeutically address despair. If we consider despair as a symptom of the loss of meaning it is essential to look at the historic methods of finding meaning. This search leads to countless sources. This study will discuss three foundational sources where people seek meaning: religion, science and poetry

Despair is a complicated theological, physiological, emotional, and physical state that is daunting to define, experience, or treat. To the person experiencing despair it seems untouchable and presents more like a death of something without a corpse. (Hawkins, 2011) The something without a corpse is the death of personal “meaning.” People in despair ask the “whys and hows” about incidents and circumstances that have no absolute answers. When there is no clear answer that leads to a manageable cognitive, spiritual or emotional resolution, the individual stands in the presence of an empty space. There is a loss, creating a hole in the previous meaning. Unfortunately what often fills the hole is a deep sense of powerlessness that creates openings for despair. What can also fill that metaphoric hole is the discovery or recovery of meaning. The

ravages of what people try to use to fill the hole confront therapists. Fillers have often been; drugs, alcohol, sexual activity, self-pity, depression, ongoing sorrow, and countless other non-productive activities and substances.

While despair has been studied neurologically, psychologically and theologically, there are no standardized answers of how to manage despair therapeutically. Most disciplines provide the best of their efforts in treatment protocols, theories, ideas, and technologies. Unfortunately, the exclusive nature of these well meaning efforts have missed seeing despair as a part of the cosmology of the times and therefore as complex as the current state of humanity and its problems. Complex problems and issues demand complex treatments. A multi-model approach to despair that includes the best of religion, science, and art might provide a more comprehensive integrated treatment that is psychologically, theologically, artistically and personally meaningful. A treatment protocol that included individual and collective foundational sources of meaning would provide a strong framework on which to rebuild meaning.

Gary Nabhan, acclaimed scientist and poet, uses a metaphoric approach to combining science and poetry to help people find meaning. He uses the term “cross-pollination” (Nabhan, 2004, p.12) to explain his view of how religion, science, and art bridge the separations between disciplines and communicate meaning. Paul Strand, who wrote the introduction to Nabhan’s book *Cross Pollinations* said, “The true artist, like the true scientist, is a researcher using materials and techniques to dig into the truth and meaning of the world in which he himself lives, and what he creates, or better perhaps, what he brings back are the objective results of his explorations.” (Naban, 2004, p.3) The value of treating an issue from the cosmology of the current “now” of history is where meaning for the now resides. Where some foundations suggest meaning can be found in an afterlife, often a therapeutic client requires a sense of meaning in

their “now” in order to consider an afterlife. Chelsea, a minister and client in therapy (shared with permission but not her real name), described her despair and treatment issues simply when she stated, “I don’t need something for tomorrow that will make me feel better. I need something in my now, because now is where my pain is.” (Hawkins, 2011)

We live in an age where specialization is valued and highly regarded. Therefore the realms of religion, science and art are generally separated into powerful and exclusive kingdoms. What if these realms experienced cross-pollination? Using a metaphor in the style of Nabhan, if a person is starving for meaning (despair), would they like one small potato or a feast? Feed them a gourmet combination meal (religion, science, and art) for full nutrition. The most proactive therapeutic approach to despair based on this metaphor would be a grand have-all-you-want-smorgasbord-gourmet feast, not a one-flavored-ready-to-eat-fast-food-special-de jour treatment. More than just a whatever-works- eclectic approach to therapy, it seems as if offering best substances of religion, science, and art would be a feast of options for someone who has recently had a loss that leads to despair. People generally find meaning when it is offered to them. Starving people will take what is offered. It is the ethical responsibility of the provider of therapeutic methods to evaluate and determine the merit and worthiness of what is offered to make sure that the suffering individual will be led to self-sufficiency and not dependency. Doling out crumbs of wisdom is a control device of some providers that keeps them dependent on specific services. The ethical provider will help the client become his or her own provider. As the old saying goes, “give a man a fish and he eats for one day, but teach a man to fish and he will have food for a lifetime.” Teaching a suffering person how to seek meaning from within his or her own cosmology is ethical, responsible, and inclusive.

Before her accident, Louise (shared with permission but not her real name) had been a well respected and accomplished professional registered nurse. After her catastrophic car accident and complicated life-threatening injuries, she spent much of her life that followed in hospitals as a patient. Her spouse left her and former workmates were no longer present as they moved forward in their lives. She had been in therapy prior to her accident working on simple issues of step parenting and marital adjustment. She returned to treatment after the accident seeking support and management of her despair and compromised health issues. Her previous life or work and marriage were gone and she was desperate to find out how to proceed. After one particularly difficult surgery she reported that her “life meaning” had been restored. During a very difficult portion of surgery recovery where she felt as if she had lost all hope a “Sacred Being of Love and Light” came to her bedside and gave her a new purpose for living: “To be grateful and show others mercy.” She stated she was now able to forgive everyone at that point and saw that life was not bleak, but meaningful. When asked about the “being” she reluctantly disclosed the being had come in the form of “Clifford the Big Red Dog[®],” a character from a children’s book of the same name. It was clinically clear that her despair had indeed been alleviated and her demeanor profoundly altered by this non-traditional “sacred” encounter and she began to reclaim her life and discuss a new career. From this point forward, the client and the researcher were more than happy to refer to the experience as a legitimate religious event that eliminated despair. (Hawkins, 2011) It is possible that another practitioner would have defined this uncommon event in psychological diagnostic terms rather than religious. It is also possible that a neurologist would have determined this was some scientifically measurable brain event. Clifford the Big Red Dog[®] isn’t art in a true sense of the word, but it is “children’s art” and Louise’s therapist saw the combination of children’s art form, a presence of a sense of sacred,

and a psychologically, scientifically observable uplifting of attitude as some sort of “cross pollination” that provided meaning for Louise. Meaning was restored and sustained.

The firefighter stood apart from the others and refused support from the assigned trauma counselor on scene. He gruffly announced he was “fine” and insisted that it was the “other SOBs that needed help.” After three days of this behavior, the counselor insisted on assessing and addressing the first responder’s status. The gentleman explained, with visible annoyance, that he had the availability of a system for managing his distress and did not need anything else. Upon further prodding, since the counselor was responsible to determine his readiness for work, he reluctantly referenced his participation in the Twelve Steps of Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) as his methodology to treat any loss of meaning and personal powerlessness and stated again that he was fine and more concerned about his peers. He was more concerned about those without a method to face the overwhelming despair of the loss of countless other firefighters in the Fire Department of New York after September 11th. He said, “I’m fine. I’m hurting and brokenhearted, but I have a personal recipe for despair.” He quoted an entire text of the Twelve Steps of AA like sacred scripture and finished with, “Now go help those other SOBs that don’t have a clue how to live with this” (Hawkins, 2011) One of the foundations of all 12 Step programs is an acknowledgement that the person in recovery has to find their own meaning. The program of recovery uses the phrase, “My God of Understanding” to open a process of seeking meaning that is not limited by anyone else’s interpretation of meaning. The person in recovery can find meaning in the God of *their* unique understanding and meaning. AA is a program that works well and has for decades. Within the “cosmology” of the alcoholic, the language, religion, science, and perhaps poetry of the program, offers a protocol of meaning that works when they work it. The ravages of alcoholism clearly lead to episodic despair and this protocol leads to

meaning and recovery over time. Meaning is where it is found and is self-validating. Forcing meaning on a client in despair is not ethical treatment. Helping a client discover their own, self-sustaining meaning is best practices and most enduring.

Purpose of the study

Fundamentalism in any tradition, religion, science or art, eliminates the possibility of creative solutions to complicated problems and issues by limiting original and creative options. The rigidity of a fundamental “true belief” limits problem solving that may be necessary to resolve a new manifestation or a unique demonstration of an old problem. In an age that values specialization the trend to take each specialty and turn it into a foundation with fundamental rigidity filters down to the individual by creating more despair. Specialization limits access to the wide array of possibilities for someone who has lost meaning. A client is introduced to one small unit of treatment and that small unit is supposed to be the source of meaning. They will necessarily be required to become true believers in that unit of “truth” in order to be returned to meaning and thus well-being. The therapist creates an isolated location for that fundamentalism during sessions. What happens when the client leaves the office? Is the nature of therapy to build a collection of fundamentalist followers of true believers or to help a client regain their own meaning? The vulnerability of a client who is in despair should be the religion, science and art of the therapeutic intervention in order to protect the client from bias, transference, and cross-transference. Selling a particular fundamentalism is not a neutral service to the client. Asking someone to develop their own meaning from their own cosmology is, in the long term, the basis of religion, science and art and should also be the basis of good therapy. Looking at how religion and science demand specialization may lead to a clue about how not to seek therapeutic methods for clients in despair.

A cursory examination of injunctions from foundational religious scriptures shows doctrines demanding exclusivity and separation. Dogmatic insistence and scriptural messaging insist the adherent offer full attention to exclusive solitary written word as source of all meaning. The same can be said of some adherents to science, including psychology. Theorists present the treatment de jour and pronounce it as Holy Grail. Equally, only a few “special” individuals during any particular time in history have had the ascribed social authority to define what is art and what is not art. The “clergy” of each of these disciplines demand fidelity, sometimes in total exclusion, and complete authority. The nature of rigidity is ultimately its own end as life constantly changes and moves forward.

Accomplished leaders in religion, science, and poetry are now dissolving the boundaries created by past separations. Opening the doors to creative options will hopefully evolve into a more global cross-pollination of the best ideas and contributions for the future. Therapeutically such opening offers fresh air and hope to those who suffer and those who treat people suffering from despair. Cross-pollinating from the foundations of religion, science and art could offer a more limitless approach to healing loss of meaning.

Life is multi-dimensional. The meaning in life must include a rich multi-dimensional combination of what is meaningful to the individual psychologically, theologically and artistically. Meaning is found in life itself, the dynamic combination of all that is. Bits and pieces can be extracted and defined but the whole of meaningfulness cannot be amputated from the larger context without a certain loss of meaning. While a thread can be removed from a tapestry and retain its nature scientifically it is no longer part of the meaning of the textile. A poet will write about the thread, a scientist will study it, and a clergy may pontificate on how it is part of the whole. And yet it can be argued that it is removed from its meaning. Despair is the

unraveling of the tapestry. Picking up one string and calling it meaning isn't sufficient for the reweaving of a life. Despair is also a symptom leading to isolation moving the suffering away from their source of hope and away from the capacity to seek help. More isolation and separation isn't helpful. If life is meaningful then LIFE must be the solution. The tapestry of life includes a sense of sacred, scientific facts, and art. Even the agnostic or atheist has full sacred belief in their lack of belief. Sacred works, science and art, in the form of poetry in this discussion, need to be woven together for meaning, not separated into random threads. As Gary Nabhan wrote, "Science and literature should not be separated but should be brought together in mutually supportive and provocative ways." (Nabhan, 2004, p. 93)

Background of the study

I have come to you for help
 yes. I know the answer
 stand up, sit down, turn in a circle,
 don't move, read this page while holding your mouth just right,
 but don't worry about how you hold your mouth,
 life is a paradox, no it isn't
 now spin in a circle,
 no. not that direction, o now you won't find God
 so i am lost unless i spin in the direction you are spinning
 and science will disprove it anyway,
 and o god help me help me in my despair.
 there is no god
 yes there is (Hawkins, 2011)

Religion is complicated. The Divine, or God, or Sacred nature of the universe seems to have properties similar to quantum physics. Small units of truth seem to defy the truth while maintaining it in a different location at exactly the same time. While quantum physics sounds a bit like “double talk,” so does much of religion as the paradoxes overlap the enigmas. The essence of religious dogma purports, not unlike quantum science, that truth is fact, absolute, and unchanging over time. This somehow immediately spawns a new cult or denomination that speaks the same thing in a different location, not unlike an atom that appears in two places at once. Pattiann Rogers writes, “Our cosmology tells us we must be willing to accept new, corroborated information that may dismiss or alter parts of its story as previously related. The story adjusts and expands. Rigidity is definitely not a part of our cosmology. Science is not rigid. Dogmas are rigid.” (Brown, 2001, p.7) Richard Alan Green, Correspondent with CNN News, made the following report on March 23, 2011:

Organized religion will all but vanish eventually from nine Western-style democracies, a team of mathematicians predict in a new paper based on census data stretching back 100 years.

(Green, 2011, p. 1-2)

It seems that built into many religions is a state of despair in that one must follow the dogma exactly yet even in that there is no means to actually accomplish the feat of finding solace. And yet the faithful continue to search for meaning within the texts of their sacred literature. One example would be in Zen Buddhism, where the practice is to study koans written by ancient masters as *the* path toward meaning. Yet within the doctrine itself is the hopeless premise that it is almost impossible to succeed. Koun Yamada, a teacher and writer who is credited with a major

role in bringing Zen from Japan to the west, wrote, “It is very obvious that the most important thing a Zen student can do is to make sure he or she is studying under an authentic teacher.”

(Yamada, 2004, p.37) Yamada also said, “For the practice of Zen, you must pass the barrier set up by the ancient patriarchs of Zen,” (Ibid, p.11) and that “Every koan presents us with a problem which cannot be solved by thought or reasoning.” (Ibid, p. 33)

Science is complicated. Just as a thread is a unit of a tapestry, a quantum is now the words used to describe the smallest form of life force and is seen as a unit of the whole, and the whole at the same time. A quantum is also able to be in more than one place at the same time. The idea of a quantum world is complicated. In his book *Quantum Physics for Poets*, Nobel Prize laureate Leon M. Lederman uses charming images and metaphors to help non-scientists get a feel for this vast theoretical enigma. Interestingly, he starts by with the poetry of Oscar Wilde titled *In the Forest* to try to describe the character of an atom:

Out of the mid-wood’s twilight
 Into the meadow’s dawn,
 Ivory limbed and brown-eyed,
 Flashes my Faun!
 He skips through the copses singing,
 And his shadow dances along,
 And I know not which I should follow,
 Shadow or song!
 O Hunter, snare me his shadow!
 O nightingale, catch me his train!
 Else moonstruck with music and madness

I track him in vain! (Lederman, 2011, p. 118)

Art is complicated. “Rollo May said that imagination and the arts are the fundamentals of human experience.” (Atkins, 2007, p.1) The vast topic of art, like religion and science, is beyond any one writing or even volumes of writing. Breaking down the definition, much less the infinite possible expressions of what art is and what art is not is simply impossible. Those who do art are not able to encapsulate it and do their best to make art. Poetry, as just one of the limitless expressions of art form, is equally indefinable. At the risk of overstating the difficult nature of defining poetry, and decreasing all or any academic value of this narrative through the use of overwhelming quotations, a number of poets have offered their definitions of poetry that may help underscore the paradox. From a section of a small portion of one page of one website that archives quotations, the QuoteGarden, come the following definitions of poetry as defined by poets:

Poetry is just the evidence of life. If your life is burning well, poetry is just the ash. ~Leonard Cohen

Poetry is a deal of joy and pain and wonder, with a dash of the dictionary. ~Kahlil Gibran

A poem is never finished, only abandoned. ~Paul Valéry

He who draws noble delights from sentiments of poetry is a true poet, though he has never written a line in all his life. ~George Sand, 1851

Always be a poet, even in prose. ~Charles Baudelaire, "My Heart Laid Bare," *Intimate Journals*, 1864

Poets are soldiers that liberate words from the steadfast possession of definition. ~Eli Khamarov, *The Shadow Zone*

Poetry is the journal of the sea animal living on land, wanting to fly in the air. Poetry is a search for syllables to shoot at the barriers of the unknown and the unknowable. Poetry is a phantom script telling how rainbows are made and why they go away. ~Carl Sandburg

Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted. ~Percy Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, 1821

Poetry is nearer to vital truth than history. ~Plato, Ion

Out of the quarrel with others we make rhetoric; out of the quarrel with ourselves we make poetry. ~W.B. Yeats

Poetry is to philosophy what the Sabbath is to the rest of the week. ~Augustus William Hare and Julius Charles Hare, Guesses at Truth, by Two Brothers, 1827

The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse... the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. ~Aristotle, On Poetics

Poetry is a packsack of invisible keepsakes. ~Carl Sandburg

Poetry should... should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance. ~John Keats

A poet can survive everything but a misprint. ~Oscar Wilde

To see the Summer Sky Is Poetry, though never in a Book it lie - True Poems flee. Emily Dickinson

The poet is in the end probably more afraid of the dogmatist who wants to extract the message from the poem and throw the poem away than he is of the sentimentalist who says, "Oh, just let me enjoy the poem." ~Robert Penn Warren, "The Themes of Robert Frost," Hopwood Lecture, 1947

A poem begins with a lump in the throat. ~Robert Frost

Poetry is the key to the hieroglyphics of Nature. ~Augustus William Hare and Julius Charles Hare, Guesses at Truth, by Two Brothers, 1827

ever been kidnapped by a poet if i were a poet i'd kidnap you put you in my phrases and meter.... ~Yolande Cornelia "Nikki" Giovanni, Jr., "kidnap poem"

Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. ~Percy Byshe Shelley

A poet is an unhappy being whose heart is torn by secret sufferings, but whose lips are so strangely formed that when the sighs and the cries escape them, they sound like beautiful music... and then people crowd about the poet and say to him: "Sing for us soon again," that is as much as to say, "May new sufferings torment your soul." ~Soren Kierkegaard

"Therefore" is a word the poet must not know. ~André Gide

The poem is the point at which our strength gave out. ~Richard Rosen

It is the job of poetry to clean up our word-clogged reality by creating silences around things.
~Stephen Mallarme

The true poet is all the time a visionary and whether with friends or not, as much alone as a man on his deathbed. ~W.B. Yeats

Poetry heals the wounds inflicted by reason. ~Novalis

The smell of ink is intoxicating to me - others may have wine, but I have poetry. ~Terri Guillemets

(Quotegarden, 2010, Nov 18)

Seeking truth is complicated. According to Brown, the seeking for truth hasn't changed, but the root of what we write about and the science we investigate has because it is based on the cosmology of our times. (Brown, *The Measured Word*, 2001, p.3). In other words, Einstein, who is replaced by the proponents of Quantum Physics, replaces the science of Newton. Writers of the past scribed stories of their wars and loves. New writers of new wars and new loves replace them. Science fiction is now fact and those who passionately seek a cure for AIDS have replaced scientists who just as passionately investigated the causes of diphtheria. Greek classic poets sought to speak truth about social justice just as heavy metal musicians or slam poets do today. Ancient religions have spawned countless sects and cults in the struggle to find meaning in the divine. The seeking for truth and meaning has not stopped, it has simply been broken down into such small units that each unit appears to be a whole unto itself.

The phrase *Meaning of Life* is complicated. It lends itself to infinite definitions because meaning is a personal self-validating experience. It is impossible to simplify this concept. The Meaning of Life is the tapestry. It is what it is. In a scholarly overview, Tracy Marks, a student of the Psychology of Religion at Tufts University, summarized a few of the key historic

philosophers thoughts in a paper she produced in 1972. According to *Seven Philosophers, Psychologists and Theologians*, Marks summarized several philosophers in support of the notion that man's purpose is to find meaning:

For Erich Fromm, man makes his life meaningful by living productively, and by using his powers of love and reason to their fullest capacity.

For Abraham Maslow, meaning is experienced by the self-actualized, growth-motivated person who delights in using his creative powers for their own sake, and who can affirm him and simultaneously transcend him through peak experiences.

For Rollo May, meaning is experienced by a person centered in himself, who is able to live by his highest values, who knows his own intentionality, feels the power of his will to choose, and is able to love.

For Krishnamurti, the world is experienced as most meaningful when through the knowledge of self gained through self-observation, man frees himself of the self and attains the state of passive awareness and self-forgetfulness which is love.

For Paul Tillich, man can choose to make his life meaningful by surrendering in faith and love to Jesus. By opening to Jesus and experiencing His acceptance and forgiveness, one experiences the joy and freedom of "new being" and the courage to be oneself.

For Abraham Heschel, man experiences his life as a meaningful when he lives in God's presence - not simply by encountering God in the world, but primarily by serving God in everyday life, infusing every moment with the spirit of God, and by dedicating himself to ends outside himself

For Viktor Frankl, meaning is experiencing by responding to the demands of the situation at hand, discovering and committing oneself to one's own unique task in life, and by allowing oneself to experience or trust in an ultimate meaning - which one may or may not call God. (Marks, 1972, p.2)

Technology to help find meaning is complicated and advanced information systems have given us better methods to seek and access to vast levels of information as it changes exponentially almost on a daily basis. The seeking for meaning continues but has there been sustainable “finding?” The same age old questions are asked: Why are we here? What does life mean? What is death? Pain? Joy? Suffering? Great spiritualists have pontificated, scientists have dissected and measured and named, painters have expressed, dancers have spun, and poets have imaged, written, and made poetries to explain life on life’s terms. What does it mean? What is the meaning of life? Through advances in the science of technology humans have access to infinite volumes of information. Unfortunately, having information does not prevent despair or inherently provide relief. In fact an overload of information can add more stress to an already fragile emotional system. One irony of specialization is that while it removes us from the bigger context of meaningfulness of the whole it can provide digestible measures of meaning in bite size pieces. Pattiann Rogers, in an essay titled *Cosmology and the Soul’s Habitation*, suggests that “All of these oceans of information can be daunting enough, but add to that the fact that much of this information is changing and refining itself continually--and the result is often despair.” (Brown, 2001, p. 6)

People and therefore society is complicated. So the foundations have been broken down in to manageable parts. Society is the sum of the whole of its foundations. But these foundations have, over the last few decades, been broken into disparate parts. The complete history of how

these foundations have been broken into separate parts is worthy of a major study. But taking a look at the pieces, like threads of a tapestry, the individual strings reflect a bigger meaning. Three of the enduring foundations of society that provide meaning to human existence are religion, science, and enduring art of poetry. The fabric of religion is to help humans connect with the source of meaning in some form of acknowledging the supreme unknown, God, or other sacred aspect of the universe. The fabric of science is the naming, organizing and measuring of things to seek connections and meaning. (Brown, *The Measured Word*, 2001) The fabric of poetry is to feel or observe and make writing about something for the purpose of meaningfulness that offers connections, either internally or externally. Kurt Brown, a poet and author of *The Measured Word*, a collaboration of a dozen acclaimed writers, described it this way:

Any effort to investigate the universe, whether through science or literature, involves making a cut in the universe, interrupting its wholeness and unity, and therefore disrupting and ignoring the interconnectedness of all things. Any investigation, poem, or laboratory experience involves saying certain things are relevant to this investigation and certain things are not, and once this necessary cut has been made, we have eliminated any possibility of seeing nature and the universe as a whole, in its entirety.” (Brown, *The Measured Word*, 2001, p. 11)

Gary Nabhan is an acclaimed ethnobotanist and science writer/poet. Nabhan’s book, *Cross Pollination*, offers some historical perspectives of the rifts that have existed between art and science:

For complex reasons, many scientists during the latter half of the twentieth century must have believed that they were the only scholars who could legitimately elucidate the world's truths. At the same time many poets, novelists, and literary critics became disenchanted with the stories of the world: that is to say, natural history became marginal to their core interests. A tide of disengagement between the arts and the sciences rose sometime after World War II and began to ebb around Earth Day in 1970, although it's undertow still pulls down some postmodern poets and scientists. (Nabhan, 2004, p.39)

Nabhan goes on to reflect a “deep sadness, grief, anger and alienation felt by many poets and artists after American scientists unleashed the atomic bomb on Japanese civilians and soldiers at the end of World War II.” (Ibid, p.40) The last few decades have promoted an increased investment in the specializations of science and technology, while support for the arts has dwindled. “The political ideologies of the space race fueled further growth of scientific institutions, but nothing so lavish was offered to the arts and humanities to foster creativity in their domains. By 1968, the U.S. government was investing more than sixteen billion dollars a year in resources for scientists and engineers, but less than eight million dollars a year in opportunities for artists, writers, dancers and musicians.” (Nabhan, 2004, p.40)

Religion, science, art, technology, meaningfulness, society, seeking truth, and essentially all of life on life's terms is very complicated. What happens to the struggling individual who is in temporary despair if he or she reaches out for help?

Three posters:

Prayer:

Oh God Help me...but please, help me while I'm waiting for you to help me. (Hassidic Prayer)

Science:

Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts. (Sign hanging in Einstein's office at Princeton)

Poetry

When in trouble, or in doubt,

Run in Circles Scream and Shout!

(From Stuart Hawkins's office, Hawkins, 2011)

Assumptions

Life includes suffering.

Seeking relief is a part of life.

Countless therapeutic methodologies attempt to ameliorate suffering through singular methods.

Countless religious doctrines suggest singular methods for relief of human suffering.

The sufferer defines suffering.

Despair is a complicated human experience that includes the loss of meaning.

The loss of meaning can lead to death, figuratively or metaphorically.

Seeking meaning is therapeutic.

Finding meaning is life giving.

Artists seek to express meaning through creative approaches to universal "truths"

Scientists seek to explain meaning by defining and measuring universal "truths"

Religionists seek to explain meaning by defining universal "truths."

(Hawkins, 2011)

Hypothesis

Statement of the Thesis

Major religions suggest it is a requirement to study only proscribed texts as a method for finding meaning

Statement of the Antithesis

It isn't necessary to turn to religion to find meaning, in fact contemporary scientists suggest science and not religion is the true source of meaning.

Statement of the Synthesis

A protocol of therapeutic process can be created that facilitates the search for meaning through methodologies of expressive art therapy; combining elements of religion, science and poetry.

Importance of the Study

Qualitatively, despair is heinous. Dr. Stephan Diamond, a contemporary writer, states that despair is a "common human experience." (Diamond, 2011, p.1) Common or not, the anguish of despair is consumptive. When asked about despair, a therapy client simply stated, "Despair kills people." (Hawkins, 2011) For stable, well-balanced human beings, the onset of despair can be daunting. Individuals who are less than stable are clearly more at risk of complex symptoms of despair. An unexpected life event, crisis or catastrophe can crush a stable system in a moment or be the absolute last straw to an already unstable structure. Terrorism, global economic upheaval, abuse, natural disasters, violence, divorce, drugs, war, and health crises are daily occurrences. The death of a loved one, a personal health crisis, or natural disaster can make recovery an almost unbearable process that challenges the physical, mental, spiritual, and philosophical foundation of any system. And meaningfulness can disappear, either temporarily or for extended lengths of time. The restoration of meaning assists recovery but it is a rare individual who is able

to seek meaning in the middle of a dire event. Even the faithful will respond to survival needs first and seek meaning after survival has been assured. Following an event of such magnitude that could lead to despair the mind tries to reconstruct homeostasis by well-defined, amply studied neurological and psychological processes. (ibid) The individual will reach out to familiar aspects of meaning for recovery. If those are gone, meaning may be delayed. If part of the meaningfulness of their prior experience included the belief that they would be spared such anguish, the entire structure of their meaning may instantly disappear.

The science of trauma recovery is a growing field and significant research in the last decade prompts attention. For example, studies of the different hemispheres of the brain and brain trauma show brain function related primarily in the location of the amygdala, deep within the temporal lobes, medial to the hypothalamus and adjacent to the hippocampus. This is also the location considered to be the art-creative center of the brain. Experimental groups of artists and brain anatomy experts are finding the arc between the art of creativity and brain injury and stress. (Carneiro, 2011, p. 1-3) It is worthy to note that there are organizations in place that are attempting to address the apparent connection between brain, art and trauma. The work of Stephan Diamond seeks to find linkages for management of despair through clinical and philosophical merging that includes the blending of medical science, the philosophies of Alcoholics Anonymous, clinical interpretations of Carl Jung, developmental theorist Erik Erikson, philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, and Doctor Nasir Ghaemia, director of the Mood Disorders Program at Tufts Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts. (Diamond, 2011, p. 1) This is an example of cross pollination that may be the cutting edge to find means to help those in despair.

Quantifiable research on despair can be demonstrated by looking how statistics from workplace measurements enumerate the fiscal cost of emotions. In 2002, it was reported that one in ten office workers in Britain, the United States, Germany, Finland and Poland suffers from depression, anxiety, stress or burnout, according to an International Labor Organization survey. Mental, neurological and behavioral disorders are rising so fast that they will outrank road accidents, AIDS and violence by 2020 as a primary cause of work years lost from early death and disability if nothing is done, said a report released at a conference on despair at the workplace. In pure business terms, despair costs companies more than plant shutdowns or strikes, said the ILO. "These trends represent a wake-up call for business," it said. (Sutcliffe, 2000, p.1) These dramatic emotions are surely the gateways of despair. If these ailments lead to job loss, can greater despair be far behind?

The quantum units of despair are measurable. Divorce, death, financial ruin, depression, terrorism, fear of wars, nuclear accidents, natural disasters, and other complex events can lead to a sense of hopelessness, depression, and ultimately depression and despair that is measurable. (Hawkins, Emotional Terrors in the Workplace: Protecting Your Business' Bottom Line, Rothstein, 2003) According to the Wall Street Journal in 2002, The Grief Recovery Institute, of the United States and Canada, estimated Workplace grief costs U.S. businesses over \$75 billion a year in reduced productivity, increased errors and accidents. (Zaslow, 2002, p.1)

Limitations of the study

This research is not intended to prove or disprove anything. It is meant to raise some important questions. Even a cursory exploration into such vast topics as religion, science and poetry leave infinite volumes of ideas, questions, and previously researched information ignored. An attempt to just focus on the stated thesis, antithesis, and synthesis leads to the hope that the

cross pollination of quantum units of religion, science, and poetry can offer some relief from despair through an inclusive therapeutic approach to healing.

There will be no attempt here to prove or disprove the ultimate value of any theory or practice of religion, science, poetry making, or a specific method of therapeutic intervention over other practices. The assumption will be that each quantum speaks to the whole. It will also be assumed that meaning is found in the whole. The overwhelming plethora of available literature in science, religion, and literature in an age of information overload is acknowledged and a humble attempt to speak of such grand issues as these is offered up in an effort to step into a bigger context for helping those who suffer from despair. Where some contemporary writings take the position of holding a corner on some important or absolute truth and provide exact details to the necessity of acceptance to a specific vision or pathway to truth and thus meaning in the universe, it appears that there is also value in an interdisciplinary, or multi-modal position that advocates cross-pollinating the disciplines of religion, science and art for a bigger senses of meaning that can sustain individual well-being in the face of any situation.

Bringing religion, science, and art to the same table is not an original thought. But it is on the cutting edge of what a number of strong voices are claiming as the location for hope for the future. Alison Hawthorne Deming, associate professor of creative writing at the University of Arizona comments:

Clearly a divide separates the disciplines of science and poetry. In many respects we cannot enter one another's territory. The divide is as real as a rift separating tectonic plates or a border separating nations. But a border is both a zone of exclusion and zone of contact where we can exchange some aspects of our difference, and, like neighboring

tribes who exchange seashells and obsidian, obtain something that is lacking in our own locality. (Brown, *The Measured Word*, 2001, p. 191)

Every discipline, including those of religion, science, and art, has unique linguistics that requires fluency for mastery. As with other foundations the languages of religion, science and poetry, are specific to their own domains. Crossover language may be necessary, or as Nabhan calls it, being “bilingual in a convergence of poetic knowledge and ecological scientific knowledge” (Nabhan, 2004, p.33). Those who are multi-lingual may be the strongest source of cross-pollination for the evolution of bigger levels of meaningfulness. There are infinite quantum units in the study of despair and meaningfulness. The science of human perception, the philosophy of belief, the constructs of theology, the spiritual nature of making art and much more make up the vast realms of human meaning. Modern theology of the New Age Movement and neurological data on depression are not included here but must not be ignored as relevant to any exploration of meaningfulness. There is a vast difference between the academic study of despair, clinical assessment, and experiential knowledge. (Hawkins, 2011) Nabhan addresses this discrepancy when he writes about his scientific passion to save an scraggly and unpopular tree that is an important contributor to the food chain: “People have to feel some visceral connection to an issue to act upon it: they have to have images of an ironwood forest in their heads and hearts.” (Nabhan, 2004, p. 69)

Any attempt to find a method for helping people stirs up small and large questions that also need to be addressed. The irony of writing a single quantum unit while trying to discuss the uncountable nature of it is not lost. Hopefully there will be a quantum experience that finds this effort residing in two places at the same time, in the location of micro and the location of macro meaning. This is a cup from the ocean and it is not the ocean.

Definitions

Art: Forms of creative beauty (Webster, 2011)

Religion: Beliefs and worship systems (Webster, 2011)

Poetry: An art form, Literature in verse (Webster, 2011)

One of the things poetry can do is re-name the world. It doesn't matter how many times this has already been done, how many generations rise to inherit and reinvent the language, it must be done over again and again. In an essential and important way, each individual ever born refashions language to his or her own purposes. Each of us has a unique sense of words and how they are strung together to communicate thoughts, experiences and emotions. Writers, but especially poets, are people who consciously accept this fact and make an effort, in their work, to further the process of renaming and extending the resources of language. When we re-name a thing, when we describe it anew in such a way as to almost re-create it, we call it forth into a fresh dimension and show it to the rest of the world as if for the first time. An old thing, a used and worn thing, about which we thought we knew all there was to know, is suddenly revitalized, brought once again to life under the power of the poet's scrutiny. Of all the things poetry can do, this is not one of the least of its virtues. (Brown, *Poetry and the Language of Adam*, 2011, p. 1)

Science: Study of the Physical World (Webster, 2011)

Alan Lightman of MIT, a theoretical physicist and novelist, is best known as the author of *Einstein's Dreams*. He has written about the similarities and differences between the worlds of science and the arts. According to a recent set of science blogs, one of the differences he mentioned in a lecture is the way the different disciplines handle

names. He claimed that science is deeply concerned with naming things, because naming a thing in some sense defines it--the word "electron" carries with it a whole host of properties that are shared by all electrons in the universe. In the arts, on the other hand, names don't have the same power, because the same word can mean different things in different contexts, and for different people. For that reason, he claimed, artists are not as keen to name things as scientists. (Orzel, 2009, p. 1)

Quantum Physics: Branch of science that studies the smallest units of energy (Webster, 2011)

Quantum physics is a branch of science that deals with discrete, indivisible units of energy called quanta as described by the Quantum Theory. There are six main ideas represented in Quantum Theory: Energy is not continuous, but comes in small but discrete units. The elementary particles behave both like particles and like waves. The movement of these particles is inherently random. It is physically impossible to know both the position and the momentum of a particle at the same time. The more precisely one is known, the less precise the measurement of the other is. The atomic world is nothing like the world we live in. While at a glance this may seem like just another strange theory, it contains many clues as to the fundamental nature of the universe and is more important than even relativity in the grand scheme of things (if any one thing at that level could be said to be more important than anything else). Furthermore, it describes the nature of the universe as being much different than the world we see. As Niels Bohr said, "Anyone who is not shocked by quantum theory has not understood it." (ThinkQuest, 2011)

Koan: Zen Buddhist riddle (Webster, 2011)

A paradox to be meditated upon that is used to train Zen Buddhist monks to abandon ultimate dependence on reason and to force them into gaining sudden intuitive enlightenment. (Webster, 2011)

All koans are barriers set up by the Buddhas and the patriarchs of the past. It is impossible for the ordinary person to pass through them. If you want to pass through these barriers, you must realize your own self-nature. This is called self-realization or enlightenment, satori or kensho in Japanese. When you once attain true self-realization, these barriers disappear in an instant as though they were nothing but mirages, and you will find that from the very beginning you have always been in a world where there is neither inside nor outside. That is what “gateless” means. Therefore, all koans are impassable barriers for those who are unenlightened, but for the enlightened there is no gate at all. They can come in and go out quite freely. (Yamada, 2004, p. 2)

Cosmology: Study of the universe (Webster, 2011)

Cosmology (from Greek κοσμολογία - κόσμος, kosmos, "universe"; and -λογία, "study") is the study of the Universe in its totality, and by extension, humanity's place in it. (Webster, 2011)

Therapeutic: useful in treating disease and/or maintaining health (Webster, 2011)

1) Of or relating to the treatment of disease or disorders by remedial agents or methods, 2) therapeutic rather than a diagnostic specialty, 3) Providing or assisting in a cure (Webster, 2011)

Poetry Therapy: The use of literature for therapeutic treatment (Hawkins, 2011)

For the past 30 years, The National Association of Poetry Therapy, (NAPT) members have forged a community of healers and lovers of words and language. We are

psychotherapists, counselors, psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists. We are poets, journal keepers, storytellers, and songwriters. We are teachers, librarians, adult educators, and university professors. We are doctors, nurses, occupational/ recreational therapists, ministers, pastoral counselors, and spiritual directors. We are artists, dancers, dramatists, musicians, and writers. We work in many settings where people deal with personal and communal pain and the search for growth. As poetry therapists, we use all forms of literature and the language arts, and we are united by our love of words, and our passion for enhancing the lives of others and ourselves. (NAPT, 2011, website)

Slam Poetry: A form of poetry that combines literature and performance art (Webster, 2011)

Poetry slam blends poetry, performance, and competition to spawn a captivating event in which poets compete in front of an animated, electrified audience. It's a festival, a carnival act, an interactive class, a town meeting, a con game, and a poetic boxing match, all rolled into one. (Smith, 2004, p.2)

Haiku: A Short Japanese poem with exact measurements (Webster 2011)

Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry with exact measurements. The exact measurement of this form of literature combined with depth of feeling and expression create the perfect blend of science and art. Haiku consists of 17 moras (or one), in three phrases of 5, 7, and 5. Although in English haiku is said to have 17 syllables, this is inaccurate because syllables and moras are different in the different languages. Rules include seasonal references and specific types of words and in Japanese are traditionally printed in a single vertical line with references to the natural world as their subject matter. Haiku in English usually are printed three lines to parallel the three phrases of Japanese

haiku and may deal with any subject matter and use the form of 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively. The best-known Japanese haiku is Bashō's "old pond":

古池や 蛙飛込む 水の音

furuike ya kawazu tobikomu mizu no oto

This separates into on as:

fu-ru-i-ke ya (5)

ka-wa-zu to-bi-ko-mu (7)

mi-zu no o-to (5)

Translated:

old pond . . .

a frog leaps in

water's sound

(Wikipedia, Haiku, 2011)

What do major religions suggest is a required method for finding meaning?

Religion is the warp

Science is the woof

The poet sits on the tapestry with is tablet

And becomes the art

(Hawkins, 2011)

The study of ancient writings, texts and scriptures is mandatory for participation in most major religions. As man became less indigenous and nomadic, settling in tribes and cities, the methods of knowing God moved from the natural world to the world of written words. (Winkler, 2003, page 15) So as society became more cohesive it became more fractured. Man who once

knew the “divine” experientially through his own self-validating interaction with nature now had to depend on the writings of others who had experiences apparently more “divine” than his. This separated man from his own experience with the divine while the religion demanded that to be a believer one must, ironically, have a personal experience with the divine. A Zen koan is born by the quantum nature of a man having to be in two places at the same time, separate from the divine and part of the divine. And most religions posit that the only method to merge the rift is by study of their particular text. Some examples are offered below. Out of context these samples are meant to represent a few samples of dogma that demand attention to the actual scripture as source of meaning.

MAHABHARATA

For thousands of years Indian people, specifically Hindus, have been sustained poetically and religiously through vast writings of literary works, ranging from hymns, to myths, legends, theological commentaries, poetry, text books of rituals and dogmatic meaning to what are considered the two great epic poems, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

The Mahabharata and Ramayana are the national epics of India. They are probably the longest poems in any language. The Mahabharata, attributed to the sage Vyasa, was written down from 540 to 300 B.C. It tells the legends of the Bharatas, one of the Aryan tribal groups. One of the segments of the great Mahabharata, called the Bhagvad Gita, is considered the primary source of religious scripture for most Hindu seekers. The Mahabharata is considered not only an epic, a work of the art of poetry, but at the same time a text book of morals, of law and philosophy based on ancient tradition and endowed with authority. The Bhagvad Gita, although only 18 chapters, is given the same authority because of its source material. (Winternitz, 2008, p. 1)

TORAH

Study of Rabbinic literature, the highest ideal of all Jews, (Project Genesis, 2007) is Torah study. Some examples of traditional teachings from selections represented on the social media site Wikipedia as well as a website that teaches Torah studies, The Genesis Project:

* The study of Torah is considered to outweigh a number of mitzvot (commandment), such as visiting the sick, honoring one's parents, and bringing peace between people (Shabbat 127a). This paragraph was incorporated in the daily prayer service.

* A number of Talmudic rabbis consider Torah study as being greater than the (Bartlett, 2004) rescue of human life, than the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, and than the honor of father and mother (Megilah 16b), provided that someone else will save the individual's life.

* Torah study is of more value than the offering of daily sacrifice. (Eruvin 63b).

* A single day devoted to the Torah outweighs 1,000 sacrifices. (Tractate Shabbat

* Whoever learns Torah at night is granted grace during the day and whoever neglects it will be fed burning coals in the World to Come. (Avodah Zarah 3b).

* God weeps over one who might have occupied himself with Torah study but neglected to do so. (Tractate Hagigah 5b).

* The study must be unselfish: one should study the Torah with self-denial, even at the sacrifice of one's life; and in the very hour before death one should devote himself to this duty. (Tractate Shabbat 83b).

* All, even lepers and the ritually unclean, are required to study the Torah. (Tractate Berakhot 22a).

* It is the duty of everyone to read the entire weekly portion twice. (The law of shnayim mikra ve-echad targum, Tractate Berakhot 8a).

* According to R. Yehudah, God Himself studies the Torah for the first three hours of every day. (Tractate Avodah Zarah 3b).

Torah study is counted amongst the 613 mitzvot (Biblical commandments), finding its source in the verse "And you shall teach it to your children." (Deuteronomy 6:7) Upon this the Talmud comments that "Study is necessary in order to teach." The importance of study is attested to in another Talmudic discussion (Kiddushin 40b) about which is preferred: study or action. The answer there, a seeming compromise, is "study that leads to action." Although the word "Torah" refers specifically to the Five Books of Moses, in Judaism the word also refers to the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), the Talmud and other religious works. In some traditional circles, most notably the Orthodox and Haredi, Torah study is a way of life. In some communities, men forgo other occupations and study Torah full-time. (Project Genesis, 2007, p. 1) (Wikipedia, 2011)

BIBLE

Even the most cursory and random web search will find countless sites that express the absolute necessity of Bible study for Christian followers. The example that follows is representative of a sub-set of believers who reflect that the absolute authority and singularity of Biblical scriptures as the sole source of absolute truth and therefore the only valid text deemed worthy of meaning:

Studying the bible helps us know the truth: As students of the bible, we must not trust the authority of man, but search the scriptures to see what God says. We must study the bible with diligence and prayer. (Acts 17:11) These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Truth is important, especially when it is God's truth. If we study God's word, we will know His truth and we will be

able to recognize a lie when we hear one. (1 John 4:1) Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Discover the truth and do not be carried down the path of deception. (2 Peter 2:1) But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

Studying God's word protects us from traveling down this road. (Grace Points, 2003, p.1)

SANSKRIT

Haindava Keralam is a global community of Hindus that has come together with the agenda to protect and preserve their heritage. A significant agenda of Haindava Keralam is the preservation and promotion of maintaining the Sanskrit language for religious, humanitarian, emotional, and scientific purposes. (Haindava Keralam, 2008, p. 1) Their work is based on a value that posits the most ancient of languages is the bridge between religion and science.

Sanskrit, the vocabulary of which is derived from root syllables, is ideal for coining new scientific and technological terms. The need to borrow words or special scientific terms does not arise. From the very beginning, scientific principles have been hidden in the verses found in the Vedas, Upanishads and the great epics of India. Concepts and principles seen in present day mathematics and astronomy are all hidden in the compositions and treatises of many early scholars of the country. The connoisseurs of the Sanskrit language know that it is the language of the heart. Whatever be the emotion one wishes to display, be it devotion, love, affection, fear, threat, anger, compassion, benevolence, admiration, surprise and the like, the most appropriate words of Sanskrit can flow like a gushing stream. (Ibid)

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, a prolific Hindu writer, speaking from his knowledge of some of the most ancient texts, the Vedas, wrote:

“As a bumblebee gathers honey from many different types of flowers, an intelligent person will take the essence of all the sastras,* whether they be great or small”
(Thakura, 1998)

*sastra-Vedic scripture, derived from the Sanskrit verbal root sas, to govern, command. Thus sastric injunctions are authoritative and should be accepted as Absolute Truth (Samiti, no date)

It would appear, if one were to attend to any, or all of these samplings, that to pick one text over another would ultimately lead to separation from the divine. If each is the absolute source of hope over despair, then how does someone recover by choosing one option? And how does one find meaningfulness in one over the other except by closing down perception to the macro view that both, or all, are stating that there is some sort of divine that needs some sort of acknowledgement to attain meaning? Most major religions proposit that to reach meaning and individual must study only the proscribed texts of that specific religion.

ANTITHESIS

What do contemporary scientists suggest as the source of meaning?

Noble trek to Nobel Prize

Your journey seeks to save us

What does it mean and

Who will save you?

(Hawkins, 2011)

Noble scientists and Nobel scientists have traveled the frontiers of the smallest units of life and reached out to the vastest galaxies of the bigness of existence in their efforts to define. Exciting discoveries are being made that are changing our meaning. Only a few short decades ago man was earthbound and now reaches to the stars. Humans who died for “no reason” now can be cured of diseases that, once mysterious, are fixable. Quantum physics is the front-runner in terms of research saying that not only can we now know this world, but that there are multiple universes to study. Nobel Prize laureate Leon Lederman describes quantum physics as the “staple of all atomic and subatomic research, as well as much material science research and cosmic research.” (Lederman, 2001, p. 20) Accomplished science experts like Stephen Hawking, Michio Kaku and Neil Turok, have suggested the existence of multiple universes. (Cohen, 2011, p.45)

Making efforts to discover the specific location of an atomic particle, physicists found it had no single location. The particles seemed to have the capacity to simultaneously exist in more than one place at a time. And, as atoms come and go they apparently change slightly while also managing vast levels of synchronicity. (Ibid)

Others, while praising the discoveries of science, have questioned its limitations. A BBC Radio interview with Professor Peter Atkins, Oxford University Chemist, asks if we can rely on science alone to answer every question.

Every real question, like where did the universe come from, where is it going, and how is it getting there - there is nothing of that nature that science cannot illuminate," he says. “Scientists are probing everywhere, leaving no stone unturned. What they find are facts, facts and more facts, with consequences that we cannot ignore. Science has all the

evidence it needs that the universe is entirely without purpose. You are born an intelligent animal with no soul or spirit and there is nothing left alive after the body has died. If science comes up with facts that are, let's call it, true... even though they are unsettling, they have to be accepted. I think that science exposes the wonder of the world as it is. You don't need fantasies to build that sense of wonder. Science is true glory, whereas religion is fabricated glory. The religious notions of soul and spirit, of life everlasting and the final judgment, are nothing more than a fantasy. (Colls, 2011, Radio Broadcast)

While the religionists question the scientist, there are some scientists that hold similar views about religionists. Richard Dawkins, British ethologist and evolutionary biologist emphatically and publically declares his atheism and his disgust with scriptural attendance.

God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully. We are all atheists about most of the gods that societies have ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further. (Atheist.com, 2008)

Thomas Edison, considered by some as the Father of electricity, stated his fundamentalist belief in science with, "I have never seen the slightest scientific proof of the religious ideas of heaven and hell, of future life for individuals, or of a personal God. So far as religion of the day is concerned, it is a damned fake... Religion is all bunk." (Ibid)

Social scientists like Ken Wilbur or Andrew Cohen discuss the nature of man or God, offering overlapping explanations of science, religion, philosophy, evolution and the universe

with methodologies for finding peace or wellbeing, based on what Cohen calls a “kosmocentric perspective.” (Cohen, 2011, p. 46)

But once we’ve awakened to a Kosmocentric perspective, we can see that everything that’s happening here on Earth-including everything that’s happening within our own interior consciousness-has been produced by, and is part of a Kosmic unfolding.” (Ibid page 51) Wilber, in discussing Eros as a driving force for evolution, states that “what’s even more shocking is when Eros pushes ethnocentric upward into worldcentric-and this pushes, for example, fundamentalists who think they have the one and only correct way to God and that you’re going to burn in everlasting damnation if you don’t accept Jesus as your personal savior.”(Ibid, page 50)

Scientists will, with the devotion of a religionist, explain their fundamentals of belief with the same deep and abiding passion as a scriptural devotee:

We explain our existence by a combination of the anthropic principle and Darwin's principle of natural selection. That combination provides a complete and deeply satisfying explanation for everything that we see and know. Not only is the god hypothesis unnecessary. It is spectacularly unparsimonious. Not only do we need no God to explain the universe and life. God stands out in the universe as the most glaring of all superfluous sore thumbs. We cannot, of course, disprove God, just as we can't disprove Thor, fairies, leprechauns and the Flying Spaghetti Monster. But, like those other fantasies that we can't disprove, we can say that God is very very improbable. (Dawkins, 2006, p.2)

It would appear that the sacred oil and secular water of religion and science would not mix well in a shared container. The noteworthy emphasis of this divergence would appear that in

a quantum thinking world, both can exist in the same place or different places in the same and at different times. How fun is that? There is just no getting around the image that meaning is where you find it. And as soon as you do...it moves to a different location. Life on life's terms means it is in constant motion. Rigidity, and therefore fundamentalism, is static which is contraindicated for the source of meaning if it is to be found in life itself.

SYNTHESIS

Can there be a protocol or therapeutic process for seeking meaning through the combined methodologies of expressive art therapy, with an emphasis on combining religion, science, and poetry?

Can you cross over the bridge with that burden?

Yes, the backpack is filled with only thoughts that weigh nothing

If you let them carry you.

(Hawkins, 2011)

Quantum thinking includes the micro and macro units of the universe, as we know it. Quantum therapies of the future will need to blend the small and large aspects of what is known to provide the best possible approaches to humans. Ancient shaman and healers have performed quantum healing and therapeutic actions for centuries with the blending of religion, science, and poetry, in the form of healing songs, chants and poetics. This has long been a bridge between religion, science, and art. (Nabhan, 2004, p. 37) Nabhan himself has become well known and revered with his multidimensional blend of science and art, story and ethnobiological study of life. The scientist-writer-poet is known for his cross-pollination of science and art through his elegant writing and successful experiments with food management and diabetes treatment protocols for indigenous people. Completing a PhD at the University of Arizona in Arid Land

Resources he also penned a book of nonfiction ethnobotanical nature writing. He received the 1990 Pew Scholarship for Conservation and the Lannan Literary Award in 1999. His descriptions of O'odham spiritual healing songs that describe the illness and subsequent cure for poisoning from ingestion of a Datura flower, written centuries ago, and the investigations of contemporary psychiatric findings and ecological studies that support the poetry are stunning examples of how poetic descriptions can merge with scientific information to communicate. How this relates to despair could be considered in the scientific evidence Nabhan found, in collaboration with indigenous poetic song-knowledge, of a treatment for specific forms of adult onset diabetes. (Nabhan, P. 27-44) The despair is described in detail of a people of the Southwest desert of America who were dying, according to Nabhan and others, due to the loss of indigenous food sources. He sought to relieve that despair through the merging of old sacred songs and good science. (Ibid)

Sir Isaac Newton, 1643–1727, major contributor to the fields of physics, astronomy, and mathematics, used his original thinking style to bridge religion and science. Phillip E. Johnson, writer for First Things Journal, The Institute on Religion and Public Life, elaborates on Newton as a “Scientific student of the Bible”:

Newton did not believe that God merely wound up the clockworks and then let the universe run by itself. On the contrary, he insisted that God was constantly active in the physical world, and, with a dedication bordering on obsession, he developed his heretical Arian theology in secret. He took the Bible seriously as a collection of data derived from a supernatural source, and he studied the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation with methods as rigorous as those he applied to gravity and optics... (Johnson, 1998)

Alexander Pope, eighteenth century writer, acknowledge the scientific genius, making poetic arc with these simple lines about Sir Isaac Newton:

Nature and Nature's laws
 lay hid in night;
 God said, Let Newton be!
 and all was light (Butt, 1966)

Paul Strand writes, “The true artist, like the true scientists, is a researcher using materials and techniques to dig into the truth and meaning of the world in which he himself lives, and what he creates, or better perhaps, what he brings back are the objective results of his explorations. (Nabhan, 2004, p. 3)

In Edgar A. Poe’s final work, *Eureka*, which he defined as poetry, (Brown, page 14) he, according to Brown, “modulated between the language of scientific treatise and transcendental philosophy, lucidly drawing from the Western scientific observations of Herschel, Laplace, Madler, and others as well as the Bhagavad Gita. As the epigraphs show, there remain many resonances between Poe’s mid-nineteenth-century poem and some of today’s most probably cosmological models as discussed in Stephen Hawking’s *A Brief History of Time*.” (Brown, 2001, p. 15)

Rabbi Gershon Winkler has made an interesting contribution to bridging ancient texts and traditions by examining similarities between the writings of indigenous peoples of the early Americas and ancient Hebrew tradition. His book, *Magic of the Ordinary, Recovering the Shamanic in Judaism*, draws an arc of connection between the ancient Hebrew of indigenous peoples and ancient poetry of indigenous, nomadic Native American traditions. His book begins with poetry that is described in Gabriel Cousens’s book forward, as “reflecting the spiritual

crossover and similarity of at least the Native American, if not all shamanic spiritual traditions with Shamanic Judaism.” (Winkler, 2003, p. xv) The book is one example written by someone deeply versed in ancient traditional texts that also recognize that there is a bridge that can, or perhaps should be, crossed to create meaning. Rabbi Winkler writes:

I became aware of how this ancient wisdom was so urgently needed for the healing of the planet, for the restoration of her life force in the face of increasing toxins and crud that was beginning to impede her life flow. As the same time I also became aware of the fact that many of my own people (Jews) were flocking to shamans of other traditions in a trans-denominational quest for personal empowerment and enrichment, and for the expressed purpose of fine tuning their relationship with the earth and her beings. As a rabbi, a spiritual teacher in the Judaic spirit path, it pained me to watch Jewish people flock to these wellsprings not knowing that their own tradition, too, is replete with this quality of wisdom. It’s one thing to study the wisdom of other paths in order to augment your own, it’s another thinking to study the wisdom of other paths without a clue about the richness of your own. (ibid)

Winkler does not negate the need, or requirement to study ancient texts, but attempts to put the old scriptures into a context of meaning that is relevant for today and encourages a cross pollination to increase the depth of meaning.

How is a bridge between religion and science to be made? Well, according to some, it has already happened as a synthesis between the head and the heart that does not breed exclusivity. Einstein has been quoted as saying, “Only intuition, resting on sympathetic understanding, can lead to insight. The daily effort (of science) comes from no deliberate intention or program, but straight from the heart. Thinking and feeling are in short, just as inseparable to a scientist as to a

writer or artist. (Shavinina, pg. 378) Mathematical physicist Wolfgang Pauli agreed saying, “scientists must FEEL just as deeply as poet E.E. Cummings.” (Ibid, pg. 377)

Writing as therapy has been shown to be an effective method for self-reflection, synthesis, psychological recovery, addiction management, and even strengthening of the immune system. (Hawkins, 2011) It is a method of expression of experience by using both symbolic and didactic means in the art of creativity merged with the science of writing. Research into writing as therapy has been an evolving through quantitative as well as qualitative research subject for the last two decades. For nearly 20 years, Dr. James W. Pennebaker, of the University of Texas at Austin, and author of *Writing to Heal*, has been having people write down their deepest feelings about an emotional upheaval in their life for 15 or 20 minutes a day for four consecutive days. Many of those who have followed this protocol have reported that their immune systems have strengthened, grades have improved, and even entire lives have been changed. (ibid)

Matthew Lieberman, neuroscientist and professor at the University of California, researched and demonstrated the therapeutic power of writing by scanning the brains of 30 individuals while they described distressing pictures. He found that the act tended to reduce activity in the amygdala, a part of the brain connected with emotion and fear and increased activity in the pre-frontal cortex, the mind's regulator. (Alleyne, 2009, p.1)

Sociologist Professor Frank Furedi believes scientists have got their roles mixed up. The self-proclaimed rationalist explains:

Science does find out the facts, but there is still work to be done in deciding what we should do with them. Many of the debates in contemporary society emerge from the fact that science assumes that it's got a role to play in telling us how to live our lives.

From what food we should eat, to what god we should worship, scientists, often think that

the facts speak for themselves. This destroys what in the end is the most creative element of understanding our lives: that we have to decide, through public debate, what the facts mean, how they should be interpreted. He welcomes the scientists who like Professor Peter Atkins, leave the laboratory and join the public debate. But when they do this, he says, they must realize that they have left science behind and have no more moral authority than anybody else, no more "than a priest, or a nun, or the guy who runs the sweetshop down the road. (Colls, 2011, p. 1)

Cohen and Wilbur suggest that meaning can be found in a new cosmic understanding of love by finding "an awakened Kosmocentric Perspective" (Cohen, 2011, p. 51) as a potential grounding field for quantum approaches to finding meaning from despair. Andrew Cohen states, "When we awaken to these new emergent potentials, and if we keep going and we don't stop, we become far more interested in giving rise to what's possible than in the process of healing the problems and suffering that exist all around us." (Ibid)

Not unlike Georges-Pierre Seurat, the French Post-Impressionist painter who methodically worked with limited colors to create vast canvases of mathematically composed colors to create optical effects with light and limited hues, (Sondheim, Sunday in the Park with George, 1986) the quantum poet can work with dabs of color and light from multiple traditions to compose meanings that are self-generative. (Hawkins, 2011)

The fundamentalist dogmas of science and the dogmas of religion were not missed by the great scientist Albert Einstein who reportedly found a way to connect his science with his faith in the Universe:

You believe in a God that plays dice, and I in complete law and order in a world where objectivity exists, and which I, in a wildly speculative way, am trying to

capture...Even the great initial success of the quantum theory does not make me believe in a fundamental dice game, although I am well aware that your younger colleagues interpret this as a consequence of [my] senility. (Lederman, 2011, p. 20)

According to the National Association of Poetry Therapy (NAPT), the origins of using poetry for health and personal growth can be “traced back to primitive man, who used religious rights in which shamans and witchdoctors changed poetry for the well-being of the tribe or individual.” (NAPT, 2011, website) Writings in the Bible or ancient Egyptian poetry that was literally “eaten” for health are sited as origins of the use of poetry as a medical treatment. The NAPT’s website provides a historical perspective:

A Roman physician by the name of Soranus in the first century AD may have been the first “Poetry Therapist” by use of his medicinal artistic prescriptions for patients. In the 1700’s there were uses of poetry in psychiatric treatments in the United States and although the field is often linked with another form of therapy, called “bibliotherapy,” which is defined as the use of books and literature more than specifically poetry, the field of poetry therapy has, if traced, apparently a deep history in ancient and modern usages. Poetry is as ancient as the written word and the use of poetry as therapy is as ancient as any found scroll. Poetry, as a therapy, although spoken of as valuable by major psychological theorists, began expanding as a more mainstream discipline around the 1960’s and has become more of a presence by the affirmed recognition and creation of such standardizing organizations as the NAPT. In 1928, Eli Greifer, poet, pharmacist and lawyer, began a campaign to show that a poem's didactic message has healing power. In 1959, Greifer facilitated a poetry therapy group at Cumberland Hospital with two supervising psychiatrists, Dr. Jack J. Leedy and Dr. Sam Spector. Dr. Leedy was primary

in creating the Association for Poetry Therapy, which is now the NAPPT. A few of the other leading names in the field of the development of Poetry as a therapy are Ann White, Deborah Grayson, Gil Schloss, Joy Shieman, Arthur Lerner, Ruth Schlecter, and Morris Morrison who drafted the first systematic set of standards for certification in the field in 1973. Now there are established training institutes, publications, books, collections, a journal, and professional standards boards as of 2000. (Ibid)

Not only empirical scientists attempt to use poetry to describe the most challenging of concepts. Futurist philosophers speak of the value in using poetic means to discuss science. Ed Bohart, PhD and self-acclaimed futurist comments:

Poetry and science need to connect. I know there are a few wild, visionaries who speculate that our brains use quantum processes. Until the 1930's we didn't even have words to use to speculate about the processes. What will be valuable for the future----and others---is defining the steps to help understand the difference between psychological processes and the quantum-time/distance processes.” (Personal Interview, Ed Bohart, March, 2011)

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The basic irony of this narrative research is the academic need to separate the warp from the woof to describe the tapestry. The integration of religion, science, and poetry is the consideration at hand, while dissecting it is the academic process. If despair is the unraveling of the tapestry of meaning, pulling at the threads is not a helpful application.

This narrative research presented selective writings from scriptures, quantum theorists, poets, and others who have made efforts to either exclude or include religion, science and art to

explain meaningful phenomena. The assumption has been made that loss of meaning leads to despair and the recovery of meaning is useful in the remediation of the anguish of despair. This study has provided a cursory exploration of the following three questions:

Statement of the Thesis

What do major religions suggest is a required method for finding meaning?

Statement of the Antithesis

What do contemporary scientists suggest as the source of meaning?

Statement of the Synthesis

Can there be a protocol or therapeutic process for seeking meaning through the combined methodologies of expressive art therapy, with an emphasis on combining religion, science, and poetry?

There has been no attempt to define despair clinically. A mere glance has been taken at religion by means of looking at a sampling of texts that are valued within the dogmatic fundamentalisms of several specific sects. There has been a very basic consideration of only one aspect of one field of science, quantum physics. The commentaries from a few predominate voices of the day amplified the biases of a few atheistic reflections that appear to have the same reflection of fundamentalism as some religious orders. Loyal adherents to both secular and religious doctrine tend to attribute their sole context as source of primary meaning. The mention of poetry, only one form of Expressive Arts Therapy, was suggested as a means to collect ideas and write about meaning and as a method for therapeutic management of despair.

Discussion

The world we live in, the cosmology of today, opens the doors of religion, science and poetry to infinite possibilities. The therapeutic practitioner who wishes to be helpful needs to

know this in order to make a contribution. The client who is mentally ill, retarded, developmentally delayed, or in some other way rendered limited to finite expansions of cognitive or conscious attention to expansion, may be served well within by smaller units of treatment. But the individual who desires a bigger context for their meaning, especially in the face of an episode of despair, deserves a big context of intervention. Cutting edge therapeutic methods need to be multi-modal and multi-dimensional to fit in an expanding universe.

How can the contemporary integration of old scriptural texts of religions and the cutting edges of new science be brought together to synthesize a treatment milieu based on expressive art therapy, specifically poetry making? How can the merging of religion, science, and poetry treat human despair? Can there be new research undertaken on this topic to quantify results? Will studies of the future be designed around these questions by developing treatments and psychometrics using human subjects and control groups? Despair is a complicated, albeit common, human emotional response that requires a complicated intervention. If despair represents a part of the quantum human experience, treatment would demand a quantum therapy. What is a quantum therapy? As quantum is defined as the smallest measurable unit that make up the whole quantum field, small units of religion, science, and art may be considered the unit sources of the healing field. Perhaps these basic questions will lead to more rigorous qualitative and quantitative research in the future.

Artists, with words or paints or clay, make efforts to describe and find depths to explain their inner visions with outer expressions in order to “speak” some truth of which they are passionately present. Scientists, by means of vast namings of things and organization of groupings of names, make efforts to explain truth to which they are passionately present. Religious fundamentalists seek divine truth and offer it as panacea to believers. As time moves

forward a piece of classic art is lost or found or replaced by something newer, a new religion emerges from a schism, scientific theory superimposes itself over an older theory, and the quantum field changes. Static treatments will be just as lost as a pottery shard in a dust storm. While some old religions may cling to various texts, a new schism pushes other believers forward. Art and science must push their edges along their respective directions on the ever-expanding continuum. At each point of discovery, a new anomaly appears and the continuum stretches again toward its next respective outcome, toward infinity. Non-movement does not represent truth. The end of movement represents death. Science moves us forward. Religion moves us forward. Art moves us forward. Martin Luther's despair broke a religion in half. Newton's apple was replaced by Einstein's relativity in a matter of years. Einstein is now in the wings with Quantum Physics on stage. And quantum thinking is spinning terms like fractals, quarks, strings, and spiral dynamics as it finds its place in the history of truth discoveries. What remains constant is human suffering, and despair.

If humans are motivated and perhaps intended to seek meaning in life, despair is the question that remains unanswered in the suffering's mind. Why did God do this to me? What will fix this? Where is science with a cure? How can we endure this? Even in this age of universes of information there seem to be more questions than before. Although individual discoveries, like previously unnamed stars, have been found in the darkness of the vast skies, there remain infinitely more discoveries on the horizon. Promises of cures and galaxies top the newscasts. Polio is no longer a looming unknown plague on the horizon. What is Gulf War Syndrome? Aspirin is good. But why is allergy to peanuts suddenly in epidemic proportions?

The ancient writers of sacred scriptures connected the dots of the universe to create vast liturgies and religions providing meaningful matrixes for human management of suffering. Yet

there are more churches popping up daily as disenfranchised practitioners seek comfort and reassurance that their God is going to hear them. Early scientists reached far beyond the limitations of their cosmology to find the wheel, control fire, harness wind, and provide electricity. Today they reach beyond the stars and deep inside atoms. Science seeks relief and then causes despair in the failure of a nuclear crisis in Japan. Poets, clergy, and scientists passionately arise each day seeking to bring meaning to the madness and relief to those who face hopelessness.

Is the seeking the meaning? Seeking meaning in life may indeed be the meaning of life. How does the non-poet or non-scientist fit into this cosmology of expanding and seeking? How does the despairing individual, or society, find a way to rejoin the search when all motivation has been halted by the despair of a critical event? Can individuals find relief from anxiety, discomfort and doubt through the adoption of a theory, a religion, a band, a tribe, a thought, a book, a scripture, or scientific discovery or idea? Or are the questions and doubts what make us human? Perhaps the tension of staying with the discomfort of the ambiguity is the part of solution. In a society that supports instant cures it may be more valuable to take the time to integrate the foundations to create a more solid structure. Solving our personal riddles or answering our personal koans does not end the expansion of the universe and therefore we must be prepared for even the next distressing event. There is always the next riddle, a next dilemma to solve, next crisis, and next question to answer. Life is in constant change and perpetual motion while religion, science, and poetry jump forward on the moving vehicle spinning into space to leaving each generation with the signposts of where we have been and hints of where we are going.

Working to treat despair, recognizing that there is more despair around the corner, is only hopeless if seen out of context of the greater workings of the quantum universe as it reinvents itself daily. From a micro perspective despair is heinous. From a macro perspective, a quantum thinking, the movement must exist in order to rearrange itself in the next now.

The tsunami in Japan of March 2011, as viewed from the perspective of a woman watching her child swept away is personal despair at its most extreme. Collective despair may be observed as a nation loses a leader. No less significant is a nation watching its current status in the world economy being swept away as financial markets collapse. Racism leads to collective despair when it is not healed. Poverty is a gateway to despair. A tribe can lose its food source or a family can lose a beloved member. A corporation can be brought to despair overnight by a scandal or natural disaster and an individual can lose his entire life savings in with a click of a computer key.

Where religion and science fracture is in the presence of despair. A helpless person seeks a source of light in the darkness and where do they turn? Where do suffering people turn for relief of pain? Where is there hope to suture despair? It is the hope that this discussion will provide a consideration that it doesn't need to be an "either/or" discussion. The hope of quantum thinking is that perhaps hope can come from all sources all the time. Art and religion and science do not need to be fractured into quantum units and then just left in that separation. Use quantum thinking to bring them back together. Let the motion of separation and rejoining *be* the form. Religion, science, and art forms are infinite parts of the universe in motion and are the substance and stuff of the cosmology of our time. We live in a smorgasbord of abundant options for help and hope and there is no need to starve ourselves.

Since quantum physics has proven that atoms can be in two different places at exactly the same time perhaps it is time for a therapeutic methodology that works within that thinking and thereby allows a suffering individual to be in despair and in hope at the same time.

If death is non-movement and life is motion, then seeking hope is movement. Seeking is life giving. Seeking meaning returns us to life. Keep moving and keep seeking and let that be the solution. Look to religion, science, art and all aspects of life itself for the treatment of despair.

According to Victor Frankl, "We can discover this meaning in life in three different ways: (1) by doing a deed; (2) by experiencing a value; and (3) by suffering." (Diamond, 2011, p.1) If someone combines these three aspects--action, value, and suffering--into a system of seeking relief, the meaning found could assist in the return from the edges of despair. Viktor Frankl sought meaning within the despondency of the Holocaust. He sought deeply and found meaning for himself and some to spare and share. He was not lost in his despair. He kept moving. Someone in deep duress can also be in the abyss of their individual feelings of despair and make a quantum leap to writing about it if they know, or maintain a belief that the action moves them toward a position of hope. Pennebaker has shown that it isn't even the content of the writing that matters and heals, but the sheer act of putting a pen on paper. The writer can scribble gibberish and there is quantifiable improvement in health. (Pennebaker, 2004, p.49)

Neurological and psychological studies on writing and health have proven writing as a science and an art leading to health and meaning. Today's world allows a simple, and even poorly written poem to be published on a blog, shot into cyberspace, posted on Facebook and shared. Others may find meaning as well. This immediacy gives the option for meaning to be in the current moment and not left to be discovered in an earthen jar in some desert centuries from now. That an individual may be served as well as society speaks of the quantum nature of writing

for meaning on a much broader scale than this study. A person can turn to their own religious texts as sacred, translate this into the form of a Facebook Haiku, shoot it into the cyber quantum field, and the entire matrix of the individual's suffering and hope are encapsulated in an action that is made up of 17 syllables and can appear in many places at the same time.

Recommendations

When someone is in pain and duress, the problem of a quantum world is in having too many choices that seem to contradict each other. Each fundamentalist says their version of "pick me." Viable multiple options, in an age of information overload, leaves a distressed person who is seeking meaning in their life with a Russian roulette game of "just pick something and pull the trigger." Even those who have already found their path may be temporarily wracked with doubt during a crisis. The need to pick a therapist for help, a religious text for the one true answer, creating an artwork, or choosing the correct and scientifically proven pharmaceutical out of the plethora of options is a daunting task for the most calm soul, much less one under duress. Fundamentalists offer, even in the best of intentions, their one exclusive source panacea that they believe holds all the keys for all mankind's suffering. That is a challenge for regular people who think or feel. What about someone who is either temporarily or permanently outside the conventional set of standards for what is determined normal in a society? Those with mental illness or traumatic experience may not fit within a theory for everything.

Consider how artists, poets, shamans, religious seers, and scientific visionaries press the envelope of the known world forward into areas that are far outside the boundaries of "conventional" wisdoms of their times. Often these zealots themselves are considered kooks or mentally ill. How can they be left to organize and measure, name and describe, observe and feel and perhaps connect the dots of meaning in a personally spiraling universe? Those individuals

who have a previously established system of recovery in place may find it strained to capacity. Others with no foundation in recovery tools or theological traditions are limited by their crisis to seek best options. Information technology that provides us with a level of resources unprecedented in human history puts an additional strain on those in turmoil by offering a plethora of options at a time when thinking may be distorted or disturbed by circumstances.

In other words, a drowning man will grab at anything to survive; a floating log or an alligator that looks like a floating log. The question arises, in this time of information overload, how do challenged human beings who need support and therapy find a way through the labyrinth of options to find help? What if they have found safety on a log or a floating alligator? What about those who do well in alligator territory? Where do they get help during a crisis? What is the correct form? Who is the right guru? Who wrote this menu in this smorgasbord? What scientific discovery de jour will help? Just the simple act of going to a bookstore to find a good self-help or spiritual guidebook, much less the resources of the Internet, may lead to more chaos and distress. Who are the good gurus of the past or present? Who are the scary gurus? What is a guru? Why do I need one? How do I fire one? Can we trust the expert who is on a national talk show one week and on CNN because he was in court for sexual misconduct the next? What philosophy of ancient Greece can possibly support someone who has been sexually assaulted as a child? What fabulous scientific workshop on Quantum Physics will comfort someone who has recently lost his or her child in a car accident? Where does the despairing human turn? What will be enough?

A staff writer for EnlightenNext.org, an in-print and online magazine, recently penned an article entitled, *Buckminster Fuller: First Poet of Technology*. The article sweetly represents the hoped for meaning of this study on the merging of religion, science, poetry and despair.

Having just lost his daughter to polio and been laid off from his job, the 32 year old WWI veteran was pondering whether or not the universe would be better off without him, when he was suddenly overtaken by a vision that would dramatically alter the course of his life. He heard a voice from within saying, “You do not have the right to eliminate yourself. You do not belong to you. You belong to the universe.” While Bucky invented countless futuristic devices, his greatest contribution to humanity may have been his dynamic and deeply altruistic orientation towards life, which he summed up in his 1970 book, *I Seem to Be a Verb*:

“ I live on Earth at present, I don’t know what I am. I know that I am not a category. I am not a thing...a noun. I seem to be a verb, an evolutionary process...an integral function of the universe.” (EnlightenNext, 2011, p. 57)

The Dalai Lama, the current spiritual leader of the Buddhism of Tibet, was speaking to a group of followers and suggested that it would be necessary to study both religion and science.

The Dalai Lama appeared before an audience of more than 500 Korean Buddhists in Yokahama where he encouraged the study of not only Chandrakirti but also science. In his brief talk, he asked the Koreans to be 21st century Buddhists by mastering modern scientific education as well as Buddhism. Like great masters of the ancient Nalanda University, you must study and examine the Buddhist texts and practice the teachings in your daily life. (Shaheen, 2019, p.1)

The field of Quantum Physics, at the theoretical level, is exciting and has a strong voice. Not unlike religion, this field of science has the potency of scripture and the force of true believers to power the direction for research adherents. The ultimate value of this theory will be tested by history. Some scientific beliefs, like religions, rise and fall while others become fixed

foundational systems. It would be an interesting study to compare the level of meaningfulness of a new religion or scientific belief to that of an ancient religion or belief. Do fundamentalists or zealots of a new way of thinking compare to that of an old religion? The value of a religion, a scientific discovery, and a poem are all tested by time. (Hawkins, 2011)

Where does the therapeutic practitioner start? There is currently no standardized definition or psychometric test to quantify meaning. Neither is there a standardized way to measure despair. Finding a means to measure or standardize despair and meaning would be a significant contribution to therapeutic interventions. Perhaps future studies should look at specific types of poetry forms to determine levels or types of therapeutic value. Is there a difference in measurable therapeutic assistance between the formal structure of a Haiku and the verbally political performance art of Slam? If qualitative measures were designed to determine meaningfulness or measure despair it would perhaps be useful to determine if different types of poetry had specific levels of therapeutic value.

In the final analysis, finding a protocol of combining quantum of religion, science, and poetry in a therapeutic approach will lead a person toward meaning not by more unraveling but through the strengthening of the fabric of the meaning. In a state of despair, the individual experiences separation from meaning and the return to meaning must include, necessarily, adding and not subtracting from existing foundations.

The organic differences between sacred and secular works are lost in the presence of fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is about true belief. True believers believe they are correct and hold fast to the warp and woof of their values and dogmas to maintain meaning. The link between these threads can be interwoven with art forms. Expressive therapy succeeds at that

because it is not limited to a belief of right or wrong. Poetry therapy, especially, is not based on a judgment value of a good or bad poem, but rather the expression of it as catharsis.

The evidence shown in this project has come from scientists who are poets and poets who are scientists, religionists who are scientists, and atheists who are both scientific and poetic. What is interesting is that in all the literature reviewed, there were no poetry-atheists. Poetry making is not subject to judgmental review in the same way that religion and science are scrutinized. Anyone can make a poem. Certainly there are those who can critique and place social value on a “good” poem or a “bad” poem and pick who gets to be a laureate and who does not. But children’s poetry in New York City brought broken people together. The dark night of the soul brings a person to paper and pen, or crayons, or to their laptop; and they can write out their weepings. No one has to read it. It need not be published to count as meaningful. It is personal and it holds the meaning within the tapestry of the entire spectrum of that individual’s sacred and secular experience by their own standards of what has meaning for them.

No one really has the answer to what is the meaning of life. Individually we must struggle with to find meaning for ourselves. We face the sacred or the secular nature of our own life experiences and make our choices or we are born into a family or a society that makes our choices for us. But when pen is put to paper and feelings of despair are expressed with images that are iconic for that suffering individual, it is more likely that they are in control of the beginnings of defining or restructuring their own meaning. This gives the person who has been temporarily rendered powerless over a specific situation a true moment of empowerment. They can write whatever the hell they want! They can write whatever the heaven they want. They can describe their despair in scientific terms or flowery bad grammar. A poem is accessible. A poem is autobiographical. A poem is an individual expression of meaning.

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APPENCIES

APPENDIX 1

ORIGINAL THERAPEUTIC METHOD AS PARTIAL RESULT OF RESEARCH

Based on quantum theory evidence that multiple things are happening at once, the author of this study recommends doing “everything at once” to create a personal quantum experience. The recommendation is meant for the healthy student of self exploration, the therapist who wishes to be accountable for their own presence in the cosmology of the current universe, and the advise to clients who are capable of reading and writing. Suggested methodology for Quantum Poetry[©]

Meditative Reading

*Spend a few minutes reading a favorite sacred text, scripture, philosophy or treatise

*Spend a few minutes reading current scientific literature, journal, treatise, website, commentary, or other non-fiction source

*Spend a few minutes reading poetry

Expressive Poetry and Art

*On paper, write less than 3 sentences about your trouble, or question, dilemma or feeling that is happening in your world now. One word is enough. (Money, My relationship with X, My health problem)

*Pick a Zen Koan, parable, idea, scripture, story, Haiku or other wise statement from is your meditative reading. Write it on your paper.

*Spend 5 minutes in silence. Eyes open. No need to control thoughts. Just be silent.

*Spend 5 minutes drawing a rough picture or sketch or doodle or scribble about

Spend no more than 15 minutes writing poetry using the no-edit/programmed writing format, improvisational, spontaneous writing, do not edit or correct.

*Spend 5-10 minutes expressing. (Dance it out. Sing it out. Hum it quietly.

Rearrange your living room furniture if you want. Pick flowers. Wear your shirt inside out. Express both the chaos and the serenity of the moment in the moment. Find a gentle and safe way to push the energy around.

*Remain quiet for a few moments.

*Move back into your day.

APPENDIX 2

EXAMPLES OF POETRY AS RESPONSE TO DESPAIR

Religion, science and art, in order to be whole, must speak in terms of empathy in the face of despair. The limitation of this study has not addressed the nature of empathy but acknowledges it as relevant. For example, John Keats, in the face of his own melancholy and despair at the losses of his life and family wrote the following poem. We do not know if it helped. But we do know it speaks to others of the nature of despair long after his death.

When I have fears that I may cease to be
 Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
 Before high-pile books, in character,
 Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;
 When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
 Huge cloudy symbols of high romance,
 And think that I may never live to trace
 Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
 And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
 That I shall never look upon thee more,
 Never have relish in the faery power
 Of unreflecting love;--then on the shore
 Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
 Till love and fame to nothingness do sink. (Keats, 1982)

Gary Nabhan, in *Cross-Pollination*, shares how one of his favorite poets, Richard Shelton, expressed the ideas of biological despair in this writing.

What will become of the coyote
 With eyes of topaz
 Moving silently to his undoing
 The ocotillo
 Flagellant of the wind
 The deer climbing with dignity
 Further into the mountains
 The huge and delicate saguaro
 What will become of those who cannot learn
 The terrible knowledge of cities
 (Nabhan, page 68)

The New Science of Me

©1995 Vali Hawkins (*Written by the researcher of this study upon the untimely sudden death of her daughter Kirsha*)

Quantum physics of
 cellular grieving
 instinctive, primal, retching and screaming.
 Sounds emit from my body which are organically raw,
 animal not civilized.
 Socialized me is gone for now as
 I return to the primordial ooze of nature's grandest event....
 Reinvention? Evolution?
 Movement? Change?

Only civilized mind finds it unholy.

For I have wept in the forests as I heard the trees scream in the face of losing their young,
just like me.

And today they make dirge for me as I have sung the
holy songs “Waka-Paka-Hu” for their dead.

I Am All Mothers Now

I am all mothers.

The face of my grief falls into the dust of my carpeting.

The streets of Somalia and Egypt are no different

The dusts of Zaire are no different

The dirt of Bosnia is no different

The grit of South America is no different

The sands of Iraq are no different

The mud of Rwanda is no different

My snot soaked rug is all continents for

I am all mothers

Bleeding my tears to be lost in forever

Water the deserts to bloom in the spring with cactus thorns pulled from my wounded
heart.

I am all mothers

crying for our children

dead for any reason.

THE LITTLE WARS

(From Emotional Terrors in the Workplace: Protecting your Business' Bottom Line, in partial response to the attack on the World Trade Center of 2001) ©2003 Vali Hawkins Mitchell

It's not just the nuclear holocausts that we worry about!

It's the Little Wars that wear us down,

The fights and feuds,

The conflicts and sorrows,

Today's and tomorrow's

Of never-ending non-resolves

That fatigue and tire,

Bog and mire

Us down in emotions

Too frequent to bear

That lead to despair.

Our battlefields are:

Worksites

Bodies

Children

Relationships

Aging

Money

Marriage

And the Weapons of Mass Destruction are:

Despair
Loneliness
Isolation
Antagonism
Righteousness
Hopelessness
Grief
Fear
Errors
Anger
Longing
Yearning
Wanting
Giving up
Surrenders
Suspensions
Attacks
Terrors

Finding Peace is all we ask. Making Peace is a daily task.