











another word than spirituality for this 'something else' because it is so off-putting to so many people. But I've not found one yet, though consciousness is close (but has other problems).

This is just my own personal story but many people who experience a mental health crisis often speak of their difficulties in spiritual terms. Spiritual values and needs and spiritual ways of knowing, in many different guises, are frequently very important to many people for their sense of self. They can also be a potential source of great healing, as they were for me. The helping professions, however, are not

trained in how to engage in meaningful dialogue around spiritual ways of knowing. On the contrary, their training typically forbids or paralyses them from entering into such spiritual conversations. David Tacey at La Trobe University aptly describes this as the 'spirituality gap'. As a way forward, I think we can look to what we've done in recent years around being more sensitive to cultural diversity, and how we have learned to communicate more effectively with people whose cultures are different to our own, sometimes *very* different. For instance, I don't understand religious spirituality, or

the faith-based belief in a supernatural God, but these days I'm at least able to have a meaningful conversation with those who do. Although spiritual ways of knowing almost by definition take us beyond the merely rational mind, this does not mean that we cannot talk sensibly and rationally about spiritually. We must first reclaim our inherent spiritual wisdom from its current exile, where it has been banished by scientific prejudices, and reassert it as a legitimate and significant voice in the important community conversations we need to have about our sense of self—and suicide.

## AUTHOR NOTES

DAVID WEBB has served on the board of the *World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry* (WNUSP) and is International Representative for the *Australian Federation of Disability Organisations* (AFDO), representing both organisations at various UN forums on the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD). Along with his Ph.D. and the book from this research, '*Thinking About Suicide*', David's other writings about suicide and the rights of people who experience psychosocial distress can be found at the companion website: [www.thinkingaboutsucide.org](http://www.thinkingaboutsucide.org)

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