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## Chapter One

# Basic Assumptions

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Most transpersonal psychotherapists wonder from time to time (or perhaps like me wonder almost daily), What does it really mean to do transpersonal psychotherapy?

There is so much that passes for transpersonal psychotherapy, ranging from what may appear to be very traditional and mundane to the very far out and flaky. *What does a transpersonal orientation look like when it comes to actually sitting with a client?* How is it translated into action? Is it shown by what the therapist does or how the therapist is? How can a therapist be grounded in accepted psychotherapy practice and open to the realm of spirit? Are there some common principles, methods, guidelines which characterize a transpersonal approach?

Many questions arise. Some of them are practical: Is meditation helpful for therapy? What is the interface between meditation and psychotherapy? How can working with altered states of consciousness assist psychotherapy? What light does spiritual emergency shed on the psyche and on psychopathology? What implications do these issues have for healing and growth?

Other questions focus on the therapeutic relationship: What is the relationship of the therapist to the spiritual life of the client? That of detached witness? support? teacher? guru? Does the therapist provide active spiritual guidance? And if so, when and of what kind? These are

tricky questions, for they take us to the boundaries of the therapist's professional identity. If the role of the therapist blends into spiritual teacher or guide, what are the implications of this for practice and training? And, more disturbing, why can we reliably produce good, competent therapists far better than anyone has been able to produce good gurus or spiritual teachers?

Perhaps the most fundamental questions in transpersonal psychology revolve around what is the relationship of the personal to the transpersonal. What is the relationship of self to spirit? And what is the nature of this relationship?

The transpersonal field is currently at an evolutionary edge in psychology, and as such it is sizzling with creative energy and aliveness. Although there is much to be said in favor of being a discipline at the frontier in which there is experimentation, pushing past traditional boundaries, innovation, and excitement, there are hazards as well, hazards better acknowledged and addressed than ignored. This book attempts to raise some of these issues as well.

## DEFINING TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Transpersonal psychology can be understood as the melding of the wisdom of the world's spiritual traditions with the learning of modern psychology.

It is the world's spiritual traditions and modern psychology that provide the two most interesting and compelling answers to the fundamental question human beings have asked throughout the ages, "Who am I?" In reply to this question, the world's spiritual traditions look deep within and respond, "A spiritual being, a soul," and religious practices are the means by which spiritual traditions seek to connect to this deeper identity within. On the other hand, modern psychology has arrived at a very different answer to the question, "Who am I?" Psychology looks within and gives the answer, "A self, an ego, a psychological existence," and depth psychotherapy is psychology's journey into the reclaiming, healing, and growth of this self.

Transpersonal psychology is the attempt to put these two answers together. By creating a new synthesis of these two profound approaches to human consciousness, the spiritual and the psychological, transpersonal psychology attempts to honor the learning of each. It has become

a cliché in transpersonal circles that, "You need to be a somebody before you can be a nobody." While the issue is considerably more complex than this, this statement does reflect what transpersonal psychology is concerned with: developing a self while also honoring the urge to go beyond the self.

In moving beyond the confines of the self, consciousness is seen to open up into ranges of experience which go far beyond Freud's initial formulations of id, ego, and superego. Consciousness is seen to be a vast, multidimensional existence where ever new aspects of Being are manifested. This collective religious wisdom speaks of all existence as one vast, spiritual reality. All human beings (and all creatures and creation) partake of this spiritual reality.

Our self, our psychological existence, is described by these perennial traditions as the most visible, surface expression of a fundamentally spiritual essence, the ground of being. Any explanations in psychology that consider only the outward appearance of things will inevitably fall short. Just as modern depth psychology looks past the surface view of the mind to discover a dynamic unconscious of which people are generally unaware, so the teachings of religious traditions point to a supreme and ultimately spiritual source of consciousness that supports this outer psychological existence we call our "self."

No amount of study of genetics, biochemistry, or neuroscience, on the one hand, or of family systems, mother-child interactions, and early childhood development on the other hand, in other words no explanation that only considers the outward appearances of nature or nurture, will ever provide satisfactory answers to life's fundamental questions. Only by looking to the spiritual dimension that includes and transcends heredity and environment can we discover an adequate answer to the problems of human existence.

Another approach to defining transpersonal psychology takes us to the meaning of the word transpersonal. According to *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, the prefix *trans* is Latin for beyond or across. The first definition of *trans* pertains to "above and beyond," as in a *transcendent* experience which takes us beyond our ordinary consciousness. The second definition pertains to "across" or "to the other side of," as in a *transatlantic* flight which goes across the Atlantic Ocean to the other side. Both of these meanings of *trans* are appropriate in defining transpersonal psychology.

The definition of transpersonal as "beyond the personal" is the meaning which was initially emphasized during the formative years of transpersonal psychology. Indeed, sometimes transpersonal psychology is thought of exclusively in terms of what is beyond the personal, including such things as mystical experience, altered states of consciousness, kundalini experiences, various psi phenomena (such as ESP, clairvoyance, channeling, telepathy, etc.), shamanic journeying, unitive states, near-death experiences, and so on. While these phenomena "beyond" the personal form a part of transpersonal psychology, they are becoming less of a focus as transpersonal psychology has recently moved toward a more complete view that seeks to find the sacred in the daily, ordinary life and consciousness in which most people live.

The definition of *trans* as "across" also applies, since transpersonal psychology moves across the personal realm, acknowledging and continuing to explore all aspects of the self and the unconscious that traditional psychology has discovered while also placing this personal psychology in a larger framework. Thus the self is still very much the focus in transpersonal psychotherapy. But by moving across traditional personal psychology to the larger spiritual context, the individual self moves out of its existential vacuum into a wider dimension to which the world's spiritual teachings point.

So taking these two meanings of "beyond" and "across," the literal meaning of transpersonal includes both the personal and what is beyond it. Transpersonal psychology studies how the spiritual is expressed in and through the personal, as well as the transcendence of the self.

Transpersonal psychology in this sense affords a wider perspective for all the learning of conventional psychology. It includes and exceeds traditional psychology. And by holding all of conventional psychology within it, it recasts psychology into a new mold and spiritual framework.

#### DEFINING TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY: THEORY AND PRACTICE

It is customary in psychotherapy to differentiate between theory and practice. The level of theory includes philosophical worldviews, basic assumptions about human nature, concepts about what is being studied, and a methodology which forms the bridge between theory and practice. Technology is the means by which this methodology is enacted.

Every therapeutic approach has a more or less explicit theory behind it, a methodology for producing change, and a technology or set of techniques to implement the methodology.

For example, in classical psychoanalysis, the level of theory includes notions of the unconscious, defense mechanisms, the id, ego, and superego, the theory of instincts, dreams, et cetera. The methodology (or the method by which change comes about), most analysts would agree, is the working through of the transference. The level of technology includes free association, interpretation, and dream analysis. Taking the therapeutic approach of bioenergetics as another example, the level of theory is very similar to psychoanalysis except that the body is the central focus. The methodology is the softening of the body armor, the chronically contracted muscular patterns that deaden a person's aliveness. The techniques range from the breathing exercises and cathartic expression to the stress positions used to build up a charge in the body and increase the energy flow so that the armor can soften.

In each of these, the technology flows out of the methodology, and the methodology flows out of the theory. Every technique in psychotherapy, regardless of the school, implies a theory which contains basic assumptions about human nature. So whether someone says to a person who's crying, "There, there, don't cry. It'll be okay," based on a theory received from a grandmother that sees feelings as dangerous and best suppressed; or whether the person says, "Can you stay with your tears, keep breathing, and give your tears a voice," based on a theory that sees the experiencing and expression of feelings as helpful, both imply a set of assumptions about human nature and growth which generates a particular response. This chapter and the following chapter examine transpersonal theory. The following chapter examines the methodology that emerges from transpersonal theory. Most of the rest of the book explores the implications of these for clinical application.

## THEORY

Transpersonal psychotherapy is not completely encompassed by any particular writer. Ken Wilber, Carl Jung, Stanislav Grof—each of these theorists represents specific viewpoints within transpersonal psychology, which is a field much like politics or art where many viewpoints co-exist. Nor is transpersonal psychotherapy defined by Buddhist "psy-

chology," or Christian or shamanic "psychologies," for these do not really constitute psychologies at all in the sense that this word is used today. Russell (1986) has argued persuasively that the key insights of Western psychology are absent in such spiritual systems. To call them psychologies is to miss most of what modern psychology has discovered, such as categories of differential diagnosis, a theory of childhood development, a theory of psychopathology, views of intra-psychic conflict, defense mechanisms, the dynamic unconscious, and so on. Nor is transpersonal psychotherapy defined by specific subject matter, such as meditation or altered states or spiritual emergency, although these are some of its most visible topics. Transpersonal theory goes beyond these specific viewpoints to articulate a comprehensive psycho-spiritual vision of life and its unfolding.

Transpersonal theory is not a unified, clearly demarcated, cut-and-dried approach. It is still quite new, with many different formulations and syntheses, and it has much unexplored territory. It is also important to recognize that transpersonal theory, like all theory, is but a way of organizing our experience of reality, it is not that reality itself. Commenting on this many years ago, Alfred Korzybski said cogently, "The map is not the territory." He also said, "The map does not represent all the territory." We need to remember that no matter how thorough our theoretical maps are, they will always leave something out. Korzybski's third statement, "The map is self-reflexive," reminds us of the need for map awareness and points to the need for continual reevaluation and revision of our maps as human understanding advances. Transpersonal psychology, like any field of human endeavor, will always be a "work in progress."

Despite the fact that transpersonal psychology is still in its formative stages, it has nevertheless undergone a historical development. The first two decades of writings in the field were largely focused on what might be called the "high end" of human experiencing. An excerpt from the statement of purpose of the first *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* serves to illustrate this.

The *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* is concerned with the publication of theoretical and applied research, original contributions, empirical papers, articles and studies in meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experience, ecstasy, mystical experience, B-values, essence, bliss, awe, wonder, self-actualization, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, sacralization of everyday life, oneness, cos-

mic awareness, cosmic play, individual and species-wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, transcendental phenomenon; maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression; and related concepts, experiences, and activities. (Sutich, 1969, p. 16.)

Today such a statement may seem rather amusing, with its emphasis on things like bliss, ecstasy, awe, cosmic unity, and so on. What about suffering, pain, abuse, psychosis, war, greed? What about daily life? However, it is important to realize the context for the emergence of transpersonal psychology, namely the late 1960s, a time when bliss, wonder, and awe were in the air, revolution was in the streets, and enlightenment seemed just around the corner. Although transpersonal psychology has been criticized for being removed from the ordinary reality most people live in by its narrow focus on the high end of human life, this stage did serve a necessary historical purpose, namely to bring attention to those parts of human experience which had been neglected by the previous models of psychology and/or pathologized out of genuine consideration (such as Freud's dismissing mystical experience as being merely a return to the oceanic oneness of the womb).

By bringing attention to these experiences, transpersonal psychology has helped bring about a major paradigm shift away from the traditional scientific, materialistic, Cartesian worldview toward a more holistic, spiritual perspective. It has also affirmed spiritual seeking as an essential aspect of human motivation. Seeking for the Divine, whether called God, Brahman, Buddha-nature, Reality, Being, Truth, Love, or anything else, has been a major aspiration and force in all cultures and periods of history, yet it has been virtually ignored by traditional psychology. Transpersonal psychology brought this central motivating force into the center of psychology, rather than overlooking it or relegating it to the periphery. (In so doing, it has been important to distinguish between religion and spirituality. Religion is the organized, established structures associated with organized religion, which some people find great meaning in but which others do not. Spirituality is the soul's free quest for the divine and often is not affiliated with a traditional organized religion.)

More recently, however, there has been a shift in transpersonal psychology to how the spiritual is expressed in everyday life. It has become clear that transpersonal psychology must include the whole—not just the high end of human experience but the very personal realm of ordinary consciousness as well. Regular people with ordinary prob-

lems who are also on a spiritual path are seeking psychotherapy and growth from transpersonally oriented practitioners. They are looking for therapists who will honor their seeking for something sacred and who can respect their whole being—in its psychological and spiritual fullness—rather than belittling or minimizing their spiritual seeking, as much of traditional psychotherapy has historically done. Thus, there are emerging new approaches to seeing how, for example, meditation can interface with traditional therapy, how relationships can be used for spiritual unfolding, how a transpersonal perspective effects how we view childhood development, dreams, physical healing, and psychosomatic syndromes, as well as how it influences our understanding of the development and treatment of psychopathology.

With this larger viewpoint, we assume a different perspective even in the exploration of the "lower end" of human functioning and psychopathology. For example, psychosis can be seen to be more than just pathological flooding of the ego by the id, it also becomes a psychic opening to vast cosmic forces and presents a possibility for spiritual emergence and psychological healing.

In one of the only articles ever to seriously address the question of what constitutes transpersonal psychotherapy, Vaughn (1979) said that context (consisting of the beliefs, values, and intentions of the therapist), content (transpersonal experiences), and process (consisting of the development from identification, through disidentification, to self-transcendence), were the key elements. Within the discussion given in this book, these would all fall within the domain of theory. Vaughn also correctly noted that it is the context which defines a transpersonal approach. To this it is important to add: the consciousness of the therapist is what brings this context alive.

To borrow an idea from gestalt therapy, "meaning" can be defined as the relation between figure and ground. For example, the word "bow" (figure) can mean several things depending upon the ground (context) in which it appears—bow and arrow, to bow before the queen, the bow of a ship. It is the ground or context that determines the meaning of any given figure. Thus the figure of any given therapeutic intervention is given meaning by the theoretical ground in which it is embedded. It is this ground of transpersonal theory which gives meaning and value to the techniques used in a transpersonal approach, with consciousness forming the methodological bridge between theory and technique.



The defining character of transpersonal psychotherapy is the theoretical and methodological framework which informs the therapeutic process. It is certainly tempting to identify transpersonal psychotherapy through the level of technique, for this is the most visible expression of therapy. But transpersonal psychotherapy is not to be defined by technique. Indeed, the level of technique is the least important level of transpersonal psychotherapy. That transpersonal psychotherapy is not a specific technical modality is both a cause of some confusion and a source of strength. Rowan (1993), for example, in his book *The Transpersonal*, makes this error of identifying the transpersonal approach with certain techniques (primarily visualization, active imagination, and meditation). But all techniques could be thrown away and the transpersonal approach would remain, ready to innovate with new techniques. For all techniques can be transpersonal, given a transpersonal framework.

To be sure, there are specific techniques, such as holotropic breath work, altered state work, or psychosynthesis' guided imagery that are often identified as transpersonal, but even here it is the surrounding context that provides a transpersonal meaning. Some of these techniques, such as guided imagery, have been used in behavioral programs having nothing to do with the transpersonal. The meaning of the techniques changes given the shifting context.

In this way transpersonal psychology is more like humanistic psychology than psychoanalysis. Whereas in psychoanalysis all the various schools share a similar set of techniques, humanistic psychology has a wide range of modalities, from bioenergetics to gestalt to client-centered approaches. Similarly, the larger perspective of transpersonal psychotherapy, by not being limited to a specific approach, can be adapted to fit a number of technical variations.

The importance of theory, therefore, is that it is the overarching framework that defines transpersonal psychotherapy. Transpersonal content often never arises in transpersonal therapy, yet the meaning-giving frame provides the transpersonal orientation. A therapist may use an approach that is informed by a behavioral, psychoanalytic, or humanistic orientation (ideally a therapist is open to all theoretical models, though in practice most therapists tend to favor one), but transpersonal therapy proceeds by no set technique or formula. Transpersonal therapy lies not in what the therapist says or does, but in

the silent frame that operates behind the therapist's actions, informing and giving meaning to the specific interventions. It is thus a wider container which can hold all other therapeutic orientations within it.

## BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

The following chapters discuss transpersonal theory in more detail. At this point, it might be helpful to distill some of the key assumptions that define a transpersonal approach. For while there are many different perspectives within the field, there are some underlying principles that unite transpersonal therapists. These are:

1. **Our essential nature is spiritual.** Transpersonal psychology affirms that both modern psychology and the world's spiritual traditions are correct about the nature of human identity: our being is both psychological and spiritual in nature. But the transpersonal view gives primacy to the spiritual source which supports and upholds the psychological structures of the self.
2. **Consciousness is multidimensional.** Transpersonal psychology has pioneered exploration and research into other levels or states of consciousness. Within the field of psychology, such alternate states were either pathologized into irrelevance (e.g., mystical union was described as "artificial schizophrenia") or dismissed altogether as simply fantasies. Research with psychedelic compounds which radically alter consciousness, the use of non-drug techniques such as shamanic journeying, breathing, fasting, hypnosis, and meditation to induce altered states, and study of the world's religions all demonstrate that the normal, ordinary consciousness most people experience is but the most outward tip of consciousness. Spiritual experiences often catapult a person into realms and states of expanded consciousness that reveal how limited and restricted normal consciousness is.

Other dimensions or aspects of consciousness show the truth of the wisdom traditions, the cosmic connectedness of all beings, the unity within all outward diversity, the subtle realms and levels of consciousness which are more open to the clarity, peace, light, love, knowledge, and power behind this physical

manifestation. To exclude any of these dimensions from psychology leads to an impoverished theory of consciousness.

3. **Human beings have valid urges toward spiritual seeking, expressed as a search for wholeness through deepening individual, social, and transcendent awareness.** The search for wholeness, which is one way of viewing Maslow's research into the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1968, 1970, 1971), takes the individual into increasing levels of self-discovery, actualization, and seeking for transcendence. The transpersonal vision sees this entire psychological drama as a subset of a larger quest for spiritual union. Not only is spiritual seeking healthy, it is essential for full human health and fulfillment. The definition of mental health must include a spiritual dimension to be complete.

Spiritual seeking can become increasingly important and central in a client's life. The mystics of most religious traditions indicate that the deepest motivation for all human beings is the urge toward spirit. Maslow's map is a Western confirmation of what many religious traditions have expressed, which is that initially the growth of consciousness focuses upon building up the physical, emotional, mental structures of the self. It is just this area that most of Western psychology has studied. Traditional psychology has focused on motivational hierarchies—survival needs, sex and aggression, the need to integrate feelings and impulses, finding intimacy, developing a cohesive self, and actualizing the self's potentials through meaningful work and activities. Transpersonal psychology completes the process, putting this motivational path into the context of a spiritual journey. In this journey the individual moves from more basic needs to progressively higher needs, leading (either along the way or at the end) to the aspiration for spiritual fulfillment.

In hindsight, it is hard to understand how psychology, which tried to discover the truth of human experience, could have avoided the realm of spirituality for so long, for it has been a central preoccupation of every human culture throughout history. Yet it is also understandable given Western science's attempt to put aside all metaphysical speculation and focus only on what is experimentally observable. It is through

this kind of "ordinary mind" focus that psychology has come upon its discoveries. Historically in the West, organized religion in the form of the Catholic Church stultified thought for centuries. Separating religion from science during the Renaissance powerfully liberated human inquiry. Apparently only now are we ready to bring spirituality back into scientific and psychological thought.

4. **Contacting a deeper source of wisdom and guidance within is both possible and helpful to growth.** Western psychotherapy seeks to uncover a deeper source of guidance than the conscious ego or self. Different systems describe this in different terms. Gestalt therapy speaks of "the wisdom of the organism," which knows far more than the person does, and seeks to replace ego control with "organismic self-regulation." Jungian psychotherapy tries to replace the ego as the locus of control with the Self, which is more in touch with the wisdom of the unconscious. Self psychology and object relations try to bring the "nuclear self" or the "real self" to the forefront, rather than the defensively constructed, false self. Existential psychotherapy makes the "authentic self" the true guide rather than the compromised inauthentic self. *All of modern psychotherapy may be seen to be an intuitive groping toward a deeper source of wisdom than the surface self.*

For thousands of years religious traditions have declared that our fundamental nature is a source of vast intelligence, and we can and should turn inward in the search for real wisdom. Some psychological systems explicitly deny this unseen dimension (e.g., psychoanalysis and gestalt), while other systems make no mention of it. Still others (e.g., Jungian and psychosynthesis) specifically acknowledge this spiritual level.

Transpersonal psychotherapy, in line with traditional psychotherapy, aims at assisting people in accessing their inner wisdom for greater emotional and psychological integration but makes clear that whatever any particular system or psychology calls it, it is a deeper, spiritual reality that is the source of the self's or the organism's wisdom. Transpersonal psychology makes explicit what western psychology has only vaguely pointed toward.

5. **Uniting a person's conscious will and aspiration with the spiritual impulse is a superordinate health value.** Affirming the infinite ways in which the spiritual impulse may express itself is a primary value in transpersonal psychotherapy. It is not that setting out on a spiritual path clears up all psychological problems. Nor does it mean that people should be pushed, however gently, toward entering a spiritual path. Rather the assumption is that this cognitive set and, more fundamentally, this spiritual orientation, puts one into greater alignment with the healing forces of the psyche and the universe, expressed variously as the Tao, Divine Will, et cetera. This creates optimal conditions for psychological integration. Thus transpersonal psychology supports the spiritual urge. It also is alert for ways clients misuse the spiritual impulse to avoid dealing with neurotic patterns. This misuse has been called "spiritual by-passing" and will be examined in a later chapter.

In spiritual seeking it is crucial for the therapist to honor all spiritual paths. Dogmatic clinging to any particular spiritual practice is severely limiting to transpersonal practice. If there is one thing to be dogmatic about, it is the importance of not being dogmatic. There is no one way to the Divine, the paths are as varied as there are individuals, and a broad knowledge of and respect for these varied paths (including atheism) is crucial.

6. **Altered states of consciousness are one way of accessing transpersonal experiences and can be an aid to healing and growth.** From its beginnings transpersonal psychology has been influenced by altered state research in general and psychedelic research in particular. It is clear that for many people psychedelic compounds have been a significant awakener. They can open a door to the infinite, profoundly touching the foundation of our being, disclosing new possibilities of consciousness that had been entirely unseen or merely abstract. In the Hindu text the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna gives a boon to the hero of the story, Arjuna, in the form of a vision of the divine universal. This divine vision has powerful and life-changing effects upon Arjuna. The experience of altered states of consciousness can serve as a modern equivalent of Krishna's

vision to Arjuna, opening up new realms of experience with great power and intensity. While not for everyone, the judicious induction of altered states of consciousness has a respected place in transpersonal work, and altered states have significant implications for psychological and physical healing. (See later chapter on altered states of consciousness.)

7. **Our life and actions are meaningful.** Our actions, joys, and sorrows have significance in our growth and development. They are not merely random, pointless events. Moving beyond a purely scientific, materialistic, or existential perspective allows us to view life from a broader vantage point. The strict existential position is that health results from creating meaning in a meaningless world. The spiritual position, by contrast, is that health comes about as we uncover the meaning inherent in what is. A transpersonal synthesis would see both our need to continually discover deeper meaning and acknowledge our contribution to continually constructing and interpreting this deeper meaning. The transpersonal perspective is that discovering this meaning is extremely therapeutic and accords with Victor Frankl's observations that a person can cope with anything if it is meaningful, no matter how terrible it may appear.

Modern psychology has taught us a great deal about the importance of honoring our pain, of going into it, feeling and exploring it rather than avoiding or repressing it. As we relate to our pain it reveals its story, taking us to deeper levels of our being. As we become more vulnerable to our own depths, this expanding awareness heals.

Often it is the wounds and tragedies of life that provide the impetus to make the inward journey. And in the darkest, most painful area of the psyche, there may be discovered a redeeming light, a source of solace, healing, and new growth. Psyche is Greek for soul, and to open our psyche is to open to the transforming power of the spirit. A transpersonal perspective views our spiritual ground as the source of this healing. One common example occurs in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings where people sometimes refer to their alcoholism as

the best thing ever to happen to them, for it was this that launched them on their path of renewal and spiritual seeking.

This perspective results in a more expansive view of the client in his or her growth toward a higher, more encompassing self. This shift from the local scene to the big picture allows a person to see that the outer, surface show is not the only perspective, and that there is a larger process of transformative growth occurring.

8. **The transpersonal context shapes how the person/client is viewed.** Much of traditional diagnosis and therapy tends toward seeing the client as "other." But a transpersonal approach (in agreement with the humanists) views the client, just like the therapist, as an evolving being and fellow seeker. This translates into a therapeutic stance of compassion toward the client, moving the therapist toward becoming more heart-centered in psychotherapy practice, while walking that fine line of maintaining appropriate boundaries.

## PRACTICE

When the goals of therapy are limited, the techniques must necessarily be limited. But when the goal is the expansion of consciousness and widening the entire range of human experiencing, then the techniques are limitless. Active as well as traditional techniques can be used within this defining transpersonal context.

Techniques are simply ways of accessing the self and its depths. They are not ends in themselves. Each person can enter the inner world more easily in some ways than in others. The appropriate use of techniques is the matching of client capacities and preferences to these ways.

Some of the possible techniques are: interpretation, reflection, focusing, exploring cognitions, confrontation, role-playing, guided imagery and fantasy, dreamwork, bodywork approaches (such as bioenergetics, sensory awareness, yoga, tai chi, aikido, biofeedback, and other mind/body disciplines), breathwork, expressive arts techniques, expanding expressiveness, meditative practices, journal work, voice work, and altered state work (such as hypnosis, psychedelics, holotropic breathwork, and shamanic journeying).

In general, any area of life that the therapist has assimilated and which can enhance consciousness can be used. Growth in the skillful use of techniques continues throughout a therapist's life.

Regardless of the goal of therapy, a transpersonal orientation may be used to achieve this. For example, the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts shows how the very behavioral goal of stress reduction can be worked with in a transpersonal way, using yoga and mindfulness meditation to enhance a person's awareness and promote healing of the mind/body split.

### CHALLENGES FOR TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

At present, transpersonal psychotherapy evokes rather fuzzy images about actual therapeutic work with clients. As the second section of this book will show, transpersonal psychotherapy is usually identified with specific techniques associated with a specific school or approach. Yet transpersonal psychotherapy is far wider and more inclusive than any of these particular schools. And while in practice most transpersonal therapists tend to blend either a humanistic or, less commonly, a psychoanalytic approach with a transpersonal framework, this still tends to perpetuate a separatist, exclusive way of working.

It is a contention of this book that transpersonal psychotherapy will never reach its full stature until it has synthesized into itself the most powerful insights and techniques that the behavioral, psychoanalytic, and humanistic schools have discovered. Then the transpersonal approach will begin to realize more definition, while allowing for flexibility and innovation, and to come ever closer to actualizing its potential of being both an integrative and creatively original way of working.

Transpersonal psychotherapy views all psychological processes against the backdrop of spiritual unfolding. The psyche is no longer seen as an endpoint or final term, rather it opens into a vaster spiritual reality, a spiritual existence which exceeds and contains this process of psychological development. It is this changed perspective—the figure of the psyche against the supporting ground of the spirit—that typifies a transpersonal approach.

Much of transpersonal psychotherapy during its first two decades was simply an additive mixture—adding psychology to spirituality without changing either one very much. But more recent formulations



see this as a new synthesis in which both are changed and modified as part of a new whole. The challenges for transpersonal psychology are to be rigorous in developing and testing theory, to be steeped and grounded in both western psychological theory and spiritual tradition, and to carefully attempt to put these two deep sources of wisdom together in a bold new vision. The hope is that this will result in a more psychologically-informed spirituality and a spiritually-based psychology.