



Psychotherapy, Religion and Spirituality
Jay Einhorn, Ph.D.
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Contact: PDF on request

- ◆ Jay Einhorn, Ph.D., LCPC
- ◆ jay@psychatlarge.com
- ◆ 847-212-3259
- ◆ P. O. Box 370, Wilmette, IL 60091
- ◆ www.psychatlarge.com
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The Elephant in the Dark

(Rumi, Sanai)

- ◆ Several blind men, or sighted men in a very dark place, never having heard of an elephant, try to find out what one is, by touch
- ◆ Ear: “A Fan!” Leg: “A Tree!” Trunk: “A Pipe!” Tail: A Rope”
- ◆ Without sight or light, that’s all they can do
- ◆ Thus Psychotherapy, Religion, and Spirituality, often seen as separate, dis-integrated, different domains of experience
- ◆ Are all expressions of aspects of human nature, and overlap

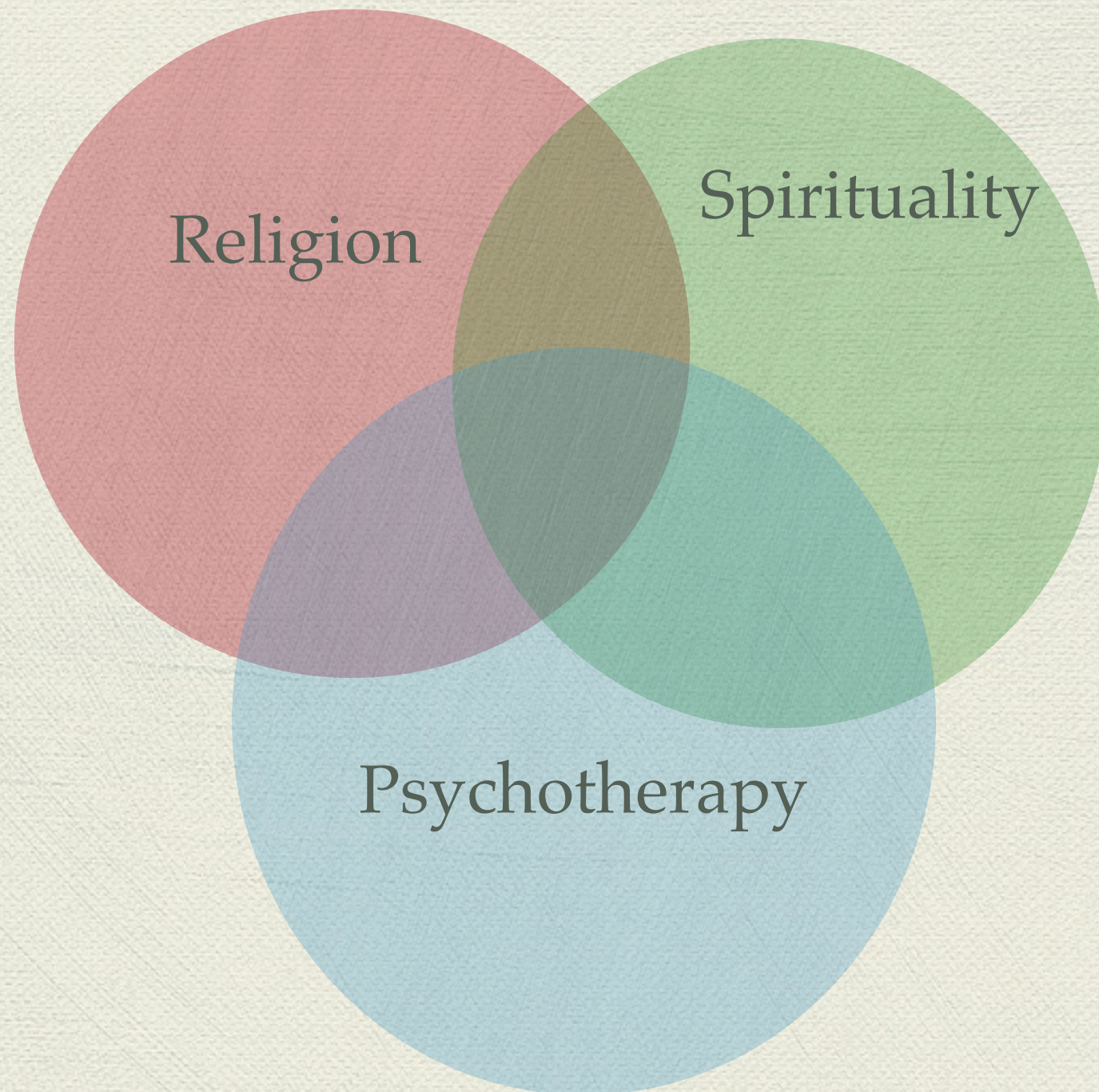
A diagram consisting of three overlapping circles. The top-left circle is red and contains the word 'Religion'. The top-right circle is green and contains the word 'Spirituality'. The bottom-center circle is blue and contains the word 'Psychotherapy'. The circles overlap in a triangular arrangement, with the bottom circle overlapping both the top-left and top-right circles.

Religion

Spirituality

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy, Religion and Spirituality Are
Often Thought of as Separate Domains



But Have Overlapping Dimensions

Psychotherapy, Religion, Spirituality, Shared Fundamentals

- ◆ There is lots going on in our minds that we don't know
- ◆ Causing mistaken perceptions and behavior, illusions that undermine us, unnecessary and unproductive suffering
- ◆ There are also resources for higher levels of "being"
- ◆ Awareness facilitates transformative reorganization of self
- ◆ And is cultivated through certain kinds of effort in the context of facilitative relationships

I. Psychotherapy: A Peculiar Relationship

- ◆ Two strangers meet, to talk about the problems of one of them
- ◆ The person with problems discloses private information
- ◆ About love, sex, emotional pain, wishes, griefs, physical and emotional abuses and injuries suffered and committed
- ◆ The helper discloses comparatively little personal information
- ◆ The person with problems finds meaning and reorganization
- ◆ And then they never see each other again

Psychotherapy: Problems They Talk About

- ◆ Spouse /lover, parents, children, siblings, friends, neighbors
- ◆ Business / professional colleagues, supervisors, subordinates
- ◆ Emotions / needs: love, anger, grief, respect, attachment, sex, ambition, achievement
- ◆ Needs and values, consistencies of self and purposes
- ◆ Morals / values, right / wrong, good / bad, purpose, meaning
- ◆ Their relationship itself, the therapy

Psychotherapy Is Born...

- ◆ In modern form, prior to W.W.I.
- ◆ At a time of intensive clashing and intermeshing of empires, cultures, economies, belief systems
- ◆ Throughout human history, a planetary culture seems to be evolving, often painfully, and at an accelerating rate
- ◆ Looking back about 900,000 years...

About 900,000 years ago



Artist's rendition of Happpisburgh, about 900,000 years ago./John Sibbick, AHOB

Settlements Support Stability



- ◆ "New Stone Age," by Allen Chandler, Haslemere Educational Museum

Trade Facilitates Interaction



Photo: Glogster

The Silk Road



Map: Wikipedia



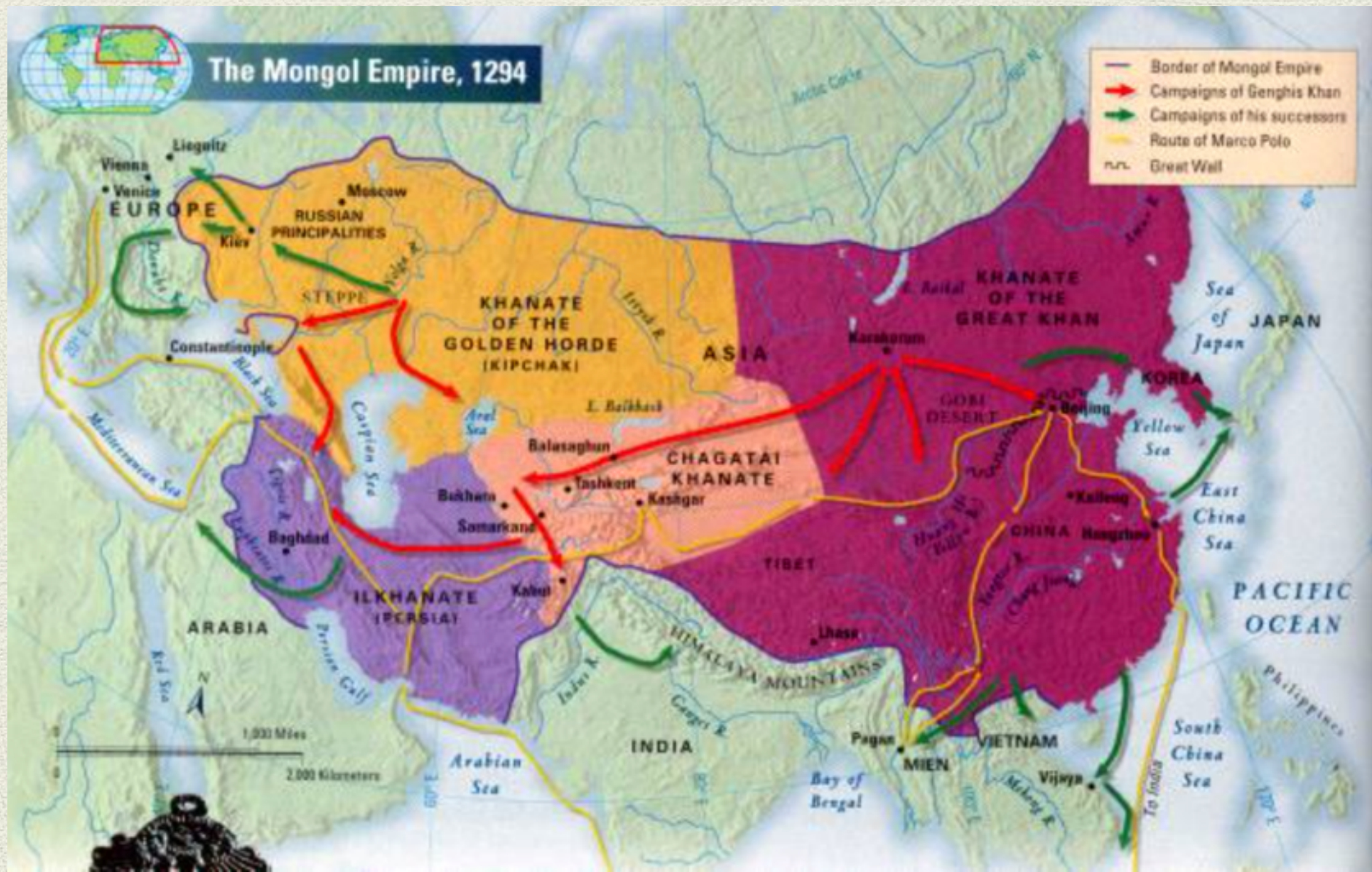
Rome at its height of power in 117 A.D.

www.biblestudy.org



Islamic Empire

3civs.weebly.com



Mongol Empire, 1294
asianhistory.about.com

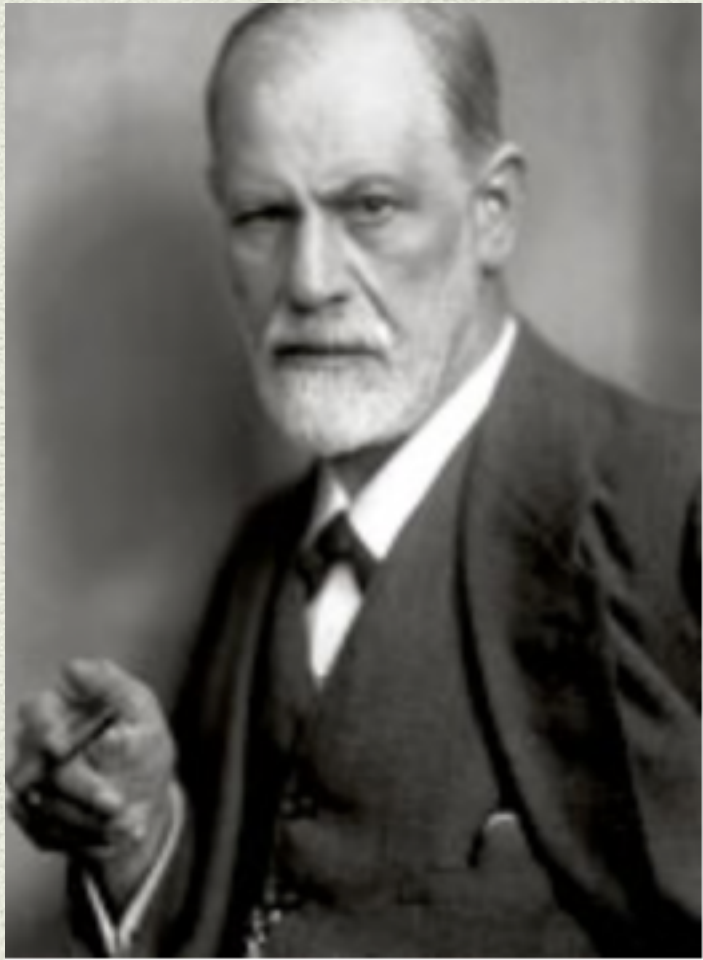


After W.W.I



Map: Wikipedia

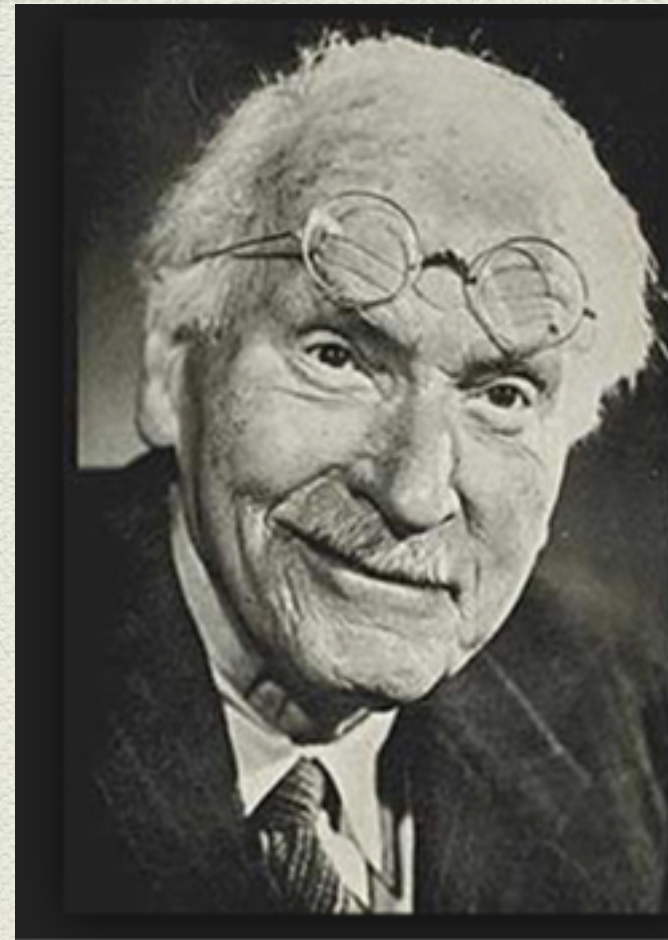
Psychotherapy Emerges Pre-Post W.W.I.



Sigmund Freud



Sabina Spielrein



Carl Jung

WTF

- ◆ What's The Formulation?
- ◆ Therapy is based on formulations about human nature
- ◆ Freud: basic drives conflict with social requirements, resulting in repression, unconscious conflicts, affective disorders, hysteria, etc.
- ◆ Jung: the unconscious, individual and collective, is a source of conflict and inspiration
- ◆ Spielrein: "Destruction as a Cause of Coming-Into-Being"

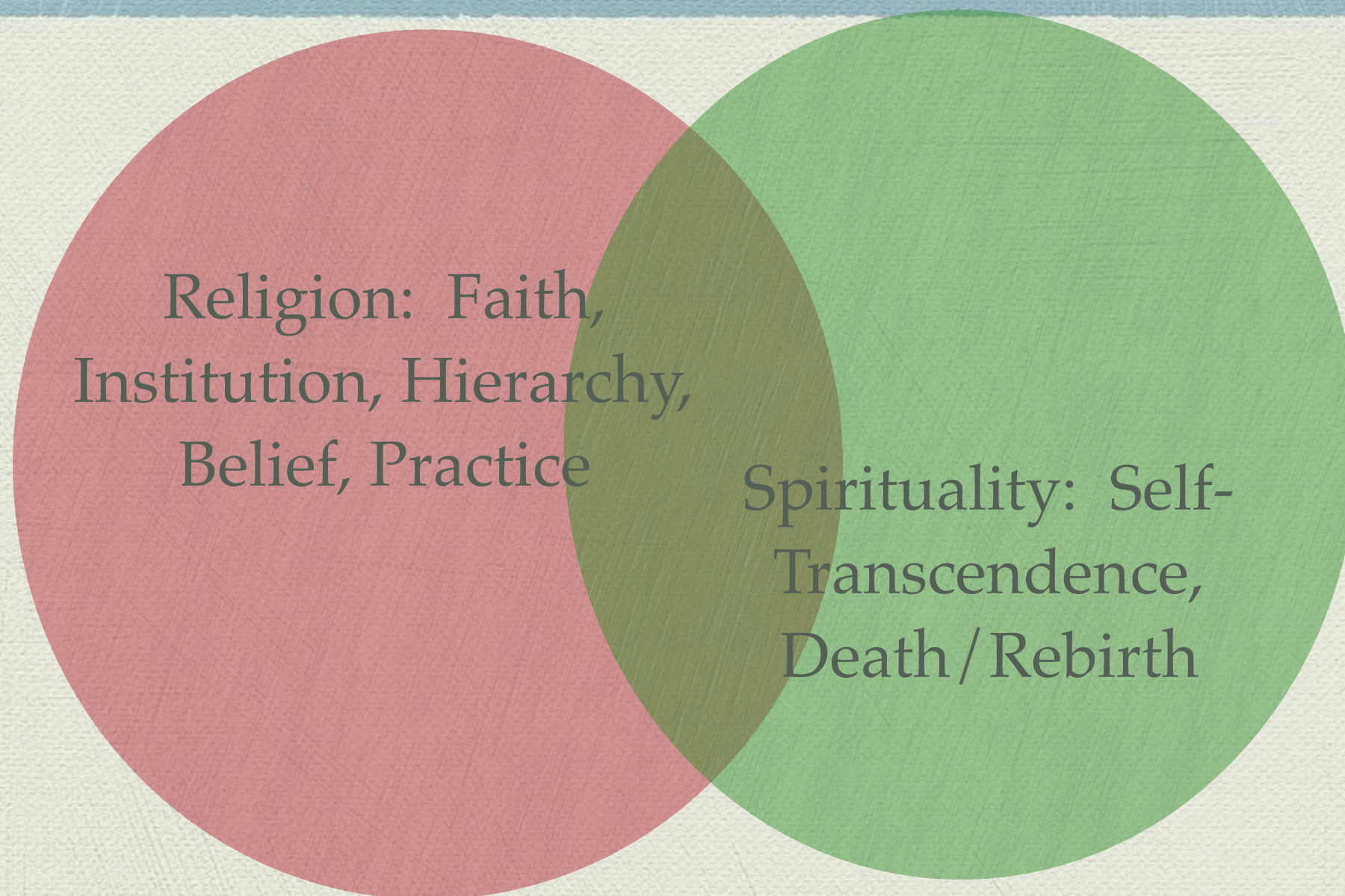
How Does Psychotherapy Work?

- ◆ **Reflection** supports awareness, “observing self,” (Deikman)
- ◆ **Relationship** supports detachment, micro self-transcendences, reorganization of self in a more functional way
- ◆ **Behavior change**, through various means and methods
- ◆ **Unconscious processes** come into awareness
- ◆ **Reconstruing**, new meanings > < new perceptions
- ◆ **Retranscribing**, new narratives of self and life

II. Religion and Spirituality

- ◆ There is a current trend to differentiate religion and spirituality
- ◆ Division 36 of A.P.A., formerly *Division of Psychology of Religion*, recently renamed itself *Division of Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*
- ◆ Practitioners of various faiths and spiritual paths recognize this overlapping and differentiation of domains

Religion and Spirituality



Religion and Spirituality

- ◆ Religion, in this model, is primarily a way of organizing individuals and groups, conferring individual and social identity through group membership
- ◆ Emphasizing doctrine, ritual, dogma, ceremony, and institutional authority in congregational organization
- ◆ Spirituality, in this model, is about self-transcendence, with cumulative top-down reorganizing dynamic in the individual and the group

“Two Roles of Religion”

- ◆ “Essentially, religion has two roles, which in all surviving systems have become confused through the absence of specialist knowledge in the publicists and most visible and active theoreticians.”
- ◆ “The first is to organize man in a safe, just and peaceful manner, to establish and help maintain communities.”

“Two Roles of Religion”

- ◆ “The second is the inward aspect which leads people from the outward stabilization to the performance which awakens them and helps to make them permanent.”
- ◆ Ustad Hilmi, in *Thinkers of the East*, by Idries Shah

Religion and Spirituality: Maslow's Motivational Hierarchy:

◆ Hierarchy of Motivation

- ◆ Being, self-actualization
- ◆ Individuation, uniqueness
- ◆ Status, identity in group
- ◆ Belonging to the group
- ◆ Security, safety
- ◆ Survival

◆ Religion / Spirituality

- ◆ Self-transcendence
- ◆ Authentic Self
- ◆ Hierarchy, status
- ◆ Congregation
- ◆ Doctrine, practice
- ◆ Survival

Prayer On Maslow's Hierarchy of Motivation

◆ Hierarchy of Motivation

- ◆ Being, self-actualization
- ◆ Individuation, uniqueness
- ◆ Status, identity in group
- ◆ Belonging to the group
- ◆ Security, safety
- ◆ Survival

◆ Religion / Spirituality

- ◆ Presence of divinity
- ◆ Not my will but Thy will
- ◆ Pray to be (seen as) righteous
- ◆ Pray to be loved, held
- ◆ Pray for the future
- ◆ Pray to live, now

Different Levels of Teaching: “The Strange Becomes Commonplace”

- ❖ A scholar asked the great sage Afzal of Iskandaria, “What can you tell me of Alim Azimi, your teacher, to whom you attribute qualities which have fashioned you?”
- ❖ Afzal answered: “His poetry intoxicated me, and his love of mankind suffused me, and his self-sacrificing services elated me.”
- ❖ The scholar said: “Such a man would indeed be able to fashion angels!”

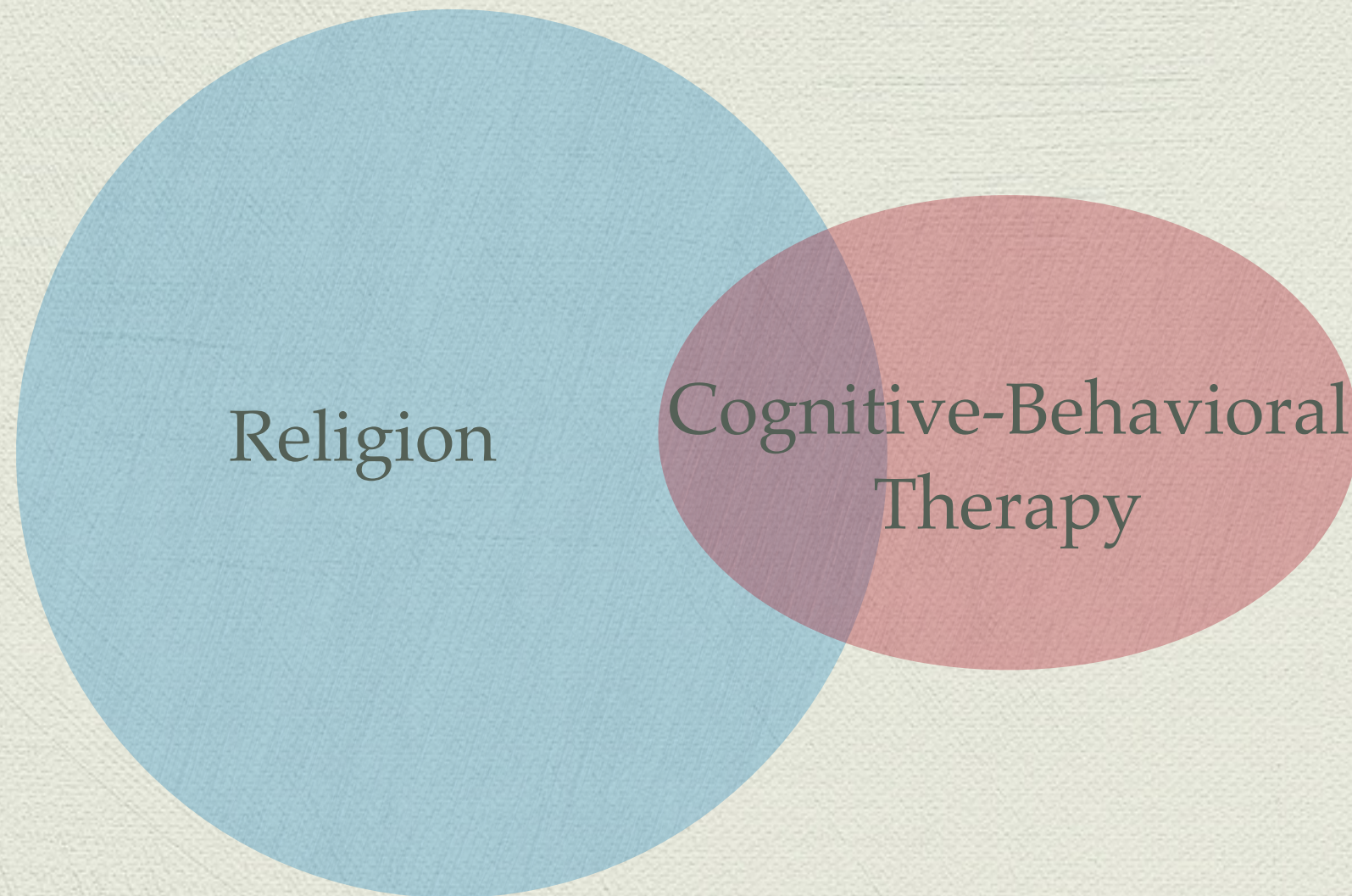
Different Levels of Teaching: “The Strange Becomes Commonplace”

- ◆ Afzal continued: “Those are the qualities which would have recommended Alim to *you*. Now for the qualities which enabled him to help men transcend the ordinary:
- ◆ “Hazrat Alim Azimi made me irritated, which caused me to examine my irritation, to trace it’s source.”
- ◆ “Alim Azimi made me angry, so that I could feel and transform my anger.”

Different Levels of Teaching: “The Strange Becomes Commonplace”

- ◆ “Alim Azimi allowed himself to be attacked, so that people could see the bestiality of his attackers, and not join with them.”
- ◆ “He showed us the strange, so that the strange became commonplace..”
- ◆ “And we could realize what it really is.”
- ◆ *The Dermis Probe*, Idries Shah

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy and Religion



Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy and Religion

◆ Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

- ◆ Specific instructions about what to think
- ◆ Specific rules about how to behave
- ◆ Manuals
- ◆ Implementation is obvious

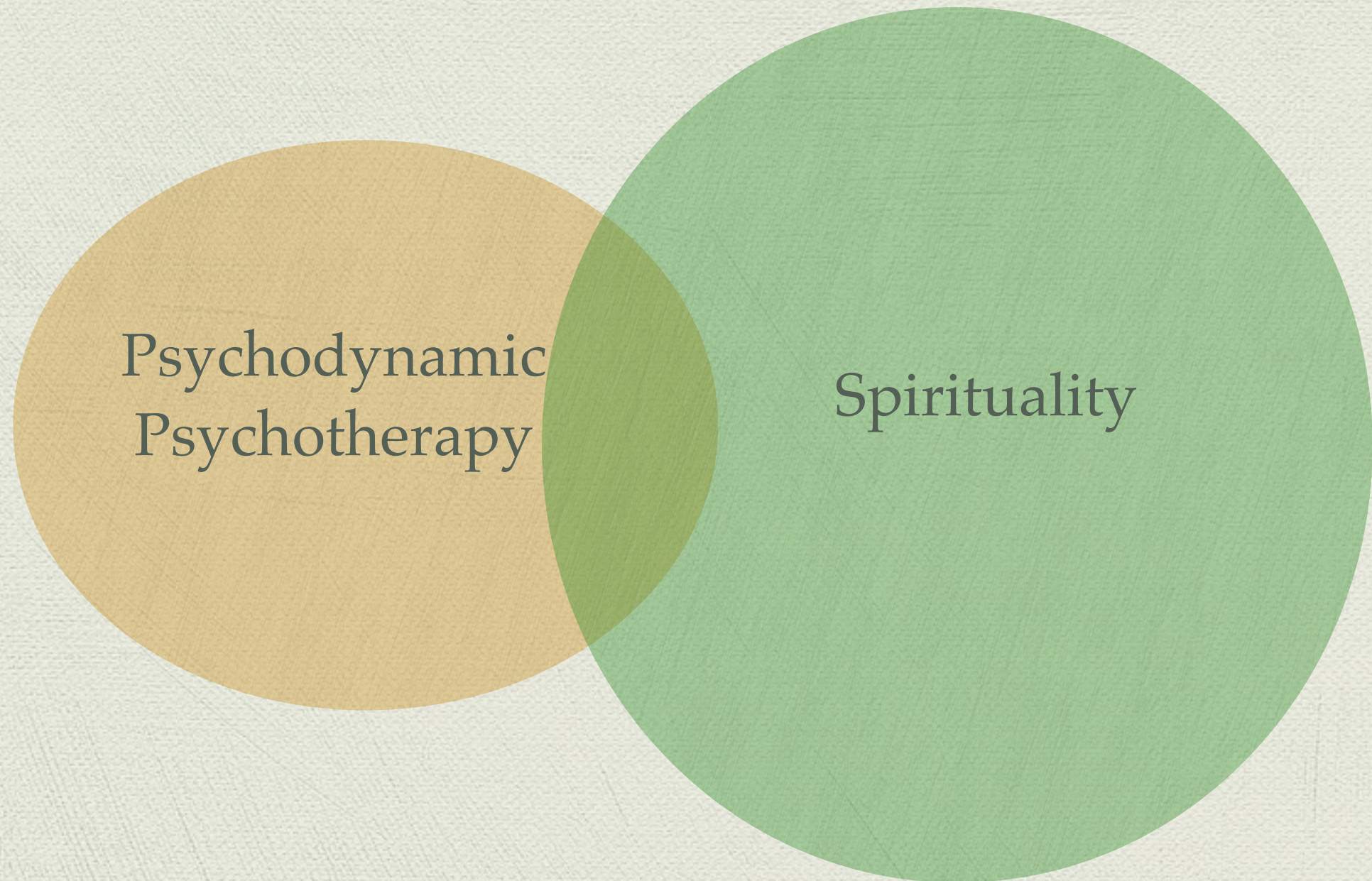
◆ Religion

- ◆ Specific instructions about what to believe
- ◆ Specific rules about how to behave
- ◆ Scriptures
- ◆ Implementation is obvious

Example: Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Intervention in a Religious Context

- ◆ Acutely suicidal client: “My sins are unforgivable”
- ◆ In fact, his sins were relatively minor, but inflated in his mind by a kind of unconscious self-importance
- ◆ Therapist: “Aren’t you usurping God’s authority, to judge and be merciful; putting your own judgement above His?”
- ◆ Provoking cognitive dissonance by challenging his interpretation of his own faith as faulty, on his faith’s terms

Psychodynamic Psychotherapy and Spirituality



Psychodynamic Psychotherapy and Spirituality

◆ Psychodynamic Therapy

- ◆ Core problem: Conflicts/splits between uncs. & cs. mind, & within the self, create suffering and undermine personal success
- ◆ Therapy >> self-observation
- ◆ Reflection, relationship, experience >> awareness of self and authentic needs
- ◆ Reorganization of self/life

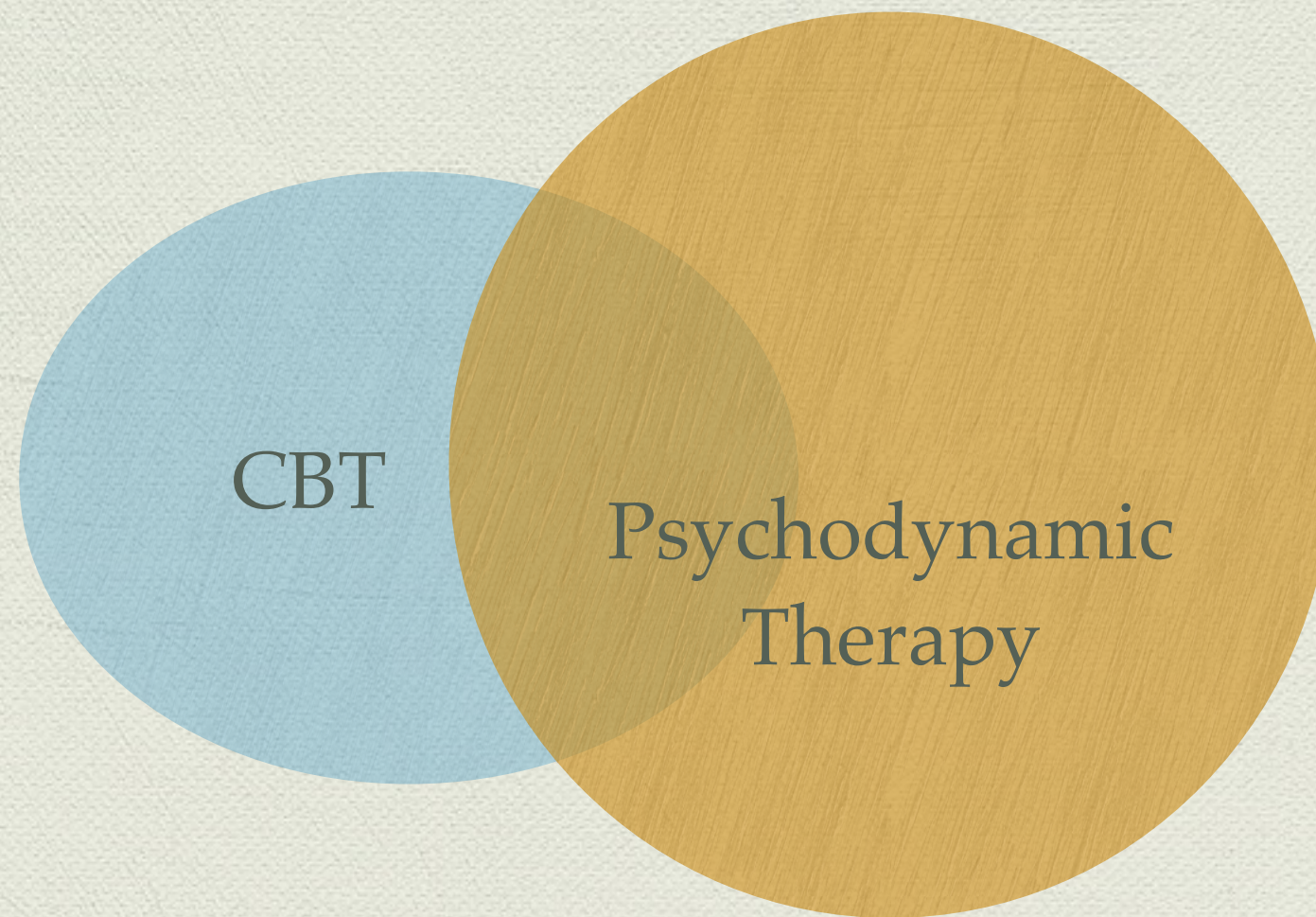
◆ Spirituality

- ◆ Core problem: The self as it has developed cannot invite or receive higher inspiration/guidance
- ◆ Reflection, relationship, effort and non-effort, increase awareness of self/truth
- ◆ The self reorganized/repurposed, in a new relationship with being
- ◆ Death/rebirth via stages

Example: Psychodynamic, Spiritually Informed Therapeutic Intervention

- ◆ Client's dream (pastor): He is diving underwater, can breathe in the water, swimming with confidence and strength toward a cave below him, where there is a dead body. He hears the phrase, "These waters are nourished by a dead body."
- ◆ Psychodynamic interpretation: the "dead body" may be that of his mother, the "waters" his psyche, which he is exploring, with new confidence and strength
- ◆ Spiritually informed interpretation: the "dead body" may be his former orientation to self, faith, & life, now in regeneration

Psychodynamics in CBT and CBT in Psychodynamics



CBT involves relationship and dynamic self-restructuring,
Psychodynamic therapy involves thinking and behaving differently

Repetition, Pre-specifiability, Idiosyncrasy and Uniqueness

- ◆ Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy tends to be repeatable and prespecifiable; the correct response is in the manual
- ◆ Religion tends to be repeatable and prespecifiable; the correct procedures and responses are in doctrine and practice
- ◆ Psychodynamic therapy tends to be idiosyncratic in relationship (for each client-therapist pair) and insights
- ◆ Every spiritual experience is unique, non-duplicatable

Neuroscientifically Informed Model

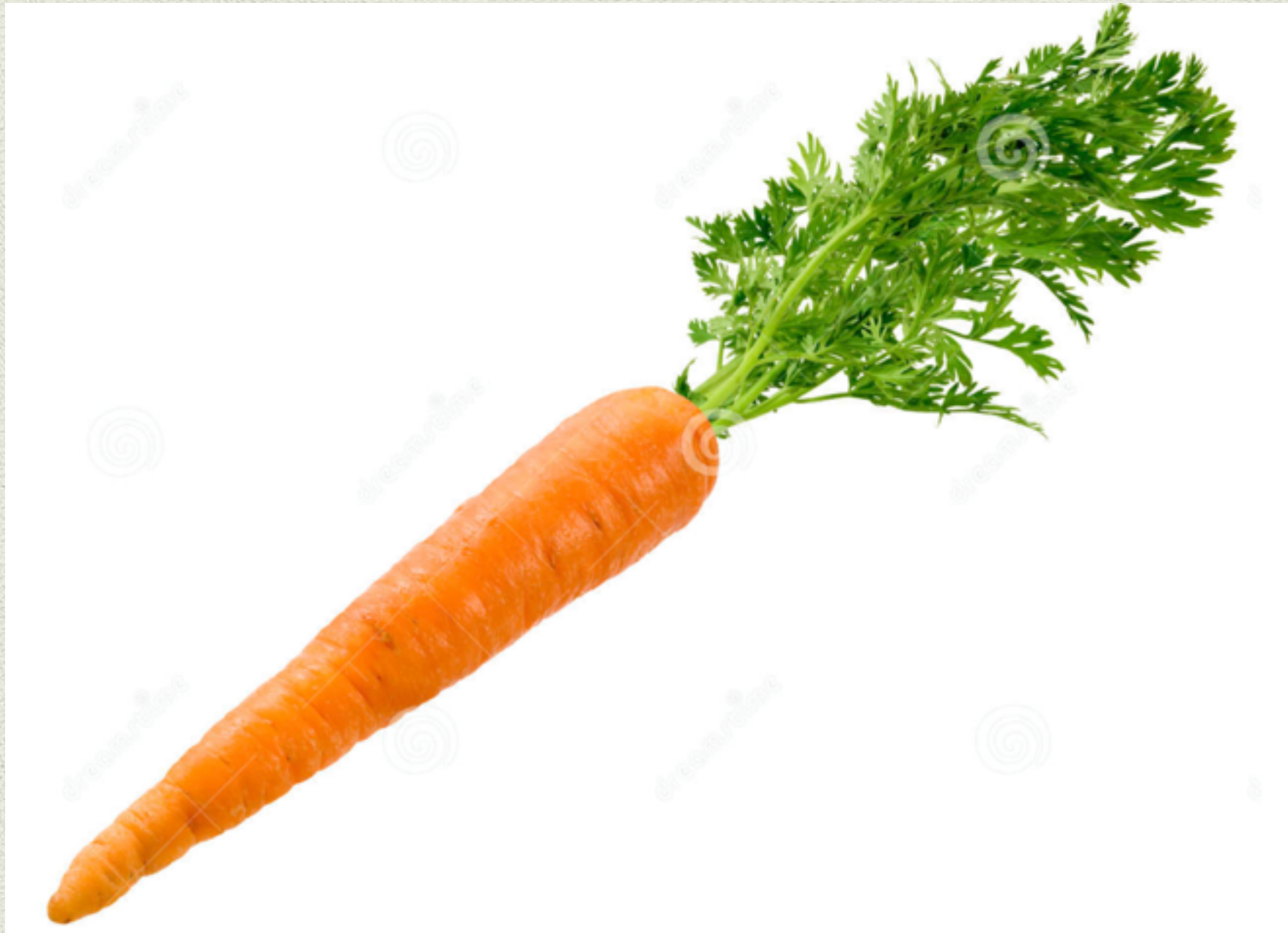
- ◆ Neural networks form Darwinially, and are evoked
- ◆ Each generate a particular state or expression of self
- ◆ With little consciousness of changing states, meta-awareness
- ◆ Self-observation, reflection, support meta-awareness
- ◆ “Which ‘You’ Are You” at any given time? (Pat Williams)
- ◆ Awareness of changing self-states is essential to both psychotherapy and mysticism (Arthur Deikman)

There is No “Once Size Fits All:”

- ◆ Psychotherapy
- ◆ Religion
- ◆ Spirituality
- ◆ “There are as many ways as there are hearts of men (and women!)”
- ◆ (A potentially rewarding meditation theme!)

Conclusion:

“The Value of the Past”



Conclusion:

“The Value of the Past”

- ◆ Nasrudin was sent by the King to investigate the lore of various kinds of eastern mystical teachers.
- ◆ They all recounted to him tales of the miracles and the sayings of the founders and great teachers, all long dead, of their schools. (*psychotherapy schools too, JE*)
- ◆ When he returned home, he submitted his report, which contained the single word: “Carrots.”

Conclusion:

“The Value of the Past”

- ◆ Asked by the King to explain himself, Nasrudin told the King:
- ◆ “The best part is buried.”
- ◆ “Few know, except the farmer, by the green that there is orange underground.”
- ◆ “If you don’t work for it, it will deteriorate.”
- ◆ “There are a great many donkeys associated with it.”
- ◆ *The Exploits of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin*, by Idries Shah

Thank You!



Jay Einhorn
jay@psychatlarge.com

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