

The Spiritual Side of Dissociation

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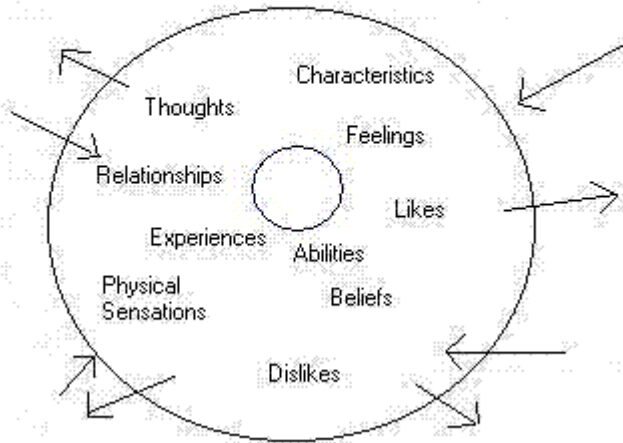
***Note** This discussion is based on the understanding that there is a spiritual side to life. Human beings are more than just body and brains. We are also spiritual beings, and are created to be in relationship with God. There is a physical realm, which we are all familiar with, and a spiritual realm as well, which includes God and angels, Satan and demons. Both the physical and spiritual realm co-exist and have been created by God and are held together by Him. As both physical and spiritual beings, we interact within both realms, whether or not we are aware of it.*

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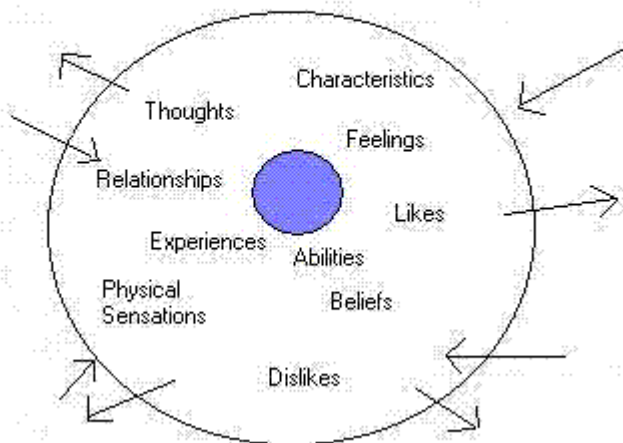
When discussing dissociation, it is important that we address the issue of spirituality. Generally, people who are dissociative have on some level faced the reality of the spiritual side of life, even if it is only in their questioning when they have gone through the difficulties they have faced. It is quite usual for people in crisis to wonder about God, who He is, whether He exists, what He could do about their situation, how He could let them suffer as they did, and why He did not seem to answer them in their trouble. They may draw conclusions about Him and themselves in relation to Him based on the pain they have experienced, rather than based on any real understanding of the facts. For some people, the trauma itself may have had a spiritual component, and they may be highly sensitized to a recognition of activity in the spiritual realm, especially as it relates to evil.

As well, there are those who have tried to deal with the issues of spirituality in therapy, only to have their experience of life with a spiritual dimension (either good or bad) minimized, or at least not adequately addressed, simply because the therapist lacked understanding of how to address these issues. There are also those who have tried to deal with their difficulties through spiritual means, such as deliverance ministry, with minimal or even negative results. Sometimes this occurs when those doing such ministry do not understand the difference between parts of the person that need healing, and the demonic that they are trying to help the person get free from. As a result, they may jump quickly to the conclusion that a deeply wounded, very negatively acting part of the person is a demon, and attempt to cast out that part. This has the result of producing the opposite effect that they are hoping for, as in unknowingly trying to get rid of a part of the person, they accentuate and perhaps even create further dissociation and deeper shattering.

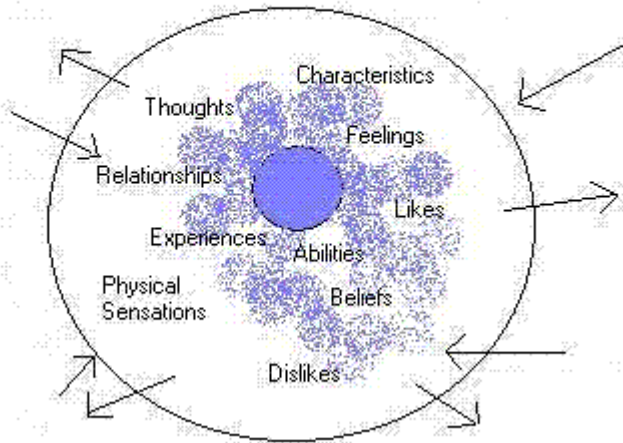
In order to understand how dissociation and spirituality are connected, we first need to have an understanding of how human beings relate to God and the world. What follows here is a very brief description of how this works. It is not meant to be an in-depth theological explanation, but a simple overview of the spiritual aspect of life, as it relates to both those who are not dissociative and those who are.



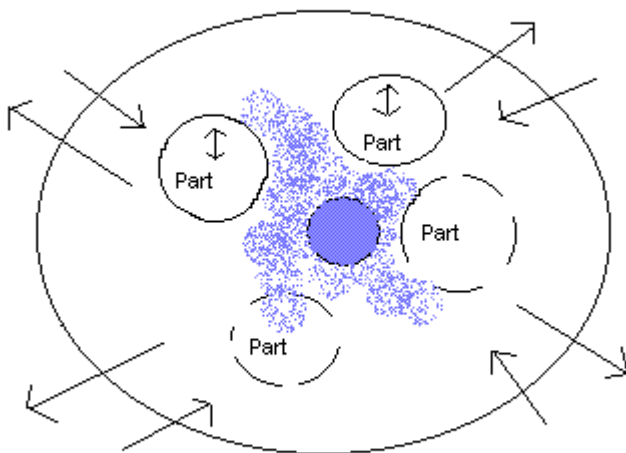
We all live in a body, and the inner part of us, our inner being, can be referred to as our "soul", the place from which we think, feel, decide and live. Human beings at one point in time had a relationship with God Himself, but they turned away from Him to follow their own ways. This resulted in every type of evil we have ever been affected by, or that has influenced our world, or that we have perpetrated ourselves. The original human choice to turn from God left us with an inheritance, in that everyone is born with a problem which we refer to as sin, or separation from God. There is a spiritual deadness and emptiness within us (represented by the small circle in the center of the diagram).



No matter what we try to fill that emptiness with, or what we try to use to make us be fully alive, this spiritual problem can be resolved only by coming back into relationship with God again. God has made this possible through Jesus Christ. When a person asks the Lord Jesus Christ to come into his or her life, there is a change that occurs within. The person is made spiritually alive, as the Spirit of God is now inside. (John 1:12, Romans 8:2-10, 16)



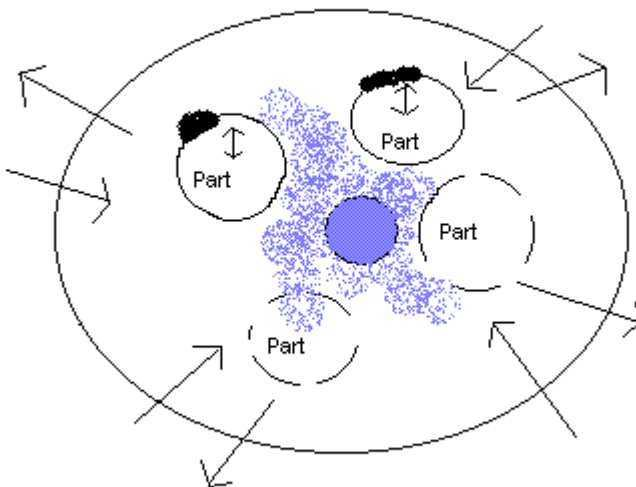
As time goes on, and the Spirit of God continues His transforming work in the soul of a person, there is an increasing change for the better which permeates more and more aspects of the person's life. They are set free, restored to be who they were created to be in the first place, and become more like Jesus Christ. (Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18) This process is referred to in theological terms as sanctification. For some people, certain aspects of this happen very quickly, while for others, it takes more time, but when the person is open to the working of the Spirit of God, the obstacles to His working can be readily overcome.



For someone with a significant degree of dissociation, this same process happens, but, since parts of the person are blocked off, the working of the Spirit of God may also be blocked off from access to those parts. The person can be a strongly committed believer in some areas of their life, while in other areas

they are questioning, doubting, not believing. Parts of them might not be in agreement with the commitment the person has made, and perhaps in some instances, not even be aware of it, or of the spiritual life offered through Jesus Christ. Therefore, a person can go through significant spiritual growth and teaching, without this ever impacting them in some areas. However, this disagreement within the person creates an inner conflict, which in turn produces turmoil within the person's life, and in how they live it out in the world. Scripture refers to this as being "double minded". (James 1:8; 4:8)

What needs to happen for these parts or areas, to resolve this conflict, is for each part to come to faith. Each part will need to be ministered to in the manner that each one specifically relates to, so that they can all make the choice to let Jesus Christ in. Although this process may happen rather seamlessly in a person without dissociation, and tends to be understood as a recommitment or an ongoing step in the journey of becoming like Christ, for a person with dissociation, this is understood more as a first time commitment for each part. In some situations, it may mean beginning at the beginning with explaining the good news of Jesus Christ to that part, even if the person knows Christ in other areas of their life. When the Lord Jesus Christ is invited into the area that has been blocked off, and He works inside, eventually, as He heals, the walls are no longer needed, and can come down. This is the process of becoming a whole person.



Sometimes, parts of the person may have the demonic attached to them in some way. This creates a greater blockage, and does need to be cleared. However, what is important is to distinguish between the demonic and the parts of the person. The parts of the person need to be ministered to, healed, be helped to resolve their issues and come to faith, and do NOT need to be treated as if they were bad, evil, and to be rejected and removed, just because they are distinctly different than what the person is perceived to be like and/or are obnoxious in their struggle. The process of dissociating is, in essence, a person's attempt to get rid of an undesirable part of themselves. This does not need to be reinforced by "deliverance" attempts that do not take this into consideration. The demonic needs to be removed from the parts, but the parts need to stay, be accepted, and be put together with the rest of the person, so that they can be whole.

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