

Editorial

# Introduction: Spirituality and Addiction

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This collection of papers is inspired by years of collaboration in delivering academic programmes in Applied Spirituality. In particular, it has been observed in the annual intake of students for the MA in Applied Spirituality (South East Technological University), on which both editors teach, that there is a growing demand to interrogate what difference spirituality makes to diverse aspects of life—exercising leadership in a public service environment; teaching children to meditate; accompanying women in the transition to motherhood; or designing Instagram posts for spiritual seekers.

In this collection of essays, we turn the spirituality spotlight onto the inner drives in life which can shape our existence, consciously or unconsciously. The diversity of addictions discussed, and perspectives presented, aims to raise deeper questions regarding the nature of addiction. Rather than presenting addictions as diverse clinical challenges, the essays seek to reflect on addiction as a universal aspect of the human condition. The diversity of foci in the papers implicitly raises the question of what form of addiction is a force within any individual life. Engaging the phenomenon of addiction through the lens of spirituality seeks to highlight that the journey through addiction is more than undertaking a moral re-alignment in life; and is instead a re-focusing of the dynamic of the search for authenticity in a life.

In this Special Issue we hope that each contribution to the collection will, in its own unique way, help to prepare the ground for some of those larger, more foundational conversations regarding addictions into the future. In reflecting on leveraging spirituality as a force for good in the face of addictions, the Special Issue seeks to engage an understandable wariness on the part of social workers (and other professionals) of 12-step programmes on grounds that their religious/spiritual dimension may not be appropriate in the 21st century.

While the academic study of spirituality in the society and the professions moves forward rapidly, the sheer variety of issues and challenges with which it is engaging often means that essays in a particular field such as spiritual awakening and disability; spiritual dimensions of aging; spiritual practices for ecological awakening may be distributed across intra-professional journals such as disability studies, gerontology or sustainability studies respectively. In this Special Issue one of the aims is to provide a collection of reflections from diverse professionals in one single volume on the subject of Addiction and Spirituality. This is a rare goal in publications and the exclusive focus on Spirituality and Addiction has only been achieved in a few select publications such as Christina Grof's, *Thirst for Wholeness: Attachment, Addiction, and the Spiritual Path* (1994) or more recently the special issue of the journal *Implicit Religion*, entitled 'Religion, Spirituality and Addiction Recovery' Vol 22/2(2019): guest edited by Wendy Dossett and Liam Metcalf-White. In the latter publication, Dossett and Metcalf-White similarly argued that the categories of religion, spirituality, and non-religion, as they relate to addiction recovery, need further analysis than they receive in the clinical literature.

The aim of the 21st century approach to addiction, religion and spirituality is to work towards an integrative mode of recovery. A recent statement from the Spirituality Interest



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Group of the International Society of Addiction Medicine (ISAM) (Marc Galanter and Potenza 2021) recommended incorporating spirituality into research and clinical care in the treatment of addictions. Currently, most addiction treatments and clinical research are concentrated on pharmacological and behavioural approaches. This ISAM statement recognised that disciplines such as neuroscience, social science and psychology need to be engaged in clinical studies on the role of spirituality and religion. Thus, the spiritual construct can serve as a component of the ‘recovery capital’ for addiction.

This Special Issue highlights the nature of addiction as a multifactorial and complex experience within the human condition. Researching how spiritual resources which are unique to the individual (spiritual programmes, spiritual experiences, spiritual peer support groups) can be evaluated and incorporated in the recovery plan from any addiction is paramount to comprehend the profound inner world of any addiction. The evaluation and integration of spiritually oriented approaches will challenge the current three theoretical models from which the scientific and medical community operate: the medical/disease model, the moral/ethical model and the biopsychosocial model.

We hope that the rich and varied contributions to this issue can elucidate the crucial role of spirituality in the recovery of addiction. The contributions fall into two main types. The following four essays address foundational issues in the theory of addiction and spirituality:

**Monique Verrier** turns our attention to ‘A Psycho-spiritual Exploration of the Transpersonal Self as the Ground of Healing’. She challenges psychotherapeutic models that are rooted in assumptions that the causes of addiction are some kind of lack of development, of confidence, of positive thoughts or impulse control. Instead, she locates the fulcrum of addiction recovery in the Transpersonal Self—the Soul, Heart, Presence, Higher Power, Authentic Self, etc. With the assistance of auto-ethnography she argues that the alchemy of healing occurs when that which can never be harmed makes contact with that which has been wounded. She testifies that non-dual awareness effects addiction recovery from the ground of being.

In their article, **Paul Barrows and William Van Gordon** evaluate the first generation and the new wave/second generation MBIs (mindfulness-based interventions) in the treatment of addictions. The authors investigate how some MBIs are spiritually de-rooted from the original Buddhist concept of *tisikkhā* (three trainings: higher virtue/higher mind/higher wisdom) principle, within which meditation is traditionally taught. They outline different types of MBIs which are openly spiritual in nature and can actively challenge the inner mechanism of addiction in the individual. Ontological Addiction Theory (OAT) is proposed as a new metaphysical model in which the deep belief of an inherently existing ‘self’ or ‘I’ could be seen to create an impaired functionality. The idea of a self that is empty of intrinsic existence provides, according to the authors, a clear strategy to stop the cycle of addiction at its source, by undermining self-attachment, by deconstructing the ego-self and by dismantling the maladaptive addictive beliefs that have accumulated.

A counter view on OAT (Ontological Addiction Theory) is taken up by **Pádraic Hurley**’s paper. The author does this by setting forth the implications of a ‘Fourth Turning’ in Buddhism, along with a ‘post-metaphysical’ turn in social science, philosophy and spirituality. These developments challenge the conventional separate, egoic-self framework in OAT by presenting an alternative view on the ontology of ‘the person’, which is proposed by developmental psychology as an ‘integrative presence’ developed through a healthy process of ‘individuation’. The author agrees with the view of **Van Gordon et al. (2016)** that a lack of the egoic sense of self and consequent cravings for fulfilment fuel ‘addictions’. However, this paper challenges the possible transcendental reductionism of OAT, in favour of the significance of ‘the person’ in addiction as a unifying/integrating/meditating quality to unite all parts into a meaningful pre-sense of ‘wholeness’ that can feel truly related and connected to the world.

Finally in this category is **Garret Wyner**’s paper which aims at deeply reflecting on spiritual addiction as a collective moral problem. By *spiritual addiction* Wynner means

“a felt compulsion to seek surrogates in the absence of that spirit of unconditional love underlying core personality change”. Hope is explored by Wynner as the core disposition for a spiritual religion of the heart. By presenting a case study, the author, elucidates such important attitudes in addiction therapy as holding the hope until the individual is ready to take the ‘hope back’ into his/her life and displaying empathetic attunement with the spirit of truth and love. This paper challenges the identification of the roots of spiritual addiction as only physical and psychological, and adds a social dimension, including morality and religion. The author argues that the end of the ‘collective moral crisis’ that is fuelling spiritual addiction, will be the conscious realisation of living with unconditional love and of experiencing a true intimacy of interpersonal connections.

The following five essays address special/applied issues in the theory of addiction and spirituality:

**Amanda Dillon** in ‘Bible Journaling as a Spiritual Aid in Addiction Recovery’ explores the newly emerging practice of Bible Journaling. In this spiritual practice Bible readers create visual reflections in their Bibles using diverse drawing materials. She has gathered drawing from a small sample of women who participate in online social media and she explores how the Bible journaling has played a role in their journey of recovery from drug addiction. The critical reflection on the bible visual reflections which are shared uses multimodal analysis, a methodological approach which provides a structured semiotic framework in which every feature of a visual creation is examined so as to explore how a journaler has made meaning of a biblical text for her recovery journey.

**Lisete dos Santos Mendes Mónico** and **Clara Margaça** investigated ‘The Workaholism Phenomenon in Portugal: Dimensions and Relations with Workplace Spirituality’. The sample in this study is larger, and is comprised of a heterogeneous group of 306 Portuguese employees, who were surveyed using a 25-question Workaholism Battery test (2010) and the five dimensions of Workplace Spirituality test (2008: sense of community; individual and organizational values alignment; sense of contribution to the community; joy at work; opportunities for an inner life). In the analysis of the intersection between the experience of workplace spirituality and workaholism the authors explore whether workplace spirituality development has the potential to promote a balanced and healthy relationship with work.

**Marcin Wnuk** raises the question, ‘Do Involvement in Alcoholics Anonymous and Religiousness both Directly and Indirectly through Meaning in Life Lead to Spiritual Experiences?’ The sample for the study consisted of 70 Polish AA participants. Since addiction literature considered often lacked precise, well-established definitions for spirituality and for religiousness they have sometimes been used interchangeably in studies. The researcher is clear that the generalizability of findings will be limited to Roman Catholic AA participants from Poland. In such a population it was found that both religious commitment and AA involvement were together a support to transformation for alcohol-addicted individuals. The finding that non-religious or religiously sceptical AA participants still experienced similar benefits to the AA religiously-inclined members leads to a deeper reflection on the core spiritual experience that supports transformation. Both the theoretical and practical implications are discussed by the author.

**Margaret Bullitt-Jonas** reflects on how an understanding of addictive behaviour can generate greater understanding of the reluctance to engage the climate crisis in ‘Climate Change, Addiction, and Spiritual Liberation’. As in the life of an addict we today can seek to look away; to see but not see; to change the subject. By reflecting on her own journey of recovery from food addiction, she identifies six transferable themes for awakening to the climate crisis: moving denial and truth-telling; stepping forth from isolation to community; grieving losses; taking moral responsibility; praying the Serenity Prayer; and nurturing love.

In her second essay in the collection **Lisete dos Santos Mendes Mónico** (with **Valentim Alferes** this time) attends to the way in which the effect of religious beliefs and attitudes of intrinsic and extrinsic optimism and pessimism in players of games of chance. The sam-

ple is composed of 271 recurring players of games of chance and gambling who answered a questionnaire on the measures of religious beliefs and attitudes, of optimism, and pessimism. Data analysis is performed by SPSS and AMOS. Results show that the influence of religious beliefs and attitudes is higher on optimism than on pessimism. These results show the importance of religious behaviours as self-regulatory mechanism for stability and promotion of optimism. This paper also opens research on the importance of distinguishing internal causes from external causes in the beliefs underlying optimism and pessimism.

It is our hope that these papers will help in understanding the importance of the incorporation of spirituality in research, and clinical treatments in the journey of addiction.

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