

Spiritual Connection in Social Work: Boundary Violations and Transcendence

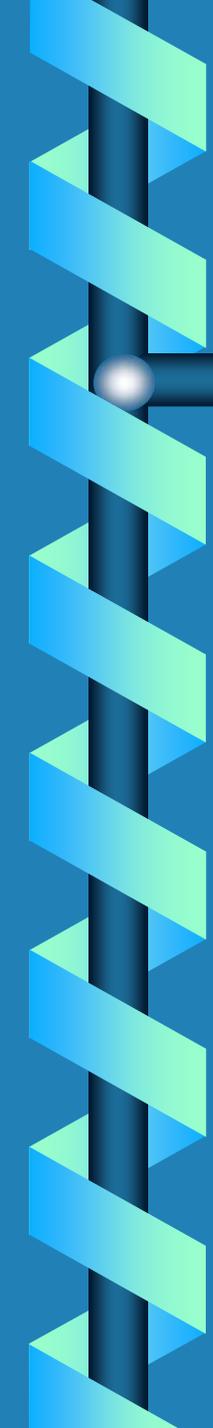
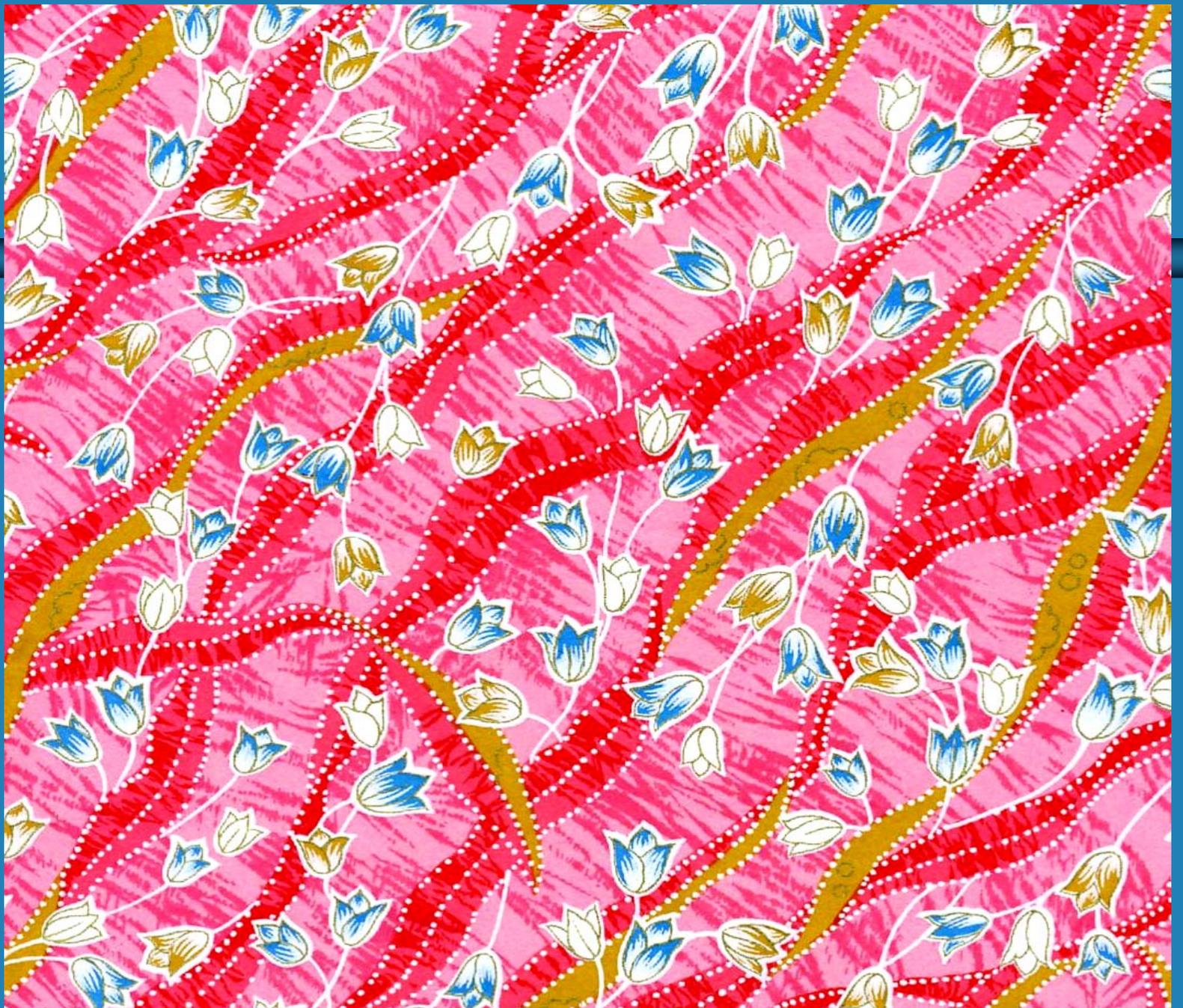
Edward R. Canda, Ph.D., Professor

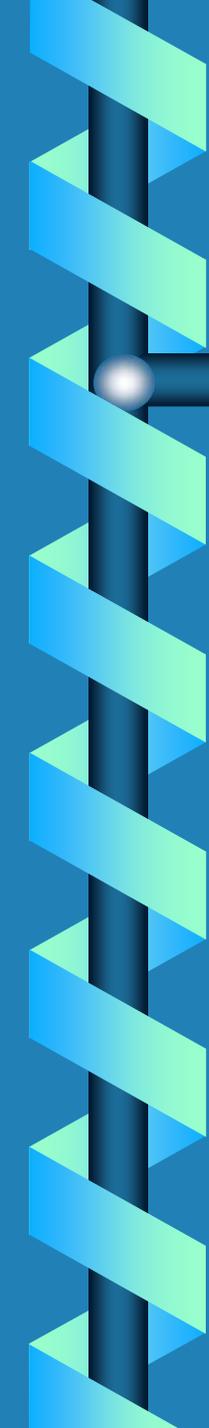
The University of Kansas School of Social Welfare

- Insights from diverse religious and nonreligious spiritual perspectives.
- Breaking barriers while respecting boundaries.
- Optimal human development.
- Transcultural and global justice.
- Dangers of boundary violations.

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Introduction

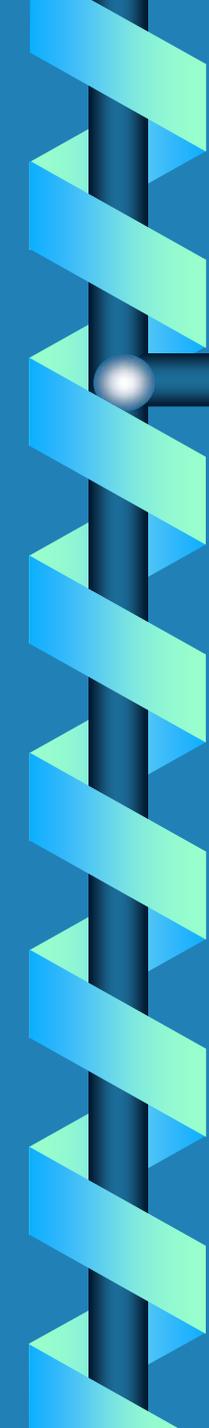
- Relevance to professional mission and values
- Mission: advancing the fulfillment of all people in context of social justice.
- Expanding to consider whole person in relation with all people and all beings.
- Appreciation for diversity: spiritual diversity and intersection with other forms of diversity (e.g. sexual orientation, culture).
- Value openness: advocacy in genuine dialogue.
- Commitment to NASW Code of Ethics and CSWE/IASSW principles.



Mandala line drawing:
Mandali, M. (1994).
Everyone's Mandala
Coloring Book, v.2.
Billings, MN: Mandali
Publishing.

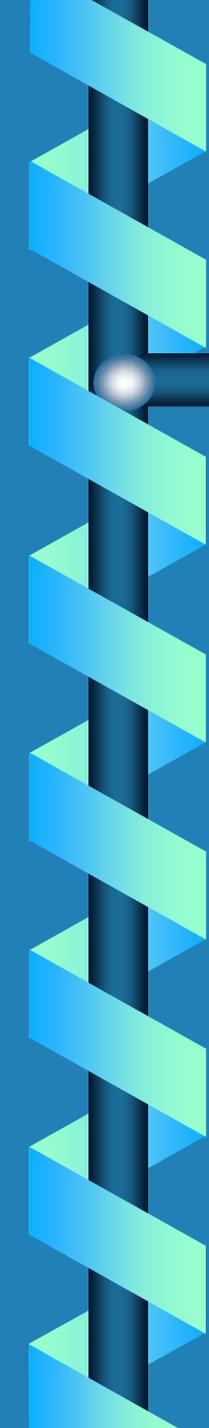
Coloring by University
of Kansas class on
Spirituality and Social
Work, Summer 1998.

Students'
View:
Mandala of
Spiritual
Diversity in
SW



Symbolism of the Class Mandala

- Each spoke represents a unique person's spiritual perspective.
- Connection in the circle shows mutual acceptance and support.
- Central open space is our common point.
- 8 Qualities around the center: knowledge, reverence, acceptance, harmony, understanding, compassion, diversity, empathy.



Definitions of Spirituality and Religion

- For use in professional discourse, adaptable and dispensable depending on context.
- Based on contributions from social work scholars of diverse religious and nonreligious spiritual perspectives *along with* work in allied fields.

SPIRITUALITY (as aspect)

- The human search for a sense of meaning, purpose, and morally fulfilling relations;
- With one's self, other people, the universe, and the Ground of Being (*ultimacy*), however understood—in theistic, nontheistic, animistic, and other ways;
- Involving centrally important orienting beliefs, values, and practices;
- That may express in religious and/or nonreligious ways;
- And may be considered private and/or shared with others.

Religion

- Institutionalized patterns of centrally important orienting beliefs, values, and practices related to spirituality (*and other things*);
- Shared by a community;
- Developed and transmitted over time;
- (Not necessarily bureaucratic)
- Faith is a related concept, esp. in theistic religions, emphasizing assent to and confidence in religious propositions and experience of relationship with a personal God and/or sacred beings.

From
Canda and Furman,
1999

Spirituality

In a

Holistic View:

- Aspect:

*Integrity &
Connection*

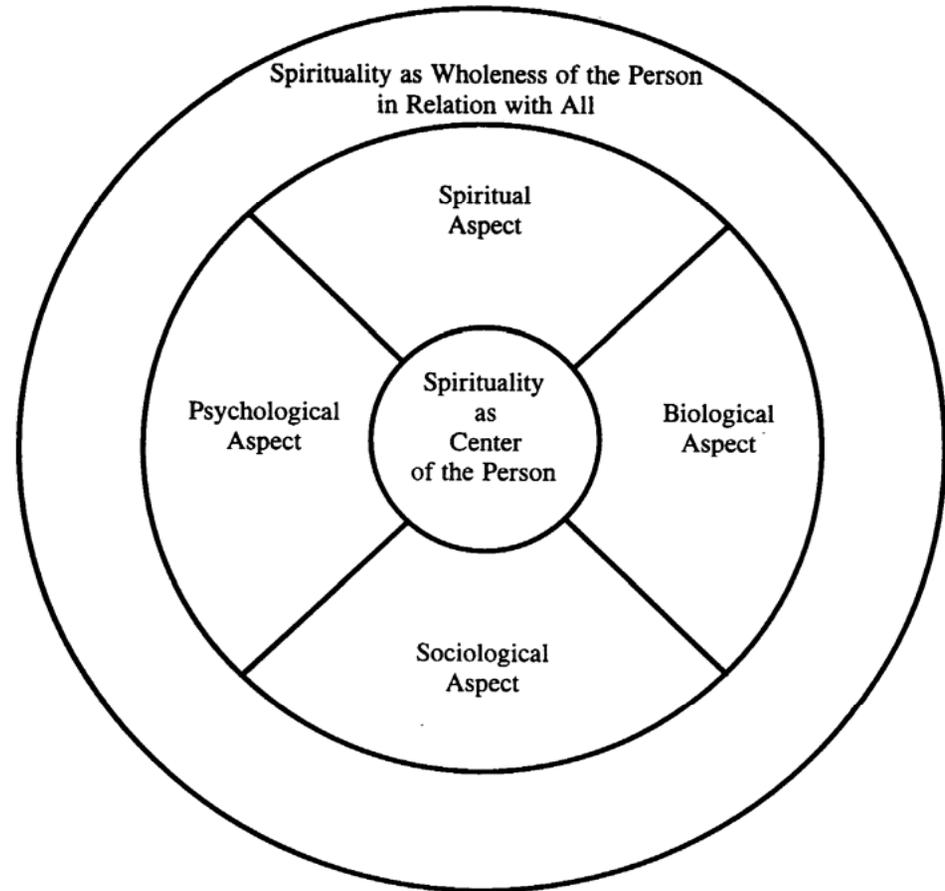
- Center:

Immanence

- Wholeness:

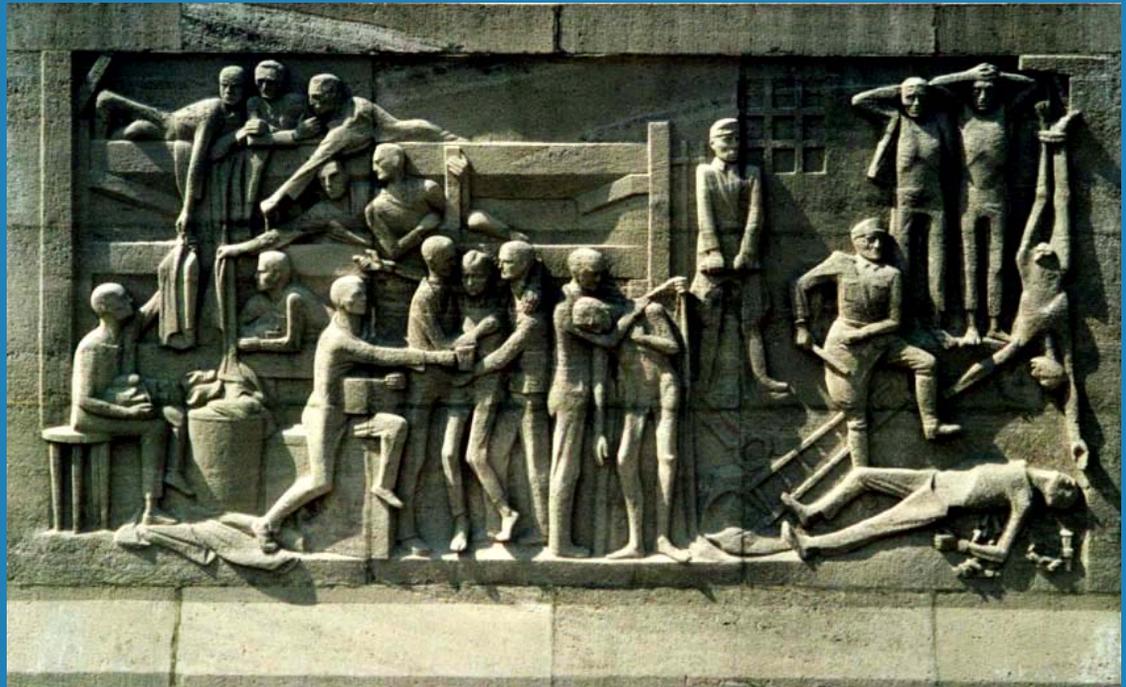
Transcendence

Figure 2.1. Spirituality in Relation to the Bio-Psycho-Social Model of the Person



Are Spirituality and Religion all Good? Boundary Violations

- War
- Genocide
- Moralistic judgmentalism
- Religious Imperialism
- Ideological Authoritarianism Of Absolute Truth

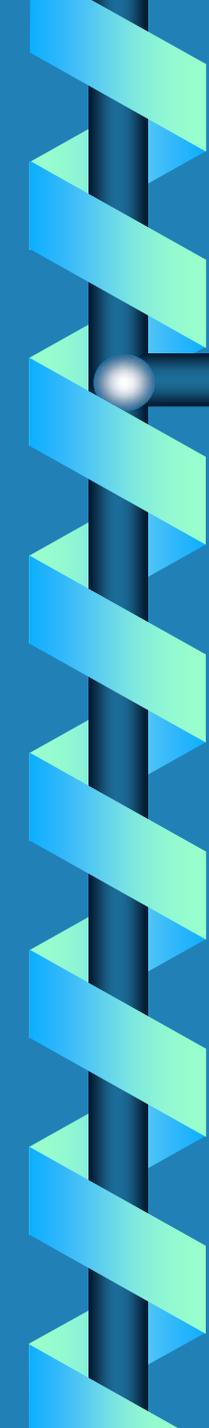


*Buchenwald Concentration Camp,
Weimar, Germany: Never again!*

- 
- Spiritual narcissism, materialism and grandiosity

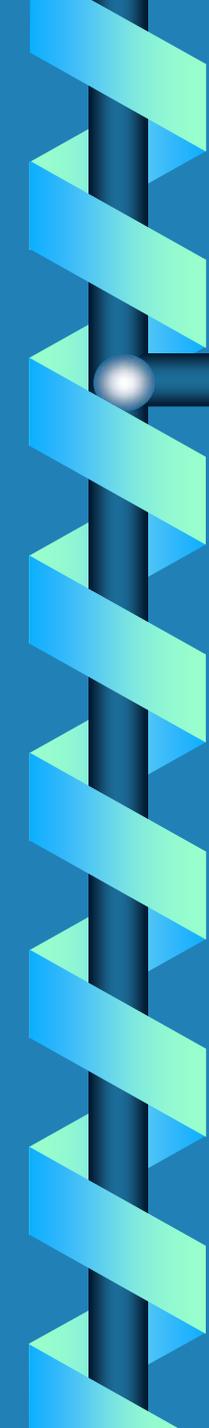
Social worker as self-appointed spiritual expert:

- “I know what is right and real”
- “What works for me is good for everyone”

- 
- Spiritual tyranny and genocide

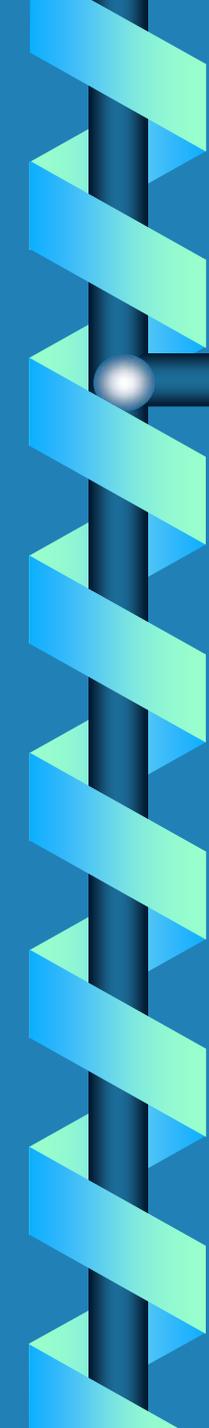
Social Worker as
Agent of Spiritual
Assimilation,
Proselytization,
Or Destruction

- Social development through forced conversion



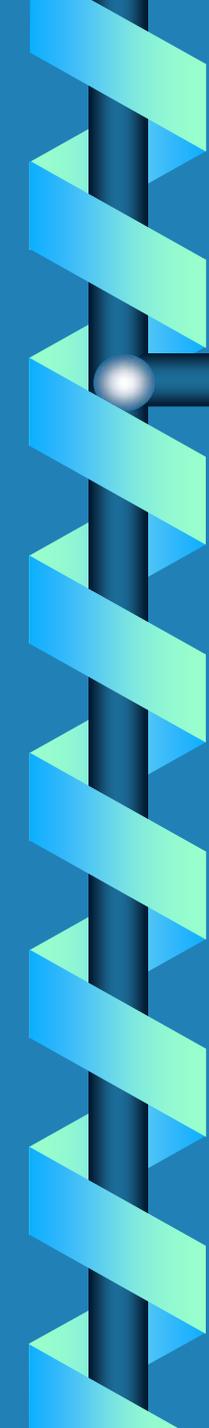
Good News:

Recent Trends to
Transcend Boundaries
through Spirituality in
Social Work



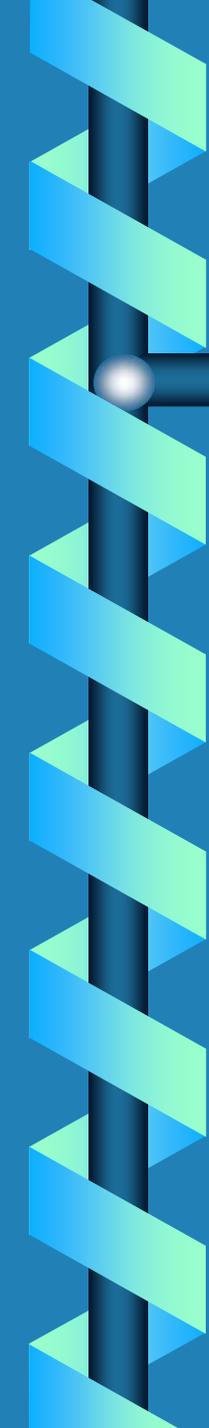
Historical Trends: 1990s

- Formation of Society for Spirituality and Social Work in 1990.
- Rapid increase of research and teaching on spiritual diversity; rise of faith-based initiatives.
- Transpersonal and ecophilosophical views increase in SW.
- Religious diversity in SW increases.
- NASW and CSWE acknowledge religion and spirituality.
- International networking.



Historical Trends: 2000s

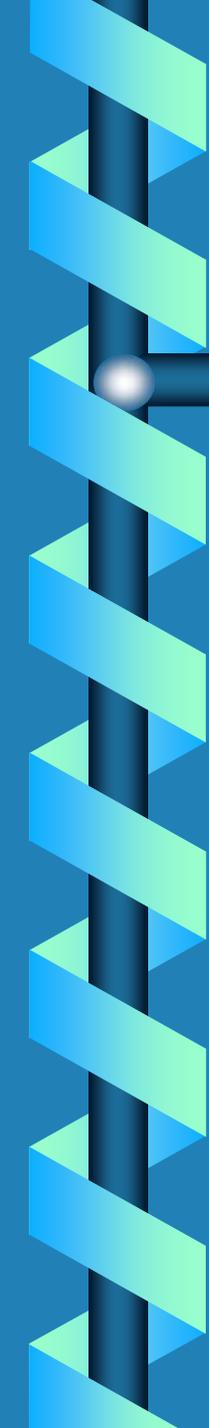
- Previous trends escalate, including interdisciplinary research.
- Development of global (not just nation-centered) perspectives on spirituality and SW.
- Human/Nature connectedness in SW increases somewhat.
- E.g. Canadian/US Collaborations



Spiritual Diversity & Connections

It is now possible to access resources from most spiritual perspectives around the world in North America and most anywhere else

- Although most No. Americans affiliate with Protestant or Catholic denominations of Christianity, hundreds of different religions and world views are present, including no religious affiliation.
- Social workers must be able to respond to this diversity respectfully and knowledgeable.



Amazing Opportunities

- Alternative and complementary therapies (e.g. wellness with illness)
- Interreligious dialogue and collaboration for spiritual growth (e.g. Catholic/Buddhist)
- Secular/Religious partnerships (e.g. refugee resettlement)
- Human nature as Human/Nature (e.g. deep ecological awareness)

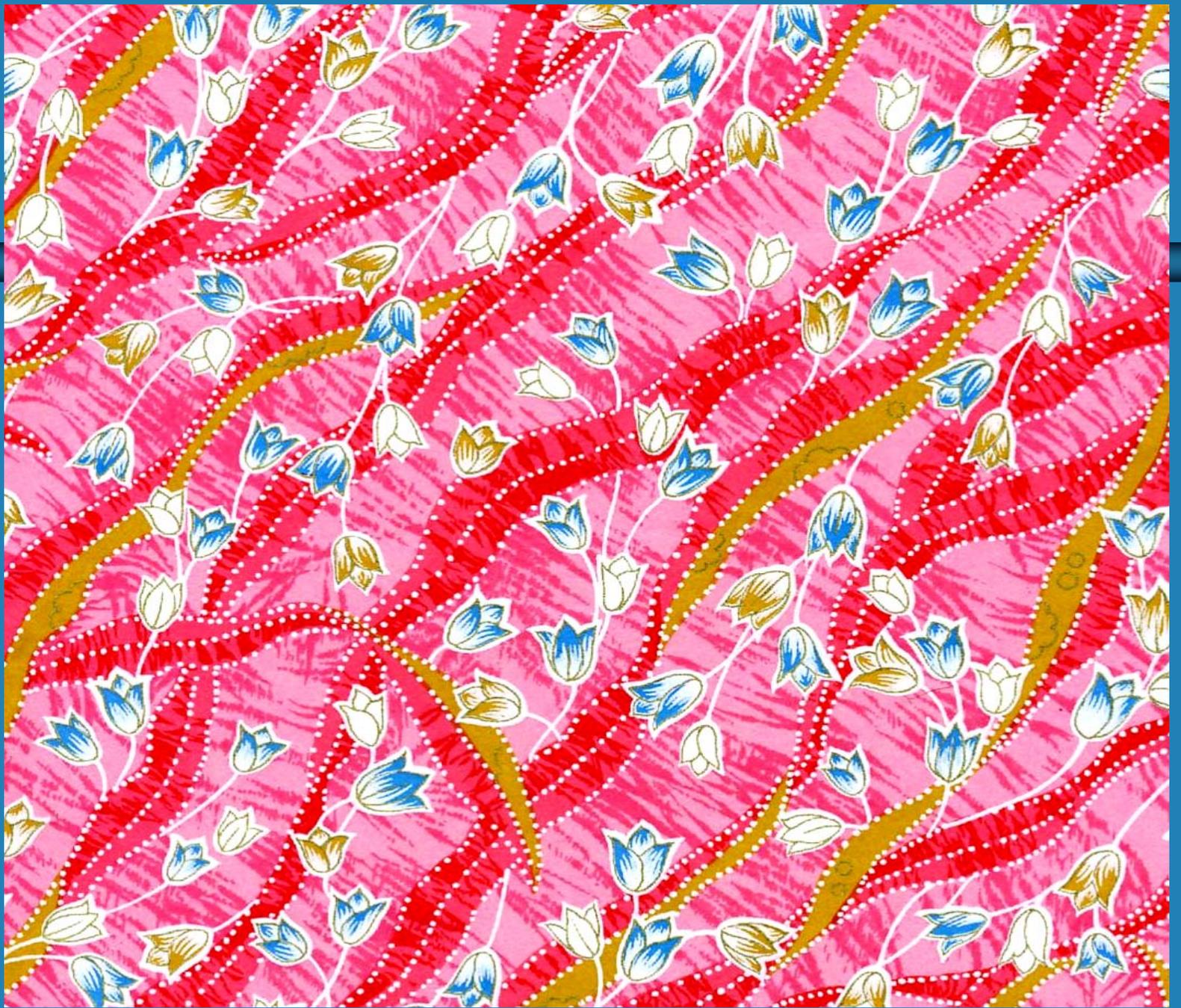
Examples of USA NASW Practitioners' Opinions about using s/r

- Appropriate Helping Activities (80% or more agree)
 - Consider s/r support systems as helpful
 - Use nonsectarian spiritual concepts
 - Discuss role of s/r in relationships
 - S/r reading
 - Discuss ways s/r support systems are harmful
 - Reflect on beliefs about after death
 - Help reflect on meaning and purpose of situation
 - Reflective journaling
 - Refer to s/r support systems
 - Help develop rituals

-- Canda & Furman, 1999

Continued

- Appropriate to Raise Topic of Spirituality by Topic (50% or more agree)
- Religion: terminal illness, foster parenting, natural disaster, bereavement)
- Spirituality: terminal illness, substance abuse, foster parenting, sexual abuse, partner violence, natural disaster, bereavement, chronic mental disorder, job loss, family relations difficulty, criminal justice



Key Concepts in Transpersonal Theories



Marian vision site at Medjugorje, Bosnia

- Transpersonal Experiences, e.g.
- Experiences of God, Brahman, Buddha Nature, Cosmic Consciousness.
- Connections with ancestors, spirit powers of nature, angels and demons.
- Near death experiences.
- Extrasensory perceptions.
- Subtle energies, e.g. chi, kundalini.

Maslow's peak, nadir, and plateau experiences

- Peak: rising above ordinary body/ego limit.
- Nadir: falling into a pit of crisis.
- Plateau: integrating growth into life; subtle yet deep insights.



Wilber's Pre/Trans Egoic Distinctions

- Pre-egoic phase: infancy and early childhood sense of fusion with significant others and fantasy.
- Egoic phase: adolescence and adulthood sense of bounded body/ego and individuated self.
- Trans-egoic phase: includes and transcends earlier phases in expanded consciousness and identity; open insights for arrangements of social justice for all beings.

TRANSformation



Developmental
potential is already
in the seed—
And is drawn up
in beauty
by the light.

Irises in the Canda garden

Needed: Liminal Social Workers

- Includes but transcends multicultural perspective
- Betwixt and between (Victor Turner)
- Comfortable and competent when shifting and transcending contexts



Memorial for Confucian Scholar Jo Gwang-Jo, Korea

Symbolism of Great Ultimate/ Great Non-Ultimate in NeoConfucianism & Daoism

- Yin (receptive and birthing quality) complementary with Yang (assertive and generating quality)
- Mutually inclusive
- Embraced by ultimate nondual reality
- Ultimate is non-ultimate, no-thing: A Key to Liminality: neither absolutism nor relativism





Vital energy transforms all things,
sometimes with volcanic force.

Mount Poas Volcano, Costa Rica

Death of the
self
is an
opening to
spiritual
rebirth.



“You must be born anew.”
-- *Gospel of John 3:7*

Sculpture studio,
Patzcuaro, Mexico

“The willows which make the frame of the sweat lodge are set up in such a way that they mark the four corners of the universe; thus, the whole lodge is the universe in an image, and the two-legged, four-legged, and winged peoples, and all things of the world are contained within it, for all peoples and things too must be purified before they can send a voice to *Wakan-Tanka*.”

-- Black Elk to Joseph Eppes Brown
(The Sacred Pipe,
Penguin, 1971, p. 23.)

Sweat lodge
frame, Kansas





Trance / Balance

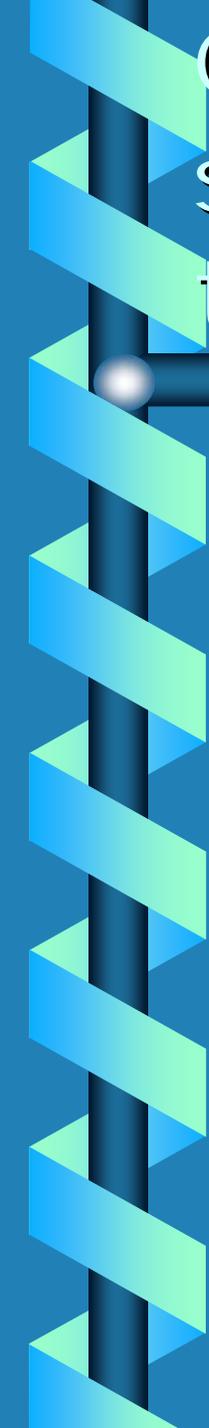
Ecstasy /

Catharsis:

Salpuri

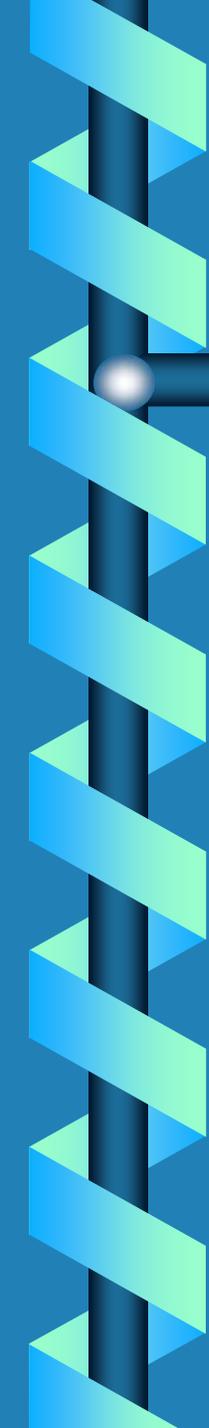
Korean shaman in
Seoul, dancing on
knife blades,
praying to the 5
directions.

Ritual Honoring
Taegam spirit
(the home overseer), 1977.



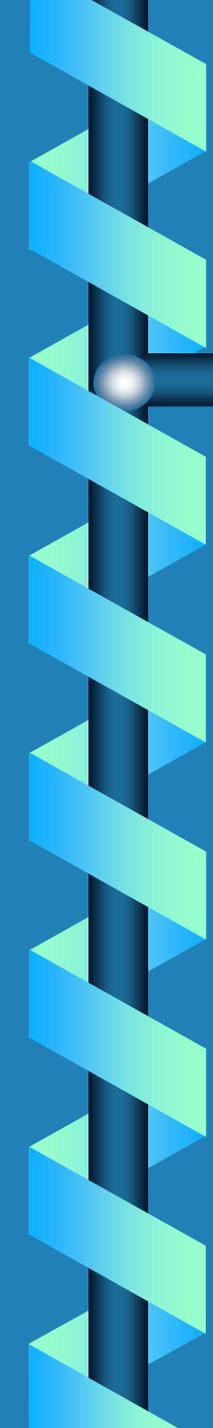
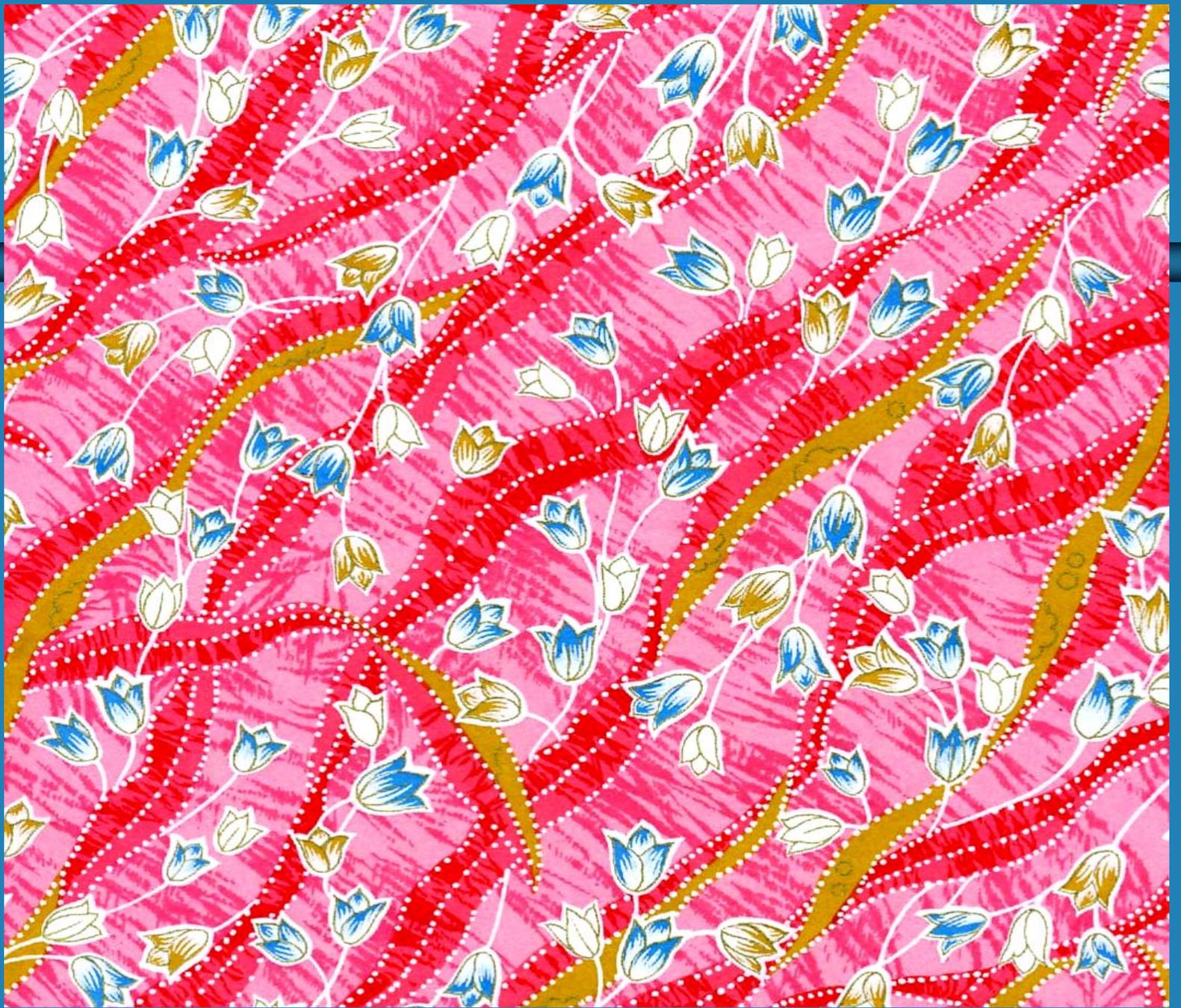
Caution re: Ken Wilber and all secular or religious stage theories

- Standardization of stages
- World view content rigidity



Key insights for barrier breaking (and boundary respecting) social work

- Open mind *not* mindless
- Flexible behavior *not* confused
- Nonjudgmental *not* amoral or unethical

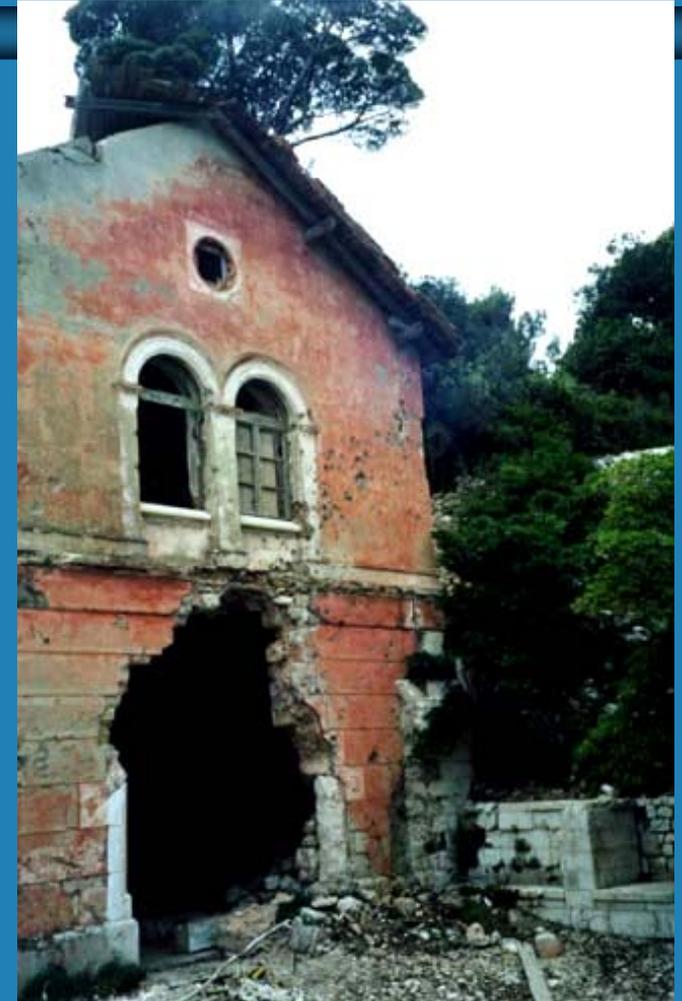


IMPLICATIONS

Lokrum Island, Croatia

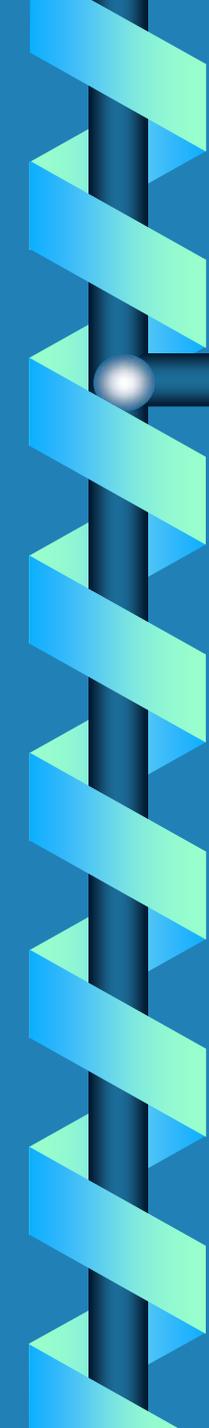


Clear water *OR*
War destruction



Examples of Using of Inner and Outer Spiritual Supports

- Holistic bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment
- Religious community mutual supports
- Prayer, meditation, dream reflection, spiritual journaling, subtle energy work, ritual for worker and client
- Spiritually based helpers and healers, including clergy, monks, shamans, etc.
- Complementary and alternative therapies
- Spiritually sensitive HSO culture
- Spiritually based peaceful social change movements (e.g. Gandhi, King)
- Religiously based ngos and social services (so-called faith based)
- Transcultural collaborations for planetary well-being



E.g., Gandhian Principles for Social Activism (Walz, Sharma, & Birnbaum, 1990)

- True Self realization as purpose of existence and social action.
- Local, global, and cosmic unity.
- Inherent dignity of all things.
- Pursuit of Truth (satyagraha) through peaceful resistance and proaction.
- Seeking the welfare of all (sarvodaya), starting with the oppressed.
- Starting with locally relevant action (swadeshi) in context of global awareness.

At MLK National Historic Site, Atlanta, GA



Statue of
Mahatma Gandhi



Buddhist Social Work:

Enlightenment
And Compassion
For all beings

Gwanseum
Bosal:
The Bodhisattva
of Compassion

at Buddhist
Sculpture
Museum, near
Seoul

Example:

Seoul Senior

Welfare Center, South Korea—

Jogye Jong/governmental collaboration



Sources and Further Information

- Brown, J. E. (1971). The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Oglala Sioux. NY: Penguin Books.
- Canda, E. R. & Furman, L. D. (1999). Spiritual Diversity in Social Work Practice. NY: Free Press.
- Robbins, S. R., Chatterjee, P., & Canda, E. R. (2006). Contemporary Human Behavior Theory, 2E. Boston: Pearson Allyn & Bacon.
- For photos and numerous resources, see the Spiritual Diversity and Social Work Resource Center via www.socwel.ku.edu/canda

Conclusion

