

Psychotherapy of the Future

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—Stuart Sovatsky, PhD

President-Emeritus, US Association of Transpersonal Psychology;
Author, *Words from the Soul: Time, East-West Spiritualities* and
Psychotherapeutic Narrative

“Pier Luigi Lattuada’s new book *Psychotherapy of the Future* is perhaps the most thorough review of transpersonal philosophy that I have seen. [It is h]ighly recommended.”

—Amit Goswami

Quantum physicist; author, *The Self-Aware Universe* and *The Everything Answer Book*

Psychotherapy of the Future:

15 Questions about Transpersonal Psychotherapy

By

Pier Luigi Lattuada

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



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P.L.L.

0. INTRODUCTION

You need to be a somebody before you can be a nobody.
B. Cortright

0.1 Exposure

Each of us builds models of the world from our own experience. Our view of the world therefore depends on our personal history. For this reason, I think it is useful to start by exposing some biographical data that played a significant role in my adherence to the approach proposed here.

Sharing oneself is not common among professionals and researchers, it is not required of them, and exposing oneself presents risks.

Self-telling subjects us to the hegemony of the ego, which exalts or belittles us, judges us or takes pleasure in us, and offers us to the evaluation of others who in turn project their own senses of inferiority or superiority onto us.

I also firmly believe that a transpersonal approach first passes us, as much as possible, through an honest and conscious self-presentation of one's own history, which gives the world an idea of the genesis of one's way of feeling, acting, and thinking.

After my training in medicine, my academic training as a psychotherapist, my extra-academic training in Bioenergetics and Gestalt, acupuncture, and homeopathy, and my doctorate in Behavioral Studies, I founded the Association for Transpersonal Medicine and Psychology in 1982.

When I got to know Brazil, due to my Brazilian wife, I found a world full of other worlds, both ordinary and extraordinary, where your mind loses its points of reference and must ceaselessly surrender to the grotesque and the supernatural, the terrifying and the magical, the sacred and the criminal, and spirituality and mystery.

In Brazil I was immersed into its syncretic rites, shamanic practices, the humanity and spirituality of its people, the magic and superstition of its healers, and its miracles, many of them fake but many unquestionable, as well as transpersonal phenomenology, some of which manipulative but most of which is evidence based, verifiable, and authentic.

This experience lasted for twenty years, two months of the year, and opened the door to psychic realities much beyond the field that mainstream

psychology considers.

The Brazilian experience shook my western doctor's mind, which was asked to expand its horizons.

And lots of questions came to my mind: Who are you to say what you say? What makes you say it? What experience, suffering, encounters, intuitions, reference points, contexts, love, and anecdotes have contributed to create your specific vision of the world, to do your research in that specific field and embrace that specific methodology? How do you relate to your beliefs, your personal epistemology, and what tools do you use to "put it in brackets"?

How is it possible to carry out research on the psychological life of an individual leaving yourself and the most authentic, unrepeatable, immeasurable, and extraordinary things you have experienced in life out?

Who can state that during your growth as a human being and professional researcher only your education or doctorate counted?

What can we make of those experiences in the Amazon, in rundown suburbs, at the peak of a mountain, or in the woods nearby of that encounter in India or in Burkina Faso, or of that love story during youth?

I'm not saying that a trip to Peru can exempt you from scientifically supporting your statements, but rather that, when carrying out research on personal histories and other people's psyche, your personal history and the evolutionary journey of your Self should hold an important and recognized position on the scale of scientific accuracy to be provided in order to support your statements.

If we think of the different psychological theories and psychotherapeutic methodologies it is easy to understand that they reflect the personal history of their founders.

I described part of my personal history to remind those who criticize transpersonal psychology that, in absence of academic training in transpersonal psychology until recent times, transpersonal psychologists and psychotherapists had to necessarily train in psychodynamic, cognitive, or humanistic methodologies before being able to access the transpersonal approach.

From the very first experiences, despite the resistance of my western medical mind, nothing could ever be the same again. The journey was neither painless nor easy, as the deep inner transformations had to be accompanied by a paradigm shift in the way of using the mind.

In the holistic-systemic paradigm, in the integral approach, and in the vision of transpersonal psychology, I found the fertile ground on which to build a psychotherapeutic methodology: Biotransenergetics (BTE).

BTE became my own way of evolution, based, up to now, on over forty thousand hours of clinical work, both individual and group.

Since then, BTE has been presented in twenty published books and numerous articles.

Here, I will present both the vision that I called Integral Transpersonal Vision and the Transpersonal Psychotherapy (TP) approach generally as well as some specific methodological models of transpersonal psychotherapy with particular regard to BTE.

0.2 The Vision

The first step to free yourself from the trap is to recognize the trap (Rumi)

During our journey together, we will address the transpersonal approach to psychology and more specifically to psychotherapy. We will have the opportunity to investigate its ontological, epistemological, and methodological aspects in order to understand how it fits with the challenges of hyper complexity and post-modernity.

Our discourse will be articulated on three levels, according to an interconnected holarchic perspective, which will intertwine throughout the course of the treatment.

The first general level of vision will be the background to the more varied principles and methods of the transpersonal psychotherapeutic approach and, finally, I will focus on some specific aspects of BTE methodology (Lattuada).

Speaking on vision, it will become clear that transpersonal approach can only be integral, and the reason why I will call the vision proposed here “Integral Transpersonal Vision” (ITV).

ITV tells us about a way of being and behaving in the world that goes beyond appearances and that, as such, belongs to everyone’s heroic journey on our way home, through valleys of passion and ignorance, the peaks of insights and impulses of the heart, nights of the soul and endless awakenings, and deaths and rebirths, by simply recognizing the humble attempt to free oneself from one’s own personal history and drink from the source of being (which some call God, others self, other heart).

A path whose practices are drawn from guidelines such as awareness, synergy, sharing, resonance, interconnection, naturalness, respect, listening, contact, acceptance, responsibility, emotional mastery, and self-knowledge. Guidelines moving from the intimate dialogue between both the worlds of consciousness and that of matter: on the one hand self-knowledge and respect for the natural processes of the body, and on the other the

recognition of the sacredness of every living system and the environment that surrounds us.

ITV tells us about a specific view of the world, which is a present, world centric view, rooted in the wisdom traditions of the past and projected into the future evolutionary dimensions of human consciousness, and is ready to lead with the hypercomplex world of post-modernity.

We can say, with Plotinus, that it deals with life and thought, ultimately with how to think and live better.

In our journey together we will try to understand how a science that wants to deal with the human experience in the world, should be Transpersonal and Integral.

Like Einstein (Einstein, 1993), ITV believes that science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind.

ITV believes in the possibility of drawing the lines of a science that does not claim to affirm certainties without providing guarantees of validity, and which does not dry up in verifiable and repeatable experimental protocols without questioning nature with reliable investigation procedures.

It proposes an approach that is not reduced to the measurable but knows how Maslow (Maslow, 1971) wishes to extend his jurisdiction and methods, wants to venture courageously where “angels fear” as Bateson (Bateson, 1976) suggests, and, at the same time, knows with humility to stop at the threshold of mystery.

I believe that it is useful and necessary to work for the affirmation of a knowledge that, by offering guarantees of validity, knows how to speak with authority about the participatory journey of the individual Self in the Kingdom of *Psyche*, of the individual Soul in the Anima Mundi, and of the individual in the *Cosmos*.

Human experience, in fact, appears as a participatory dialogue between the individual and their environment.

A dialogue that appears in reality occurring between a subject and an object but which in truth expresses the different manifestations of unity. In this discussion, this will take on different names according to the details it wishes to specify, such as essence, subject, *Self*, and *Psyche*.

The ontological statement ITV is therefore very simple in its essence: everything is one.

Failure to perceive this "ultimate truth" is the cause of our suffering. To realize this and act upon it is the foundation for awakening and for liberation from pain.

One could say that ITV ontology is very close to Buddhism and other traditional mystical visions. This is true but we should remember the different contexts.

ITV is conceived in the psychological field to support a clinical methodology of intervention on psychic discomfort and in favor of a full development of human potential or self-realization.

The ontological vision, epistemological maps, and methodological models discussed here therefore lie in a middle ground, where the way up and the way down meet. On the one hand, it expands the boundaries of the individual to include a cartography of the spiritual dimensions and higher states of consciousness, and on the other hand, it applies the insights gained in this way to the well-being and fulfilment of the individual in their specific context.

ITV shouldn't be confused with philosophical speculation, religious beliefs, or purely spiritual disciplines.

It would therefore be more correct to speak of integral transpersonal meta-ontology, meta-epistemology, and meta-methodology.

The intent is to offer broader horizons that encompass the entire spectrum of human potential and the transrational dimensions of consciousness.

0.3 Brief overview of Transpersonal Approach

An understanding of the new order ...

The history of mankind is studded with healing systems which, as they have originated from the territories of the archaic consciousness of the dawn of humanity, have crossed the centuries and millennia. Think of the shamanic tradition universally spread on the planet since the Paleolithic, the sleep temples of the Hippocratic era, the traditional oriental medicines—Chinese, Tibetan, and Ayurvedic, the therapeutic systems of yoga and tantrism, the hermetic and alchemical western tradition, Gnosticism, -theosophy, and anthroposophy.

It was Leibniz (Leibniz, 1990) who, in order to indicate this set of traditional knowledge that reappears in different forms throughout history, coined the term “Perennial Philosophy”.

At present, under the impetus of the great transformations that occurred in the last century in the panorama of scientific knowledge following the acquisition of modern physics, and thanks to the emergence of a new holistic/systemic integral paradigm, we are experiencing, as the historians of science remind us, a paradigm shift.

Direct emanation of this new paradigm, the ITV, which is establishing itself in the fields of psychology and the humanities, seems to have offered an innovative contribution to the cultural and scientific heritage of humanity

in recent decades.

This movement, research into states of consciousness and ancient spiritual traditions based on meditation, deals not only with the problems of the individual, but above all with his or her highest potential and qualities. This is the Transpersonal Movement™, which is based on what Bohm (Krishnamurti, Bohm 1986) calls "an understanding of new order" and produced by the mastery of inner experience, which is the result of insight.

TM was born in the United States of America during the sixties.

This approach started to assert itself in the field of psychology thanks to the work of A. Maslow, who was the first to place emphasis on an "evolutionary" psychology that considered the "development of potentialities", the "gradual satisfaction of needs", the relationship between "person and person" in the therapeutic relationship, and the mystical experience as fundamental moments on a path of self-realization.

The first association of transpersonal psychology was founded in the United States in 1969 by personalities such as Charlotte Buhler, Abraham Maslow, Allan Watts, Arthur Koestler, and Viktor Frankl. The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, founded by Antony J. Sutich, published all the major American exponents of the transpersonal movement: Ken Wilber, Stan Grof, Stanley Krippner, Lawrence Le Shan, Michael Murphy, Charles T. Tart, Frances E. Vaughan, and others.

Right from the start it became clear what the main problem would be, as Stan Grof, one of the main protagonists of that adventure, put it

When our small group (Abraham Maslow, Anthony Sutich, Jim Fadiman, Miles Vich, Sonja Margulies, and myself) first formulated the principles of transpersonal psychology, there seemed to be a formidable problem: the new psychology seemed to be in irreconcilable conflict with the "Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm," which had dominated Western science for more than 300 years (Grof, 2017, 5).

Since the seventies,

The problematic relationship between transpersonal psychology and "hard sciences" has changed very radically since the inception of this fledgling discipline. (Grof, 2017, 5).

From its fervid womb, experiential approaches to psychology and psychotherapy have developed crossing the boundaries of psychic discomfort to deal with the participatory dialogue of the human being with his environment and journey of fulfillment.

TM grew thanks to the work of scholars and researchers, who were prepared to acknowledge the limits of the most popular approaches at that time and ready to honor the whole range of human experiences, including non-ordinary states of consciousness.

The TM acts as an element of reconciliation between science and spirituality based on experience, and as a synthesis between modern science and ancient wisdom.

Thanks to ITV, for the first time in history, mankind is able to transcend and unify the polarities that have opposed each other for millennia with their conflicting and often violent dynamics.

The transpersonal perspective embodies the assumptions of the integral paradigm and “aims to develop wise and mature individuals who support humanity, respect nature and can contribute to the health of human life”. We can thus confirm the following:

Transpersonal psychology speaks to a primary crisis of this era: the task of living peaceably as divergent religious and cultural traditions share space in a crowded world where nations that were once distant from each other face off frequently, often dangerously. To oppose this dynamic transpersonal psychology seeks not merely a better intellectual understanding of the human mind, but emancipation from outmoded psychological models that conceal the seeds of violence. The transpersonal approach is not only about new knowledge, but about new contexts for knowledge and new ways of knowing.

Beliefs about human psychology hold great potential for either liberation or oppression. Scientific theories have at times been conscripted to argue for the intellectual inferiority of various races, genders, and social classes, often to justify gross inequities of power (Belkhir and Duyme, 1998), thus contributing to the precarious polarization of today’s world. Transpersonal Psychology, by contrast, offers the vision of a truly inclusive psychology that spans the many forms of human diversity—a psychology that opposes specious justifications for the oppression of any person or group. It challenges the egoic view that truth is possessed by the society most effective at disposing of its rivals. Instead, it offers a holistic and transformative vision in which authentic meaning can be shared by all of humanity.

In this vital but arduous task, transpersonal psychology does not have all of the answers. For this reason, it cannot work in isolation. Its lens of inclusiveness effectively welcomes the complementary strengths of humanistic and integral psychologies, as well as other similarly oriented disciplines, to the shared task of re-shaping psychology and reconstructing the vision of what it is to be human. (Hartelius, Caplan, Rardin, 2007, 9).

We will articulate the discourse through fifteen questions and answers designed to investigate a broad spectrum and to highlight in detail the specificity of the transpersonal (and integral) approach, to psychology and psychotherapy willing to face the challenges of globalization, hyper-complexity and post-modernity with a new look and adequate tools.

1. WHAT DOES TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY DO?

The spirit of the depths took away my faith in science, deprived me of the pleasure of explaining things and classifying them, and extinguished in me the dedication to the ideals of this time. It has forced me to immerse myself in the ultimate and simplest things.

C. G. Jung

Transpersonal Psychotherapy (TP) aims at self-realization, as well as the awakening of the "intimate nature" of each individual and of his or her most genuine human qualities.

With the term Transpersonal we want to indicate what goes beyond personality, which can be interpreted as a "mask" and as a level of existence of the human being that obscures its essence and its highest potentialities.

The Transpersonal approach aims to reveal these intimate potentialities, which move towards contact with the true nature of human beings and live in the integration of the levels of existence of a person: physical, emotional, energetic, mental, and spiritual.

ITV presents itself as a "vehicle of mediation between the methods of research of certainty and the ways of accessing the truth".

As Wilber reminds us in *The Religion of Tomorrow: A Vision for the Future of the Great Traditions*:

The traditions uniformly divide truth into two categories, relative truth and ultimate Truth. (Wilber, 2017, 20)

ITV encourages the recovery and evaluation of intuition through the mastery of states and stages of consciousness by offering tools to deal with both.

The term "transpersonal" seems to have been used for the first time by Roberto Assagioli, the creator of Psychosynthesis, and later by Gustav Jung. It indicates those areas of psychic reality that extend beyond identification with the individual personality.

TP, therefore, indicates a psychological approach that deals with the study and culture of spirituality and spiritual experiences in a psychological context; it is characterized as the contribution of scientific circles to the

study and understanding of the inner experience, its states, and stages of consciousness.

From a methodological point of view, TP integrates the experience of Western psychology, especially that of the Gestalt, existential, and humanist strand, with mystical traditions based on meditation and shamanic traditions based on ecstasy alongside direct contact with the forces of nature.

It is also strongly influenced by the most recent acquisitions of modern physics and biophysics; the Science of Complexity; and research on states of consciousness and other sciences, such as sociology, anthropology, and ethnopsychiatry.

1.1 Major assumptions

To better understand what transpersonal psychotherapy does and how it works we could start with the worlds of Wilber:

It fully acknowledges and incorporates the findings of modern psychiatry, behaviorism, and developmental psychology, and then adds, where necessary, the further insights and experiences of the existential and spiritual dimensions of the human being. We might say it starts with psychiatry and ends with mysticism (Wilber, 1993, 10).

Fadiman and Speeth likewise state:

Transpersonal psychotherapy includes the full range of behavioral, emotional and intellectual disorders as in traditional psychotherapies, as well as uncovering and supporting strivings for full self-actualization. The End State of psychotherapy is not seen as successful adjustment to the prevailing culture but rather the daily experience of that state called liberation, enlightenment, individuation, certainty or gnosis according to various traditions (Boorstein, 1996, 3).

And Grof specifies that

Transpersonal psychology is a branch of psychology that TPs and accepts spirituality as an important dimension of the human psyche and of the universal scheme of things. It also studies and honors the entire spectrum of human experience, including various levels and realms of the psyche that become manifest in non-ordinary states of consciousness (NOSC). Here belong, for example, experiences and observations from meditation and other forms of systematic spiritual practice, spontaneous mystical raptures, psychospiritual crises ('spiritual emergencies'), psychedelic therapy,

hypnosis, experiential psychotherapy, and near-death situations (NDE). (Grof, 1992, 1)

In order to point out the legitimacy of transpersonal orientation Boorstein points out that

many professionals refuse to accept that the transpersonal orientation represents a legitimate scientific endeavor. They dismiss it as an irrational and undisciplined product of a group of eccentrics, mystically oriented professionals and paraprofessionals that are not familiar with the most basic principles of traditional science. The main reason for this criticism is the fact that the findings and conclusions of the transpersonal disciplines are incompatible with the most basic meta- physical assumptions of the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm and with the materialistic philosophy that has dominated Western science for the last three hundred years.

However, this attitude completely ignores the fact that many of the pioneers and chief representatives of the transpersonal movement are people with solid academic backgrounds and often impressive professional credentials. They have departed from the traditional conceptual frameworks, not because of their ignorance of the most basic principles of Western science, but because the mainstream conceptual frameworks failed to account for and explain too many of their important observations and experiences. (Boorstein, 1996, 45)

We could also cite the first definition of Transpersonal Psychotherapy made by Anton Sutich in 1969 in the first issue of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*:

Transpersonal Psychology is the title given to an emerging force in the psychology field by a group of psychologists and professional men and women from other fields who are interested in those ultimate human capacities and potentialities that have no systematic place in positivistic or behavioristic theory ('first force'), classical psychoanalytic theory ('second force'), or humanistic psychology ('third force'). The emerging Transpersonal Psychology ('fourth force') is concerned specifically with the empirical, scientific study of, and responsible implementation of the findings relevant to, becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, B-values, ecstasy, mystical experience, awe, being, self-actualization, essence, bliss, wonder, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, oneness, cosmic awareness, individual and species-wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, sacralization of everyday life, transcendental phenomena, cosmic self-humor and playfulness, maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression, and related concepts, experiences, and activities. As a definition, this formulation is to be understood as subject to optional individual or group

interpretations, either wholly or in part, with regard to the acceptance of its content as essentially naturalistic, theistic, supernaturalistic, or any other designated classification (Sutich, 1969, 15).

Since 1969, there have been countless authors who have highlighted the specificities of the transpersonal approach to transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy, and so it is impossible to mention them all.

I will just report a short synthesis of the study by Hartelius, Caplan, and Rardin (Hartelius, Caplan, Rardin, 2007, 1-26).

The study involved a thematic analysis of a corpus of 160 definitions of Transpersonal Psychology. combining the 41 definitions collected by the authors with 119 additional definitions dating from 1968 through 2002. The additional definitions were drawn primarily from two major published collections of definitions (Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992a; Shapiro, Lee, & Gross, 2002).

The study begins by presenting one of the earliest definitions of transpersonal psychology, which is contained in a letter to Stanley Krippner, dated 8/29/86, and written by Leon Pomeroy of New York. His definition is as follows:

“Transpersonal Psychology” is the scientific study of behavioral phenomena commonly thought to possess the qualities of “awe,” the “spiritual” or the “mystical,” and of the belief systems and physiological states underlying such behavior. (Hartelius, Caplan, Rardin, 2007, 2).

There are authors who have also added two published definitions, which have not been included in any collection:

Transpersonal psychology returns the questions of ultimate human value and questions of spiritual or religious experience to the field of psychology. (Judy, 1990, 3)

As I see it, there are three major assumptions underlying transpersonal psychology (TP): reports of transpersonal experiences and behaviors can be studied scientifically; transpersonal experiences and behaviors reflect concerns that transcend the personal, reflecting a group or even humanity as a whole; these experiences and behaviors are given the highest possible priority or value by those reporting them. (Krippner, 1990, 2)

At the end of their inquiry, Hartelius, Caplan, and Rardin assembled the content of transpersonal psychology into a summary definition:

Transpersonal psychology: An approach to psychology that 1) studies phenomena beyond the ego as context for 2) an integrative/holistic psychology; this provides a framework for 3) understanding and cultivating human transformation. (Hartelius, Caplan, Rardin 2007, 11).

Lajoie & Shapiro (1992a) took 40 definitions collected between 1969 and 1991 and they identified five key themes that were common within these definitions: states of consciousness, ultimate potential, functioning beyond the ego boundaries, transcendence, and spirituality. Finally, they arrived at the following conclusion:

Transpersonal psychology is concerned with the study of humanity's highest potential, and with the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness. (Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992a, 91)

Cortright (Cortright, 1997, 16-21) lists eight basic assumptions defining the Transpersonal:

- Our essential nature is spiritual
- Consciousness is multidimensional
- Human beings have valid urges toward spiritual seeking, expressed as a search for wholeness through deepening individual social, and transcendent awareness
- Contacting a deeper source of wisdom and guidance within is both possible and helpful to growth
- Uniting a person's conscious will and aspiration with the spiritual impulse is a superordinate health value
- Altered states of consciousness are one way of accessing transpersonal experiences and can be an aid to healing and growth
- Our life and actions are meaningful
- The transpersonal context shapes how the person/client is viewed.

Charles Tart in his work *Transpersonal Psychologies* explains that,

Transpersonal Psychology is the title given to an emerging force in the psychology field by a group of psychologists and professional men and women from other fields who are interested in those ultimate human capacities and potentialities that have no systematic place in positivistic or behavioristic theory ('first force'), classical psychoanalytic theory ('second force'), or humanistic psychology ('third force'). The emerging Transpersonal Psychology ('fourth force') is concerned specifically with the empirical, scientific study of, and responsible implementation of the findings relevant to, becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values,

unitive consciousness, peak experiences, B-values, ecstasy, mystical experience, awe, being, self-actualization, essence, bliss, wonder, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, oneness, cosmic awareness, individual and species-wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, sacralization of everyday life, transcendental phenomena, cosmic self-humor and playfulness, maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression, and related concepts, experiences, and activities. As a definition, this formulation is to be understood as subject to optional individual or group interpretations, either wholly or in part, with regard to the acceptance of its content as essentially naturalistic, theistic, supernaturalistic, or any other designated classification (Tart, 1975, 2).

Walsh and Vaughan specify that

The goals of transpersonal therapy include both traditional ones, such as symptom relief and behavior change, and, for appropriate clients, the introduction of a variety of methods aimed at the transpersonal level. The latter include the provision of an adequate conceptual framework for handling transpersonal experiences; information on psychological potential; realization of the importance of assuming responsibility, not only for one's behavior but for one's experience; discovery of the possibility of using all life experience as a part of learning; experiencing the existence and potentials of altered states; and understanding the usefulness, limits, and dangers of attachment to fixed models and expectations. In addition to working through psychodynamic processes, the therapist may also assist the client in beginning to disidentify from them. (Walsh & Vaughan, 1996, 21–22)

Daniels (2005, 26) aims to clarify our understanding of the nature of transpersonal by focusing on the concept of transformation. He distinguishes two groups of transpersonal approaches, the immanent-horizontal-descending position where

The transformation is to be sought through greater connection to the world of nature, to other people, the body, the feminine, or the dynamic ground of the unconscious.

And the transcendent or ascending position whereby

transformation can be sought through the realization of mystical or divine states that are regarded as being metaphorically above or beyond the physical universe.

Hutton instead aims to reveal how transpersonal psychotherapists differ from other practitioners. His results reveal that

Transpersonal psychology may be better suited to the study of psychological and psychospiritual concerns than other psychological and psychiatric disciplines". (Hutton, 1994, 167).

And

The practitioners of transpersonal psychology tend to report having had spiritual experiences, follow some spiritual practice, and believe that such experiences are important. They have had training in transpersonal psychology and believe that spiritual issues are relevant to psychotherapy. (Hutton, 1994, 167).

Rowan in turn emphasizes the stage of consciousness that characterizes the transpersonal dimension:

I do want to say, on the one end, that the transpersonal dimension is just a part of being human: it may or may not take a religious form; it may or not may take a philosophical form; it may or may not take an interpersonal form. But it always put us in touch in some way with the sacred, the numinous, the holy-the soul, the spirit, the divine. (Rowan 2005, 1) ...

Transpersonal constitute the foothills of mystical experiences and that the Causal stage is the major source of true and mystical experiences as experienced by the great historical mystic described in Underhill's classics. (Rowan 2005, 272).

1.2 Towards an integral transpersonal approach to the *Psyche*

In order to help understand a transpersonal approach to psychology and psychotherapy, the BTE model proposes the metaphor of the square and the circle.

The square represents the phenomenon, the thing, the substance, the behavior, the object, and the form—in one word the content of the psyche. The circle represents the *noumenon*, the mode, the form, the subject, the container, the emptiness, and the essence of the *Psyche*.

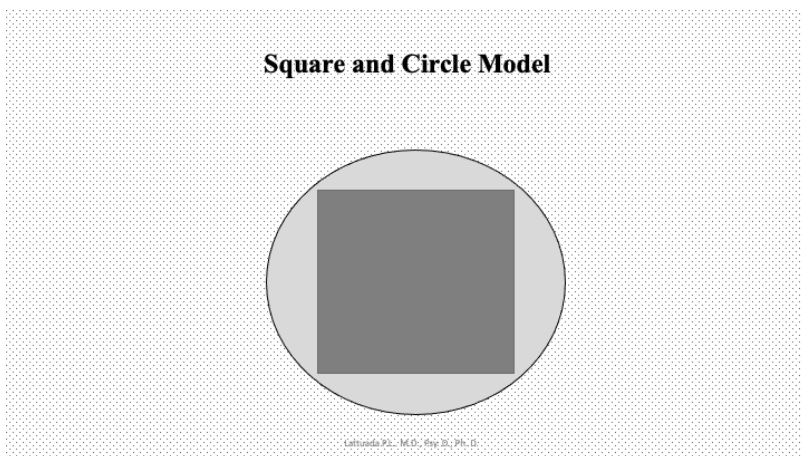


Fig. 1-1
Circle and Square

TP aims to deal with the dialogue between the content, that is, the expression (square) and the container, which is the essence (circle).

Therefore, the Object of TP would be the participatory dialogue Subject/Object. The various traditions of wisdom of humanity gave different names to this Unity (square/circle), which are all ascribable to one: *Psyche*.¹

According to transpersonal psychology, perennial philosophy, and the holistic-systematic vision from Bateson onwards, *Psyche* does not coincide with the mind that in turn is not confined to the brain. This is the reason why on I will use the term *Psyche* instead of psyche from now.

In my understanding, what should distinguish a transpersonal psychotherapist, whatever methodology he/she employs, is the unitary gaze able to catch both the square and the circle.

Consequently, a transpersonal psychotherapist should TP any human experience as a manifestation of *Psyche*, which is understood as the unity of Object and Subject.

As a matter of fact, Jung, Assagioli, Wilber, and Panikkar, among others, as we shall shortly see, conceive the *Psyche* as the Self, or the unifying archetype.

¹ *Psyche*, Atman, Supreme Consciousness, Essence, Nous, and Nagual are all terms that any religion could identify.

Therefore, we would say the field of investigation of the TP is the human experience of *Psyche* (Self) in its participatory dialogue with the world. To be more specific, following the ITV we could define human experience as the participatory dialogue between the personal and the Transpersonal Self.

In order to grasp the essence of complexity and not fall into the temptation of reducing it to simplicity we will narrow down the fields by saying that TP deals with interactions between humans and the environment by focusing on the human side, that is, on the psychically significant effects that such an interaction produces as a human experience of the world.

In order to proceed, BTE suggest the model of the *Circuit of Experience*, to define human experience of the Self through three dynamic and interconnected subsystems: thinking (elaborating), acting (behaving), and feeling (sentient functions).

Wanting to find the biological basis of three organismic subsystems of *Circuit of Experience*, we can go to McLean Triune's description of the brain. Indeed, he argues that the brain is formed by reptilian, paleo-mammalian, and neo-mammalian parts. The reptilian brain is connected to action; the paleo-mammalian is linked to feelings, sensations, and emotions; and the neo-mammalian is concerned with thinking.

We can also think of the three embryonic leaflets: the *mesoderm* connected to action, the *endoderm* connected to sentient function, and the *ectoderm* connected to thinking.

This condition that suggests the centrality of the term *transpersonal*.

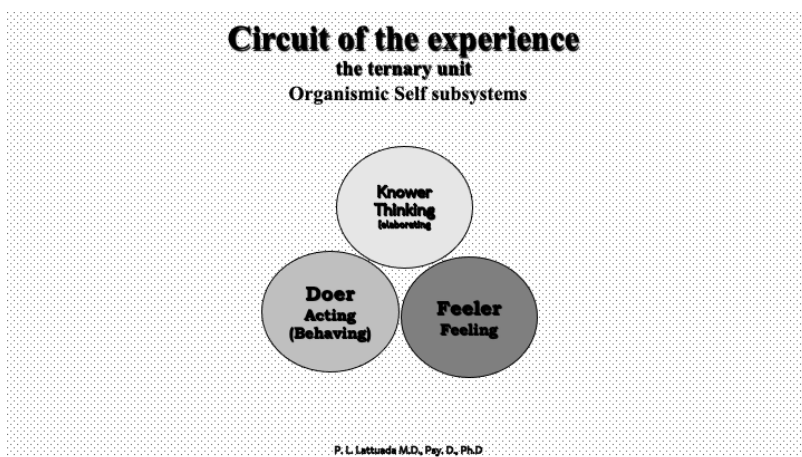


Fig.1-2
Circuit of the Experience

1.2.1 *Trans*

Trans is a Latin preposition meaning beyond; this in turn derives from the archaic root *tar* or *tra*, which has the sense of moving, pushing forward, a concept that extends into Sanskrit *tarâmi*, which means through, over, up to Greek *taràssô*, I put in rapid succession.

Summarizing today, as Tarnas point out (Hartelius, Caplan, Rardin, 2007, 8), there are three different meanings of the Latin word *trans*:

- Going beyond
- Pervade
- Transform (change)

Therefore, going beyond the person means overcoming the typical prerogatives of our individual identity, behavior, feelings, and selfish thoughts in order to explore and awaken our higher altruistic, creative, and spiritual qualities and potential.

This aspect underlines the evolutionary drive of the human being and their possibility to transcend and gradually include the limitations of their previous stages of development in the potential of the next ones.

The pervasive component of the term *trans* means that life and, therefore, every human experience is pervasive, involving the totality of being. This aspect focuses on the need for an integral view to understand how everything is interconnected and, for example, how a mental event is simultaneously physical, energetic, and emotional.

Transformation is the third aspect and emphasizes the human being's capacity for change. In particular, it allows us to remember that our organism, as a living system, is endowed with the capacity for self-organization, which means that it is able to regain its balance when it loses it by renewing its components and evolving creatively towards new dimensions.

We may now apply these three founding characteristics of the Transpersonal Approach suggested by Tarnas to our metaphor of the circle and square to realize that they imply a fourth unavoidable element—the concept of states and stages of consciousness.

To conceive of the circle over the square is to conceive of an elsewhere but, however you want to conceive of it, this otherness has horizontal as well as vertical dimensions.

Think of a building. One may find oneself in the middle of a room, then with an act of attention realize that there is a whole floor in the building. We could say that the subject has covered the circuit of experience along a

horizontal dimension: the felt sense of the existence of something beyond the room made him think about getting out and allowed him to perform the action of crossing the threshold.

By using our ordinary, rational state of consciousness and stage of thinking, we can easily behave in this way.

The vertical dimension and consequently the Transpersonal Approach starts when one realizes it's possible to observe oneself thinking, feeling, and acting.

A fourth element comes into play in the circuit of experience.

When one realizes that can observe oneself thinking, feeling, and acting, another world opens up.

It is a world made up of many worlds, which often ineffable and mysterious, both inner and outer, and unconscious and superconscious. Many of them are irreducible to rational explanation and to the known space-time dimension.

Continuing with this metaphor, the subject will be able to notice the different floors and the whole building. With a further shift of consciousness, one can look both at the world visible from the terrace and their inner experiences.

This is not the place to go into the stages of consciousness and states of thinking, but we can focus on the subject/object of experience—the Self or *Psyche*.

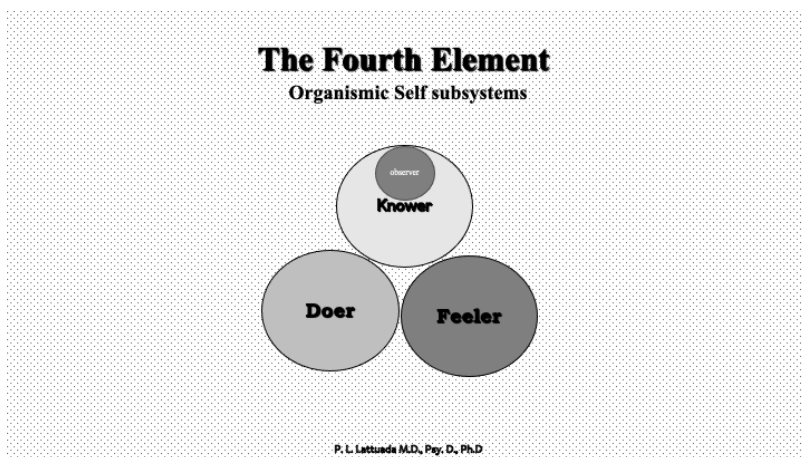


Fig.1-3
The fourth element

1.3 The Self

It seems necessary, therefore, to clarify the concept of the Self, since, from an experiential point of view, it can coincide with that of consciousness itself or *Psyche*. Its notion therefore takes on metaphysical overtones which, as Frager and Fadiman recall,

[are] a metaphysical notion every bit as obscure as transcendence, which defies scientific efforts to pin it down. (Frager & Fadiman, 2005).

Complicating the situation is the fact that, as Friedman says,

The self-concept, the running symbolic register of one's experiences, which is coded in narrative and other forms of memory, is a delimited construct as compared to the lived self...

Consequently, it is no surprise that contemporary psychology has tended to emphasize the self-concept rather than attempting to directly examine the experiencing self. (Friedman 2013, 206)

Galimberti (Galimberti, 2006, 28) clearly identifies three fundamental meanings of the concept of Self:

- Core of self-reflective consciousness.
- permanent and continuous core during the somatic and psychic changes That characterize individual existence.
- The totality of psychic instances relating to one's own person as opposed to object relations.

Wanting to retrace some stages in the construction of the concept of Self in the psychodynamic vision, we must start from Freud who conceives of it as a complex entity made up of different subsystems or "psychic places" divided into the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious.

This conception is then enriched with the concepts of Ego, Id, and Superego for which the Ego or conscious part of the personality develops by mediating between the instinctive instances of the Es and the moral instances of the Superego (Freud).

Within the framework of psychoanalytic theories, a specific area of the Psychology of the Self has been formulated in contemporary terms by Heinz Kohut. Kohut theorized a tripolar Self characterized by the instances of mirroring, idealization, and twinning, which underlie both the cohesion of the Self in the healthy subject and pathological disturbances if they are dysfunctional during "*Self/object-Self relations in childhood*" (Kout, 1971a, 80).