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HUMAN PERSON IN THE MIRROR OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

1.0 Introduction

Our world today is in the midst of a deep crisis. Mass starvation, nuclear annihilation, ethnic conflicts and ecological destruction are some of the most glaring symptoms of such a crisis. Who is responsible for this? We wrongly look at economics, politics, religion and other external structures to find out the villain. Actually, we are the villains; we, the human persons who have understood very little of *who and what we are, and what we can become*.

"What is a human person?" is the most crucial question confronting anyone who wishes to save the world from the present crisis. Different philosophies, psychologies and other disciplines assume different perspectives and emphasize different dimensions of the human person. Gathering insights from perennial philosophy¹ and synthesizing them with the modern Western psychologies, the emerging transpersonal psychology attempts to understand the human person in a larger context that includes states of consciousness and levels of well-being ignored by the previous psychological models.

In this paper, we shall mainly focus on the philosophical underpinnings of transpersonal psychology concerning the human person. For this, we shall first briefly look at the emergence of

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1. 'Perennial philosophy' is a term used by A. Huxley and others to refer to a universal doctrine concerning the nature of the human person and reality lying at the heart of every metaphysical tradition and religion. Ken Wilber and others belonging to the transpersonal movement propose a corresponding 'perennial psychology' – a universal view concerning the nature of human consciousness which expresses the very same insights as that of perennial philosophy but in a more decidedly psychological language. See Wilber, Ken. "Psychologia Perennis: The Spectrum of Consciousness", in *Beyond Ego*, Edited by Walsh, Roger and Vaughan, Frances (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1980), pp. 74-86.

the transpersonal movement in the history of psychology. Then, we shall expound some of the key concepts of the human person—human knowing, human consciousness and human growth—in the transpersonal perspective. Finally, we shall discuss some of the philosophical issues that transpersonal psychology raises with regard to our understanding of the human person.

2.0 The Emergence of Transpersonal Movement

Psychology is relatively young compared to other scientific disciplines. Within the short span of its existence and especially in the recent years, several branches, schools and theories of psychology have mushroomed. But even in the maze of its complexity that we find today, we can still discern three important 'movements' in the evolution of the history of psychology—Behaviourism, psychoanalysis and Humanistic psychology.²

Behaviourism approaches the human person by looking at the different behaviours of an individual. American psychologist John B. Watson (1878-1958), a pioneer in this school, maintained that if psychology were to be an objective science it must concern itself with what the person *does*.³ Stimulus-response psychology, advanced by B. F. Skinner (1904-1990), is an outgrowth of this behaviourism. The psychoanalytic conception of the human person was developed by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). The basic assumption of Freud's theory is that much of human person's behaviour is determined by innate instincts that are largely unconscious. By unconscious processes Freud meant thoughts, fears, and wishes of which the person is unaware but which influence the person's behaviour.⁴

2. For the purpose of clarity I have chosen the most influential approaches in the history of psychology. By this I am not denying the existence of various other approaches to the psychological study of the human person. In fact, most of the other theories or approaches could be considered as part of or at least variations that arose in reaction to these three influential movements of psychology.
3. See Weber, Ann L. *Introduction to Psychology* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 7-9.
4. See Kagan, Jerome and Segal, Julius. *Psychology*. Sixth ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1988), pp. 352-355.

A growing number of mental health professionals, especially in the early 1960s, felt that both behaviourism and psychoanalysis were limited in focussing on simple, measurable human behaviour and pathology.⁵ In adopting a reductionistic approach to the human person they ignored or often 'pathologized' certain areas, concerns and data relevant to a full study of the human person: spirituality, consciousness, self-actualization and self-transcendence. Motivations and behaviours aimed towards self-actualization and self-transcendence, and even the possibility of attaining such goals, were dispensed with as neurotic immaturities, even though non-Western psychologies and consciousness disciplines⁶ contained detailed description of them.⁷

Humanistic psychology, inspired by existentialism (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre), emerged in response to these concerns. It took as its major focus, aspects connected with health rather than pathology. "If Freud supplied to us the sick half of psychology... we must now fill it out with the healthy half".⁸ It emphasized positive human qualities of free will and self-actualization, and initiated studies and researches of individuals who seemed to have matured in these dimensions. Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), a pioneer in humanistic psychology, was particularly interested in fully developed or self-actualized people who frequently undergo changes in consciousness that he called 'peak experiences'.⁹

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5. Speaking of behaviourism and psychoanalysis Gordon Allport notes: "We have on the psychology of liberation - nothing. "And in fact, Freud's collected works contain over four hundred references to neurosis and none directly to health. See Roger and Vaughan, *Beyond Ego*, p. 19.
 6. The term 'consciousness disciplines' and other terms such as 'spiritual disciplines', 'Eastern traditions' and 'mysticism' are used interchangeably. They can be defined as doctrines and practices that assert the possibility of obtaining, through mental training, the most profound insights into mental processes, consciousness and reality.
 7. See Walsh, Roger. "The Transpersonal Movement: A History and State of the Art", *JTP (The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology)*, 1993, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 123-125'.
 8. Maslow, Abraham. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. Second Ed. (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1968), p. 5.
 9. Peak Experiences are spontaneous, ecstatic, unitive states of consciousness akin to those mystical experiences that have been widely reported and highly valued across centuries and cultures. See Maslow *Toward a Psychology of Being*, pp. 71-102. In addition to this, various Eastern philosophies,

But towards the end of his life Maslow realized the limitations of even humanistic psychology for encompassing the continuously evolving span of human experience and potential. He therefore called attention to possibilities beyond self-actualization in which the human person transcends the usual limits of identity and experience.

I consider Humanistic, Third Force Psychology, to be transitional, a preparation for a still "higher" Fourth psychology transpersonal, transhuman, centered in the cosmos rather than in human needs and interests, going beyond humanness, identity, self-actualization, and the like.¹⁰

Today, Transpersonal psychology is the title given to this emerging fourth force¹¹ in psychology that is

concerned with expanding the field of psychological inquiry to include the study of optimal psychological health and wellbeing. It recognizes the potential for experiencing a broad range of states of consciousness, in some of which identity may extend beyond the usual limits of the ego and personality.¹²

As such it draws on both Western and Eastern wisdom in an attempt to integrate knowledge from traditions concerned with the fulfillment of human potentials.

In addition to the desire to complement and expand existing psychological models, several other factors have also paved the way for the emergence of transpersonal psychology. Among them, the following two could be highlighted:

psychologies and religions described not just peak experiences but whole families of peak experiences. Contrary to Maslow's opinion that peak experiences were usually spontaneous, these Eastern consciousness disciplines claimed the possibility of inducing these experiences through training. See Tart, Charles T. *Transpersonal Psychologies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

10. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, pp. iii-iv.

11. The first three 'forces' of psychology are Behaviourism (first force), Psychoanalytic movement (second force) and Humanistic psychology (third force).

12. Roger and Vaughan. (eds). *Beyond Ego*, p. 16.

First and foremost is the growing discontentment with 'consumeristic culture' and the accompanying interest in and use of psychedelics and consciousness-altering techniques such as meditation, Yoga and Zen for a meaningful life. These techniques for the first time¹³ showed specially the West the possibility of having extraordinarily powerful experiences of a range of states of consciousness quite outside the realm of daily living or of anything previously recognized by Western psychology. This attracted a large following. But alongside these areas of popular interest, empirical research has also gradually provided support and legitimization for certain claims about altered states of consciousness. Studies and researches of meditation, although still in an early stage, lend preliminary support to ancient claims that meditation can enhance psychological development, modify physiological processes, and induce a range of altered states.¹⁴

Another supportive research area is modern physics and its affinity with mysticism¹⁵. In recent years the physicists' picture of the universe has undergone a radical re-visioning. The traditional understanding of the universe as atomistic, divisible, static and nonrelativistic has given way to models of the universe that acknowledge a holistic, indivisible, interconnected, relativistic reality inseparable from the consciousness of the observer. Such pictures of the universe seem to parallel in certain ways the reality experienced by mystics and people interested in consciousness disciplines.

3. 0 Defining Transpersonal Psychology

The term 'transpersonal' was adopted after considerable deliberation in 1968 by the founding editors of *The Journal of Transpersonal*

13. Although William James laid the groundwork in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) for the psychology consciousness at the turn of the century there followed a period of some fifty years during which Western psychology shunned anything suggestive of introspection in an effort to secure psychology as one of the objective sciences.

14. See Roger and Vaughan *Beyond Ego* pp. 20-22.

15. A Detailed analysis of the parallels between the principal theories of modern physics and mystical traditions of the East can be found in Capra, Fritjof. *The Tao of Physics* (London: Bantam Books, 1983). Also Ken Wilber's *Quantum Questions* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1984) is an excellent anthology of mystical writings of the world's great physicists. Finally, a comprehensive overview of scientific theories, specially in their understanding of human person is presented in Casti, John L. *Paradigms Lost* (London: Abacus Books, 1989).

Psychology Anthony Sutich, Abraham Maslow and others.¹⁶ Their choice expressed a philosophical position about the human person and a new vision of psychological inquiry that is concerned with what his "beyond individuality, beyond development of the individual person into something which is more inclusive than the individual person...."¹⁷

In the recent years there has been renewed interest in defining the field of Transpersonal Psychology.¹⁸ It is impossible to present here all the different definitions that have been attempted so far. We can delineate the most frequently occurring themes in these definitions which in fact provide a comprehensive overview of the field of transpersonal psychology. They are: (1) States of Consciousness (2) Highest ultimate potential, (3) Beyond ego or personal self, (4) Transcendence and (5) Spiritual.¹⁹ Based on all the original existing transpersonal literature and the compilation and analysis of the corpus of previous definitions of transpersonal psychology Denise H. Lajoie and S.I. Shapiro provide a succinct and yet a synthetic definition:

Transpersonal psychology is concerned with the study of humanity's highest potential, and the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent state of consciousness.²⁰

4. 0 Human Knowing

An analysis of our experience in the world reveals that there are two basic modes of knowing: one, the dualistic or symbolic

16. Though there are no records of 'transpersonal psychology' as a name or title being used before 1967-69, there are uses of the single term 'transpersonal', by William James in 1905-1906 and Carl Jung in 1917. See Vich Miles Al "Some Historical Sources of the Term 'transpersonal'" *JTP*, 1988, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 107-110.

17. Sutich, A. J. "The Emergence of the Transpersonal Orientation: A Personal Account" *JTP*, 1976, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 5-19.

18. A systematic survey of all the definitions (forty in all) of transpersonal psychology attempted so far is presented in Lajoie, Denise H. "Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology: The First Twenty-three Years," *JTP*, 1992, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 80-89.

19. See Walsh, Roger and Vaughan, Frances. "On Transpersonal Definitions", *JTP*, 1993, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 199-202.

20. Lajoie and Shapiro, *JTP*, 1992. Vol. 24, No. 1, p. 91.

mode of knowing and the other, the non-dualistic or intimate mode of knowing. These two modes of knowing are recognized universally but articulated differently by various traditions. In the Hindu world view, we have *aparavidya* and *paravidya*. The Mahayana Buddhism speaks of *vijnana* and *prajna*. Taoism recognizes two forms of knowing as conventional knowledge as opposed to a knowledge of the Way (*tao*). Christian theology - Meister Eckhart for example - distinguishes between "twilight knowledge" and "daybreak knowledge". They all correspond to dualistic and non-dualistic modes of knowing respectively.²¹

In our dualistic mode of knowing, knowing consists in establishing an outer chain of physical or mental intermediaries connecting the subject and the object. The two important characteristics of this dualistic form of knowing are abstraction and bifurcation. The process of abstraction, useful as it may be in every day discourse, is ultimately false, in the sense that it operates by noting the salient feature of an object and ignoring all else. "Abstraction", according to Whitehead, "is nothing else than omission of part of the truth."²² The dualistic mode of knowing also operates by bifurcation. In the very act of knowing, it divides the subject and object into a 'seer' and 'seen', thus creating two irreconcilable realities out of the one 'seamless coat of the universe'.

Today more than ever before, this dualistic mode of knowing has ingeniously extended itself in technological progress. While it has earned us comfort and convenience, it has to a large extent been responsible for all kinds of diseases: physical, psychological, moral, social and ecological. Is not techno-logic a natural, disastrous extension of duo-logic, subject as object?²³

An authentic apprehension of reality is possible only through the non-dual mode of knowing. For, in the non-dual mode of knowing, the act of knowing does not operate by separating the knower and the known. Instead, reality is apprehended in its fullness and wholeness and we come to feel that we are one with the universe. There is no one thing as reality separated from a subject

21. See Wilber, Ken. *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (Wheaton: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1977), pp. 29-45.

22. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 45.

23. See Wilber, Ken. "Two Modes of Knowing", in *Beyond Ego*, pp. 234-239.

who knows this reality. We directly experience the undifferentiated, undivided, indeterminate "suchness" or Supreme Identity or Cosmic Awareness or Unity Consciousness.²⁴

Two fundamental tenets of Transpersonal psychology concerning the human person are derived from the above epistemological insight. The first one is concerned with human person's identity.²⁵ The two modes of human knowing correspond to the levels of consciousness. For, the identity of the human person is intimately related to the level of consciousness from and on which we operate. A shift in the mode of knowing results in the shift in our sense of identity. Thus, in the dualistic mode of knowing we feel alien and distinct from the very reality which we seek to know. Whereas in the non-dualist mode of knowing, we are on the level of awareness where we feel one with the reality. Reality is Consciousness.²⁶

The second one is concerned with the human evolution or, in the words of Ken Wilber, with the *Atman project*. The basic nature of the human person is Unity Consciousness or Ultimate Wholeness or Atman. But through the interplay of *maya*,²⁷ this Unity consciousness is split into different levels. Rediscovery of this Unity consciousness is the human person's single greatest need and want. For, not only is Atman the basic nature of all souls; each person knows or intuits that this is so. At the same time, since this realization entails 'death' of our separate-self sense we constantly seek transcendence in ways or structures, that actually prevent it and force symbolic substitutes. These substitutes of transcendence

24. See Wilber, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, pp. 43-45.

25. For transpersonal psychology, 'identity' is a central concept in the understanding of the human person. Traditional Western psychologies have understood identity as a process of identification with external objects and have defined it as an unconscious process in which the individual becomes like or feels the same as something or someone. Transpersonal psychology, while recognizing the external identification, emphasizes the significance of identification with internal phenomena and processes. Identity, therefore, is defined as the process by which something is experienced as self. See Roger and Vaughan, "What is a Person?" in *Beyond Ego*, p. 56.

26. Wilber, "Two Modes of Knowing", in *Beyond Ego*, pp. 237-239.

27. For transpersonal psychology, *maya* is any experience constituted by or stemming from dualism (specifically, the primary dualism of subject vs. object). Transpersonal psychology also holds all dualism to be not so much *unreal* but *illusory*.

come in a variety of ways: sex, food, money, fame, knowledge, etc. Human history is a narrative of this attempt to re-gain and re-discover unity consciousness (Atman Consciousness) in ways or under conditions that prevent it and force symbolic substitutes – this is the Atman project.²⁸

5.0 Human Consciousness

The perennial question "Who am I?" has probably tormented mankind since the dawn of civilization, and remains today one of the most unanswerable of all human questions. Instead of looking at the multitude of answers that have been offered so far to this question, let us examine the very specific process which occurs when a person asks, and answers, the question 'who am I?'

When we are describing (I am so and so....) or explaining or even just inwardly feeling our 'self', what we are actually doing is drawing a mental line or boundary across the whole field of our experience. Everything inside the boundary we feel to be our 'self' while everything outside the boundary we feel to be 'not-self'. Human consciousness, therefore, depends entirely upon where we draw the boundary line between 'self' and 'not-self'.²⁹

28. Drawing on anthropology, psychology, sociology and the history of religions Ken Wilber portrays human evolution in the following major stages: (i) Archaic world – characterized by primitive notions in its beliefs and practices (ii) Magical world – characterized by rituals, totems, and struggle for life and death in a world of participation mystique. (iii) Mythic world – characterized by the world's enduring mythologies but hiding a dark side of human sacrifice. (iv) Rational World – characterized by rationality and logic but alienated from past organic roots and scarred by a repression of the body by the mind. But the story continues: based on the past evidence Wilber suggests higher stages towards which future evolution might now be moving. See Wilber, Ken. *Up From Eden*. (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986), pp. 12-13.

Synthesizing the developmental studies of Piaget, Lovinger and Kohlberg, Ken Wilber also proposes a developmental model of consciousness. He begins with infantile (Lower realms) and progresses through to the adult levels (Intermediary realms). What is unique, however, is that he then continues this developmental sequence through the unfolding of the successive structures of consciousness (Ultimate realms) that Eastern psychologies describe in the most psychologically developed and spiritually enlightened persons. See Wilber Ken, *Atman Project* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1980).

29. Robert Ornstein considered consciousness to be the main object of inquiry for psychology. "Psychology is, primarily, the science of consciousness. Its

It is because we construct such innumerable boundaries and at different levels that human consciousness could be conceived as a spectrum, a rainbow-like appearance composed of numerous bands or levels of self-identity. Every level of the spectrum can be understood as a progressive bounding or limiting of one's real self, of unity consciousness and non-dual existence. This boundary line that we draw can and does frequently shift. There are as many different types of boundary lines as there are individuals who draw them. For our convenience, these different boundaries could be categorized into a handful of easily recognized groups of existential, ego and shadow levels.³⁰

5.1 Existential Level

The most common and fundamental boundary line that individuals draw up or accept as valid is that of the boundary line between the total organism and the environment. This seems to be a universally accepted self/not-self boundary line. It is in fact the

researchers deal with consciousness directly when possible, and indirectly, through the study of physiology and behaviour when necessary''. Quoted in Tart, p. 1

There is also a lot of current research being pursued in the realm of consciousness. Some of the most accepted scientific theories with regard to consciousness are in consonance with what we propose here: "Consciousness," says Antonio Damasio "is concept of your own self, something that you reconstruct moment by moment on the basis of the image of your own body, your own autobiography and a sense of your intended future".

For Francis Crick and Christ of Koch "consciousness is somehow a by-product of the simultaneous, high-frequency firing of neurons in different parts of the brain. It is the meshing of these frequencies that generate consciousness, just as the tones of different individual instruments produce the rich, complex and seamless sound of a symphony orchestra. "See *Time Magazine*, July 31, 1995, p. 42.

30. This presentation of different levels of consciousness is a synthesis from the works of Ken Wilber *Spectrum of Consciousness* (1977), *Atman Project* (1978), *No Boundary* (1985) *Up from Eden* (1986) *A Sociable God* (1983) one of the leading thinkers in the transpersonal movement: But there are also other accounts of levels of consciousness that more or less share a similar view. See, for instance, Smith, Huston. *The Forgotten truth*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1976). Here Huston Smith proposes a four-fold distinction of ontological levels of consciousness: 1) the body 2) the mind 3) the soul 4) the spirit, the *atman* that is *Brahman*. Also See Grof, Stanislav. "Realms of the Human Unconscious: Observations from LSD Research", in *Beyond Ego*, pp. 87-99. From his research Grof reports that the use of psychedelics under clinical conditions leads the individual through a series of experiences and states of consciousness.

primary boundary. When this primary boundary occurs then the person is no longer identified with the total reality; identity is narrowed down to one's organism alone. The organism is self and the entire environment is not-self. This state of awareness can be appropriately called 'existential awareness', because the organismic awareness' (non-dual awareness) is now limited to an awareness centered on the person's separate existence in space and time.³¹

The consequences of this primary boundary are mainly three. First, the problem of death and fear of nothingness. When we imagine our real self to be exclusively confined to our organism, death of that organism becomes all-consuming. We refuse to accept the oneness of life and death. The environment 'out there' becomes a potential threat to the well-being and existence of the self, the organism. Secondly, the fear of death generates in us an intense sense of time. Our present moment is bound with the future and the past. Since death is the condition of having no future, it forces us either to search for a future or to identify with the past unconditionally. Thirdly, since death threatens the very existence of our self, we externalize this fear of death by creating different 'immortal' social institutions such as culture, language, ethics and law.³²

Though the human person at this level identifies solely with organism, existing in time, in flight from death, he/she is at least still in touch with the entire psycho-physical being. This is the reason why this level of consciousness is also called the centaur awareness. A centaur is a legendary animal, half human and half horse, that represents well a perfect harmony of mental and physical aspects of the human person.

5.2 Ego Level

With the construction of next level of the spectrum - Ego level - the centaur is literally broken. We refuse to remain in touch with our total organism. We refuse to extend our identity to all of our organic activities. Instead we narrow our identity exclusively to our ego, our self-image, our purely mental personality, the

31. See Wilber, Ken. *No Boundary* (Boston: Shambhala, 1985), pp. 75-78.

32. See Wilber, Ken. *Up From Eden*, pp. 55-68.

abstract portion of the centaur. This implies that we deny the body and reject it on a fundamental level by turning it into property. We lose touch with the unity of the body and mind.³³

What impels us to draw this boundary between mind and body? Among the many reasons two could be emphasized. First and foremost, we are still in flight from death. Since the body is mortal and a constant reminder of death we avoid it and repress it. Secondly, in trying to flee from death, we seek for a self that will be permanent, static, unchanging, everlasting. This is what symbols, concepts, and ideas are like. We therefore center our identity around a mental abstraction called the ego.³⁴

A healthy ego at this level would be the one which skillfully integrates the bodily, the emotional and the rational aspects of the organism. But this does not always happen. A further split occurs in the ego itself.

5.3 Shadow Level

A further boundary is erected even in the ego when we refuse to admit certain aspects of our own ego. Some of the ego's wishes and desires seem so strange and threatening that we repress them and project them outside. By doing this we have once again narrowed our identity to certain parts of our ego and thus creating a false self-image (persona). In an attempt to make our self-image accurate and acceptable to the world we deny facets of our own self.³⁵

But these repressed and projected aspects of the ego do not just disappear. They continue to remain ours and return to plague us in the form of 'neurotic' symptoms. These are called shadows. "Shadow" is an evocative term used to refer to unconscious aspects of the personality that have been repressed.³⁶

33. See Wilber, *No Boundary*, pp. 77-80

34. See Wilber, "Psychologia Perennis", in *Beyond Ego*, pp. 74-82.

35. See Wilber, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, pp. 130-135.

36. See Wilber, *No Boundary*, pp. 81-82.

It is through the successive (not in time) drawing of boundaries, that the spectrum of consciousness evolves.³⁷ Each time a new boundary is drawn, the person's sense of self diminishes, simultaneously producing its own peculiar pathologies, diseases and symptoms. First, the environment, then the body and finally the shadow appear as not-self, as existing out there, as foreign and enemy objects. But all these objects out there are just projections of a person's own being, and they all can be re-discovered as aspects of one's own self. This is exactly the path of human integration, the transformation of consciousness or coming back home.

6.0 Human Growth and Integration

When we speak of the healing and integration of the human person we are bewildered at the wide range of therapies, systems, methods and disciplines that are available to us today. We have Western psychoanalysis, Gestalt therapy, Jungian therapy, etc., and at the same time Eastern mysticism, yoga, Zen, and the like. These systems and therapies not only differ from each other, but often contradict each other in their content and approach. The biting problem for both professionals and laymen alike, is to discern a model that will create a synthesizing structure of all these different and contradictory psychological systems and their respective understanding of health and pathology.³⁸

This is made possible when we recognize and accept that the human person is a multi-leveled manifestation or expression of unity consciousness and that pathologies occur on any of these levels. Each of the major but differing schools of psychotherapy, east or west, therefore, is simply addressing different levels of the human person and arriving at complementary, and not contradictory, conclusions.

37. I have presented here only the major levels of consciousness. But it must be kept in mind that there are other minor levels as well. We cannot strictly compartmentalize these different levels of consciousness. The different levels of consciousness infinitely shade and grade into one another.

38. See Wilber, *No Boundary*, pp. 11-12. Also see Wilber, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, pp. 198-200.

6.1 Integrating the Shadow

At the shadow level, by trying to deny certain facets of our ego, we end up with an impoverished self-image called the persona. In this process there is a constant tussle between the persona and the shadow, and the war within is felt as symptoms of depression, anxiety, boredom or fear.

Healing at this level consists in developing a more or less accurate, realistic self-image and creating an integrated ego. This can be achieved by a comprehensive awareness of those facets of the ego that were repressed and re-own them as part of one's own psyche. Therapy at this level is to make room in ourselves for an understanding and acceptance of all our potentials, positive and negative, good and bad, loveable and despicable.³⁹

Different forms of psychotherapies that have developed in the West aim at 'making conscious the unconscious', 'integrating our shadow', 'strengthening our ego' and thus develop an accurate self-image. Certain aspects of Gestalt therapy, psychoanalytic ego psychology, reality therapy, rational therapy, transactional analysis, and psychodrama help us to develop a healthy self-image.⁴⁰

6.2 Person as Centaur

The descent to the existential level involves an expansion of our boundaries of identification to include all of the aspects of the total organism (body and ego) that once seemed foreign, threatening, or at least beyond control. We are taking back our bodies, and thus reviving the centaur.

The therapies at this level generally fall into two broad categories: those that proceed primarily through the mind (noetic approaches), such as existential analysis, humanistic therapies, logotherapy, etc., and those that proceed basically through the body (somatic approaches), such as structural integration, *hatha yoga* and sensory awareness. Some approaches such as bioenergetic

39. See Wilber, *The Atman Project*, pp. 30-36.

40. See Wilber, *No Boundary*, pp. 85-103.

analysis work from both body and mind. Despite their many differences, they all seek to authenticate the full and concrete human organism.⁴¹

The most important result of any of the therapies aiming at this level is the subtle but pervasive awareness as one begins to resurrect the centaur and discover one's prior identity with it. The human person's full potential springs from what Carl Rogers calls the 'total, ongoing psychophysiological flow' or 'total organismic experiencing', and not from any aspect or fragment of that flow—ego, body, self-concept and so on. The expanded potentials of this totality are commonly known as self-actualization. (Maslow-Goldstein), autonomy (Fromm) or meaning in life (Rollo May).⁴²

6.3 The Person in Transcendence

The transpersonal level represents those aspects of consciousness that by their very nature are supra-individual. At this level the person's identity is not completely with unity consciousness and yet neither is it confined to the boundaries of the total organism.⁴³

Carl Jung was the first major European psychologist to discover and explore significant aspects of the transpersonal realm of human awareness. According to him parts of the unconscious contain personal memories, personal wishes, ideas and experiences and potentials. But the deeper realm, the collective unconscious within us, contains nothing strictly personal whatsoever. It contains the collective motifs of the entire human race, known in Jungian terms as archetypes. Whether we know it or not, these archetypes live on and continue to move deeply in ways that are creative or destructive. These archetypes could be experienced directly. Realizing this, Jung stated, "mystics are people who have a particularly vivid experience of the processes of the collective unconscious. Mystical experience is experience of the archetypes."⁴⁴

41. See Wilber, *The Atman Project*, pp. 45-62. Also see Wilber *No Boundary*, pp. 105-121.

42. See Wilber, "Psychologia Perennis" in *Beyond Ego*, pp. 80-85.

43. See Wilber, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, pp. 266-288.

44. Jung, Carl. *Analytical Psychology: Its theory and practice* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 110.

Since mythological imageries are expressions of human collective unconscious, they put us in contact with these archetypes and opens us to the world of transcendence. They are not contaminated or perverted by merely social conventions, language, logic, or the illusions of any particular cult or individual. They transcend boundaries of space and time and thus suspend all dualism and create a life-renewing power in the individual. "Once upon a time", according to Coomaraswamy, really means "once beyond time".⁴⁵

The aim of some types of transpersonal level therapies such as psychosynthesis, Jungian therapy and others, is to help us to consciously acknowledge, befriend and utilize these powerful forces instead of being unconsciously moved by them. In a more practical way, when we begin to reflect on our life through the eyes of our archetypes and mythological images common to humankind, our identity expands qualitatively to a more global dimension and our self becomes impregnated with depth: This is truly a mythological way of living.⁴⁶

6.4. "That which is always already"

For convenience sake we have so far been referring to Unity consciousness as the deepest level of human consciousness. But this is really not the case. Unity consciousness is in no way buried or hidden in the obscure depths of our psyche. On the contrary, unity consciousness is our present and ordinary state of consciousness, for, being infinite and all-inclusive, it is compatible with every imaginable level or state of consciousness.⁴⁷ "All that needs to be experienced for cosmic consciousness", Alan Watts emphasizes, "is already present, and anything in excess of this is obstructive and redundant."⁴⁸

There is neither path to nor achievement in unity consciousness. We can therefore, only speak of special conditions or skillful means (*upaya*) that are appropriate for the actualization of human integration proposed by traditions such as yoga, Zen Buddhism

45. See Wilber, *No Boundary*, pp. 124-139.

46. See Wilber, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, pp. 276-278.

47. See Wilber, *No Boundary*, pp. 142-159.

48. Watts, Alan. *Cloud-Hidden Whereabouts Unknown* (Pantheon, 1973), p. 159.

and Tibetan Mysticism. Despite the differences that characterize each of them, all these traditions seem to be proposing essentially three factors, one leading to another.⁴⁹ Factor 1: Active attention - a special type of intense yet relaxed alertness. This is a total acceptance of all my tendencies with an active vigilance and watchfulness directed towards the activities of the mind. Factor 2: Stopping - the suspension of thought, of conceptualization, of objectification, of mental chatter. This stopping is the suspension of the dualistic and symbolic knowledge that distorts reality. Factor 3: Awareness - it is pure spaceless - timeless awareness without the dualism of subject versus object.

Just to illustrate this insight a little more clearly, let us analyze the teachings of two of the modern mystics: Ramana Maharishi and Krishnamurti. Ramana Maharishi maintained that I - thought is source of all illusion and bondage. The I-thought is to be suspended through Self-inquiry. This attentive Self-inquiry leads to the suspension of images and opens the door to infinite awareness.

When does this 'I' arise? Seek for it within (factor 1); it then vanishes (factor 2). This is the pursuit of Wisdom. Where the I vanishes, there appears "I-I" by itself (factor 3). This is the infinite.⁵⁰

Krishnamurti is concerned about the liberation of the human person filled with misery and unhappiness. Whether it is a problem of fear, anger, jealousy or suffering, the ultimate cause lies in thought and images. This could be overcome only when the individual goes into the machinery that builds thoughts and images, and gives full and complete attention to it. In Krishnamurti's own words, at the moment image arises,

give complete attention at that moment (factor 1), then you will see that there is no image (factor 2), and having no image there is no division between the observer and the observed (factor 3).⁵¹

49. See Wilber, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, pp. 335-337.

50. Osborne, A. (ed.) *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharishi* (London: Rider, 1959), p. 20. Quoted in Wilber, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, pp. 321.

51. Krishnamurti, J. *Krishnamurti in India 1970-71* (Madras: Krishnamurti Foundation 1971), p. 13 Quoted in Wilber, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, p. 319.

7.0 Conclusion

Transpersonal psychology has approached the central question What is a human person from the perspective of consciousness and has emphasized the following insights: (i) Human consciousness, like a spectrum, is pluri-dimensional consisting of different levels of self-identity. (ii) Each level of consciousness is but a partial expression of unity consciousness, the ultimate goal of the human person. (iii) Each major school of psychology or psychotherapy, addressing different levels of the human person, offers complementary conclusions towards psychological health and well-being. We shall now point out some of the basic problems and challenges of such a transpersonal vision of the human person.

7.1 The Problem of 'Hierarchical Ontology'

At the heart of perennial philosophy and transpersonal understanding of the human person is a claim about the hierarchical nature of both the world and the self. Reality (Consciousness), the subject matter of ontology, is 'layered' both in its outer and in its inner manifestations and there are different levels of the world and the self. This is exemplified in different grades of being, power, and value. Higher levels of the hierarchy are more 'real', more causally effective, and reveal more 'good' than lower levels. Though there are serious disagreements from the sphere of psychology⁵² itself, we shall highlight here the socio-political implications implicit in such a conception.

A hierarchical ontology and correspondingly a 'hierarchical psychology' which locates greater value in the 'spiritual' and 'rational' and lesser value in the body, emotions, drives, and desires directly or indirectly asserts a hierarchy of value between different groups

52. We can mention here two important psychological objections to the hierarchical model advanced explicitly by Ken Wilber and other transpersonalists. First, there is the well-known psychoanalytic equation of mysticism and related phenomena with regression and infantile illusion. Secondly, very serious questions of empirical evidence and cogent argument have been raised concerning the hierarchical ontologies and specially Wilber's developmental model that charts out a schema of upward evolution and downward involution. See Rothberg, Donald. "Philosophical Foundations of Transpersonal Psychology: An Introduction to Some Basic Issues", *JTP*, 1986, Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 6.

of persons, and between humans and the rest of the natural world. Put more explicitly, a hierarchical philosophy or psychology is an ideological expression of social and psychological relations involving domination and exploitation of most humans (especially women, workers, dalits, and tribals), of nature and of certain parts of the self.

Consequences of such kinds of exploitations are many. They first and foremost, drastically limit the autonomy and potential of most of the inhabitants of the human and natural worlds. Secondly, they justify material inequalities and prevent free and open discourse among the members of the society which [in fact is the seed of a free society. And finally, on a personal level these dominations hinder psychological life of the person by repressing aspects of individual whose full expression is necessary for a full psychological health and well being. Because of these inherent problems in positing such a model, what is perhaps needed today is to search for non-hierarchical models of reality and human person that can avoid these pitfalls.

7.2 The Universalist Claim of 'Perennial Psychology'

Theoretical frameworks in transpersonal psychologies range from adaptations of the doctrines of classical religious traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, to the use of one or more of many modern psychological theories. But, such theoretical frameworks are founded in the universalist claims of perennial philosophy or psychology: (i) that there is a common, identifiable, meaningful structure to the different historical, transpersonal, religious and philosophical expressions; (ii) and that this common structure is somehow the 'core' or the essence or the 'transcendent unity, of the historical religions and wisdom traditions.

Objections to these universalist claims have come strongly from the contemporary discussion with regard to the different forms of 'mysticism'. Many scholars of mysticism reject the notion of a common mysticism or 'experience of reality' which crosses cultural and religious boundaries, and is relatively autonomous in relation to culture, history, tradition and practices. Drawing inspiration

from the field of hermeneutics,⁵³ they first and foremost argue against the autonomy of mystical states. According to Robert Gimello,

mysticism is inextricably bound up with, dependent upon' and usually subservient to the deeper beliefs and values of the traditions, cultures, and historical milieux which harbor it. As it is thus intricately and intimately related to those beliefs and values, so must it vary according to them.⁵⁴

Secondly, they point out that plurality of mystical experience is not restricted solely to their 'expressions' alone. It extends to their 'essences' or 'core' as well. Hence in no way we can claim that the Buddhist experience of *sunyata* is same as the Christian mystic's experience of the Trinity, or the Vedantist's experience of the identity of *atman* with *brahman*.

7.3 Challenges of the Transpersonal Understanding of Human Person

Science is, fundamentally, a way of knowing. It relies heavily on the logical analysis of sense data. As such, It has largely excluded the investigation of subjective experience. Such an exclusion maintains the power of scientific approach at the cost of significantly limiting its range of applications. The transpersonal vision of the human person invites science to explore and accept those phenomena of human potentials that cannot be strictly demonstrated in laboratories.

Our current educational systems are almost entirely addressed to the mode of reason. Training of the contemplative mode and

53. The hermeneutical theory of Gadamer points out that all knowledge claims can only be articulated and have meaning within 'traditions' and within language. Such contexts are fundamentally structured by non-universal core assumptions or 'prejudices'. The project of arriving at a universal categorical framework and moving beyond the confines of language and prejudices does violence to the realities of particular traditions and experience in general, which is most basically hermeneutical. See Gadamer, H-G. *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975).

54. Gimello, R. "Mysticism in Context" in S. Katz *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 63,

affective dimensions are almost lacking. Even within the mode of reason, the emphasis is placed on the acquisition of data and less on actual training and developing skills in reasoning. The transpersonal vision of the human person demands that today's educational systems be altered to facilitate a holistic development of the human person.

The realm of the transpersonal was formally the exclusive domain of the guru or spiritual teacher. The transpersonal vision of the human person has made us realize that a full psychological growth necessarily raises questions of a spiritual nature and embraces fields beyond the traditional ego goals and adjustments: transcendence, self-realization and consciousness. This makes a unique demand on psychologists and therapists. It is not enough for psychologists and therapists to be intellectually informed about these transpersonal and therapists to be intellectually informed about these transpersonal phenomena. They should genuinely pursue different methods or paths proposed by the consciousness disciplines for a direct experience of the transpersonal phenomena.

The social implications of a commitment to the inner life and development of transpersonal awareness are not to be underestimated. The transpersonal vision of the human person enables one to rise above narrow, limited self-interest to commit oneself to more the encompassing needs of others and the universe.

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