

## **Spirituality, Psychology and the Transpersonal**

The quest and call for a congruency between spirituality and psychology has been called upon for over 20 years (Hartelius, Rothe, Roy, 2013, p.45). The question they posed “is transpersonal psychology essentially spiritual psychology under a more obscure and now less marketable name?” (p.45) would seem to allow transpersonal psychology the scope to strive towards a congruent rationality.

The transpersonal movement has been described as seeking to “draw on both science and spirituality to forge a new vision of psyche and cosmos, one that suffers neither from the parochialism inherent in some religious and spiritual traditions nor from the limitations of a narrowly applied natural science Philosophy”. (p.56)

Notwithstanding these limitations there are many benefits from this marriage. The more mystical aspects of spirituality, challenging to explore outside of mainstream thought processes enjoy an authentic development with transpersonal psychology as “the psychological investigation of transpersonal experiences, processes and events”. Daniels (2005).

Further strengthening this authenticity Friedman (2013) explains that it “allows a way to deal with a continuum of non-transcendent, yet still transpersonal experiences that go beyond the individual and that can be scientifically studied.

By virtue of its inclusion in this new branch of psychology the stage is set for many to explore their spirituality in psychological terms before which may not have been deemed acceptable to ones conditioned spiritual doctrine. Psychological exploration seems more palatable to allow for a meaningful exploration of spirituality.

The benefit of a transpersonal psychological approach is that it allows the person to go beyond the ego or conditioned personality where the external influences of parents and teachers, culture and religious or spiritual doctrine and traditions can have their influence.

Considering that many spend their whole lives committed to one spiritual tradition without question, this development makes room for what Tart (2010) spoke of as the value of a rational approach. He describes this whereby one could be advised on which practice is and is not for them without having to spend 20 years practising only then to find out its for them or not for them. The importance of this cannot be underestimated.

The transpersonal allows for an exploration of mystical and spiritual experience by defining such experiences under the awning of transpersonal psychology. “Transpersonal psychology is a transformative psychology of the whole person in intimate relationship with an interconnected and evolving world; it pays special attention to self-expansive states as well as to spiritual, mystical and other exceptional human experiences that gain meaning in such a context.” (Hartelius, Rothe and Roy, 2013, p.45)

**References:**

Daniels, M. (2005). *Shadow, self, spirit: Essays in transpersonal psychology*. Charlottesville: VA. Imprint Academic. p.13

Hartelius, G., Rothe, G. & Roy, P.J. (2013). *The Wiley Blackwell handbook of transpersonal psychology*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell. p.45,56

Tart, C.T. (2010). Toward an evidence-based spirituality: Some glimpses of an evolving vision. *Subtle Energies & Energy Medicine*, p. 9.