

Self and Personality: Contemporary and Traditional perspectives

"Continued observations in clinical psychological practice lead almost inevitably to the conclusion that deeper and more fundamental than sexuality, deeper than the craving for social power, deeper even than the desire for possessions, there is still more generalized and more universal craving in the human make up. It is the craving for knowledge of the right direction; for orientation."

--William Sheldon

Objectives

1. To initiate a thinking process and open minded approach in the participants which can be applied in all their future academic and intellectual pursuits specially towards bringing fresh facets in the dialogue of science and religion.
2. To build a zone of understanding where dialogue and sharing can take place between diverse belief systems and learning disciplines. This will be implemented by inviting the religious scholars to participate in the open seminars planned during the course, thereby building a bridge between two institutions which are totally exclusive of each other. We also hope to be able to teach this course in an Indian university in coalition with a Hindu professor. An interaction at this level will be helpful in developing the spirit of peaceful coexistence and hopefully bring some sanity into the strained relation scenario.
3. To develop a resource pool of literature pertinent to science religion interface as well as of individuals who understand the background of science/religion discourse. This literature will be produced through the assignments, research projects and discussion groups.

Course content

Historical Background

Instructor: Dr. Suhail Umar

Guest speaker: Dr. Saroosh Irfani

Lectures

Science religion discourse in Islamic world

The sub-continent scenario.

Related activity

Each lecture will be followed by discussion session.

Comprehension evaluation: summary of the lectures written by students, due before the next class.

Man and Universe: Scientific and theological perspectives

Instructor: Suhail Umar, Naumana Amjad

Theme 1: Macrocosm and microcosm

Topics for lectures:

- a) Self- Universal and individual in Islamic Metaphysics
- b) Alchemy as science of Cosmos in Christian hermetic Tradition
- c) Hindu and Buddhist perspectives on reality
- d) Levels of Reality, Levels of selfhood

Theme 2

Topics for lectures:

- a) Scientific worldview on origin of universe and time- lecture by guest speaker Dr. Anis Alam, professor of Physics, University of Punjab.
- b) Darwinian theory- lecture by Dr. Waheed Akhtar, Professor of biochemistry, University of Punjab
- c) Significance and relevance of evolutionary theory for behavioral sciences
- d) Related issues and critique

4. Audio recordings of lectures by S. Hussain Nasr and Dr. William Chittick will be followed by question answer session.

Related activity

Group discussion on questions raised by students.

“Human Nature” and Theories of personality

Instructors: Durre. S. Ahmad and Naumana Amjad

Theme: Contemporary modules in behavioral sciences

Topics for individual lectures:

- a) The Freudian and post-Freudian legacy
- b) Behavioral/Learning and environmental approaches
- c) Humanistic school
- d) Biological perspectives
- e) Evidence from Neuroscience

Theme: Islamic theories of human development

Instructor: Suhail Umar and Naumana Amjad

Topics for individual lectures:

- a) Ibn Sina
- b) Ghazali's model and its implications for humanistic theories
- c) Ibn Arabi
- d) Mullah Sadra

Related activity

Open Seminar: each student will present his/her model of relating the Islamic and scientific perspectives.

Pathways from external reality to Internal reality

Instructor: Naumana Amjad

Theme: Faculties of soul

Topics for individual lectures:

- a) Intellect, Reason, Imaginal faculty and Will
- b) Ego and Nafs as explanations of dynamics of self
- c) Internal and external senses, cognition and Information processing

Related activity

Discussion addressing following questions:

Does traditional view contribute to our understanding of the functioning of mind?

Can it be verified directly or indirectly?

What sort of evidence should we look for?

Class Experiment

Theme: Levels of consciousness

Topics for individual lectures:

- a) Dreams in Islamic thought
- b) Altered states of consciousness
- c) Spiritual experience

Related activity

Written assignment

Theme: Pathology

Instructor: Dr. Durre S. Ahamad

Concept of spiritual and psychic disorders in Muslim medicine

Modern classification of disorders

An overview of the shared concepts and possible areas of sharing.

Related activity

Seminar- The enigma of mental illness-Presentation of case studies and discussion on etiology-

Theme: Self and Well-being

Instructor: Naumana Amjad

- a) Balance and homeostasis- Theories of Motivation and emotion revisited
- b) Self-awareness in Sufism, and other spiritual disciplines
- c) Centrality; concentration and dispersion
- d) Intrapsychic Conflict and tendencies of soul
- e) Self control, fulfillment and frustration

Related activity

Language of the Self-Exposure session

Written assignment to be presented in the class

Open seminar

Framework for methodology

Topics for individual lectures:

- a) Scientific methodology, its rationale, assumptions and goals
- b) Traditional epistemologies
- c) Control, prediction and empiricism reconsidered
- d) Was there a sacred science of soul?

Topics for prepared class discussion

Group 1: *Psychology by definition is committed to provide insight and understanding about a domain, which eludes the scientific method or overflows it in all directions*

Group 2: *Hillman Points out that “the ideational process in Psychology is far behind its methodology.” Discuss.*

Theme: The twain shall meet

An overview of various approaches to science religion dialogue

Integration, complementarity and contextual coherence

What model can be developed for science of human behavior?

Research project

Choose one area of psychological functioning and try to build an interface between science and religion. You can choose any model to approach this task.

Open seminar at the end of course. Students will present their research projects and then a panel discussion will follow.

The exposure sessions can take the form of excursions, slide shows or participation in creation of a sacred craft.

The credit will be given as per following formula:

Class participation = 25% (This includes participation in group discussion)

Research project = 25%

Mid term evaluation of conceptual clarity = 20%

End term evaluation = 20%

Assignments =10%

Bibliography

References for historical Background

Ian Barbour. *Religion in age of science*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990.

J. Hedley Brooke. *Reconstructing Nature: The engagement of science and religion*. T&T Clark, Ltd, 1998.

Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth*, Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1981.

Barbour, Ian. *Religion and science: Historical and contemporary issues*. HarperCollins, 1997.

References for man and universe

Murata, Sachiko. *Tao of Islam*. State university of New York Press, 1992.

Tage Lindbom. *Tares and the good grain*. Lahore, Suhail Academy, 1988.

Nasr and Brien, K. (Ed) *In quest of the sacred*. Virginia, 1994.

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McCarthy, R.J. *Freedom and fulfillment*: An annotated translation of Al-Ghazali's al-Munqidh min al-Dalal, Boston, Wayne, 1980.

Morris, J.W. *Wisdom of Throne*. Princeton, 1981.

Burckhard, Titus. *Alchemy; science of cosmos, science of soul*.

David Bohm. *Wholeness and implicate order*. Selected portions. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

Bakr, Usman. *A critique of evolutionary theory*. Kualalampur, 1986.

References for personality, Consciousness, Pathology and faculties of soul.

Asbrook, James B. and Carol Rausch Albright. *The humanizing Brain: where religion and Neuroscience meet*. The Pilgrim Press, 1997.

Steven Pinker. *How the mind works*, New York, Norton Publishers, 1997. Selected portions.

V.S. Ramachandran. *The phantoms in the brain*, London, Clays Ltd, 1999. Selected portions.

Churchland, Paul M. *The Engine of reason, the seat of soul*. MIT Press, 1996.

Tilby, Angela. *Soul: God, Self and the new cosmology*, New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Quranic concepts of Psyche; An anthology of essays, Islamabad, 1992.

Arkes, H.R & Garske, J.P. *Psychological theories of Motivation*. California, 1982.

Sherrinton, Charles. *Man on his nature*. Cambridge University Press, 1963.

References for methodology and ways of relating science and faith.

H. Nasr. *Knowledge and the Sacred*. Crossroads, 1981.

Bakr, Usman. *Tawhid and Science*, Lahore, Suhail Academy, 1998.

Nasr, H. *The need for a sacred science*, state university of New York Press, 1993.

Wilber, Ken. *The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating science and religion*. Random House, 1998.

Smith, Huston. *Beyond the Post modern mind*, New York, Crossroads, 1989.

Along with above mentioned books readings will be assigned from standard textbooks of Psychology made available in the library of the College.

Self-Actualization and Personality. Another aspect of Maslow's (1950) theory that still holds promise is his proposed list of the characteristics of self-actualizing people. The most prominent personality traits investigated in contemporary personality psychology are the "Big Five" Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience which have been shown to account for most of the covariance among more specific personality traits (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008; McCrae & Costa, 2008). Self-actualization was significantly correlated with both metatraits of the Big Five (Stability and Plasticity), as well as all Big Five personality traits and their facets (see Table 5). Different perspectives of the theories of personalities, the authors of the theories of personalities and their importance. Freud's beliefs of personality and human development gained him a bevy of followers a few of which would go on to shape psychology with their own theories of personalities. Alfred Adler was well-known to be a follower of Freud, he was what many in the psychology community would call a "Neo-Freudian". Our personality is structured as a compromise between our true self, and who society expects us to be. The last but certainly not the least influential player in regard to the psychodynamic perspective of personality is Karen Horney. Karen was the first woman of the time to be trained as a Freudian psychoanalyst. Denial of their personal self and becoming a God-oriented self is the first step toward His eternal and glorious kingdom. As an eastern, the concept of the "self" stands for something which always exists somewhere out of you. Eastern perspectives about self are inherently non-dualistic. Not only does the evidence not support a dual, separate self that exists in isolation from other selves, materialist science has never been able to pin down a self. If I were you, I'd look into teachings from traditional Vedanta philosophy on the related topics of advaita (Sanskrit for nondualism) and its relation to infinite consciousness as well as traditional Buddhist ideas on "anatman" or the doctrine of no self (implying no permanent, dualistic self).

PERSONALITY Historic Perspectives Opening Exercise:

- 1) Have students number a blank piece of paper 1 through 20 down the left side.
- 2) Have them list some of their own positive and/or negative personality qualities.

Psychoanalytic Perspective

Freud Free Association method to explore unconsciousness

Psychoanalysis treating psychological disorders by interpreting unconscious thoughts

Unconscious according to Freud bad thoughts, wishes, feelings, memories

Id reservoir of unconscious psychic energy that strives to satisfy basic sexual & aggressive drives.