Theoretical Analyses

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy: A Transformative Approach to Negative Appraisals of Religious Origin

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Abstract

This paper discusses ways of transforming personal appraisals of religious origin through the use of cognitive behavioural therapeutic approaches. In the introduction, an account is presented of the theoretical background of cognitive behavioural therapy together with the main aspects underlining it, such as: how an event can induce irrational thinking in one's reasoning, how irrational thinking can affect physical and emotional sensations and what follows, in terms of behaviours, after one has been emotionally influenced by irrational thinking. Appraisals of religious origin are presented and discussed in the main part of this chapter, followed by cognitive behavioural explanations which explore how these can be transformed from negative to positive ones. Before completing the main part of the chapter, a new topic is discussed, titled Cognitive Behavioural Psychology of Religion and ways of its contributing to new theoretical and empirical approaches for both psychology and religion. Finally, a summary of the main points of what has been discussed concludes the paper.

Keywords: psychology cognition, irrational thinking, negative appraisals, cognitive behavioural psychology of religion

Introduction

Cognitive behavioural therapy is regarded as one of the most influential models in psychotherapy today (Brewin, 2006). It combines philosophy, cognitive science and behavioural theories (Reisner, 2005). Cognitive behavioural therapy investigates how the mind's cognitive abilities can aid one's psychological state suffering from negative automatic thoughts and avoidant behaviours[1] (see DeRubeis, Webb, Tang, & Beck, 2010).

Century-old writings, such as *Plato's "Cave"* (Broom, 1991)[2] and *Epictetus's "Enchiridion"* (Long, 2002)[3] explain the human condition by discussing how the self is influenced in terms of *situations* and *events* (Montgomery, 1993); the way individuals interpret *what takes place* in their lives as to the *irrational thinking* and/or *beliefs* they hold about this; the *emotional responses* following such *beliefs* and/or *negative appraisals*; and what they do in order to come to terms with *feelings* and *physical sensations* (Beck, 1970).

In cognitive behavioural therapy terms:

1. Irrational thinking refers to the negative appreciation of situations or events that took place in one's life

2. Negative appraisals can be transformed not through their outcomes, which are avoidant behaviours, but through the synthesis of meanings of fruitful content deriving from the positive side of personal experiences (Lyddon, 1991).

On the other hand, religion constitutes a valuable expression for human experience, the age of which is as old as the human mind itself (Voland, 2009). Religions have been founded on events. The way these events are explained from the faithful gives rise to *schemas*[4], both positive and negative. Human interrelationships can be based on schemas which can influence not only people but an entire culture as well. An example to understand the latter is that individuals belonging to a religious affiliation may regard others not belonging to their affiliation as infidel, inferior, or even a threat. Irrational understanding of reality in those people's minds is not concerned with the meaning of a different religion per se but with the meaning of belonging to a religion one cannot accept as one's own. Such religious appraisals are certainly negative for they refer to individuals' consideration of reality in terms of how they experience it in the religious group they belong to; in the religious group they seek coalitions at; in the religious group they receive identity from (see Rajaei, 2010). Another example of negative religious appraisals could be the meaning of God as an imposing Father (see Freud, 1927).

Religious appraisals can have an irrational influence on individuals' emotions and behavioural responses, too (see Pargament, 1997). At first, they can be demonstrated via ruminative thinking associated to schemas they spiritually adhere to, such as believing that by being members of a religious group, they - and not others - are the chosen ones. On the other hand, religious appraisals may have a negative lasting effect on the cognitive balance individuals need to keep between themselves and the meanings of faith, spirituality and religious life in general (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956; Slater, 2005). One of the aims of cognitive behavioural therapy is to tease out individuals' conflictive tendencies that alter and dysfunction cognitions with regards to what has been so far experienced and how reality associates to it (see Festinger, 1957).

Psychology of religion as a discipline covers a wide range of psychological theories in the explanation of religious phenomena. Religious phenomena explain what human life is and what humans can do to transform it when in need for a spiritual change. Transformation from a religious point of view plays a crucial role for the life of individuals and individuals' relations to others. If religious appraisals, in regard to the religious phenomenon, are faulty, such as the examples mentioned above, religious life becomes very uneasy and negative not only as to one's reasoning in reference to one's religion, but also as to one's reasoning in reference to one's relation towards others.

In this paper, I introduce a new approach to the issue of transformation from a cognitive behavioural point of view. I discuss how cognitive behavioural theory can be applied therapeutically to the needs of a religious individual belonging to a particular religion both in terms of personal faith and interrelationships.

Main Body of Research

Parts to the Understanding of the Transformative Value in Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy Terms

The transformative value of cognitive behavioural therapy will be discussed in this chapter according to the following points:

1) *The Meaning of Reality* — In cognitive behavioural therapy *reality* is explained in a phenomenological and a structural way. Reality is a phenomenological trend for it refers to everyday events that are malleable, unpredictable, and affect human life; reality is also a structural trend because it regulates human behaviour.

2) *The Structural Synthesis of Experience* — Cognitive behavioural therapy argues that the meaning of personal experience belongs to the perceiver. That implies that "perceivers" design syntheses the meanings of which lie in accordance with their needs and expectations. Personal experience can be seen as the underpinning factor of personal syntheses of meanings whereas also as subject to changes taking place due to personal schemas.

3) *One's Schematic Misinterpretation of Others' Actions* — In cognitive behavioural therapy, faulty cognitive thinking depends on how the perceiver anticipates an event or others' behaviours, when he/she attempts to explain personal difficulties in life. If the perceiver is in difficulty to explain an event, he/she considers others being part of his/her difficulty, establishing thus schemas and appraisals through which he/she misinterprets their behaviours.

4) *Transformation of Personal Schemas* — During the course of transformation the individual sees oneself as a conscious agent towards changing personal schemas and syntheses of meanings. In this way, one regards oneself in the active role of transforming meanings through bringing about changes *not in what happened* but *what followed the aftermath of it* in terms of one's cognitions, feelings and behaviours.

5) *The Need of Transforming Negative Cognitive Appraisals of Religious Origin* — Negative cognitive appraisals can be of religious origin if individuals attribute religious content to personal experiences. Cognitive behavioural therapy can operate in a transformative way and help individuals understand that negative cognitive appraisals of religious origin can relate to meanings and interpretations deriving from religious ideas or affiliation needs in religious settings.

Cognitive behavioural therapy deals with how human cognition operates when issues of *core beliefs*[5], concerning reality, negatively affect one's explanation of the world, others and the self. Core beliefs may refer to one's faulty perception that one is incapable of finding solution to a problem as well as that one is incapable to develop healthy interrelationships (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Core beliefs can also be understood as *schemas* individuals have about reality influencing emotions and behaviours (Epstein, 2003).

Discussion on Each Individual Part

The Meaning of Reality — The issue of reality in cognitive behavioural therapy explains the relationship of an individual with the *here* and *now* (see Hafner, 1981). According to the aforesaid Epictetus's motto that *men are disturbed not by things, but by the view they take of them*, reality is seen as a structural imperative with many and different components. What Epictetus argues with this extract is that humans must learn to accept and tolerate reality so as not to be influenced by it in their thinking, emotions and behaviour. To use an example, humans succeeded in explaining the natural phenomenon of thunder, not because they did not have the fear of it, but because they accepted it as a component of the many and different facets of nature. In accepting the thunder, humans accepted the emotion of fear, for that was the element humans had to tolerate in order to survive (behaviour).

Appraisals of a religious content can also refer to the structural importance of reality. There are religious ideas which tackle reality in terms of superficiality and trickery. That means that reality for religion can be something constantly changing and as such humans need not be attached to it. Though, such approach can be acceptable by many, there are religious individuals who consider reality as associated with what they haven't done to be pleasing God. Through this kind of thinking, they see themselves as failures or not good enough to be accepted by God. Such a schema can lead one appraising that one's life has been in vain, insignificant and full of transgres-

sions. What we see in that understanding is that such a core belief consists of a faulty thinking about what reality is and not about what one hasn't done into pleasing God.

The comprehension of reality in terms of the *here* and *now* lies at the core of one's faulty beliefs and this is where cognitive behavioural therapy can offer a transformation to such appraisals. Transformation of negative religious appraisals into positive ones can come through one's cognitive disengagement from the issue of reality as part of one's religious life. Religious life can be regarded in terms of spiritual adherence to aspects of faith, whereas reality as the contingent-specific realm one experiences at a given time. One, in disengaging religious life from reality is able to explain reality not as the "cause" of one's discomfort to one's relationship with God, but as a field whereupon one's endeavours in faith can be fulfilled.

The Structural Synthesis of Experience — What we mean by "structure" in cognitive behavioural therapy refers to the personal experience and the synthesis of schemas (David & Szentagotai, 2006). The synthesis of schemas is an element which leads to faulty cognitive thinking. Schemas establish perceptions in terms of ideas entailing meanings (see Hinton, 1980). Schemas depend on the *expression of meanings* through personal experience and environmental stimuli (Padesky, 1994). For instance, if one thinks that flying (meaning) depends on the technology of controlling the winds during takeoff (expression), one may explain "flying" as travelling quickly to destinations (schema). What could be argued from that example is that the cognitive understanding of meaning may not necessarily be subject to the application of expression to it, but to the need the meaning to reflect a requisite one cannot live without.

In cognitive behavioural therapy terms, the synthesis of experience depends on:

a. Events that took place in one's life - Events are situations which trigger thinking and feelings (see Ellis, 2003).

b. What one does in order to deal with such events (see Ellis, 1994) - Behaviours are actions in order consequences coming out of situations to be avoided (Tiba, 2010).

Irrational schematic thinking regarding religion can depend on events construing and activating appraisals of faulty content. An example could be religious ritualistic behaviours disassociated from meanings of spiritual exegesis. What I mean here is that individuals may participate in religious rituals not because they refer to particular religious practices but because they are part of a given culture. In that way, rituals of religious origin do not relate to religious beliefs but to individuals' cultural need into getting together and celebrating traditional values. That kind of disassociation disengages ritualistic meanings from congregational needs (expressions), for the former refers to the content religious spirituality originates from (synthesis) and the latter to the context such spirituality is seen at (schema).

Faulty religious appraisals are based on irrational cognitive thinking referred to what an individual does in a particular congregation and the understanding one holds of the belief system one adheres to. Faulty religious appraisals refer to *expressions* composing the *synthetic understanding* of *schemas* in terms of one's commitment and attachment to a religious system. Do these foundations refer to the synthesis of experience which is expressed by the congregation one belongs to, or is it part of a religious thinking unrelated to the belief system one *thinks* that others represent (schema)? And second, is one's structural synthesis of religious experience in harmonious and agreeable combination to what other individuals of the same belief system accept as well (expression); in other words, what cognitive elements of learning individuals have employed to make sure that what they believe in is indeed what they advocate for (challenging faulty schemas)?

One's Schematic Misinterpretation of Others' Actions — An important part to understanding and explaining appraisals lies for cognitive behavioural therapy with the schematic misinterpretation of others' actions (see Levin, 2010). One's perception of how others act and behave is of a significant value to the understanding of faulty cognitive appraisals. It is so because faulty cognitive thinking does not only depend on an individual's relation to oneself, but on an individual's relation to others as well (Brodie, 2005). One's schematic misinterpretation of others' actions alienates one from others and makes one subject to further irrational thinking (Gilbert & Malone, 1995).

Personal difficulties in life can be found at the heart of one's misinterpretation of others' actions. If one feels one is not taken care of by others in regard to one's difficulties, one may feel that others are part of one's problem, considering thereby that others' behaviour has negatively influenced one's inability to deal with the problem at hand (Fine, 2006).

Cognitive behavioural therapy discusses an individual's schematic misinterpretation of others' actions by explaining one's irrational thinking as part of one's lack of adaptation in the needs of a given environment (see D'Zurilla & Nezu, 2001). What makes an individual thinking that others are to blame may refer to values an individual believes in; values which are not accepted or tolerated from others (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In cognitive behavioural therapy an individual by adapting and surviving in an unfriendly environment indicates he/she is able to face and overcome difficulties in relation to that environment (Duntley, 2005). Cognitive behavioural therapy is more interested in explaining that such difficulties have to do with the self rather than with one's relation to others.

In order for such schematic misinterpretation of others' actions to alter, one needs to consider *why* others' behaviour is thought of as responsible for one's problems and cognitive discomfort. By "why", I do not mean the *causes*, but the *effects* that causes rely on. It is understood that one's schematic misinterpretation of others' actions is unsubstantiated for it is related to the *emotional reasoning* how one would like to be regarded from others and one *thinks* he/she isn't (see Arribas-Ayllon, Sarangi, & Clark, 2008). What an individual does not wish to accept at a situation like this is the *here* and *now* of one's experience of faulty cognitions. To use an example, an individual may consider that one is not accepted from others because one is cleverer and others aren't, or because one is able to see and explain things others can't see and explain the same way. According to this example, what an individual does not wish to cognitively recognise is that he/she emotionally and behaviourally rejects and avoids others in order to prove oneself superior of them.

To relate schematic misinterpretation of others' actions to appraisals of religious origin I refer to an example of a member of congregation disagreeing with religious practices followed by the majority of that congregation. A disagreement can be presented with an overt or covert form and relate to everyday congregational practices, such as sermons, talks, charity work, or liturgical needs; i.e. congregational practices which play an important role to the religious community one is part of. One by disagreeing against others' liturgical needs, because one thinks that there are believers who gather around not actually to praise God but to fulfil their needs in overcoming personal difficulties, places oneself in a schema of not taking into account others' needs, but what one personally considers what is right or wrong about what others' wants should be about (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001).

A transformation of such schematic misinterpretation could include an individual's cognitive consideration that others' needs may be different from one's own and that what others point out as spiritual wants may not actually reflect what one would like them to reflect. One's cognitive thinking by not taking into account others' needs, but only one's own, reflects one's cognitive inability to tolerate others' differing understanding of religious needs. Such cognitive inconsistency, i.e. the difficulty one to comprehend others' needs as different from one's own can be

solved if the individual pays attention to what other people's needs are and to what extent they can relate to one's own in order for a rational and not an irrational reasoning to be the case.

Transformation of Personal Schemas — Personal schemas are transformed when appraisals of faulty reasoning are transformed too (Papageorgiou & Wells, 2004; Wells, 2004). In cognitive behavioural therapy terms, faulty appraisals, including those related to religion, originate from same starting-points. In cognitive behavioural therapy, core beliefs which refer to one's incapability to consider one as worthy and valuable, originate from one's faulty reasoning about motivation and initiative.

Transformation is all about changing cognitions and schemas. During transformation, the individual becomes a conscious agent to what one needs to cognitively change with regards to personal schemas and meanings. As previously pointed out, personal schemas refer to core beliefs of irrational content about how an individual under-stands of a situation compared to how the situation should really be understood. An individual is a conscious agent in terms of assuming an active role to the changing of interpretations contrasted to the information received.

In order for personal schemas to be transformed, the following four questions need to be answered:

a. *How could one transform one's irrational thinking and faulty appraisals*?

The transformation of irrational thinking depends on the understanding that faulty appraisals beget cognitive un-easiness to one's mind. By *faulty appraisals* are meant *thinking errors*, some of which are *black-and-white thinking*, *filtering*, *mind-reading*, *catastrophising* and *overgeneralising* (Clark, 2007; Williams & Garland, 2002a). The transformation of irrational thinking follows the transformation of faulty appraisals through the alleviation of anxiety individuals feel in their relationship both to the events they have experienced and others. Transformation in cog-nitive behavioural therapy comes through *cognitive restructuring* where faulty appraisals of irrational thinking, such as "others think I'm a waste of time in a relation" can be replaced by positive thinking patterns, such as "what others think about myself is their understanding and not mine and therefore does not affect my emotions and be-haviours towards them".

b. *In which way, one's irrational thinking can be replaced by an individual's willingness to undertake an active role and change it*?

As argued above, *cognitive restructuring* entails changes in anxiety-provoking situations which generate faulty appraisals and irrational thinking. Steps to be followed in that direction refer to the identification of the distressed situation; to tracking down negative feelings coming out of that situation; to pinpointing the negative feelings - one by one - in relation to the issues linked to the distressed situation; and finally, to draw a rational conclusion about how each negative feeling is related to every part of the distressed situation (see Luce, 2005). All these four steps explain an individual's willingness to undertake an active role against one's irrational thinking and faulty appraisals, so to transform one's negative automatic thoughts into positive ones, not only theoretically but practically as well.

One other crucial means into changing negative cognitions through *cognitive restructuring* is the replacement of thinking errors with thinking accuracy. In terms of *black-and-white thinking*, instead of considering others or oneself as good or bad, wrong or right, successful or unsuccessful one should accept that making mistakes in life is something normal and expected; that one should not worry about; that one should consider life as a learning course where no one is faultless. In terms of *filtering*, instead of thinking that everything is negative – even among positives – an individual should think that a negative experience can prove helpful for oneself because one can

learn what to do in order not to repeat it in the future. In terms of *mind-reading*, instead of thinking that others see one as stupid, incompetent or insufficient, to think this is a faulty perception which does not represent others' thoughts about oneself. In terms of *catastrophising*, instead of thinking the worst to happen, to think what is that which actually bothers one's mind; whether that can be confirmed; what is the evidence for and against it; whether one could think of other possibilities to deal with; or, what one considers as worse to happen could that relate to truth or not? Finally, in terms of *overgeneralising*, instead of thinking that once one has failed one will always fail, to think of it as something which cannot be applied to every situation (Williams & Garland, 2002b).

c. *How can individuals become active and not passive participators to changes of faulty thinking*?

When an individual undertakes the labour to change one's negative automatic thoughts, it means that cognitive distortions included in them are also in the process of such change. The active role one undertakes to such changes is linked to an individual's positive belief that one can tackle them by becoming an active participator to what one needs to change (Gergen & Gergen, 1983). That is to say that, one's passive tolerance to one's irrational automatic thoughts turns one inactive and detached from the *thinking changes* to be underwent (Hope, Burns, Hayes, Herbert, & Warner, 2010).

Individuals can become active by setting up *goals* and introducing *interventions* to accomplish these goals – i.e. what they want to reach and what exactly therapeutic tools to employ so such goals to be reached. Goals should be precise and doable, such as instead of eliminating the fear of something to be able to comprehend what the fear is and the components it consists of (Watson & Tharp, 2007). Interventions to an irrational thinking change start from the *cognitive domain* where issues inducing distortions in the mind are pursued in terms of cognitive restructuring and psycho-education, such as removing the negative bias from cognitions with irrational content; changes in the *feelings domain* are pursued in terms of upturning emotional reasoning and ruminations by the help of helpful activities such as physical exercise; changes in the *behavioural domain* are pursued not through negatively reinforcing the self to avoid what happened, but instead to positively reinforcing him to facing up the event and looking for useful strategies to deal with the its derivatives, such as recording down activities and what the individual would like to change in them (Beck, Emery, & Greenberg, 2005).

d. *Finally, how could transformation of irrational thinking be applicable to negative appraisals of religious origin*?

As it is understood, what we have said about irrational thinking and faulty appraisals refer to the schemas and core beliefs people constitute for themselves and others. The same it is applied to negative appraisals of religious origin, which can also be subject to core beliefs and negative schemas. To come back to the "congregation example", if a believer thinks that the congregation one is part of is a hostile environment for oneself, because other members think of him/her as an "alien", or that one "must be put aside because one is not worthy of that congregation", irrational thinking can also be an issue for that believer.

To elaborate this example in more precise terms, I refer to James's Epistle (2:1-5) where he writes that discriminating against others[6] - cognitively meaning: if one *schematically misinterprets* others in need -, such discrimination should not be regarded in an irrational way, but in a way that explains that others' position against needy or socially deprived individuals occurs due to situation-specific contingencies of *their state of mind and not the state of mind of the individuals in need*. If discriminators in such a state of mind consider others as inferior or insignificant, then neither negative automatic thoughts, nor core beliefs of irrational reasoning can take place in the minds of the affected individuals.

The Need of Transforming Negative Cognitive Appraisals of Religious Origin — Hitherto, we have discussed issues of appraisals of negative religious content which are associated to major ideas of the cognitive behavioural approach concerning a faulty religious reasoning.

In this last part we will investigate:

   a. why negative cognitive appraisals of religious origin need to be transformed

   b. what could be the meaning of such transformation for individuals in religious settings

   c. how cognitive behavioural therapy can be of utility to the epistemological and empirical advancement of psychology of religion

a. Cognitive appraisals of religious origin instigate emotional and behavioural tendencies from meanings and schemas linked to individuals' interpretation of religious ideas (see Titus, 2002). To use an example, emotional and behavioural attitudes and the way these are influenced by religious origin concepts, may refer to *God being in control of everything in one's life and one to have no choice in decision-making*. Such understanding, according to cognitive behavioural therapy, relates to stress-induced cognitions of inability to cope and lack of involvement so strategies of problem-solving not to be undertaken. In such a way, irrational thinking becomes the agent of eliminating coping efforts before them to have even been attempted to. Negative cognitive appraisals of religious origin could refer also to *untried* coping strategies due to irrational reasoning beliefs with regards to events that influenced one's religious life (comp. Wong, 1998). Beliefs of an irrational thinking, in order to be transformed, need to be examined as *faulty* in the sense that individuals *think* about religion, i.e. as *faulty*, in the sense individuals *misunderstand* religion in terms of *thinking errors* not representing religion per se: such as that Bishops and Priests who are sinners cannot represent God, or that the Sacraments they perform are not valid or acceptable by God[7]. Transformation efforts regarding cognitive appraisals of religious origin disassociate negative automatic thoughts from the true cognitive context, meaning and elaboration of religious beliefs in order them to be understood as aspects of personal commitment and not as aspects of cognitive distress. To an extent, this is what a religious individual really needs to understand: that, commitment to a faith system implies that one should be in control of one's expectations as to what one asks from one's religion when one comes to cognitively comprehend it in relation to one's intrinsic spiritual needs (see Greenstreet, 2006).

b. On the other hand, cognitive appraisals of religious origin can also be related to an individual's affiliation needs in religious settings. What individuals in religious settings seek is alleviation from personal psychological pains, a comforting environment and a fruitful field of communication between themselves and others. If, for instance, a fruitful field of communication cannot be found in a religious setting, churchgoers might think they are not accepted or tolerated in that environment. In using a *New Testament terminology*: those being *weak in faith* find difficult to understand why some members of the congregation behave in a way other than the one practiced by the religious group they adhere to[8]. In such a case, cognitive behavioural therapy can assist those *weak in faith* to realise (cognitive restructuring) that what they feel (emotions) should not negatively influence their attitude (behaviour) towards faith, for it is not a matter of faith but others' stance who through negative influence affect churchgoers' minds in that congregation[9].

c. A new topic concerned with the relationship between *cognitive behavioural therapy* and *psychology of religion* can emerge from the discussions we have had in the present paper. I entitle this topic *Cognitive Behavioural Psychology of Religion* for it is preoccupied with the epistemological and empirical advancement of both psychology of religion and cognitive behavioural therapy. Cognitive behavioural psychology of religion can be regarded as a

modern approach to faulty and irrational automatic thinking that explains religious schemas as maladaptive psycho-spiritual interpretations[10].

The centre of inquiry of this new approach deals with the negative interpretations of human mind, which:

- cognitively relate to faulty impressions as to what took place together with the emotions and behaviours that followed;
- psychologically explain psychopathology issues in the religious domain.

The interpretation of religious phenomena from a psychology of religion point of view incorporates psychodynamic, cognitive, psychoanalytic, phenomenological, evolutionary, social psychological and empirical approaches to the understanding of the condition individuals are presented with in their relation to religion. Through cognitive behavioural psychology of religion issues which are linked to personal psychopathology in reference to religious principles, precepts and/or behaviour are epistemologically pursued in terms of core beliefs and schematic thinking about religion. Cognitive behavioural psychology of religion integrates the relationship between cognitive behavioural therapy and psychology of religion in empirical terms as well. That is to say that this new topic is also concerned with the practical implications of negative automatic thoughts in a religious person's life and how these can be therapeutically dealt with. What cognitive behavioural therapy can gain from the psychology of religion and vice versa is an integrative explanation of the religious phenomenon according to human cognition.

Through such an integration, modern psychology could also be benefited as well: on the one hand, it can adopt insights in terms of the therapeutic understanding that faulty religious reasoning is not only associated to irrational thinking, but that can be subject to cultural imperatives as well, such as beliefs about "good" and "bad" religions, generated from *societal reasoning errors of black-and-white thinking*; on the other hand, it can regard human psychopathology as not only depending on irrational religious thinking, but on others' emotional responses too, such as an individual who has been taught from others that different faiths are enemies, resulting in hating these faiths.

Cognitive behavioural psychology of religion has the scientific capacity to restructure negative cognitions of religious content - like the ones mentioned above - both for the wellbeing of religious individuals as well as that of contemporary societies and cultures.

Conclusion

Cognitive appraisals of religious origin refer to core beliefs and schemas with regards to how individuals explain the religious phenomenon. Cognitive behavioural therapy provides the necessary tools towards one's constructive understanding of the above together with one's religious relationship to others. In this chapter, transformation issues of faulty cognitive appraisals have been discussed in terms of the meaning of reality; the structural synthesis of experience; one's schematic misinterpretation of others' actions; the transformation of personal schemas; the need of transforming negative cognitive appraisals of religious origin. Finally, a new topic was presented and discussed, titled *Cognitive Behavioural Psychology of Religion* which aims at incorporating cognitive behavioural therapy and the psychology of religion into a new approach which could both deal with the faulty reasoning related to the religious phenomenon as well as with issues of psychopathology associated to it.

The issue of cognitive restructuring is of main value to that perspective. Through that, individuals can re-examine their cognitive position in line with how they feel and behave towards others; how they should behave in a religious

setting, should it be hostile to them; how they should identify faulty cognitions of personal religious content unrelated to religious concepts; how they should think of others if they are not liked by them.

Following a detailed discussion on all of the above, with examples taken either from issues of personal experience or from the New Testament, therapeutic interventions are suggested which address the relationship between cognitive behavioural therapy and psychology of religion.

Notes

1) "Negative automatic thoughts" mean *beliefs*, *images* and *interpretations* individuals construct out of *situations* and *events* which influence them in life; "avoidant behaviours" mean *consequences* of *emotional responses* to *negative automatic thoughts*. Avoidant behaviours refer to what individuals do to avoid what took place *instead of finding ways to face it and deal with it* (Padesky, 1994).

2) Plato's allegory of the Cave (Republic: Chapter 7) discusses the aspect of self-consciousness where individuals are explained how to be freed from negative appraisals. Introspection is the tool of self-consciousness for Plato whereby individuals are helped to discover a self able without illusions. Plato with his discussion on illusions argues that they do not associate with one's actual needs and expectations, but with one's escape from reality. In this way, *cognitions*, *feelings* and *behaviours* are also affected for reality is understood not in the true sense but through imagination (Metcalfe, 1998).

3) Epictetus is regarded as the founding father of the philosophical origins of modern cognitive behaviour therapy. In his Enchiridion, he denotes that "men are disturbed not by things, but by the view they take of them". In other words, since things represent reality, both in *behavioural* and *emotional* terms, individuals should grasp them not in the way they are, but in a way their *cognition* should not be affected by (Westbrook et al., 2007).

4) "Schemas" is another term which cognitive behavioural therapy uses to refer to *beliefs*, *interpretations* and the explanations individuals apply to *meanings*. *Schemas* can also be called "core beliefs" for they represent *ideas* an individual *is not conscious of*.

5) *Core beliefs* refer to hidden cognitions one is unaware of. Examples of core beliefs are the expressions: "I am not good enough", "I am a failure", "I am nothing", "I don't mean anything", "Others don't like me", etc.

6) In particular, *if people discriminate against the poor by embracing only the wealthy, God can make the poor in the world wealthy in faith and heirs of His Kingdom*. The full extract is as follows: "My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man with gold ring and in fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, 'Have a seat here, please', while you say to the poor man, 'Stand there', or, 'Sit at my feet', have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which he has promised to those who love him?"

7) An important extract in this instance can be taken from the Gospel of Matthew (23:1-3) where it is clearly stated that high-ranked religious individuals who transgress in the face of God, should not be followed because of their personal transgressions, but because what they say and preach is God's word, which is unchangeable and always functional to the spiritual needs of the faithful (free translation). According to the text: "Then said Jesus to the crowds and to his disciples, 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice'".

8) A meaningful extract on that comes from the Epistle to Galatians (2:11-14) where we see Paul confronting Peter's hypocritical behaviour to both the Judaeo-and Gentile-Christians: "But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the Gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?'"

9) The extract in note 8 is a clear example of how one's avoidant behaviour can precipitate imbalance to the life of the religious community as a whole.

10) In a next paper, I will discuss religious schemas as misunderstandings of spirituality in cognitive-behavioural psychology of religion terms.

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