

cultural exchange must play a significant part. Sen conveys the poetry of new discovery and the flourishing of collaboration she experienced at Nesin Matematik Köyü, the world's first mathematics village. She paints an inspiring picture of a convivial space that seemed truly to enable free flowing inquiry, without the anxiety of assessment hanging over either teachers or students.

The book includes an insightful foreword by Joseph Milne and afterword by Valentin Gerlier. Both texts highlight the metaphysical considerations of re-imagining and engaging with the intelligence of nature.

By emphasising the connection between mathematics, nature and being, Sen makes a persuasive case for why mathematics is not just a technical subject, but a deeply human one that has the potential to transform the way we think about the world around us. Awe and wonder are vital in education today for inspiring curiosity, creativity, and a deeper appreciation of nature. When young people are able to recognise the patterns and phenomena that exist in the natural world, when they are able to draw comfort and meaning from 'reading' nature, they are better equipped and more inclined to steward it. The guiding principles of balance, harmony, efficiency and thrift that Sen identifies across many natural phenomena are enlightening. In *Re-imagining Mathematics*, we can re-imagine our relationship to the world, its resources and one another.

LEILA DEAR

*The Pursuit of the Soul: Psychoanalysis, Soul-Making and the Christian Tradition* by Peter Tyler. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016. 208 pp. Paperback: £23.99. Cloth: £75.

The need to rehabilitate the human soul into modern psychotherapy is paramount. Yet the present-day discipline of psychology and the field of mental health appear to be suffering from deep-seated amnesia, having emerged out of a desacralized worldview whose culmination was the Enlightenment project. This continues to be a prevailing influence even if rarely acknowledged. Even though psychology and psychotherapy have severed their roots from a foundation in sacred metaphysics, ontology and cosmology, these contemporary disciplines have simply become secular parodies of their traditional forebears.

An adequate notion of the soul is indispensable to any spiritual understanding of existence, and requires an intimate knowledge of humanity's religious patrimony. This is something that modern Western psychology does not appear to grasp. For millennia, traditional civilizations have regarded the person as consisting of Spirit, soul, and body—these dimensions of who we are cannot be ignored without doing

violence to the integrity of our very being. The soul is a mystery; it is immersed in time while also being grounded in the timeless. The human body is immersed in both time and space, whereas the Spirit transcends both. The human psyche belongs to the intermediary realm between body and Spirit, but partakes of both dimensions. With the loss of spiritual metaphysics in our contemporary culture, Western psychology has become correspondingly degraded. Any consideration of the psyche is altogether absent from the discipline and, as a result, the field of mental health has been in a state of disarray.

The book under review attempts to document the resurgence of the use of the term *soul* in contemporary discourse. The work is divided into three parts—*Part I: Origins of the Soul*; *Part II: The Return of the Soul*; *Part III: Whither the Soul?*—consisting of eight chapters in total along with a prologue and epilogue. In this work, Tyler wrestles with the question (and a deeply personal one for him) of ‘how to reconcile . . . working as a psychological analyst in the Jungian and Freudian tradition on the one hand, and working as a theologian and spiritual director in the Christian Catholic tradition on the other’ (p. 4). This is also challenging for many others who are struggling with the same question, because the very existence of modern psychology is due to the desacralization of a traditional ‘science of the soul’. Tyler identifies the crisis within the discipline today, yet does not address its genesis in the loss of a sense of the sacred.

In the first part of the text, Tyler highlights the ‘identity crisis’ looming in the discipline of psychology, which has lost its way due to having ignored the intermediary realm of the human psyche. In doing so, he makes reference to the crucial notion that we are tripartite beings comprising Spirit, soul, and body. References to the three-fold constitution of the human being can be found in St. Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians: ‘May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your *spirit and soul and body* be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Thessalonians 5:23). This tripartite structure of Spirit/Intellect, soul and body is known in Latin as *Spiritus/Intellectus, anima, and corpus*; in Greek as *Pneuma/Nous, psyche, and soma*; and in Arabic as *Rūḥ/Aql, nafs, and jism*. Tyler explores Plato’s views on the soul—which extended through Plotinus, Proclus, and St. Augustine—and the ways in which these informed the early Christian understanding of the psyche. It is this section that most clearly reveals, not only the impoverished aberration of the discipline today, but, more importantly, the urgent remedy needed to restore modern Western psychology to its rightful place. Here, the reader is also able to glean what a true ‘science of the soul’ might look like and how it would be able to support more authentic healing, in the quest to reclaim a fully-human wholeness.

The psyche—as understood from the earliest times—was inseparable from metaphysics, ontology, and cosmology; in this sense, it was connected to the whole of

reality. The human soul is fundamentally linked to the world soul (*anima mundi*). When the former suffers, all other souls suffer as well, including that which pervades the cosmos. According to traditional cosmologies, the world soul is to the universe as the human soul is to the human body. Plato (429–347 BC) made the following observation:

[Psyche] is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intelligible, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable; and the body is in the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintelligible, and multiform, and dissoluble, and changeable. (*Phaedo* 80B)

He identifies the transpersonal faculty of the Intellect as ‘the highest part of the soul’ (*Phaedrus* 248B–C), which is synonymous with the spiritual dimension in all beings. Plato articulates the traditional doctrine (largely lost today) of the two natures that we possess; namely an outer and inner dimension:

Of the nature of the soul, though her true form be ever a theme of large and more than mortal discourse, let me speak briefly, and in a figure. And let the figure be composite—a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. Now the winged horses and the charioteers of the gods are all of them noble and of noble descent, but those of other races are mixed; the human charioteer drives his in a pair; and one of them is noble and of noble breed, and the other is ignoble and of ignoble breed; and the driving of them of necessity gives a great deal of trouble to him. (*Phaedrus* 246A–B)

Plotinus (AD 204/5–270) addresses the affiliation of the world soul to all living beings by virtue of their common origin in the Absolute:

Now if my soul and your soul come from the soul of the All, and this soul is one, these souls also must be one. But if the soul of the All and my soul come from one soul, again all souls are one. (*Enneads* iv.ix.1)

In the Christian tradition, St. Augustine (AD 354–430) affirms both the transcendent and immanent aspects of the Divine as they concern the human soul:

God is within, spiritually within, but also spiritually on high, though not in a spiritual sense, as high places are distant from us. . . . God who is within us is most high, spiritually exalted, and the soul cannot reach him unless it transcends itself. (*Homily on the Psalms* 130:12)

Elsewhere, he writes that the Lord himself ‘heal[s] . . . the eyes of our hearts, with which God is to be seen’ (*Homily on the Psalms* 84:1). The reference to the ‘eye of the heart’ here signifies the immanent Intellect within all of us.

In the second part of the text, Tyler turns to modern psychology’s understanding of the soul. An unfortunate feature of this book is that it seeks to establish common ground between psychology and spirituality, largely through the work of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Carl Jung (1875–1961), along with other representatives of psychodynamic theory and depth psychology. Tyler does not appear to address these authors critically or to acknowledge the harm that has been inflicted by Western psychology. Not only has it virtually replaced religion and spirituality in the lives of people today, but it has also asserted itself as the sole authority on understanding the mind, setting itself up as a new secular pseudo-religion for the modern age. The efforts to resuscitate the notion of a soul by the likes of Otto Rank (1884–1939) and James Hillman (1926–2011) are discussed. However, to urge that the human soul needs to be reinstated in psychology today, as important as this is, is not possible while its true metaphysical foundations have been profaned. Tyler asks: ‘How can coherent human personhood be maintained in the light of the transcendent perspective?’ (p. 147) The answer is to return the discipline to its sacred bedrock, and to sever its dependence on a truncated and impoverished ontology.

In the third part, Tyler concludes his analysis by considering ‘the postmodern turn’. According to this ideology, there is no grand narrative about the nature of reality and no ultimate meaning behind human existence—truth is simply reduced to the manifestation of subjective preferences and desires. In repudiating any objective dimension to truth claims, postmodernism effectively undermines its own claims to veracity. In other words, it seeks to present its worldview as categorically correct while being firmly entrenched in skeptical relativism. The phenomenon of *scientism*, which Tyler also discusses in the book, is worth mentioning here as it, too, represents another hegemonic worldview that spurns any notion of transcendence. Postmodernism, akin to modernism, like its scientific offshoot, ruthlessly flattens our understanding of reality to what is exclusively desacralized and ‘horizontal’, thus denying its most important aspect: the ‘vertical’ dimension of the Spirit, without which the *psyche*—in all its depth and richness—can never be resurrected in modern psychology. From the perspective of traditional metaphysics, ‘the postmodern turn’ is not a ‘turn’ for the better, to say the least, but rather a descent into a hopeless *cul-de-sac*.

Another obstacle to restoring the soul in contemporary discourse is the ingrained (and often hostile) bias against metaphysics and religion in much of academia today. As a result, there are very few scholarly expositions of ‘sacred’ psychology as practiced across all traditional cultures. The modern discipline simply fails to recognize

that it does not have a monopoly on psychology—its secular prejudices have blinded it to its own (largely concealed) metaphysical assumptions.

Peter Tyler's survey of the soul through the premodern, modern, and postmodern eras, while informing and useful in many ways—particularly in the sections on ancient philosophy and Christianity—still does not address the central problem as to why present-day psychology remains a 'science without a soul'. Although Tyler rightly discerns that 'my growing contention has been that *reflection on the pre-modern gives answers to postmodern questions*' (p. 6), he does not go far enough in pointing out the damage that has been done by modernism (and its prolongation of postmodernism) in spurning everything related to transcendent orders of reality. Accordingly, one could say that this *Weltanschauung* has reached the incoherent position of having 'absolutized' its own relativism.

Bringing the soul back to the discipline of psychology is not possible where metaphysics and the spiritual dimension of life have been thoroughly repudiated. Without a true 'science of the soul' there can be no support for an integrated psychology that gives access to enduring wholeness. Regrettably, the modern discipline in the West has existed without any notion of the *psyche*, thus disqualifying it from being considered a true *psychology*. Because of this crippling defect in its outlook, it will remain in a hopeless quandary. Exponents in the field of mental health need to undergo a far-reaching psycho-spiritual transformation—or *metanoia*—so as to apprehend that true healing must be completely anchored in the realm of Spirit. 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Romans 12:2).

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*Dante's Divine Comedy: A Guide for the Spiritual Journey* by Mark Vernon.  
New York: Angelico Press, 2021. 462 pp. \$22.95.

The language of mysticism is performative which is why, so often, its form takes that which facilitates its recitation: the dialogue, the letter, the poem or song and the sermon. For in rhythm is truth, as the distinguished Welsh poet Gwyneth Lewis once told me; and, as the philosopher and critic, Owen Barfield discovered, recitation, in his case of the Romantics, can transform consciousness and change the awareness through which we apprehend the world. It can, in fact, be a mystical or spiritual practice.

When poetry seeks to embody this spiritual transformation, it can be said, broadly speaking, to take two forms. The first is to plunge into the heart of the transcendent, capturing a moment of enlightening lucidity that then, as it were, percolates to the surface: illuminating our landscape, internal and external, as it goes; allowing its