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To: TNI ARCHIVES
Subject: COULD SPIRITUAL REGRESSION BE CONSIDERED A RELIGION?

As to the question of whether spiritual regression in a PL and LBL context could be considered a religion, I would answer no. To my mind we represent a spiritual philosophy. But to respond to this question fully I am going to compare our work with some similarities and differences of various religions around the world. We characterize religious institutions as having set doctrines and ritual where authority of enforcement is exercised based on both empiricism and traditions from the past. This can also involve superstition and prejudice. While religion has comforted millions over the centuries with the concept of God and a better life, they have also delayed human advancement by exercising severe repression, demands for conformity and outright cruelty toward any resistance to doctrine. The major religions have a reputation of having a fear-based history along with concepts of demons, hell and punishment for the sin of simply being human.

Religion is institutional in scope and so are we in TNI but in a different way without the intermediaries of priests, ministers, mullahs and holy men. Spiritual regression has none of these aspects because our word "facilitator" does not fall into the same category as religious intermediaries. Even so, during our intense training helping students learn our techniques, we could be considered as spiritual directors as well as teachers. Additionally, as a spiritual organization, TNI does expect our LBL facilitators to follow a format of proven methodology. We allow some latitude depending upon the circumstances of the individual client, the hypnotherapist and the session itself. Yet, while each client is unique, we do expect the belief system, abilities and behavior of the facilitator to be congruent with our procedures. This is, after all, a one-on-one experience of heightened communication between client and facilitator. It is not a religious congregation of adherents who come for sermons of theological ritual and lesson learning in a more inflexible format. With regard to individual counseling by traditional religious practitioners, it is expected that they must not only be competent but also conform to church doctrine and acceptable conduct in their practice to remain in good standing. Ethical standards are also in place in TNI where facilitators are accountable to our organization for their actions with clients.

Certainly, it would be a stretch for people to consider what our organization has learned about souls in the afterlife as a formal religion. We are not pious or devout but we are scrupulous in the manner in which we impart ideas about our calling and have strong convictions about the value of our spiritual research. As a group of practitioners for spiritual regression, we want people to have a better life through understanding their true identity and the world around them. I believe we are making a contribution in the search for divine

meaning in life and I say this because there are so many who find no solace in any of the religions around the world. I also believe that the New Age of our period in human history is forcing even the old traditional religions to make adjustments in their dogma and become less rigid and more inspirational. Change comes slowly but the modern spiritual thinkers on earth endeavor to show why all religions should work to become more united in the community of humankind. It has been said that science is the source of a new pluralism that eventually will unite more people spiritually. This remains to be seen but in my lifetime I have noticed that, especially since the revolution of the 1960s, people have begun in earnest to look for belief systems that stressed the individual over collective religious authority dominated by what has been called, "Iron Age superstitions." Our movement is part of a modern spiritual process.

Does this mean that there could be a place for spiritual regression within a larger pantheon of religious faith? I would say a definite, yes because our methodology does qualify as a spiritual belief system. I know that LBL proves very graphically a sense of order and purpose from a higher source. Thousands of our cases show a consistency of spiritual reporting involving a divine plan. All religions have a quest for meaning and value in life and this is certainly true with spiritual regression. In this sense our goals are the same. Our clients come to us to find purpose into their lives by spiritual knowledge and learn about their own spiritual identity. I have also been asked if any of the world's belief systems could be equated with spiritual regression more specifically. For instance, the Hindus want their people to venerate pleasure and joy in living as long as the basic tenants of morality are practiced that do not harm others. In TNI, with each client, we find karmic aspects of morality that govern their lives especially in relation to improving the lives of others. After their sessions they often write to their LBL facilitator and explain they are happier and feel more connected to other people.

When I was an adolescent questioning comparative religions, my mother once told me that Buddhism is a gentle religion devoted to calmness and she was right. Despite my stated misgivings that the downside to Buddhism is their lack of understanding about the existence of the soul, their great contribution to the world was the development of an orderly plan of meditation. Buddhist meditation teachings explain about how to empty the mind of all extraneous thought and then focus on single elements through a person's inner being. I went through this program myself at a wat in Northern Thailand and know it's value. Going inside yourself in a search for truth was their path to awareness and then enlightenment. Unequivocally, this is a foundation of our methodology with clients in deep hypnosis. On the western front of religion, what I especially appreciate about Judaism is their avoidance of dogma in answering questions about life, death, good and evil. These profound questions are never simplistic in Judaism because in this religion the underlying theme is to give the seeker of truth the spiritual tools to struggle for answers within themselves rather than telling people what they must do. This is definitely compatible with what we teach in TNI.

Both Jews and Muslims have an identical monotheistic concept of God as absolutely one, without plurality. While this makes sense to me in terms of defining prophets on earth rather than living gods, I believe the souls of our clients experience a plurality of higher sources between lives. We are told this is even more evident at the end of their incarnations on earth. There is no question about the sincerity of the reports of still-incarnating souls who tell us about a unifying Oneness of sacred energy in the spirit world in their experiences between lives. Christian theology states that a holy spirit exists within all of us. This does fall within the tenants of our spirituality although we might use the words divine-like rather than holy because that label has a deified connotation. I will explain this further.

There are factions of the major religions in the world along with spiritual philosophies that say we exist under the control of a transcendent deity who exists only from without rather than within us. This may appear as a contradiction. People ask; "how can a Creator live outside of the affairs of humans and also inside us as well in terms of personal involvement?" This ostensible inconsistency in religious texts is partly semantic. A better way to describe an omniscient essence is to not picture the concept spatially but rather as a state of unified consciousness. I have said that our work in spiritual regression has shown that the soul within us has been exposed to forces of higher intelligent awareness in the spirit world between lives. This is why I have called these "lesser Gods" as divine-like rather than an ultimate Creator. When a religious person states that God (or Jesus) spoke to them within their minds we believe it is the person's spirit guide or perhaps a soul mate in their spirit cluster group. Individual divine intervention often comes in crises situations to people on earth and they react to these messages very emotionally because it is so personal.

Turning to another tenant, the three major religions of the world stress charity and helping others less fortunate than oneself. Our research indicates this is a mainstay of karmic law which states that your choices have consequences. We do see this quite graphically from our case studies in TNI. For Muslims reading the Koran there is a stated belief system that soul's judge themselves after life. This forces total objectivity about how one has lived their life on earth. We find this also to be true in our case histories of souls in transition because soul's are harder on themselves than those spiritual entities around them.

I remember once being asked by a listener on a radio show to name one religion I was attracted to after I had made the statement that; "I was not religious but I hoped that I was spiritual." My response to the question was Taoism. Founded 2500 years ago in China, the Tao means "the way." I am not attracted to the superstition and passivity of Taoism but rather their belief that while on earth we may not fathom life but we should understand that our spirit is in transition to higher and higher levels of awareness. Also, that it is best to live life by appreciating nature around us through the alignment of self with universal energy and to live wisely by avoiding conflict and friction since this causes a draining of energy. While I have not always lived this way myself, I recognize that disturbing emotions do detract from a harmony

of the mind and make one less productive. I have worked over the years to keep myself in better control because I am fighter by nature about the causes I believe in. This toughness and discipline has served me well, for example, in my clashes with occasional fundamentalist hecklers at my lectures and in the early days of SSR and TNI dealing with disruptive malcontents in our organization. In my meditations I always tried to align myself with a universal energy. This is the foundation of Taoism. A Taoist supports the spiritual idea of co-existing with your subliminal, or unconscious, mind that we would call the superconscious. This deep hypnotic Theta state exposes the soul as an identity conjoined to the human brain. There are quite a number of principles from Taoism that reflect our own philosophy at TNI one way or another.

Spiritual regression does not teach a way of life. This is not our role because it must come from the client. In concert with our clients, we help them uncover an inner life not limited by time that is based on order, purpose and the value of goodness. From this spiritual knowledge with our hypnosis clients we try to foster the inspiration of a more balanced mind in harmony with our environment. We attempt to remove the fear of death and loss of personhood within the client that will lead to a more productive life helping both themselves and others in our international community. Our goal is not to convert the atheist, religious fundamentalist or anyone in between but to present a spiritual choice that does not fall into any particular philosophical camp. The spiritual principles we advocate are listed as 14 points called, The Way of Souls, in the back our text, Life Between Lives Hypnotherapy, under the Appendix.

I would like to close this position paper with the following statement that in my experience has brought the objectives of religion and spiritual regression closer together. In a sense, there is almost a religious aspect to what we do in LBL. When one of our clients looks deep into their own human soul we as facilitators become both bystanders and participants in this psychological process. It does involve a sequence of enlightenment. Sitting next to the client who is experiencing the duality of mind and body—perhaps for the first time—we witness both the attachment and, curiously, traces of alienation of an ageless, unworldly immortal soul who is only here temporarily in their host body. For me, as a facilitator and counselor, I must say I always felt there was a divine quality to the expression of a soul's wisdom through the client. It was as if I was also involved in a kind of ecclesiastical role and with this holistic wonderment of an ordered afterlife came humility on my part. Frankly, there were times when I considered my office as a spiritual sanctuary, rather like a chapel.

Michael Newton