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Title: The Future of Transpersonal Psychology and Spiritual Direction

Abstract: This paper explores the possibility for transpersonal studies professionals to assist the needs of spiritual “nones”. The spiritual “none” population continues to expand in western society and currently includes 30% of the United States population. The religious “nones” are epistemologically and ontologically centered in transpersonal values. The religious “nones” lack a framework and knowledge of spiritual practice. They often engage in syncretism which does not provide consistent method for spiritual growth. This paper responds to the existing literature that offers transpersonal studies professionals an opportunity to serve as spiritual directors for this group. The religious “nones” are defined in detail followed by legacy and cutting-edge approaches that may serve this population. The canon of transpersonal literature includes conceptual frameworks that would be attractive for the religious “none” population. Jorge Ferrer’s Participatory approach serves as a container to explore spiritual paradigm. There are two paradigms reviewed including Forman’s Innate Capacity and Murphy’s Evolutionary Panentheism. Recent discoveries in technology, virtual communities, psychedelics and neuro-clinical interventions are reviewed for spiritual significance. The paper ends with how transpersonal professionals may explore future models of spiritual direction to answer the needs of the spiritual “nones”.

Keywords: spiritual but not religious, spiritual nones, spiritual direction, transpersonal psychology, participatory theory, perennial philosophy, psychedelics, innate capacity, panentheism

Introduction

Transpersonal psychology, in its fifty plus years of existence, has included a diverse and robust amount of subject matter. Topics as complex as anomalous experience, spiritual enlightenment and human development require study of research methodology, consciousness studies, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, comparative religion, spiritual practice and much more. Transpersonal psychology’s focus on human potential challenged its professionals to explore many academic fields to uncover its scientific foundations.

Transpersonal psychology has a legacy of research focused on spiritual contexts. The Wiley Blackwell Handbook in Transpersonal Psychology includes an essay by the editors titled, “The Calling to a Spiritual Psychology: Should Transpersonal Psychology Convert?”. Hartelius, Friedman & Pappas (2013) suggest Transpersonal Psychology could acquire enhanced credibility if it rebranded itself to Spiritual Psychology. The authors establish their argument for this rebranding by leveraging the rich history of Transpersonal Psychology’s focus on the spiritual dimensions of humanity.

The field matured and began to research methodologies to encourage transpersonal experiences. This led to the exploration of spiritual practice. Ken Wilber’s (2000) Integral Philosophy helped to provide a framework of human development and practices to encourage attainment. Wilber explored all the religions, neatly placed them in a hierarchical structure and highlighted eastern spiritual practice as the gateway to transcendence. This included denominations of mostly Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

Over time the field began to explore the esoteric spiritual practices of Eastern Orthodox (Markides, 2008), Sufism (Knabb & Walsh, 2009), Indigenous Teachings (Robbins & Hong, 2013), Rinzai Zen (Puhakka, 1998) and other traditions. The findings led to what is called, “The Perennial Philosophy”. The perennial philosophy suggests at the heart of all religion is a consistent revelation of spiritual ultimacy (Ferrer, 2002). This armed the field with a strong foundation on which to build its paradigm.

Transpersonal Psychology continued to strengthen its legacy on spiritual matters by developing measurement tools to assist therapists and counselors. These tools helped with the identification and measurement of spiritual transcendence (Garcia-Romeau, 2010), spiritual emergency (Goretzki, Thalbourne & Storm, 2013) and transpersonal assessment (Friedman & MacDonald, 1992). The field grew strong in knowledge regarding spiritual growth and the potential impacts of spiritual experience.

Littered throughout transpersonal literature are guidelines and support for the plethora of activities to engage spiritual pursuits. Some of these include, art and nature (Burello, 2021), pharmacology (Apud, 2016), memoir writing (Raab, 2014) and dreaming (Stimson, 2012). How to live a life that is aligned with spiritual pursuits is also represented regarding aging (Atchley, 2011), work (Affeldt & MacDonald, 2010), nature (DmMares & Krycka, 1998) and intimate relationship (Wellwood, 1990).

This is important for current trends in our social milieu. There has been a consistent movement away from organized religion. This trend led to the development of a group who identified themselves on surveys as “spiritual but not religious”. This began in the 1960s and 1970’s with a generation of baby boomers who engendered a revolutionary spirit. This generation found organized religion unscalable to the current modern lifestyle. They sought to continue spiritual involvement but leave behind what they considered

outdated social expectations. This created a distinction between religion and spirituality for modern western culture (Hill et al., 2000).

The PEW Research Center has been tracking this topic dating back to 1973. In its most recent report from December 2021, it reported the rise in a new group of survey respondents, religious “nones”. These individuals qualify themselves as having no religious affiliation. The religious “nones” include the “spiritual but not religious”. The only element that distinguishes the two groups are the options for answers on surveys. Over time surveys measuring religious involvement have moved from “spiritual but not religious” to “no affiliation” (Mercadante, 2020). From 1973 to 2018 the population of this group increased from 2.2 to 11.8 percent (Wiertz & Lim, 2021). The most recent report from PEW displayed growth from 2007 to 2021 of the “nones” from 16 to 29 percent of the United States population. At almost 1 percent per year this increase is accelerating. Linda Mercadante, a leading researcher in theology, suggested in 2020 the rise of the “nones” was increasing at 0.5 percent each year. Religious “nones” are doubling from Mercadante’s (2020) assessment at 1% per year. The PEW Report displays participation in Christianity decreasing in the United States from 78 percent to 63 percent from 2014 to 2021.

This data leads to questions about how spiritual aspirants will find their way. Without organized religious structure, religious leaders or defined spiritual programs how can the “nones” satisfy their spiritual needs? Mercadante’s (2020) research on the “nones” highlights their need for spiritual guidance. The “nones” spiritual dilemmas include psychological, physical, and social crises. Research has displayed a connection between spiritual struggle and high metrics of distress. Mercadante (2020) calls for social scientists, psychologists, chaplains, spiritual directors and clergy to help identify and understand this rising population and their associated struggles.

This essay seeks to understand how transpersonal psychology professionals can answer Mercadante’s (2020) call for help. Transpersonal psychology professionals have a long legacy of spiritual expertise. They understand spiritual crisis and several spiritual paths. Transpersonal psychologists have depth in mystical and anomalous experience that can contribute to guiding and enhancing those without a spiritual home. After exploring the characteristics of those without religion, we will explore the transpersonal literature that aligns to this support opportunity. This could be an opportunity for Transpersonal Psychology to find its niche in society. The Transpersonal vision is to arm humanity with guidelines for reaching our highest potential. The robust academic rigor and multiplicity of topics included in transpersonal studies puts the transpersonal professional in a position to answer western society’s movement away from religion.

Societal Trends

Understanding those who do not affiliate themselves with religion is complex. This is due to the available answers in the data collection surveys. There can be many different labels

for those leaving organized religion for example, the most popular is “spiritual but not religious” or SBNR. The second category is religious “none” as “none” has recently been added to modern survey formats. There can be many other categories such as, multiple religious belonging (MRB), multiple religious involvement (MRI), and multiple religious orientation (MRO) (Mercadante, 2016). There are also “liminals” who walk the line between religion and spirituality. These individuals attend religious services but not consistent enough to garner affiliation. They are identified as exploring spiritual practices outside of religious context (Mercadante, 2020).

What is apparent in the plurality of these designations is religious transformation in western culture. Traditional expressions of religious ethics and practice are not scaling as western society matures into the postmodern age. Technological advances have created ubiquitous access to data sources that were historically unavailable. Access to media allows individuals to engage communities across the globe. Culture is rapidly changing and leaving behind traditional family and community activities as we move into a technocratic society. This theme portrays the attributes of the long-held belief that secularization would encourage the diminished influence of religion.

In the mid-20th century, a German political economist and sociologist, Max Weber, coined the term secularization. Weber studied religion and was trying to understand its place in society. His research focused on the rationalization of action and the processes that support it. Weber was enamored with how rational calculation came to rule the experience of modern society. This “spirit of capitalism” as he called it, aligned society to focus on objectivity. Weber traced this mindset back to the 1600’s in which society progressively became dependent on sensory input. The result of this shift away from phenomena that was difficult to grasp with the senses, led to a devaluing of the mysterious (Swatos & Christiano, 1999).

Robert C. Fuller cites a study by Gebauer et al. (2013) who reviewed personality traits along a scale of communal to individual agency. The study found communal personality traits tended to have conventional religious affiliation while individual agency traits tended to be religious contrarians. Fuller (2018) states religious “nones” score lower on collectivism and traditionalism than religious conventionalists. Schwarz and Hart-Brinson (2021) suggest more inviting communities and clear definition of spiritual practice will encourage involvement for younger, more autonomous generations.

Mercadante (2020) highlights more modern trends driving decreases in religious affiliation. She suggests late marriage, late or no childbearing, higher educational attainment, mixed-faith family, and community influences from family and friends who are not religious. She notes the polarization of politics and the rise in identity politics is influencing the rise of religious “nones”. Hout & Fischer (2014) agree by stating religious preferences are influenced by political identification as a reversal of how political affiliation was once an expression of religious tradition. Fuller (2018) is consistent in his

social influences stating the religious “nones” have higher educational status, are typically in white collar professions, are liberal in their political views, have parents who attended church less frequently and are independent with less social connection.

Characteristics of the Religious “nones”

Religious “nones” are highly influenced by social trends. They have similar attitudes, behaviors and ambitions for their spiritual practice. Mercadante (2020) identifies the religious “nones” as, “secularists, atheists, agnostics, humanists, the never affiliated, the disaffiliated, and the loosely affiliated” (p. 1). Review of the literature displays consistent themes regarding their drive to explore multiple forms of spiritual development. One element that stands out is their belief in God. In a study from 2018, 80 percent of Americans believe in God. This survey distinguished Christians from religious “nones”. The survey revealed 80% of Christians believe in God. The religious “none” population, which includes the “spiritual but not religious”, includes a 72 percent belief in God or a higher power (PEW, 2018).

Religion and spirituality have been associated closely with one another historically. The religious “none” population has discretely divided religion and spirituality. They view religion as representative of services such as mass, lighting candles for Hanukkah and worship. Kenneson (2015) highlights the general attitude religious “nones” have toward spirituality and religion. Religion has a negative connotation due to its institutional structure and authoritative dogma. Kenneson (2015) cites Robert Fuller in describing the positive attributes associated with spirituality. Fuller (2001), as cited in Kenneson (2015), sees the religious “nones” as valuing their autonomy by having freedom to experiment, curiosity and intellectual freedom.

Robert C. Fuller, a professor of religious studies at Bradley University, sees religious “nones” as having minds of their own. He has identified the religious “nones” as reserving the right to determine what is meaningful and provide needed connection in their lives. They have not followed a secular path of reason to determine non-religious conclusions. Instead, they choose to be curious of the possibilities of exploring higher truth in a transcendent metaphysical reality. This confirms the religious “nones” openness to paranormal beliefs such as telepathy, extra sensory perception and out-of-body experiences. Fuller (2018) believes this confirms religious “nones” report encounters with the mystical realm and experiencing connectedness with everything around them.

Exploring the psychological constructs that may influence the religious “nones”, Fuller (2018) looks to cognitive science as a guide. He states that humans have a cognitive tendency to view the mind as separate from the body. Humans also can discern the presence of unseen ghosts or Gods and to interpret ambiguous events as having meaning and purpose. The social institutional influence is low in religious “nones” which allows them to develop more openness in their spiritual beliefs (Fuller, 2018).

Spiritual struggle is common for the religious “nones”. Their ambition to engage in transcendent experience, observe personal growth and be inspired by spiritual attainment is not easy to produce. All spiritual seekers and religious communities find orienting frameworks that help align them with purpose and meaning in life. These serve as a destination or pathway for the life adventure. When life events occur, religious “nones” may not have an orienting framework to rely upon and these spiritual struggles ensue (Mercadante, 2020).

Fuller (2018) highlights the transpersonal nature of religious “nones”. He finds the religious “nones” to be more highly characterized by transpersonal identification, self-forgetfulness, fantasy proneness, belief in magical powers and reliance on both intuitive and subjective experience. Mercadante (2017) identifies the perennial biases of the “nones”. She observes their perennialist values in parallel to the Transcendentalist movement of the 1800’s. “Nones” are averse to the community aspects of religion. They are more de-traditionalist in their attitudes and move the locus of authority from outside themselves to inside themselves. Mercadante (2017) asserts the “nones” are attracted to perennial truths in that they seek consistent truths religions have uncovered. The “nones” are especially drawn to mystical perennialism which they believe has been discovered by spiritual mystics throughout history. The “nones” believe there is ancient wisdom available that will provide them with spiritual transformation.

The psychological characteristics, beliefs and attitudes of the “nones” are closely associated with Transpersonal research. “Nones” seek out mystical phenomena and believe in or have knowledge of intuitive experience. They believe in ancient wisdom that will provide personal transformative experience. They see God or a higher power as a transcendent reality that can be accessed through spiritual engagement. Mercadante (2017) cites a significant amount of research that has identified a connection between addiction recovery groups and religious “nones”. Mercadante (2017) believes this research displays the “nones” positive experience with transcendence, community, identity and a structured spiritual path. Many of the “nones” she met with, who were associated with addiction recovery groups, displayed less spiritual struggle.

Transpersonal psychology offers many spiritual development paths for individuals looking to curate transcendent experience. What follows is a framework and three options that would be attractive to the “nones” population. These were chosen for their direct alignment to the characteristics of our growing population of “nones”. There are many options for Transpersonal Psychology professionals to choose from. For those “nones” who have not participated in addiction recovery programs, there are many options that could provide clarity, community and transcendence. To begin, we will explore Jorge Ferrer’s Participatory Turn as a framework from which to approach the needs of the “nones”.

The Participatory Turn

Jorge Ferrer published numerous amounts of literature supporting his theory of Participatory Philosophy. His initial book, "Revisioning Transpersonal Psychology" highlighted three prevalent themes in Transpersonal Psychology that he felt had philosophical shortcomings. These themes include experientialism, inner empiricism and perennialism. The arguments levied by Ferrer are arguments against the common threads of the "nones" worldview. The remaining features of Participatory theory provide a leading framework for "nones" and those who seek to guide them.

Ferrer's (2002) concept of the Ocean of Emancipation provides a platform that matches the syncretism and spiritual marketplace approach of the "nones". The Ocean of Emancipation is shared by many traditions and does not correspond to a single spiritual referent. It corresponds to an overcoming of self-centeredness and a liberation from limiting perspectives and understandings. It calls for a fuller participation in the mystery of existence. Ferrer's (2002) "mystery" is characterized as the continuous unfolding of creation that is dynamic and indeterminate. It is immediately available to individuals and humbly offers the spiritual aspirant a reciprocal role in the creative disclosure of the divine. There are no ultimate spiritual claims. An individual co-creatively partners with the mystery to enrich their spiritual experience. Ferrer (2002) encourages the liberating power of this approach in its capability to drive individuals, communities and cultures away from egocentric understandings of reality. The Ocean of Emancipation has many shores and can be accessed by many spiritual approaches. The raft one chooses to access the shore is up to them and honors their cultural and environmental makeup. Ferrer's (2002) research of historical mystical experience uncovers the influence of the experiencers by the language, culture and doctrinal beliefs associated within the traditions in which they occurred. To alleviate the oppressive nature of ultimate spiritual knowledge, Ferrer (2002) encourages the liberation from religious authority but honors the contextualization of an individual's reality.

The vision of Ferrer's (2002) theory holds values that enable a platform to unbiasedly approach spiritual development. It is a vision that embraces differences among religious tradition, it accepts the contextual factors in human spirituality, it doesn't privilege any spiritual knowledge claim over another, it emphasizes liberation away from oppressive spiritual ultimacy, and it seeks to re-establish our connection to the source of being with whatever method enables that transmission. This allows a religious "none" who seeks flexibility, wants to be liberated from spiritual oppression, chooses to include their cultural influence, and work co-creatively with the "mystery" for divine self-disclosure.

The Innate Capacity

If we are to use Participatory Theory as a framework for spiritual development, language is important. Ferrer (2002) uses the word "raft" to define paths to the shores of the Ocean

of Emancipation. One raft that could be considered for religious “nones” is Robert K. C. Forman’s “Innate Capacity”. There are some distinctly opposing perspectives between Forman’s (1998) “Innate Capacity” and Ferrer’s (2002) Participatory Theory. Forman (1998) values deconstruction over Ferrer’s (2002) constructivist approach. Forman (1998) believes there is a perennial psychology that displays a predictable method for mystical experience. Ferrer (2002) believes perennial approaches suggest a pre-given ultimate that subjugates other belief structures.

The elements of Forman’s (1998) “Innate Capacity” match very well to religious “none” values and beliefs. First, spiritual “nones” value their subjective experience of consciousness. This is a strong value in Forman’s (1998) approach as he believes intimacy with consciousness allows an individual to attain transcendent experience. Forman’s “Perennial Psychology” believes consciousness transcends cultures and eras through a human psycho-physiological structure. This structure contains two types of human consciousness, ordinary and mystical. Having reviewed the case studies of enlightened historical mystics, Forman (1998) believes there are innate features that makeup human psychology that allow mystical and transcendent experience.

The mystics studied by Forman (1998) used similar approaches to achieve mystical states and it focused on releasing the contents of our mind. Forman (1998) referred to this as deconstructing our mind from its distraction of material existence. Forman’s (1998) decontextualization encourages the letting go of anxieties, work and responsibilities of material life. Once relaxed and open, unfettered by worldly duties, we can access the mystical realm. Forman (1998) views this as available at any moment for all seekers. All humans are psychologically equipped with the tools to achieve mystical experience. This allows the religious “none” to utilize the raft that best fits their subjective worldview. There is no dogmatic authority brooding over the spiritual aspirant. The spiritual method that best allows them to lower sensory input and liberate them from distraction will produce transcend experience. Being based on perennial approaches from ancient wisdom, this aligns well with “nones” values.

Evolutionary Panentheism

Following the framework of Participatory Theory, another raft for spiritual development could be Evolutionary Panentheism (Murphy, 2012). Evolutionary Panentheism was organized in an essay from Michel Murphy titled, “The Emergence of Evolutionary Panentheism”. He brought together common threads of work by Sri Aurobindo, Lovejoy, Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, and de Chardin to emphasize the worldview. Evolutionary Panentheism’s philosophy of consciousness is closely affiliated to Wilber’s (1995) Integral Theory. In fact, Michael Murphy developed a practice called, “Integral Transformative Practice” that still functions as an organization. The major influence in both approaches is Sri Aurobindo.

Evolutionary Panentheism has three core principles that allow an individual the freedom to assess its fit. First, the individual must commit that evolution is a fact. Second, one must believe our universe arises and is constituted by a world-transcending supernature. That supernature could be referred to as, The One, The Universe, Spirit, Brahman, Buddha Nature or Christ Consciousness. Third, humans have a fundamental affinity toward that supernature and it can be accessed by transformative practice. There is an opportunity for religious “nones” within evolutionary panentheism as they believe in a world-transcending supernature. In fact, “nones” use similar language to refer to a transcendent higher power. “Nones” are highly educated which would encourage their belief in evolution. “Nones” seek personal transformative practices to engage their fundamental affinity to a transcendent supernature.

Evolutionary Panentheism favors the uniqueness of each human being as an expression of the spirit’s drive to wholeness. It observes supernature as immanent in and transcendent to material reality. Through all material existence it seeks to find its way back to source through the impulse of evolutionary action. As human beings have attained the highest level of consciousness, our main achievement would be the evolution toward wholeness with the divine. This is synonymous with de Chardin’s Omega Point where the universe meets its ultimate goal of unification (Murphy, 2012).

Murphy (2012) ends his essay by pointing out potential areas of evolutionary striving toward higher levels of attainment. Murphy (2012) believes sports to be an example of higher achievement thanks to the supernormal phenomena it evokes. He reflects on Olympic records being broken across all ages. He also provides other examples where we may see future extensions of our potential. Architecture and landscaping have been found to positively influence mood, consciousness and behavior. Novel writing is growing in depth from the complexities of story writing, surprise and scale of higher powers. Cinema continues to inspire and captivate us with its ability to increasingly display phenomena once invisible to our imagination. In this model is an expectation of growth and more complexity as evolution pushes the species to higher forms of expression (Murphy, 2012). Evolutionary Panentheism aggrandizes the human spirit and believes universal powers are at play to encourage higher forms of expression toward a universal source. Murphy (2012) highlights multiple spiritual practices that support continued growth and development to experience of highest potential. The “nones” may find peace with this philosophy as it allows for creative spiritual practice and encourages the unique expression of each individual.

Spirit Tech

The modern era has embraced the continued advancement of technological innovation. There are now uses of technology to improve our spiritual experience, accelerate our spiritual learning and enable transcendent experiences. Denton & Flory (2020) in their book, “Back Pocket God: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Emerging Adults” highlight

our emerging mindsets from the influence of technology. Their research uncovered the emerging adult population views religion and spirituality as an app on their phone. They see God as manageable and patient who can be accessed on demand. Like a digital application, God is reassuringly there awaiting to be called upon when the consequences of life deem his assistance appropriate (Denton & Flory, 2020).

Future generations will continue to look for technological options for spiritual experience. They will have a plethora of options that are just beginning to emerge. A new approach to enhancing spiritual experience is transcranial focused ultrasound stimulation (tFUS). A MRI is required to map the brain to find the exact location of the basal ganglia and the posterior cingulate cortex. An ultrasound machine is then focused in this area of the brain while the individual meditates. Beta testing has produced effective results that enable deep experiences of meditation. Meditation beginners can achieve deep levels of meditation typically only observed in long-time practitioners (Wildman & Stockly, 2021). Neurofeedback is also being utilized to help individuals with several health and wellbeing goals. In neurofeedback an EEG machine detects different voltage changes within the brain in real time. The use of software helps to quantify the brain waves, identify their effect and produce images and sounds that elicit the desired brain state. This approach has been used to treat many disorders such as anxiety, depression, seizures, ADHD and others. Quantitative Electroencephalogram (qEEG) can be utilized to enable entry-level meditative states. The individual must use more advanced manual techniques to achieve deeper meditative states but qEEG has been helpful getting individuals started (Wildman & Stockly, 2021).

Group engagement is important for spiritual communities. Wildman and Stockly (2021) highlight the human connection that was lost during the 2020 COVID pandemic. Humans can develop feelings of collective effervescence when they are together at a concert, dance club, political rally, sporting event or self-improvement workshop. Researchers are attempting to replicate these experiences and there are some relevant options. A technology called *Groupflow* is being utilized to establish deep, synchronous connections within groups of individuals. An electrocardiography (ECG) device is connected to the individual's torso and measures the individual's heartbeat. The individual can see their heartbeat pulse from a colored light in a mason jar. Headphones are utilized so individuals can hear their heartbeats. Groupflow allows the group to share the sound of their heartbeat with other participants. Paired with a guided process that imbues the colored jars with sacredness and meaning, individuals find deep connection with the group (Wildman & Stockly, 2021).

Those who seek their spiritual experiences through technology can find options in Virtual Reality. Virtual reality allows individuals a sense of freedom to be fully authentic. The disguise of the avatar they create lowers the veil of self-consciousness and produces an atmosphere of anonymity that allows for deep authenticity. Individuals meet in virtual churches. Ministers have created church events in virtual reality and developed non-

denominational communities that are open to everyone. One organization called VR Church has four services on Sunday across the globe (Wildman & Stockly, 2021).

For individuals looking for spiritual transcendent experiences, Dr. David Glowacki from the University of Bristol in the UK developed a multi-person virtual reality journey called “Isness”. Instead of being displayed as an avatar in virtual reality, participants are displayed as glowing energetic essences. They enter a space with three other participants. They have mudra gloves that allow them to see each other in the space and touch hands. By altering aesthetic parameters of the virtual space, facilitators can construct up to thirteen phenomenological states. These states may include connectedness, transcendence, ego dissolution, unity and noetic qualities that are consistent with psychedelic drug effects (Wildman & Stockly, 2021). Researchers are calling these experiences numedelics due to their indistinguishable consistency with high doses of LSD, psilocybin and mescaline. Participants involved in the Isness studies report having peak experiences and mystical experiences (Wildman & Stockly, 2021).

The use of psychedelic drugs is also a raft in the world of spirit tech. Recreational use of psychedelics is becoming available due to the loosening regulations prohibiting their use. For those seeking spiritual development there are many opportunities. Ayahuasca has become a popular psychedelic adventure for spiritual seekers. It has been shown to reduce anxiety, lower depression and enhance wellbeing. Due to its regulatory limitations in the United States, individuals seek ayahuasca experiences in South America. South America offers many options for Ayahuasca journeys. Research is required to ensure safe and effective experiences. Wildman & Stockly (2021) emphasize the importance of ceremony and ritual by shamans who have been influenced in South American ayahuasca traditions. Ayahuasca regular use has been correlated with decreased anticipatory worry and high self-transcendence scores (Wildman & Stockly, 2021).

There are organizations in the United States that offer legal use of psychedelic substances. One of these organizations is called Uniao do Vegetal (UDV). UDV has become attractive to western spiritual aspirants who prefer expanded consciousness and mystical experiences. Similar to the religious “nones”, those participants in UDV are averse to Catholic doctrines (Wildman & Stockly, 2021). UDV participants often take an ayahuasca brew and engage in dancing. The goal of this ceremony is to produce a trance state called *burracheira* which is characterized by concentration, a search for clarity, self-knowledge and personal transformation (Wildman & Stockly, 2021). The Native American Church is also an option for spiritual seekers. The Native American Church legally utilizes peyote (mescaline) to encourage psychedelic experience and transcendent phenomena. Ritual and ceremony often accompany the psychedelic as these organizations seek to honor the traditions of their culture (Wildman & Stockly, 2021).

There are robust opportunities for the religious “nones” to develop a spiritual life free from authoritative dogma and institutionalization. The options offered in this essay include

Ferrer's (2002) Participatory Theory, Forman's (1998) Innate Capacity, Murphy's (2012) Evolutionary Panentheism and Wildman and Stockly's (2021) Spirit Tech. These options were carefully chosen to align with the values of religious "nones". All the options have authors who have been published in transpersonal journals or books. Spirit Tech has several references to transpersonal literature. It is hoped that these choices influenced by the values of religious "nones" has provided a connection to transpersonal studies. This essay argues for the opportunity of transpersonal professionals to assist the religious "nones" with their spiritual development. A consideration for transpersonal professionals may be Spiritual Direction.

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Direction has historically been a role encased in traditional religion. The Spiritual Director would counsel with clergy and participants within the congregation to enhance spiritual development. Historically, the Spiritual Director was an authoritative manager who demanded respect from the pupil. Wildman and Stockly (2021) see this role transforming in the future. They observe a need for knowledgeable and eclectic Spiritual Directors who can meet the needs of "nones" and technology-based generations. The Spiritual Director will act more like a facilitator, guide or coach rather than an authoritarian boss. It could be the Spiritual Director's role is referred to as an *anam cara* or "soul friend".

Wildman and Stockly (2021) offer three opportunities for spiritual direction as new technologies and spiritual development tools are uncovered. First, to quell the siphoning through options in the spiritual supermarket, they believe a studio can be offered that enables introduction to several technological spiritual modalities. Secondly, they see the Spiritual Director able to provide integrated and curated approaches to spiritual seekers. One advantage of using qEEG is its ability to produce a brain map. Researchers have found enough consistency across groups of people that would allow them to create profiles. Understanding these profiles resulting from the brain map would inform Spiritual Directors on the most useful technologies for spiritual development. The third option presented by Wildman and Stockly (2021) is providing guidance. A skillful spiritual director who is well informed on the latest technology but also understands traditional approaches could serve as a mentor along the journey (Wildman & Stockly, 2021).

Wildman and Stockly (2021) see the new Spiritual Director as religiously nonaligned. They could provide secularized and demythologized versions of Spiritual Direction. They observe this following a path similar to psychotherapy and post supernaturalist/post religious forms of spirituality. They believe this role will be perceived as an element of healthcare as it encompasses spiritual, mental, and physical dimensions of the human being. They believe the Spiritual Director should be empowered to prescribe entheogens, counsel those who have had psychedelic experience and offer the best retreat centers for ayahuasca quests. As with any new technology the regulatory and safety guidance is still lacking. Researchers have not had time to perform longitudinal studies to determine the

long-term effects of neuropathy and neurofeedback approaches. Wildman and Stockly (2021) see the Spiritual Director as assisting spiritual seekers on safe and effective journeys that enable their spiritual success.

Conclusion

Transpersonal studies students are well positioned to meet the needs of a growing religious-less population. Transpersonal students will be introduced to many of the methods and technologies for spiritual development in their coursework. Psychedelics are becoming an area of research for transpersonal students and will arm them with the knowledge to guide the “nones”. More traditional forms of spiritual development that envisage higher powers to self-transcendent experience are well represented in transpersonal literature. This offers an opportunity to students who may be interested in Spiritual Direction roles. The beliefs and values of religious “nones” are well suited toward transpersonal studies. This seems to be a match made in secularized heaven and provides a response to those who understand the plight of the religious “nones”.

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