

Winnicott's Infant-caregiver Dynamic as a Bridge between Pentecostalism and Sufism

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This paper attempts to demonstrate how the Winnicottian concept of transitional progression might serve to explain similarities between Pentecostalism and Sufism by analogy of the infant-caregiver dynamic. Therefore, it is necessary to explain how maternal attunement to the infant's biological needs support the infant's development of a moral sense of awareness. The concept of the caregiver is a significant factor that convenes transitional progression by the practice of interplay. Hence, this method of transitional progression, according to the caregiver's presence, is analogous to the practice of Pentecostalism and Sufism. Both denominations promote the internal regulation of ethical orientation by adhering to a care-based dynamic that serves to develop the moral compass. Wherein Pentecostal and Sufi spirituality encourage an internal effort to regulate moral attitude according to the desire to unify the heart to the presence of the Pentecostal sense of the Spirit, or the Sufi sense of the Beloved. In this way, ethical orientation is achieved by priming emotion in order to interpret what is right from wrong, transcending conscious efforts of logic and reason.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Winnicott, Sufism, Infant-caregiver dynamic, Sufism, Ethical orientation

Introduction

This paper explores the notion that the true essence of what one believes is located within emotional intention rather than logic and reason, and, therefore, ethical judgement is predetermined according to how one feels. In order to conceptualise a theory that proposes how emotion serves in a process that influences ethical formation, one should acquire an understanding of how emotive functionality takes precedence when one responds to an equation that calls for logic and reason.

The study of ethical formation has provided theorists with a mountain of workable models to demonstrate a logical sequence of investigating a method of processing information that reflects good practice. As such, rational deliberation offers many forms of analysis in providing a method to execute judgement. For example, deontological modality provides the essence of how one should conduct behaviour and 'is concerned with the necessity or possibility of acts performed by

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morally responsible agents' (Lyons 1977, 823). In this way, deontological efforts of reasoning rely on cognitive processes and the ability to rationalise information by logically evaluating a possible outcome. Likewise, a utilitarian approach employs logical sequencing of where to place the importance of a situation for the greater good, whereby the right choice of moral standing is one that considers the best outcome for all parties involved.

This paper proposes that ethical formation precedes conscious awareness, assuming that it is subject to an internal regulatory system, primed by the individual's aesthetic register (an internal system that processes information according to how one feels). This process determines a sense of moral judgement that is felt rather than logically sequenced, insinuating that an emotive structure regulates a sense of desire to do what is right. Therefore, the preliminary that governs behavioural conduct is initially unconsciously governed before it is consciously executed. Hence, Pentecostalism and Sufism both encourage the development of ethical orientation from an interpersonal encounter-based perspective to the idea of a greater Being that resides and is accessible within the metaphorical sense of the heart. Furthermore, one might suggest that the conclusion of this paper supports the notion that the human condition, in its quest for meaning and spirituality, transcends all denominational and cultural barriers.

Pentecostalism: The Significance of the 'Spirit'

Pentecostals attempt to relate their interpretation of experience as closely as possible to the biblical scriptures, as Pentecostal theology essentially develops from a position of experiential reflectivity. According to this method of interpretation the individual expresses his or her behaviour by what the Spirit internally manifests. In this way, Pentecostalism provides a lens that magnifies an ideological concept of the Spirit that is accessible to whoever wishes for an intimate encounter-based hermeneutic approach to understanding the Christian faith. Parker further suggests that space for the Spirit to move is essential within the Pentecostal tradition (Parker 1996 191), as it creates transitional opportunity for the individual to develop a self-conscious desire to access the Spirit.

This type of interplay with the Spirit resembles practices that can be interpreted as meaningful behaviour. According to Nicholas Healey, practices are not mere behavioural patterns but intentional informed actions performed by human agents (Healey 2003, 287–308). Therefore, the place of Pentecostal worship encourages desire to express a sense of Self in proximity to the Spirit. The primary objective is to feel the spirit move and to act out its interpretation in a symbolic form. Therefore, the concept of the Spirit provides intention of meaningful behaviour.

John Inge postulates that 'space has been Christified by the incarnation' (Inge 2003, 57). Metaphorically speaking, this further suggests that the Spirit defines the Pentecostal place of worship, as it is the real subject of the congregants' core reason to practise out faith, that it is the Spirit's work that is constitutive (Healey 2003, 287–308). Therefore, it is the Spirit that provides meaning and value to the individual's religious or spiritual orientation not deontological efforts of reason. However, scripture does indeed serve to guide, as Israel, Albrecht and McNally assert that 'texts' include not only written materials but also 'rituals' that assist communities to live and practice their interpretations (Parker 1996, 26).

Amos Young's rendition of 'Spirit activity' implements a sense-based construct that places an emphasis on affective-somatic sign as conducive for Pentecostal worship. This spiritual pedagogic structure is a felt process that implements a mode of learning through the senses rather than logically sequencing information that is consciously perceived. This is where felt emotion is of significance when applying a biblical structure to behaviour. Young highlights the essentiality of sensory modality to convey 'multiple modes of human knowing, [...] especially in its kinesiological dimensions as manifest in the touch that is inspired by the Spirit' (Young 2009, 167–188). This suggests that unconscious rhythms of meaning influence desire before it becomes consciously acknowledged. The true nature of Pentecostal identity is a celebration to desire the loving presence of the Spirit. Hence, 'we love before we know' (Smith 2009, 70).

Therefore, Pentecostalism may be defined as a denominational branch of Christianity that encourages interpersonal experience with the concept of the Spirit. This is developed through necessitating a form of interplay which provides an emotive framework that adheres to free expression. Hence, to grow in the Spirit is the intention of Pentecostalism, as the Church (a gathering of believers) is a spiritually living organism (Ephesians 4:16).

Sufism: A Way of Connecting to the Internal Sense of the 'Beloved'

The definition of Sufism is difficult to express, as the core of this discipline is indeed the nature of the heart. Therefore, when referring to emotional discourse to convey a method for coming-to-know a particular practice that renders cathartic expression to determine a religious or spiritual position, one relies on the senses to yield what might be a true reflection of this practice:

Sufism is a mystical path of love in which God, or Truth, is experienced as the Beloved. The inner relationship of lover and Beloved is the core of the Sufi path. Through love the seeker is taken to God. The mystic seeks to

realize Truth in this life and God reveals Himself within the hearts of those who love Him' (Vaughan-Lee 2012, 28).

The ideological notion that 'God, or Truth, is experienced as the Beloved' suggests that the individual who searches for meaning and purpose appropriates emotion to deliberate what is perceived to be the right form of moral action. In this way, actions of truth are executed according to a desire to be united with a true sense of what the 'Beloved' might mean to the individual. Taken literally, Sufism is the exploration of discovering the true essence of a praxis that encourages submission and love in order to gain closer proximity to the internal sense of the Beloved.

Hence, the way Sufism contributes to the psychosomatic nature of spiritual pedagogy is demonstrated through the ability to function according to the senses, regulating 'tauba' (repentance) through the will to desire 'heart-felt' change. St. Augustine of Hippo's sentiment conveys this notion in *The Confessions*, that spirituality is emotionally led according to the will of the heart (Chadwick 1992, 147). Therefore, emphasis is placed on how one feels in proximity to his or her own ontology of what God, or truth, might subjectively mean.

In order to qualify a position that endorses the Sufi's concept of intention and desire of the heart as the true essence of being, one is compelled to demonstrate that this can only be achieved by the practice of 'dhikr' (remembrance of God), 'for the Sufi aspires to remember God in every moment, [...] a remembrance of the heart, for it is the heart which holds the higher consciousness of the Self' (Vaughan-Lee 2012, 28). Accordingly, for the Sufi it is the heart that harbours the desire to seek union with God, as the heart yearns to dwell in the presence of the Beloved.

Transitional Progression as a Form of Spiritual Interplay

According to Winnicottian psychoanalysis, transitional progression is only conceivable during the practice of interplay (Caldwell 2011, 28), an integral part of self-discovery facilitated by the mother's (caregiver's) response to the infant's needs. This practice reduces anxiety in a manner that does not jeopardise the interpretative act, but rather provides the infant with an incentive to act out his or her discovery of what might be perceived as internal reality. In this way, Winnicott expresses that the dynamic of transitional progression adheres to a method of 'holding' (Abram 2007, 1851 and 4224), where 'holding' is defined as a state of comfort and security by attunement between the infant and the caregiver. This social dynamic emulates space to practise out self-actualisation in a playful mode. Therefore, the concept of 'holding' represents the mother's ability to attune to the infant's internal sense of reality, convening a method for creative play in attempting to achieve individuation (Winnicott 2005, 73).

The dynamic of attunement operates as a defining characteristic that determines healthy progression for the infant. For the infant, there is no distinction between the infant's own identity and that of the caregiver's, both parties are perceived as a unified whole. The essentiality of 'holding' remains a constituent for the infant, where the primal need for the presence of the caregiver is vital for the infant to successfully develop. Hence, the fabric of transitional awareness conditions a moral sense of orientation, as attachment to the caregiver conveys security (Koleva, et al. 2014, 185–194). By this practice the infant is unchallenged to exercise his or her own coming-to-be through transitional processes that lead to a care-based directive for moral development.

Thus, the same pragmatic feature which accounts for this dynamic affair between the caregiver and the infant may be applied to the functionality of spiritualism, such as Pentecostalism and Sufism. This is for the very reason that the internal concept of the caregiver (Spirit/Beloved) represents and attends to the individual's needs by encouraging moral development according to an internal need to discover the Self in unison with the caregiver. Thus, this assertion implies that the dynamic of Pentecostal and Sufi spirituality should provide a type of 'holding' state, just like a mother holds her infant. This is analogous to a concept of the Spirit or the Beloved holding the individual. However, in order to make such a claim two points need to be expounded; firstly, to assert a methodology that insinuates a 'holding' state that encourages transitional progression; and secondly, to identify biological significance in order to authenticate this position.

This internal method of assessing the environment must be subject to an internal process that necessitates a moral code of conduct that primes the senses according to emotive intentionality. In this way, the emphasis of ethical decision making is determined by the conscience of the individual rather than a standardised set of impersonal statutes and laws. Pentecostalism provides an example of this notion as this denomination typically encourages emotional practices that render expression as coming-to-know truth through experience. The practice of interplay serves in this manner to structure the aesthetic register in order to respond in accordance with a bodily based function that conditions unconscious orientation. Nimi Wariboko highlights the significance of experience-led theology and terms it as play, 'Pentecostalism is the sacred in a playful mode' (Wariboko 2012, 53). Play, therefore, provides an insight as to how Pentecostal Christians practise their theology, by developing an internal desire to direct emotive behaviour. The activity of Wariboko's sense of play harnesses the same properties of Winnicott's developmental practice of interplay, as, when the child plays, he or she performs the act of becoming (Zuzanna 2007, 5–11). It is this method of interplay that attunes the mystical essence of Sufism to the aesthetic register by providing the individual with an emotive reason to worship and please the Beloved of the individual's heart. This method provides a

sincere individual who seeks to discover truth with an ethical lens of how to process understanding of the world through the senses. Hence, practical functionality is initially precognitive until the formation of rational intention is established. Although interplay offers a method of understanding the world, it does so solely on the basis of the individual's relationship with the caregiver (Winnicott 2005 191). One might suggest that the Sufi's relationship to the Beloved is established in much the same way, through processes of affect regulation, as interpretative symbolic play stimulates emotional responses to situations that call for ethical judgement.

Therefore, within the context of Pentecostal and Sufi spirituality, the individual can discover a true sense of Self through transitional activity, subject to the caregiver's presence; doing a good deed is simply a by-product of active creativity through seeking truth. Pentecostal and Sufi spirituality serve in this manner also as a means to understand a situation according to a true sense of Self in proximal relation to the idea of loving the Spirit/Beloved.

A Bodily Based Method to Interpret and Understand the Environment

So far, the proposition put forward assumes the position that the process of conditioning moral sense is subservient to more than just a matter of logic, but rather an unconscious attempt to orient a true sense of Self in proximity to a spiritual quest for truth. This notion yields that cathartic expression is necessary, for the 'knowledge of God and knowledge of the self are interdependent' (Hauerwas 2013, 27). This conjecture leads encounter-based spirituality to an emotional type of understanding, intimately linking selfhood and morality by forming a dialogue between fairness and care (Gilligan 1982, 175).

In this light, Wariboko emphasises the importance of play as an emotional directive, ascertaining that creativity is a practice that influences ethical formation. This is expressed through emotive involvement: 'the process of creative emergence that figures and disfigures biological and social life.' By assigning a creative component to ethical formation, Wariboko indicates a value for conditioning unconscious intention, suggesting that moral choice is a felt process rather than a reasoned one. To strengthen this idea, James K. A. Smith argues that biological affective connectivity verifies a sense of what the world presents according to the individual Self (Smith 2010, 65). In this way, one learns right from wrong by means of experience rather than conforming to deontological efforts: 'we feel our way around the world' (Smith 2010, 72). This form of awareness generates what Anthony Damasio proposes as a feeling of knowing that is 'played out in the theater of the body' (Damasio 2000, 8), emphasising the importance of neurobiological rhythms

of consciousness that condition the senses (Smith 2010, 67). This process orients desire to influence an awareness of conscious, logical assessment of what is morally right and wrong, building on Smith's assertion that behaviour is unconsciously influenced. According to this principle, desire is the key to understanding the true intention of the will, discovering a sense of Self on a primal level. In this manner, rules delivered as a narrative or parable only steer the need to acquire the notion of 'virtue' (Hauerwas 2013, 95), as transitional progression aims to instil transcendent value. The observed effect of doing what is morally right permeates a desire to fulfil virtue ethics according to cathartic expression, where wisdom and knowledge operate as precursors (Devettere 2002, 95). Although sacred texts provide a sequence of applied knowledge regarding ethical reasoning, it is through attuning to the internal sense of what the Spirit or Beloved might require in order to orient the soul according to a moral way of conduct. This suggests that interdependent creativity is necessary in fulfilling a practice that bestows moral, transcendent identity, by the attachment process between the infant and the caregiver. For the Pentecostal or Sufi, this is achieved by emotionally learning ethical qualities by the desire to obtain the presence of the Spirit or the Beloved.

Henceforth, a care-based approach to a theory of ethical formation applies a code of interdependency between the individual and the maternal concept of the caregiver, asserting that the significance of the mother's (caregiver's) role and direct involvement during infancy are responsible for affectively developing moral conduct. In this way, the individual shares an emotional affinity with the caregiver as Nel Nodding suggests that ethical judgement is shaped by 'eros', the feminine spirit (Nodding 2013, 1). Milton Mayeroff also proposes that caring through the dynamic of relatedness assists in growth and self-actualisation (Mayeroff 1990, 1). These perspectives indicate that the caregiver moulds the individual's worldview.

Therefore, according to this proposal, moral development emphasises maternal value as forming an affinity between the infant and the caregiver. Winnicott terms this process 'primary psychic creativity' (Winnicott 1965, 99), where the mother attends to the emotional needs of the infant, facilitating an environment of comfort and security. Thus, this 'holding' environment is only possible if the infant attunes to the caregiver according to a familiar dynamic of relatedness, as what might be externally perceived is internally sign-posted in accordance with emotional relatedness. Consequently, should the individual's concept of the caregiver be displaced, the ability to process and order external stimuli will be disrupted as the adverse effects of anxiety are imminent due to an insufficient 'holding' environment.

The Significance of the Caregiver's Presence

The study of *kayak-angst* provides evidence to suggest how interpersonal familiarity

is important when processing and assessing external reality. Kayak-angst is a psychological disorder that can induce a state of panic and lead to paralysis. This condition is mostly associated with the Inuit hunters of western Greenland that go out at sea alone. Michaela Amering and Heinz Katschnig support the notion that kayak-angst is a form of mental dysfunction that arises out of a state of disorientation, which is brought on by sensory deprivation in a situation that leads to perceiving 'physiologic sensations' as threatening, and this can trigger anxiety (Oldham and Riba 1995, 586). Thus, the significance of mentally regulating orientation according to a familiar setting is paramount for psychological stability, implying that an innate structure to learn the environment is essential.

By examining disassociation of familiarity, one can perceive how important Winnicott's theory of transitional phenomena is when applied to the dynamic of the infant and caregiver structure, providing scope to suggest how significant interrelatedness actually is. In reference to kayak-angst, Zachary Gussow highlights the importance of a personal comforter, as in some cases the Inuit hunters would go out hunting with people that they knew and trusted in order to avoid feelings of anxiety (Gussow 1963, 18–26). Therefore, this comforter compensates for the loneliness and the lack of familiarity that is felt in the world. This process signifies that familiarity serves as a means for healthy development by entrusting the Self to a concept that emulates maternal attachment, regulating an interdependent exchange that ensures trust and security.

Henceforth, by emphasising an internal connection to the Spirit or the Beloved, transitional progression is based on the ability to care by metaphorically holding the individual to grow within a spiritually facilitated environment. This is achieved by administering maternal significance to the idea that the Spirit or the Beloved is the great caregiver responsible for the internal development of the soul, resembling the psychoanalytic notion of 'good-enough mothering' (Caldwell and Joyce 2014, 18–32). Accordingly, Winnicott developed this notion as good practice for maternal care, as it promotes the infant's alleviation from anxiety by providing space to practise interplay. The essential component of creativity subjects the infant to moral codes of conduct by the acceptance or withdrawal of love (Winnicott 1965, 99). The ideological notion of good-enough mothering provides a psycho-creative component that is expressed between the caregiver and the infant (Abram 2007, 4213), supporting the theory that internal spirituality guides moral judgement by shaping emotive intention. Analogously, it is through the acknowledgement of feeling close to a transcendent being that emotionally led ethical orientation develops. In this way, experience of the transcendent typifies an occasion for the individual to learn ways of moral conduct, as he or she acquires to do what is right through honest intention. Thus, it is through experience that directly modifies

behaviour in accordance with what is emotionally perceived.

Traditionally, experience provided the basis of pedagogical development; for example, the original Hebrew word for 'know' is *yada*, transliterated as 'yada', 'which connoted knowledge as an experience of an object in relation to the subject' (Johns 2012, 49). It is through interpretive action that a sense of knowing how to engage with the environment becomes subjectively clear. Aesthetic attunement to experience plays a role in preparing the individual to interpret and solve ethical dilemmas, in order to achieve a transformative experience. By this method the individual develops an identity that includes the notion of the Spirit or the Beloved through transitional means of stimulating desire through 'yada'. Experience in this context is subjective, a creative method that encourages interaction through transvaluation and mediates personal knowledge of how to engage in the world through spiritual means.

The process of interpretation through emotive means relates experience of the Self to what is perceived as subjective truth. Mary Midgley suggests that there is a need to feel the 'transcendental spiritual depth of the individual self' (Best 1996, 142), as this provides the basis of an aesthetic reality according to the dynamic of an unconscious affective regulatory system.

Therefore, religious institutions that promote Pentecostalism or Sufism provide an environment for moral development and spiritual orientation, by which the individual may find solace in the formation of a belief system that encourages the notion of a transcendent Being. In this way, Pentecostalism and Sufism encourage a code of moral conduct to circumvent anxiety. This code of conduct belongs to a set of standards that constitute a theory of function that serve as a need to experience the love of the Spirit or the Beloved. This locates the function of transitional desire as the reason for atonement and discovering a true sense of Self in relation to the love of a transcendent Being.

Similarly, Winnicott's model of 'holding' assumes an exchange, purporting socio-emotional mediation between the individual and the caregiver, developing neurobiological rhythms for self-discovery: 'the basic elements are put in place enabling the individual to pursue a path of ethical self-realization' (Meissner 2003, 21). Nodding highlights that the developmental processes are subject to moral sensitivity, adhering to attachment schemas formed in infancy, locating the sense of morality arising from an impulse in response to certain needs and feelings (Nodding 2013, 27). In order to provide a workable model for this theory it is necessary to examine the components that prime ethical judgement according to neurobiological conditioning.

Examining Neurobiological Activity in Priming Interpersonal Affective Regulation

The significance of interpersonal affective exchange during infancy should convey a theory of how the ability to process information according to social and psychical structures conveys interdependent relational value. Robert Emde provides evidence for interpersonal significance between the infant and caregiver, whereby ‘propensities for moral development are strongly biological, but require facilitation and direction through accumulated experiences within the infant-caregiver relationship’ (Schoré 2009, 7574).

According to research investigating the effects of interpersonal exchange in moral cognitive development, psychical regulation of the orbitofrontal cortex, anterior cingulate cortex, insula, amygdala, and posterior superior temporal sulcus orchestrates and influences awareness that organises emotional response, rendering affective regulatory involvement (Decety, et al. 2011, 305–307). Paul Vitz further supports this notion as he demonstrates how the right hemispheric function stimulates emotional-imagistic progression (Schoré 2009, 7578). This idea favours a theory that places progressive moral development as a product of ‘empathic processes’ (Schoré 2009, 7578), where the right hemispheric function directs empathic structures that lead to a sense of moral identity, construing emotional response as part of its sequence.

These biological perspectives provide support to speculate that maternal care constitutes the basis of the infant’s ability to develop according to the caregiver’s presence. An unconscious directive provides a sense of awareness that orients the individual’s trust by conditioning his or her sense of dependency upon relational inter-subjectivity. The ideal state is to induce a ‘holding’ dynamic that signifies internal regulation as ‘[a]ttachment experiences thus directly impact the neurobiological substrate of moral development’ (Green 2003, 40).

In sum, the internal caregiver’s presence ignites arousal that stimulates the development of moral sensitivity. Jean Decety et al. further suggest that emotional and affective processes are responsible for later development of moral cognition as these systems are strongly related (Decety, et al. 2011, 305). Progressive studies in neuroscience confirm that both ‘affective reactions’ and ‘cognitive reasoning’ contribute to moral judgement. However, the functional role of the neural circuit of reciprocally connected regions demonstrates automatic affective activity that overshadows but also influences cognitive reasoning (Decety, et al. 2011, 306). Hence, this supports the idea that emotively guided ethical orientation precedes conscious awareness.

A good example that metaphorically expresses this sentiment can be demonstrated by the dynamic of improvised jazz (Calhoun 2004, 4708). As such, the musician understands the balance and technique jazz requires in ensuring the right riffs and direction of the music, keeping in line with the style of the genre. This is achieved according to the ability to feel the music by the right temperament of correct timing and rhythm. As Jerry Coker, an authority on jazz music explains, '[f]ive factors are chiefly responsible for the outcome of the Jazz player's improvisation: intuition, intellect, emotion, sense of pitch, and habit' (Coker 1987, 3). This sort of expression purports the musician's feelings, expressed as creative play. Anyone can appreciate the expression of jazz, as 'Jazz is made up of many intangible qualities that create appeal. This appeal becomes a matter of personal choice' (Coker 1987, 81). Improvised jazz is not just sporadic sound but a system and style of music that evokes an emotive response. Like the jazz musician, the moral agent expresses ethical conduct through the instrument of the body.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to introduce the idea that ethical formation adheres to a care-based theory of function, which is analogous to the process of maternal attachment. This interdependent exchange is subject to an emotive quality, attuning the sense of Self to a concept of the caregiver by regulating a state of transition through interplay in order to infer moral conduct. Therefore, this insinuates that the philosophies of Pentecostalism and Sufism reverberate a similar dynamic in much the same way as a mother attunes to her infant, where the concept of the Spirit or the Beloved, through the process of interplay, raises awareness of an omnipresent being that provides comfort and security while engaged in a practice of learning how to interpret right from wrong through a bodily based hermeneutic filter. Thus, Pentecostalism and Sufism encourage an emotive state of play that develops an internal moral compass according to what is emotionally felt.

Therefore, the dynamic of an internal concept of the Spirit or the Beloved should resonate with Winnicott's theory of 'good-enough mothering' as this method supports the concept of a 'holding' state, suggestive of an environment for discovering a true sense of Self. This idea postulates that moral development is a product of relational interconnectivity that organically sustains the individual's ability to make choices based on how one feels.

Finally, Pentecostalism and Sufism operate according to a dynamic similar to improvisatory jazz whereby internal spirituality is the instrument that one obtains through being nurtured by the internal love one has for the Spirit or the Beloved. This method is regulated according to a heart-felt way of understanding, influencing ethical orientation, by encouraging the individual to express his or her Self through the means of emotion.

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