PERSONAL GROWTH THROUGH SUFFERING: POST-TRAUMATIC SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Saša POLJAK LUKEK
Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana
Poljanska cesta 4, SI – 1000 Ljubljana
sasa.poljaklukek@teof.uni-lj.si

Tanja VALENTA
Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana
Poljanska cesta 4, SI – 1000 Ljubljana
tanja.valenta@teof.uni-lj.si

Abstract

This paper explores the concept of the »Wounded healer« in psychotherapy. It explores how personal struggles as well as emotional wounds can serve as sources of empathy, compassion, and therapeutic efficacy. Drawing on the psychological theories of Carl Jung and Henri Nouwen, the study demonstrates how personal suffering, when integrated into one's professional identity, can enhance the therapeutic relationship by fostering deeper connections and mutual healing. In addition, the archetype of the Wounded healer is compared with Attachment theory to illustrate how both emphasize the role of vulnerability and personal growth in developing empathy and the ability to help others. The paper also looks at the influence of religious and spiritual experiences on post-traumatic growth and highlights the transformative power of spirituality in healing and developing professional competence in therapists. The integration of psychological insights with spiritual dimensions provides a nuanced understanding of the role of empathy in therapeutic and religious contexts and demonstrates the interconnectedness of human suffering, personal growth, and healing.

Keywords: wounded healer, attachment theory, empathy, religion and spirituality, post-traumatic growth

1. The concept of wounded healer in psychotherapy

The concept of the Wounded healer, based on psychological insights, extends its meaning across cultural and religious contexts. The archetype suggests that personal wounds and struggles can become sources of empathy, compassion, and wisdom, enabling individuals to help others on their healing journey[1]. The idea emphasizes that healing is an ongoing process in which the healer's experiences can become a source of strength and connection in therapeutic relationships. The archetype of the Wounded healer emphasizes the idea that personal struggles are not an obstacle to helping others but can be sources of strength and wisdom. Jung[2] believed that integrating one's wounds into one's identity could lead to a more authentic and effective role as a healer or guide for others. This concept stresses the intertwining of personal growth, resilience, and the ability to support and understand others in their struggles. Nouwen[3] adds an even deeper dimension to the concept of the Wounded healer by addressing the paradoxical idea that healers are most effective when they embrace their own woundedness. He argues that acknowledging and working through personal struggles allows individuals to connect more deeply with the pain of others, fostering empathy and compassion. Consciously developing compassion offers a new coping strategy that promotes positive feelings even when faced with the hardship of others[4]. Nouwen[5] emphasizes the importance of authenticity, vulnerability, and spiritual renewal in the healing process. This involves not only acknowledging the existence of suffering, but also understanding its causes, manifestations, and effects on the individual and the community.

The Wounded healer is therefore a psychotherapist's concept of personal growth. The psychotherapist should be aware of their own emotional deprivation and recognize the importance of personal growth as the key to developing competence in the psychotherapeutic profession. The quality of a therapist's personal life is linked to the therapeutic alliance with their patients. Therapists with elevated levels of personal satisfaction tend to have stronger thera-

---

[1] Cf. Carl Gustav JUNG, *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious*, Zurich, 1934; Henri J. M. NOUWEN, *The Wounded Healer Ministry in Contemporary Society*, New York, 1972.

[2] Cf. Carl Gustav JUNG, *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious*, Zurich, 1934.

[3] Cf. Henri J. M. NOUWEN, *The Wounded Healer Ministry in Contemporary Society*, New York, 1972.

[4] Cf. Olga M. KLIMECKI – Sussanne LEIBERG – Claus LAMM – Tania SINGER, Functional neural plasticity and associated changes in positive affect after compassion training, in: *Cerebral cortex*, 23 (2013) 7, 1552-156, here 1552.

[5] Cf. Henri J. M. NOUWEN, *The Wounded Healer Ministry in Contemporary Society*, New York, 1972.

peutic relationships, whereas personal stress can negatively affect patients' perceptions of the alliance[6]. Psychotherapists should continuously strive to develop a theory- and knowledge-based professional subjectivity[7] and a personally grounded professional attitude. A blend of professional knowledge and personal experience helps therapists develop a grounded therapeutic stance by enhancing the therapist's emotional insight and therapeutic skills.

Psychotherapists' personal struggles can bring unique benefits to their work with clients, as well as potential challenges to their work. Wounded healers can have many difficulties in maintaining a stable recovery, dealing with countertransference, and coping with compassion fatigue or professional impairment[8]. These challenges can impact both their personal wellbeing and their professional effectiveness, potentially leading to burnout or ethical concerns. However, when managed well, a psychotherapist's life experience can increase empathy, deepen the therapeutic relationship, and provide clients with a greater sense of understanding and connection.

Empathy and attachment are key components that enable vulnerability to be used for personal growth and consequently to help others. When therapists embrace their own vulnerability, they can cultivate a deeper empathy and form a more genuine bond with their clients[9]. This increased empathy allows therapists to empathize more authentically with their clients' experiences, which in turn fosters the trust and therapeutic alliance that are essential for effective treatment. The therapist's ability to empathize with shared human struggles allows clients to feel understood and supported and creates a space where healing can occur on both sides.

Religious and/or spiritual experiences are seen as one of the possible ways to transform trauma into growth by providing individuals with meaning, hope, and a sense of connection to something greater than themselves. For many, religious experiences can help reframe trauma by offering a narra-

---

[6] Cf. Helene A. NISSEN-LIE – Odd E. HAVIK – Per A. HOGLEND – Jon T. MONSEN – Michael Helge RONNESTAD, The contribution of the quality of therapists' personal lives to the development of the working alliance, in: *Journal of counseling psychology*, 60 (2013) 4, 483-495, here 485.

[7] Cf. Katarina ASTRAND – Rolf SANDELL, Influence of personal therapy on learning and development of psychotherapeutic skills, in: *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, 33 (2019), 34 – 48, here 41.

[8] Cf. Noga ZERUBAVEL – Margaret O'Dougherty WRIGHT, The dilemma of the wounded healer, in: *Psychotherapy*, 49 (2013) 4, 482-491, here 485.

[9] Cf. Robert ELLIOT – Arthur BOHART – Jeanne WATSON – David MURPHY, Therapist Empathy and Client Outcome: An Updated Meta-Analysis, in: *Psychotherapy*, 55, (2018.) 399–410, here 405.

tive of redemption or a way to understand suffering as part of a larger life story. This can promote post-traumatic growth by providing comfort, structure, and a sense of purpose, which can be crucial in transforming personal pain into strength and resilience[10].

2. Attachment theory and religious experience

Attachment theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how trauma can be transformed into personal growth. Attachment theory, originally developed by John Bowlby to explain the bonds between children and their caregivers, provides a framework for understanding the formation of a person's image of God and religious experience. Bowlby's Attachment system is biologically designed to provide a sense of security through closeness to caregivers, which protects the individual from harm[11]. The internal working models that emerge from these early relationships influence emotional responses and expectations throughout life, including spiritual life[12]. Research indicates that secure attachments to caregivers can lead to positive and trusting relationships with a perceived deity, whereas insecure attachments may result in ambivalence or distance in spiritual experiences[13].

Many religious traditions assume that God can be understood as a binding figure. This means that individuals can seek comfort and security from God in times of need, just as they seek comfort from caregivers. The relationship between a person's attachment to their parents and their attachment to God has been the subject of numerous studies, which have shown that early attachment experiences can have a profound influence on people's religious relationships[14]. Following this theory, the correspondence pathway of attach-

---

[10] Cf. Julio F.P. PERES – Alexander MOREIRA-ALMEIDA – Antonia Gladys NASELLO – Harold G. KOENIG, Spirituality and Resilience in Trauma Victims, in: *Journal of Religion and Health*, 46 (2007), 343-350, here 343.

[11] Cf. John BOWLBY, *Attachment and Loss; Vol. 1 Attachment* (2nd ed.), New York, 1982.

[12] Cf. Cynthia N. KIMBALL – Chris J. BOYATZIS – Kaye V. COOK – Kathleen C. LEONARD – Kelly S. FLANAGAN, Attachment to God: A qualitative exploration of emerging adults' spiritual relationship with God, in: *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 41, (2013) 3, 175-188, here 178.

[13] Cf. Edward B. DAVIS – Glendon L. MORIARTY – Joseph C. MAUCH, God images and God concepts: Definitions, development, and dynamics, in: *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 5, (2013) 1, 51-60, here 52.

[14] Cf. Lee A. KIRKPATRICK – Phillip R. SHAVER, Attachment Theory and Religion: Childhood Attachments, Religious Beliefs, and Conversion, in: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29, (1990) 3, 315-334, here 318.; Maureen MINER, The impact of child-

ment to God, as proposed by Granqvist[15], establishes a correlation between an individual's attachment style and their relationship with God. Securely attached people tend to view God as a supportive figure, and their religious beliefs often reflect those of their caregivers[16]. In contrast, individuals with an Avoidant Attachment style tend to hold atheistic or agnostic beliefs and maintain a distant relationship with God. Those who are anxiously attached may develop an intense and affectionate relationship with God and strive for divine love and acceptance.

Securely attached individuals maintain a balanced, stable relationship with God and mirror the religious behavior of their caregivers. Avoidant individuals show little religious influence because their self-esteem outweighs their sense of God's worth. Anxiously attached individuals exhibit stronger religious behavior that is strongly influenced by their need to earn God's love, with God playing a dominant role in their lives[17].

However, attachment to God can be seen as a continuation of an attachment style developed in childhood or as a separate attachment style if the person has an insecure attachment style.

Important findings[18] led to the formulation of two primary hypotheses within the field of attachment theory as it relates to religion: the correspondence and compensation hypotheses.

2.1. Correspondence hypothesis

The correspondence hypothesis states that people with a secure attachment to their caregivers are also likely to develop a secure relationship with God. This reflects their internal working model of secure attachment, which promotes a

---

parent attachment, attachment to God and religious orientation on psychological adjustment, in: *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 37, (2009) 2, 114-124, here 115.

[15] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST, *Attachment in religion and spirituality: A wider view*, New York, 2020.

[16] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Lee A. KIRKPATRICK, Attachment and religious representations and behavior, in: *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications*, 2nd ed., (2008), 906–933, here 913.

[17] Cf. Todd W. HALL – Annie M. FUJIKAWA, God image and the sacred. in: *APA handbook of psychology, religion, and spirituality: Context, theory, and research*, 1, (2013), 277–292, here 281.

[18] Cf. Cynthia N. KIMBALL – Chris J. BOYATZIS – Kaye V. COOK – Kathleen C. LEONARD – Kelly S. FLANAGAN, Attachment to God: A qualitative exploration of emerging adults' spiritual relationship with God, in: *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 41 (2013) 3, 175-188, here 177; Mario MIKULANCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, Attachment patterns in adulthood: structure, dynamics, and change, (2nd ed.) New York, 2016; Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, in: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, (2020), 175-186, here 181.

view of God as supportive and benevolent[19]. Research supports this by showing that people with secure attachment often adopt the religious beliefs of their caregivers and maintain their faith throughout their live[20]. In addition, securely attached people tend to perceive God as loving and available, and they have easier access to positive images of God. Secure attachment promotes emotional regulation, behavioral control, and autonomy, which often affects spiritual identity. In addition, research has shown that people with a secure human attachment also have a secure attachment to God and have faster cognitive access to positive representations of God[21].

The social correspondence hypothesis takes this further and assumes that securely attached people not only reflect the religious beliefs of their attachment figures, but also adopt similar religious practices, which leads to a secure religious identity[22]. For example, studies using the Adult Attachment Interview have shown that people with secure parental attachments often see God as a loving figure, whereas people with insecure attachments may perceive God as distant[23].

2.2. Compensation hypothesis

The compensation hypothesis states that people with an insecure attachment history may seek a compensatory relationship with God to regulate their dis-

---

[19] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Lee A. KIRKPATRICK, Attachment and religious representations and behavior, in: *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications*, 2nd ed., (2008), 906–933, here 909.; Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, in: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, Fargo, (2020), 175-186, here 175.

[20] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST, Attachment and Religiosity in Adolescence: Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Evaluations, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28 (2002) 2, 260-270, here 265.; Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, in: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, Fargo, 2020, 175-186, here 176.

[21] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Vered GEWIRTZ – Phillip R. SHAVER, Experimental findings on God as an attachment figure: normative processes and moderating effects of internal working models, in: *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 103 (2012) 5, 804-818, here 807.; Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, in: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, Fargo, (2020), 175-186, here 180.

[22] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST, Attachment and Religiosity in Adolescence: Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Evaluations, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28 (2002) 2, 260-270, here 265.

[23] Cf. Rosalinda CASSIBBA – Pehr GRANQVIST – Alessandro COSTANTINI – Sergio GATTO, Attachment and God representations among lay Catholics, priests, and religious: a matched comparison study based on the Adult Attachment Interview, in: *Developmental psychology*, 44 (2008) 6, 1753-1763, here 1758.

tress. When primary caregivers are unresponsive or unavailable, people may turn to God as a substitute attachment figure. This compensatory attachment to God is often observed in moments of emotional distress, such as after the loss of a relationship or during significant life changes[24].

People with an insecure attachment history may turn to God because God's response can always be imagined as benevolent and he offers unconditional love, unlike human relationships which can be fraught with risk and rejection. Furthermore, religion provides individuals the opportunity to earn God's love through certain actions such as charitable deeds or prayers[25] .

However, research has repeatedly shown that people with insecure attachments – especially those who have experienced insensitive care – are more likely to make sudden religious conversions to compensate for the insecurities in their attachment[26]. For example, individuals with insecure parental attachment are nearly twice as likely to experience sudden conversion as those with secure attachment. In addition, individuals with less affectionate parents reported a greater increase in religiosity[27]. These patterns are observed across different religious traditions, including Catholic and Jewish samples[28].

Compensation also extends to romantic relationships. Studies show that people with an Anxious Attachment style are more likely to form a new relationship with God after a romantic breakup and undergo a dramatic religious change[29]. This compensatory attachment allows people to turn to God when

---

[24] Cf. Mario MIKULANCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, *Attachment patterns in adulthood: structure, dynamics, and change*, (2nd ed.), New York, 2016; Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, in: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, Fargo, (2020), 175-186, here 179.

[25] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST, Attachment and Religiosity in Adolescence: Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Evaluations, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28 (2002) 2, 260-270, here 265.

[26] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Lee A. KIRKPATRICK, Attachment and religious representations and behavior, in: *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications*, 2nd ed., 2008, 906–933, here 912; Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, in: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, Fargo, (2020), 175-186, here 176.

[27] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Tord IVARSSON – Anders G. BROBERG – Berit HAGEKULL, Examining relations among attachment, religiosity, and new age spirituality using the Adult Attachment Interview, in *Developmental Psychology,* 43 (2007) 3, 590-601, here 595.

[28] Cf. Peter HALAMA – Marta GASPARIKOVA – Matej SABO, Relationship between attachment styles and dimensions of the religious conversion process, in: *Studia Psychologica* 55, (2013) 3, 195-207, here 198.

[29] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Berit HAGEKULL, Longitudinal predictions of religious change in adolescence: Contributions from the interaction of attachment and relationship status, in: *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships,* 20 (2003) 6, 793-817, here 798.

human relationships fail to provide the emotional security they need[30]. In this context, the concept of the Wounded healer becomes relevant because people who have experienced emotional wounds in their relationships can find healing and personal growth through their relationship with God. The attachment to God serves as a space for emotional resilience and allows them to transform their pain into empathy and compassion, much like the archetype of the Wounded healer.

2.3. *Earned security through religious experience*

While the compensation hypothesis emphasizes how people with insecure attachments turn to God for emotional regulation, the concept of earned security suggests that these relationships with God can help revise and heal attachment patterns. Studies using the Adult Attachment Interview show that some people who have experienced insecure parental attachment develop what is called »earned« attachment security through their perceived relationship with God[31]. This parallels reparative relationships formed with a therapist or a supportive romantic partner.

Spiritual attachment relationships can serve as corrective experiences that help people reframe their internal working models and positively change their views of themselves and their relationships. Spiritual relationships with God often fulfill important attachment functions, such as providing a safe haven in times of distress and serving as a secure base for exploration and personal growth[32] .

To summarise, Attachment theory is a valuable tool for understanding religious experiences, especially the way people form attachments to God. Secure attachments to caregivers are likely to lead to stable, secure relationships with God, while people with insecure attachments may turn to God as a com-

---

[30] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, in: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, Fargo, (2020), 175-186, here 181.

[31] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, Religion as Attachment: Normative Processes and Individual Differences, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14 (2010) 1, 49-59, here 51.

[32] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, Religion as Attachment: Normative Processes and Individual Differences, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14 (2010) 1, 49-59, here 50; Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, in: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, Fargo, (2020), 175-186, here 176.

pensatory figure to alleviate their distress[33]. However, these spiritual relationships can also promote »earned security« by helping people heal from early attachment insecurities and develop healthier relationship patterns[34]. Whether through correspondence or compensation, attachment dynamics shape a person's religious beliefs and experiences to a significant degree, demonstrating the profound overlap between psychology and spirituality[35]. The archetype of the Wounded healer is closely related to Attachment theory, as both emphasize the importance of vulnerability and personal growth in fostering deep, healing relationships. Just as Attachment theory suggests that secure relationships promote emotional resilience, the Wounded healer model illustrates how therapists can use their own experiences of suffering to enhance their empathy and build a stronger therapeutic bond with their clients, facilitating the transformation of trauma into personal growth.

3. Empathy and the perception of God

Empathy plays a crucial role in religious experiences because it enables people to connect emotionally with their perception of a divine being. Mirror neuron systems, which are responsible for understanding and mirroring the actions and emotions of others, support this empathic connection. Studies have shown that praying activates regions of the brain associated with active interpersonal interactions, creating an inner representation of God. This process helps believers to perceive God as a real, meaningful person rather than a fictional or abstract being[36].

 The archetype of the Wounded healer, which emphasises the transformative power of personal struggles in developing empathy and compassion,

---

[33] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, in: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, Fargo, (2020), 175-186, here 178.

[34] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, Religion as Attachment: Normative Processes and Individual Differences, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14 (2010) 1, 49-59, here 50.

[35] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, n: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, Fargo, (2020), 175-186, here 177.

[36] Cf. Raymond L. NEUBAUER, Prayer as an interpersonal relationship: A neuroimaging study, in: *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 4 (2014) 2, 92-103, here 94.; Hanneke SCHAAP-JONKER – Jozef M.T. CORVELEYN, Mentalizing and religion: a promising combination for psychology of religion, illustrated by the case of prayer, in: *Archive for the Psychology of Religion,* 36 (2014) 3, 303-322, here 311.

parallels the role that empathy plays in religious experiences. Just as therapists use their own wounds to connect more deeply with others, religious people often build emotional connections to their perception of a divine being. The mirror neuron system, which allows individuals to understand and mirror the actions and emotions of others, also supports this empathic connection with the divine and allows believers to experience God as a real, meaningful presence rather than an abstract concept.

This dynamic fosters an empathic understanding of the divine, which subsequently influences the individual's own beliefs, behaviours, and emotional responses[37]. Furthermore, research findings suggest that brain regions such as the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex, which are responsible for assigning emotional meaning, support the inner representations of God[38] .

Furthermore, the concept of a person's image of God is complex and encompasses several dimensions such as biological, cognitive, emotional, motivational, behavioral, and relational aspects. The image of God interacts at multiple levels – individual, familial, organizational, and communal – forming reciprocal relationships that are shaped by and influence contextual factors. The image of God exists on a continuum from positive, health-promoting to negative, health-damaging effects[39]. This empathetic connection with a divine entity allows individuals to engage deeply with the emotions and actions of their perceived image of God, often framed as a personal relationship with God[40]. This empathetic connection with a divine entity allows individuals to engage deeply with the emotions and actions of their perceived image of God, often understood as a personal relationship with God[41].

---

[37] Cf. Hanneke SCHAAP-JONKER – Jozef M.T. CORVELEYN, Mentalizing and religion: a promising combination for psychology of religion, illustrated by the case of prayer, in: *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 36 (2014) 3, 303-322, here 310.

[38] Cf. Laila VAN MENTS – Peter ROELOFSMA – Jan TREUR, Modelling the effect of religion on human empathy based on an adaptive temporal–causal network model, in: *Computational Social Networks* (2018) 5, 1-23, here 5.

[39] Cf. Laila VAN MENTS – Peter H.M.P. ROELOFSMA – Jan TREUR, How empathic is your god: an adaptive network model for formation and use of a mental god-model and its effect on human empathy, in: *Mental Models and their Dynamics, Adaptation, and Control: a Self-Modeling Network Modeling Approach*, (2022) 285-319, here 291.

[40] Cf. Marieke MEIJER-VAN ABBEMA – Sander L. KOOLE, After God's image: prayer leads people with positive God beliefs to read less hostility in others' eyes, in: *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 7 (2017) 3, 206-222, here 210.

[41] Cf. Laila VAN MENTS – Peter H.M.P. ROELOFSMA – Jan TREUR, How empathic is your god: an adaptive network model for formation and use of a mental god-model and its effect on human empathy, in: *Mental Models and their Dynamics, Adaptation, and Control: a Self-Modeling Network Modeling Approach*, (2022) 285-319, here 288.

An individual's personal image of God or mental model of God is shaped by their upbringing, religious teachings, and communication through prayer[42]. Family dynamics have a considerable influence on emotional and cognitive development and therefore also on religious beliefs.

However, it has been proven that religion influences emotions and behavior. For example, Koole et al.[43] found that religion fosters implicit self-regulation, influencing actions and emotions unconsciously. Bremner et al.[44] demonstrated that praying for those who have caused anger reduces aggression toward them. Praying activates brain regions responsible for social interaction, suggesting that individuals perceive God as a real person rather than an abstract entity[45].

Furthermore, empathy plays a significant role in how individuals perceive God. Memon and Treur [46] describe how people develop empathic understanding through mirroring and internal simulation mechanisms. These mechanisms also extend to the individual's relationship with God, with internal representations of God influencing their own beliefs and actions. The characteristics of this »mental model of God« profoundly shape the individual's behavior. For example, those who perceive God as authoritarian (»God is great« or »God strikes in anger«) tend to behave in an antisocial or unsympathetic way, whereas people who see God as loving (»God is love«) behave in a more social and empathetic way[47]. A judgmental mental God-

---

[42] Cf. Hanneke SCHAAP-JONKER – Jozef M.T. CORVELEYN, Mentalizing and religion: a promising combination for psychology of religion, illustrated by the case of prayer, in: *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 36 (2014) 3, 303-322, here 310.

[43] Cf. Sander L. KOOLE – Michael E. MCCULLOUGH – Julius KUHL – Peter H.M.P. ROELOFSMA, Why religion's burdens are light: From religiosity to implicit self-regulation, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14 (2010) 1, 95-107, here 98.

[44] Cf. Ryan H. BREMNER – Sander L. KOOLE – Brad J. BUSHMAN, Pray for those who mistreat you: Effects of prayer on anger and aggression, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37 (2011) 6, 830-837, here 831.

[45] Cf. Uffe SCHJOEDT – Hans STØDKILDE-JØRGENSEN – Armin W. GEERTZ – Andreas ROEPSTORFF, Highly religious participants recruit areas of social cognition in personal prayer, in: *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 4 (2009) 2, 199–207, here 200.

[46] Cf. Zulfiqar A. MEMON – Jan TREUR, An agent model for cognitive and affective empathic understanding of other agents, in: *Transactions on Computational Collective Intelligence,* 6 (2012), 56-83, here 58.

[47] Cf. Daniel ESCHER, How does religion promote forgiveness? Linking beliefs, orientations, and practices, in: *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 52 (2013) 1, 100-119, here: 102.; Kathryn A. JOHNSON – Yexin Jessica LI – Adam B. COHEN – Morris A. OKUN, Friends in high places: The influence of authoritarian and benevolent god-concepts on social attitudes and behaviors, in: *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality,* 5 (2013) 1, 15-22, here 16.

model also influences a person's willingness to volunteer in their community[48].

However, the process of mentalizing is essential in this context. Mentalizing is the ability to think about one's own mental states and those of other people and thus understand how behavior is controlled by internal processes. This ability allows individuals to simulate the mental states of others, including God, and predict how these states might influence behavior. Mentalizing occurs both consciously and unconsciously, merging cognitive and emotional processes. This mechanism shapes interactions with the mental model of God and influences a person's emotions, behaviors, and sense of identity[49].

Furthermore, Kapogiannis et al.[50] have shown that the mental representation of the divine comprises both emotional and cognitive elements. The emotional component, shaped by early family dynamics and important caregivers, involves brain regions such as the amygdala and prefrontal cortex, which are responsible for processing emotions and assigning emotional meaning. The cognitive aspect, shaped by religious teachings and doctrines, involves brain regions responsible for sophisticated linguistic and symbolic reasoning.

Moreover, prayer is a unifying force that integrates the emotional and cognitive aspects of one's conception of the divine. Bamford and Lagattuta[51] describe prayer as a mental activity that transcends the self-other dichotomy, serving as a form of communication with God. Schaap-Jonker and Corveleyn[52] posit that prayer activates both the cognitive and emotional brain systems, thereby promoting an empathic understanding of others and reducing negative emotions such as anger and aggression. Bremner et al. [53] discovered that

---

[48] Cf. Carson F. MENCKEN – Brittany FITZ, Image of God and community volunteering among religious adherents in the United States, in: *Review of religious research*, 55 (2013) 3, 491-508, here 495.

[49] Cf. Hanneke SCHAAP-JONKER – Jozef M.T. CORVELEYN, Mentalizing and religion: a promising combination for psychology of religion, illustrated by the case of prayer, in: *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 36 (2014) 3, 303-322, here 306.

[50] Cf. Dimitrios KAPOGIANNIS – Gopikrishna DESHPANDE – Frank Krueger – Matthew P. THORNBURG – Jordan Henry GRAFMAN, Brain networks shaping religious belief, in: *Brain connectivity*, 4 (2014) 1, 70-79, here 72.

[51] Cf. Christi BAMFORD – Kristin Hansen LAGATTUTA, A new look at children's understanding of mind and emotion: The case of prayer, in: *Developmental Psychology*, 46 (2010) 1, 78-92, here 81.

[52] Cf. Hanneke SCHAAP-JONKER – Jozef M.T. CORVELEYN, Mentalizing and religion: a promising combination for psychology of religion, illustrated by the case of prayer, in: *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 36 (2014) 3, 303-322, here 315.

[53] Cf. Ryan H. BREMNER – Sander L. KOOLE – Brad J. BUSHMAN, Pray for those who mistreat you: Effects of prayer on anger and aggression, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37 (2011) 6, 830-837, here 831.

prayer markedly diminishes anger directed towards individuals who have provoked it. This indicates that prayer facilitates the regulation of emotions by engaging both cognitive and emotional brain processes.

However, research shows that religious people often perceive God as a real, meaningful person, which activates brain regions involved in social interactions. This perception is consistent with the theory of God as an attachment figure who provides emotional security. When people communicate with God through prayer, their mental model of God evolves and influences their behaviour and emotions in a similar way to human relationships[54].

To summarise, the mental model of God is shaped by cognitive, emotional, and social factors that are closely interwoven with personal experiences, family dynamics and religious teachings. This model influences the way people interact with God and others, shaping their emotions, behaviour, and empathy. When we understand the mechanisms behind the mental model of God, such as mentalizing and inner simulation, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between empathy, religious experience, and human behavior. Just as the Wounded healer archetype emphasizes the role of personal struggles in developing empathy and fostering healing connections with others, the mental model of God similarly reflects how cognitive, emotional, and social factors shape a person's capacity for empathy in both therapeutic and spiritual contexts. The wounded healer's ability to use his individual experiences to guide others parallels how the mental model of God, informed by personal experiences and relational dynamics, shapes interactions with God and others and deepens our understanding of empathy in human behavior and religious experience.

4. Religious and spiritual aspects of psychological growth

Initially, it is important to emphasize the distinction between spirituality and religiosity. Spirituality is viewed as an integral part of one's identity and personal experience of the transcendent, while religiousness is an external tool for accessing spirituality and relationship with the divine[55].

---

[54] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST, Attachment, Emotion, and Religion, in: I*ssues in Science and Theology: Do Emotions Shape the World? Springer International Publishing* (2014), 9–26, here 11.

[55] Cf. Terry GALL – Judith MALETTE – Manal GUIRGUIS-YOUNGER, Spirituality and Religiousness: A Diversity of Definitions, In: *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 13 (2011) 3, 158-181, here 160.

Research shows that religious beliefs and practices have a significant connection with mental health and influence people's lives, their ability to cope with stressful life events, and their peace of mind and meaning in life[56]. Religion and spirituality generally have a positive effect on coping with trauma. Positive religious coping, openness, willingness to face existential questions, participation and intrinsic religiosity are associated with post-traumatic growth.

In the following we would like to emphasize two aspects: Religion and spirituality as useful coping mechanisms and religious factors associated with post-traumatic growth.

4.1. Religion and spirituality as useful coping mechanisms

Religion and spirituality can serve as effective coping mechanisms and promote psychological and emotional well-being, especially in stressful or crisis situations. Positive religious coping is generally associated with better psychological adaptation to stress, including improved mental health and emotional well-being[57]. Religious beliefs, practices and communities can serve as a psychological support and help people process grief, loss, or pain. Spirituality can promote emotional healing by offering a broader perspective on suffering that can help people feel connected to something greater than themselves. Therefore, religious coping can also improve emotional adjustment, maintain hope, forgiveness, purpose and meaning, and provide a sense of control and strength[58].

Forgiveness plays a significant role in promoting psychological well-being and is also strongly connected to spirituality. Research has consistently linked forgiveness to higher self-esteem and positive effects, which together serve as a protective mechanism against stress[59]. By fostering emotional re-

---

[56] Cf. Naziha S. ABDALEATI – Norzarina Mohd ZAHARIM – Yasmin Othman MYDIN, Religiousness and Mental Health: Systematic Review Study. In: *Journal of Religion and Health*, 55 (2016) 6, 1929-1937, here 1930.

[57] Cf. Gene G. ANO – Erin B. VASCONCELLES, Religious coping and psychological adjustment to stress: a meta-analysis, in: *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 61 (2005) 4, 461-480, here 461; Natalia YANGERBER-HICKS, Religious Coping Styles and Recovery from Serious Mental Illnesses, in: *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 32 (2004) 4, 305-317, here 305; Samuel R WEBER – Kenneth I PARGAMENT, The role of religion and spirituality in mental health, in: *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 27 (2014) 5, 358-363, here 358.

[58] Cf. Natalia YANGERBER-HICKS, Religious Coping Styles and Recovery from Serious Mental Illnesses, in: *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 32 (2004) 4, 305-317, here 30; Rene HEFTI, Integrating Religion and Spirituality into Mental Health Care, Psychiatry and Psychotherapy. In: *Religion*, 2 (2011) 4, 611-627, here 611.

[59] Cf. Blake Victor KENT – Matt BRADSHAW – Jeremy E UECKER, Forgiveness, Attachment to God, and Mental Health Outcomes in Older U.S. Adults: A Longitudinal Study,

lease and reducing feelings of resentment, forgiveness enables individuals to reframe negative experiences, resulting in improved stress management and mental health outcomes. In addition to its direct benefits, forgiveness has a strong connection with spirituality, which further enhances psychological well-being. Spirituality, especially when coupled with self-forgiveness, has been identified as a key predictor of better psychological adjustment and overall quality of life[60]. Spiritual coping, often facilitated by forgiveness, allows individuals to find meaning and peace in the face of adversity, contributing to higher self-esteem and well-being.

Spirituality as a coping mechanism is not only important for clients or patients, but for anyone who deals with people professionally[61]. Spirituality, as a coping mechanism, holds significance not only for patients but also for professionals working with people, such as healthcare workers, social workers, and counselors. Engaging with spirituality helps these professionals manage stress, navigate emotional burdens, and maintain well-being while offering support to others.

Evidence suggests that professionals in caregiving roles frequently turn to spirituality to find strength and meaning in their work. For instance, mental health professionals working with addiction and trauma reflect on how spirituality helps them process traumatic events, allowing them to connect with their clients on a deeper level and find resilience through spiritual practices[62]. Similarly, psychologists have been shown to incorporate spiritual practices, such as prayer and meditation, as first lines of defense against professional distress, which aids in their overall well-functioning[63].

Moreover, spirituality is a source of personal strength and peace for professionals facing work-related stress. Spirituality, particularly practices

in: *Research on Aging*, 40 (2018) 5, 456-479, here 456; Terry Lynn GALL – Cynthia BILODEAU, The role of forgiveness as a coping response to intimate partner stress, in: *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 23 (2020) 2, 319-341, here 319.

[60] Cf. Catherine ROMERO – Lois FRIEDMAN – Mamta KALIDAS – Richard ELLEDGE – Jenny CHANG – Kathleen LISCUM, Self-Forgiveness, Spirituality, and Psychological Adjustment in Women with Breast Cancer, In: *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 29 (2006) 1, 29-36, here 29.

[61] Cf. Diane ELKONIN – Ottilia BROWN – Samantha NAICKER, Religion, Spirituality and Therapy: Implications for Training, In: *Journal of Religion and Health*, 53 (2014) 1, 119-134, here 119.

[62] Cf. Peter BRAY, Working with Addiction and Trauma: Mental Health Professionals Reflect on Their Use of Spirituality, In: *Topography of Trauma: Fissures, Disruptions and Transfigurations*, Boston, 2019.

[63] Cf. Paul W CASE – Mark MCMINN, Spiritual Coping and Well-Functioning among Psychologists, in: *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 29 (2001) 1, 29-40, here 35.

like prayer and meditation, is helping professionals to cope with workplace stress, offering emotional stability and helping them reframe challenges positively[64].

4.2. Religious and spiritual factors associated with post-traumatic growth

Studies suggest that people who engage in religious coping often find deeper meaning in their traumatic experiences, enhancing their personal growth[65]. Traumatic experiences often lead to a deepening of spiritual or religious beliefs. Individuals develop new existential insights and often find greater meaning and significance in life through their spiritual growth[66]. This process of finding meaning is crucial for integrating traumatic experiences and promoting growth. Spiritual change is considered one of the core areas of post-traumatic growth, along with personal strength, appreciation of life, and improved relationships. Many trauma survivors report a change in their spiritual worldview, leading to increased spiritual awareness and personal transformation[67].

The concept of the Wounded Healer also provides a starting point for understanding the importance of spirituality in the processing of traumatic experiences, personal growth, and the development of professional competence of mental health professionals[68]. Personal post-traumatic growth not only strengthens the competence and resilience of mental health professionals, but also provides them with profound spiritual development that contributes to their overall well-being and ability to provide care. Spirituality plays a crucial role in this process as it provides a framework for finding meaning and emotional stability after a trauma experience. By exploring their own spiritual beliefs and struggles, mental health professionals often find themselves more open and understanding of their clients' spiritual and emotional needs. This

---

[64] Cf. Denise BACCHUS – Lynn HOLLEY, Spirituality as a Coping Resource, in: *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 13 (2004) 4, 65-84, here 68.

[65] Cf. Zahra NIKMANESH – Elham KHAGEBAFGI – Behjat KALANTARI, The Role of Religious Coping in Predicting the Quality of Life Dimensions in Women with Breast Cancer, in: *Journal of Research Development in Nursing and Midwifery* 15 (2018) 2, 1-7, here 7.

[66] Cf. Frauke C SCHAEFER – Dan G BLAZER – Harold KOENIG, Religious and Spiritual Factors and the Consequences of Trauma: A Review and Model of the Interrelationship. in: *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine*, 38 (2008) 4, 507-524, here 507.

[67] Cf. Richard G. TEDESCHI – Lawrence G. CALHOUN, The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory: measuring the positive legacy of trauma, in: *Journal of traumatic stress*, 9 (1996) 3, 455-471, here 460.

[68] Cf. Julio F.P. PERES – Alexander MOREIRA-ALMEIDA – Antonia Gladys NASELLO – Harold G. KOENIG, Spirituality and Resilience in Trauma Victims, in: *Journal of Religion and Health*, 46 (2007), 343-350, here 343.

deepened connection enriches therapeutic relationships and enhances the healing process for both professionals and clients[69].

Professionals who have experienced personal trauma often report a shift in their spiritual life that leads to a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment in their professional role. Studies show that spirituality contributes to a greater sense of personal strength, appreciation of life and increased emotional resilience[70]. Spirituality also provides mental health professionals with an opportunity for self-care and helps them to recover from emotional exhaustion and secondary trauma. By relying on their spiritual beliefs, they can find meaning in their work, which in turn maintains their mental health and prevents burnout[71].

Religion and spirituality serve as powerful coping mechanisms that enhance psychological well-being and emotional resilience, particularly during times of stress or trauma. Through practices like forgiveness and spiritual reflection, individuals can process difficult experiences, foster personal growth, and maintain hope[72]. This is particularly valuable for professionals in caregiving roles, who often draw on spirituality for emotional support and stress management[73]. The integration of spiritual practices not only aids in personal healing and post-traumatic growth but also strengthens professionals' ability to provide compassionate care, enriching both their personal and professional lives.

5. Conclusion

Religion and spirituality, with its emphasis on redemption, forgiveness, and compassion, provides a fertile ground for understanding and embodying the

---

[69] Cf. Peter BRAY, Working with Addiction and Trauma: Mental Health Professionals Reflect on Their Use of Spirituality, In: *Topography of Trauma: Fissures, Disruptions and Transfigurations*, Boston, 2019.

[70] Cf. Mike SLADE – Stefan RENNICK EGGLESTONE – Laura BLACKIE – Joy LLEWELLYN-BEARDSELY – Donna FRANKLIN – Ada HUI – Graham THOR-NICROFT – Rose MCGRANAHAN – Kristian POLLOCK – Stefan PRIEBE – Amy RAMSAY – David ROE – Emilia DEAKIN, Post-traumatic growth in mental health recovery: qualitative study of narratives, in: *BMJ Open*, 9 (2019) 6, e029342.

[71] Cf. John P. WILSON – Thomas A. MORAN, Psychological Trauma: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Spirituality, in: *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 26 (1998) 2, 168 – 178, here: 168.

[72] Cf. Blake Victor KENT – Matt BRADSHAW – Jeremy E UECKER, Forgiveness, Attachment to God, and Mental Health Outcomes in Older U.S. Adults: A Longitudinal Study, in: *Research on Aging*, 40 (2018) 5, 456-479, here 456.

[73] Cf. Paul W CASE – Mark MCMINN, Spiritual Coping and Well-Functioning among Psychologists, in: *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 29 (2001) 1, 29-40, here 35; Denise BACCHUS – Lynn HOLLEY, Spirituality as a Coping Resource, in: *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 13 (2004) 4, 65-84, here 68.

Wounded healer archetype. In embracing this archetype, individuals can find solace in the belief that their wounds, when transformed through grace, can become sources of healing and hope for others, echoing the profound truth that out of suffering emerges the potential for redemption and renewal.

Both Attachment theory and the mental God-model provide valuable insights into how personal experiences, cognitive processes, and emotional dynamics shape an individual's spiritual relationships and capacity for empathy. Secure attachments in early life often lead to stable, trusting relationships with God, while insecure attachments may prompt compensatory spiritual connections[74]. Similarly, the mental God-model, shaped by cognitive, emotional, and social factors, influences interactions with both God and others, affecting behaviors, emotions, and empathy[75]. Both frameworks underscore the profound connection between psychology and spirituality, highlighting how personal struggles and relational dynamics – whether through attachment patterns or mental models of God – shape human behavior, empathy, and healing. Just as the Wounded healer archetype emphasizes personal suffering as a source of growth and therapeutic connection, these models illustrate how individual experiences can foster deeper empathy and emotional resilience in both spiritual and interpersonal contexts.

These premises give us a basis for understanding the interplay and complementarity of the two fundamental sciences dealing with human beings: psychology and theology. Psychological theories about human development and well-being can help interpret theological and even biblical accounts of human struggles and growth. This approach does not aim to replace biblical truth with psychological insights but rather uses psychology to reveal deeper layers of biblical narratives[76]. The theological concepts of grace, redemption, and forgiveness, for instance, provide frameworks for psychological healing and transformation. This perspective suggests that biblical insights can help therapists understand the spiritual dimensions of human suffering and growth, enriching therapeutic processes[77]. While psychology tends to focus on

---

[74] Cf. Pehr GRANQVIST – Mario MIKULINCER – Phillip R. SHAVER, An attachment theory perspective on religion and spirituality, in: *The Science of Religion, Spirituality, and Existentialism*, Fargo, (2020), 175-186, here 178.

[75] Cf. Kathryn A. JOHNSON – Yexin Jessica LI – Adam B. COHEN – Morris A. OKUN, Friends in high places: The influence of authoritarian and benevolent god-concepts on social attitudes and behaviors, in: *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 5 (2013) 1, 15-22, here 16.

[76] Cf. Harold J. ELLENS, (1997). The Bible and psychology, an interdisciplinary pilgrimage, in: *Pastoral Psychology*, 45 (1997) 3, 193-208, here: 193.

[77] Cf. Lowrence J. CRABB, Biblical Authority and Christian Psychology, in: *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 9 (1981) 4, 305-311, here 308.

empirical and observable human behaviors, the Bible addresses these same issues from a spiritual and moral perspective. Combining these insights enables a fuller understanding of humanity and our relationship with God, showing that both disciplines are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary sources of truth[78].

In conclusion, the interplay between psychology and theology offers a rich framework for understanding human development, well-being, and the spiritual dimensions of suffering and growth. Psychological theories provide valuable insights that can deepen our understanding of biblical narratives without replacing theological truths. The archetype of the Wounded healer further illustrates this connection, as both psychology and theology recognize the profound role personal suffering plays in fostering empathy and facilitating healing in others. Therapists and spiritual leaders alike can draw from their own experiences of hardship to better understand and guide those in need. By integrating these perspectives, therapists can address both the spiritual and emotional aspects of human struggles. This complementary relationship between psychology and theology enriches our understanding of humanity and our connection with God, showing that both disciplines offer unique and valuable contributions to the exploration of human experience and the healing process.

This study is highly significant for its contributions to psychotherapy, theology, and broader discussions about human well-being. By bridging psychology and spirituality, it provides a framework that extends beyond therapeutic practice to inform pastoral care, education, and community support initiatives. The study's insights highlight the universal relevance of the Wounded healer archetype, demonstrating its potential to inspire healing, empathy, and resilience across various professional and personal domains.

The findings suggest that therapists, counselors, and spiritual leaders should integrate reflective practices into their training and professional development, focusing on personal growth and the spiritual dimensions of their work.

Further research could explore the role of diverse spiritual traditions in shaping therapists' post-traumatic growth would deepen the understanding of this transformative process. Questions about the long-term effects of embracing the Wounded healer archetype on professional efficacy and personal

---

[78] Cf. Samuel B. RENNEBOHM – John THOBURN, Incarnational Psychotherapy: Christ as the Ground of Being for Integrating Psychology and Theology, in: *Pastoral Psychology*, 70 (2021) 2, 179 – 190, here 179.

well-being remain open for investigation. Additionally, exploring how various attachment styles and mental God-models impact the therapeutic process and spiritual guidance could deepen our understanding of this integrative approach. Research could also focus on the practical implementation of these findings in diverse settings, such as community health, education, and religious institutions, to further enhance their real-world applicability.

Sažetak

OSOBNI RAST KROZ PATNJU: POSTTRAUMATSKA DUHOVNA TRANSFORMACIJA

Saša POLJAK LUKEK
Teološki Fakultet, Sveučilište u Ljubljani
Poljanska cesta 4, SI – 1000 Ljubljana
sasa.poljaklukek@teof.uni-lj.si

Tanja VALENTA
Teološki Fakultet, Sveučilište u Ljubljani
Poljanska cesta 4, SI – 1000 Ljubljana
tanja.valenta@teof.uni-lj.si

Ovaj rad istražuje koncept »ranjenog iscjelitelja« u psihoterapiji, ispitujući kako osobne borbe i emocionalne rane mogu poslužiti kao izvori empatije, suosjećanja i terapijske učinkovitosti. Polazeći od psiholoških teorija Carla Junga i Henrija Nouwena, studija naglašava kako osobna patnja, kada je integrirana u nečiji profesionalni identitet, može poboljšati terapijski odnos kroz stvaranje dubljih veza i međusobnog iscjeljenja. Osim toga, arhetip ranjenog iscjelitelja uspoređuje se s teorijom privrženosti, prikazujući kako oba koncepta naglašavaju ulogu ranjivosti i osobnog rasta u razvoju empatije i sposobnosti pomaganja drugima. Rad također razmatra utjecaj religioznih i duhovnih iskustava na posttraumatski rast, ističući transformativnu moć duhovnosti u procesu iscjeljenja i razvoja profesionalne kompetencije terapeuta. Integracija psiholoških uvida s duhovnim dimenzijama pruža nijansirano razumijevanje uloge empatije u terapijskim i religijskim kontekstima, pokazujući međusobnu povezanost ljudske patnje, osobnog rasta i iscjeljenja.

Ključne riječi: *ranjeni iscjelitelj, teorija privrženosti, empatija, religija i duhovnost, posttraumatski rast*