

The Differentiation of Psychosis and Spiritual Emergency

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STATEMENT

This work has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation itself.

Signed

..... / December 2007

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ABSTRACT

Psychosis has long been recognised as a severe mental disorder characterised by derangement of personality, disorganised thought, and a loss of contact with reality. Certain mystical and alternate states, which have been practiced throughout history by various cultures, have also been deemed as pathological through the lens of western psychiatry even though many of these states provide beneficial contributions to the individual and their community. A number of similar states have been found in modern society and have been termed “Spiritual Emergencies”. The aim of this research was to determine whether “spiritual emergency” (SE) is a valid concept and to outline the differences between SE and psychosis. One-hundred-and-nine participants from the general public completed a questionnaire developed for this research, comprised of measures of psychosis and ten spiritual emergency subscales. Results indicated that participants who were prescribed medication or previously experienced a psychotic episode scored higher on the SE subscales. One strong factor was found to underlie all the SE subscales and a significant relationship was found between this factor and the measure of psychotic experience. It is open to interpretation as to whether psychosis is nothing more than SE or whether SE is nothing more than psychosis. The implications of these findings are discussed.