



As to things like mystical experiences, if they were mentioned at all, which was rare, they were relegated to the fringes of psychiatry as being undoubtedly schizophrenic in nature and just showed how sick religions were to be associated with superstitious nonsense like that.

Real people in real life were still having transpersonal experiences of course, but they didn't speak of them around psychologists unless they wanted to be referred for treatment for psychopathology, and many of these experiencers suffered a great deal through having no support networks to help them realize the growth potential of their experiences, rather than wondering if they were crazy or possessed by the Devil.

That's an oversimplified picture of the negative side of where we were 30 years ago. As you can guess, given that 30 years is not much time for a culture, I think we've made enormous progress!

Now let's look at the other extreme, where we would like to be. To put it in a way that I think would fit most spiritual traditions, I think we would like to live in a world where the majority of people had direct, *experiential* knowledge of deep spiritual realities, rather than just ideas or beliefs about them. To put it

another way, a world where the majority of people were transpersonally oriented not through theory but as a result of direct experiences of transcending their ordinary biological, psychological and cultural identities and contacting/being that larger “something” - words fail us here, as we know - that Source of Intelligence and Love that is our true nature. I am being conservative in a way in wishing that just the majority have this experiential transpersonal knowledge: ultimately I hope it would be everyone in the world, so in this ideal extreme we would want to have hope of such transcendence for everyone even if they haven’t already tasted it.

To reach this ideal implies the existence of a field of Transpersonal Psychology that (1) is widely available in all cultures; (2) is of vital interest to most people so they will invest time in it; (3) is affordable to all; and (4) is quite effective in actually leading people to have deep transpersonal experiences and to learn from them and integrate them into their lives in a healthy and effective way.

In reality, the current state of the art in Transpersonal Psychology is between these two extremes of no Transpersonal Psychology at all and most people being relatively enlightened, and more toward the “no Transpersonal Psychology at all” end of the continuum than the transcendent end.

As to the first criterion of wide availability in all cultures, we have far more Transpersonal Psychology than 30 years ago, but really haven't been heard of in many, if not most, of the world's cultures, and are certainly are not widely available in most.

As to the second point of being of vital interest to most people, well, look around at who's here. That we're here at all is a wonderful accomplishment, but we're still too much a bunch of WASPs.

As far as being affordable, we can be proud that the services of trained transpersonal professionals are affordable to a few - that's enormously better than the situation 30 years ago where if you went to a psychologist or psychiatrist for help with a transpersonal experience you were almost always pathologized and probably hurt more than helped. But the vast majority of people in the world are a long way from being able to afford expensive individual sessions with trained professionals.

As to the fourth criterion, having a Transpersonal Psychology that is quite effective in actually leading people to have deep transpersonal experiences and to learn from them and integrate them into their lives in a healthy and effective way, again we can see enormous progress compared to 30 years ago, but we are still a

long way from being able to say “Give me any person and I have a 90% probability of leading them, within some reasonable period of time, say 30 hours, into a deep transpersonal experience that will be good for them and make them a better human being.”

I believe we can be quite proud of where the state of the art in Transpersonal Psychology has gotten to in 30 years, but we are still so far short of our ultimate aim that our main question in assessing the state of the art is “What are the major areas we need to develop?” This is a complex question, and one that has to be answered from transpersonal levels as well as our more ordinary professional, psychological and political levels, but I will make a few suggestions that will hopefully stimulate our field.

As to the first three criteria, that Transpersonal Psychology (1) be widely available in all cultures; (2) be of vital interest to most people; and (3) be affordable, these can usually be seen as a set of social and political questions. On those levels, which are very real and important levels, I have no particular expertise and leave possible answers to others who are more knowledgeable, but I do want to suggest that part of the answer comes from a different level than we usually think about. Rather than thinking of how we can “sell” Transpersonal Psychology in the world, I would rather work within the framework that we don’t have

some sort of consumer product of little inherent value that people must be manipulated into buying, even if we're convinced it's for their own good, but rather than we are dealing with the most essential thing a human cares about, their ultimate transpersonal or spiritual nature. Given that in our desperate search for transpersonal meaning the "marketplace" for Transpersonal Psychology is saturated with imitation products, pseudo-spiritualities containing a bit of the real thing but with lots of crazy adulterants, the real question is "*What can we do to make the transpersonal manifest so vitally in us and those we help that ordinary people will notice, from their own transpersonal centers, no matter how repressed they ordinarily are, that we have something vital that they want?*"

I wish I were so transpersonally developed that the ultimate transpersonal answer to this question intuitively came to me from my/our highest levels and radiated itself intuitively to you and the world, that I could demonstrate, rather than describe the answer, but.....I am merely a transpersonal psychologist, someone trying to make sense of the transpersonal and help make it a little more useful, working with a far too limited experiential knowledge base, not a Realized Being. So I will say make some suggestions that are primarily from my psychologist and scientist level about how to develop the state of the art in Transpersonal Psychology to make our knowledge deeper and

our practices more effective, in the hope and belief that as we become more transpersonally developed people ourselves and help others along that path, the Light will shine out from within and this communication from our deepest Higher Selves (or Higher non-Selves, if we want to be more Buddhist about it) to the world will attract resources and energies that will help the solution of the more practical cultural, psychological and political problems.

To put it bluntly, Transpersonal Psychology is not very effective. I don't have clear statistics for the field of Transpersonal Psychology itself, but let me use a parallel from the meditation traditions. My friend Shinzen Young, who is one of the best teachers of Buddhist vipassana (insight) meditation in the world, has told me that it is common knowledge among Western meditation teachers that if you have a hundred new students who come to a course or retreat and learn vipassana meditation, the majority will report that they have been touched deeply, see that a meditation practice needs to be an important part of their life, and intend to practice regularly. But if you check a year later, you will find only about 5% still practicing.

In the East this is apparently accepted. If it's your karma to come around and want meditation instruction, fine. If it's your karma to quit, fine, maybe

a dozen lifetimes down the road, when your karma is better, you'll get more serious about practice. By Western standards, though, this is terrible! If I ran a university and found that 95% of the students had dropped out within a year we would consider this a total failure as an educational effort.

What's our track record in Transpersonal Psychology? Do we lose 95% of those initially interested in a short time? I hope it's not as bad as 95%, but I'm sure it's quite high because *we don't really have good technical knowledge of what techniques are likely to work for particular types of people*. If you come to me in my role as a transpersonal psychologist and want advice on which spiritual path to start down, what do I recommend? Vipassana meditation or Gurdjieff work because I've gotten a lot from those routes? Sufi dancing? Zen? Reiki? Neo-gestalt psycho-neuro Jungian body repatterning? Or whatever the latest new way is?

Of course we give the best recommendation we can, but we really have little technical knowledge of what practices are best for what sorts of people. Indeed, a practice that might be quite transpersonally effective for one person might be a waste of time for a second and positively dangerous for a third.

My primary suggestion for advancing the state of the art, then, is to make our practice more effective by building a knowledge base that will begin to allow differential prescription, to allow reducing the dangers of harm or time wasting from inappropriate practices and increasing the likelihood of useful transpersonal experiences and integration from suggested practices. We need a knowledge body that for decades I've been calling a spiritual version of *Consumers Reports*, where we can assess and test a person wanting advice and then say "For your type, practice path A, (alchemy, e.g.), produces significant transpersonal gains in 20% of its practitioners within 5 years, but 70% feel they've wasted their time after 5 years, 5% feel it's gotten them into serious psychological trouble and 5% have actually been hospitalized for transient psychotic episodes. Practice type S, (Sufi dancing, e.g.), has quite different effects for your type, with 70% reporting significant spiritual gains within 5 years, 28% reporting it was fun but didn't seem to get anywhere, and only 2% reporting psychological disturbance. If you were type X person, however, I would have to warn you against Sufi dancing as 30% of that type show a lot of psychological disturbance from it....." Etc., etc.

Ideally our knowledge of the transpersonal will advance so rapidly that we will have a deep understanding that allows us to give such advice, but

meanwhile, back in the real world, we are a quite small group of practitioners and can't count on rapid advances in deep understanding. We could, however, build the basis of our spiritual Consumers Reports within a decade or so on a purely empirical basis by launching a centralized research project that got in touch with, say, the next 10,000 people who start down the transpersonal path, testing them in the beginning with everything we've got, and then following them up over a decade and doing some statistical analyses. This is not a theoretically elegant approach, but it's workable.

One of the most useful psychological tests, e.g., the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, (MMPI) was developed this way. They tested thousands of visitors to the Minnesota General Hospital to get normative data for ordinary, non-psychiatric patients, and thousands of hospitalized patients on hundreds of true-false questions. For many of the questions, there would be no sensible theoretical reason why it should help diagnose any form of mental illness. One of the questions, e.g., is something like "Roses are my favorite flower." But empirically, if a significantly higher percentage of people already diagnosed in a more labor-intensive way as schizophrenics answer that as true than the control population, you had an item that helps you diagnose schizophrenia. It worked for the MMPI, whether anybody

understood it or not. Similarly, maybe Zen is not suitable for people who have roses as their favorite flower? I have no idea, but the point is we could begin collecting a lot of empirical data that would eventually allow us to be more helpful to those embarking on a transpersonal path, and that is a worthwhile goal. Whether we will do this, I don't know, but I hope so.

To conclude, then, I'm very proud of the current state of the art in Transpersonal Psychology, considering where we came from only 30 years ago. I am also very sad that we know so little compared to what needs to be known, what vitally and desperately needs to be known to improve the state of our troubled world. Our pride needs to be balanced with humility, and our efforts need to go into advancing the state of the art. That's my relatively rational and scientific view. May that which is so much more than our personal selves aid us in being of greater service!