

ESOTERIC PSYCHOLOGY: EXPANDING TRANSPERSONAL VISION

by Robert P. Turner, M.D.

As humanity undergoes a tumultuous period of transition from the Piscean to the Aquarian Age, we are beginning to observe unprecedented growth in all areas of human endeavor. This will certainly continue -- especially in the field of psychology, where the spiritual dimension is becoming increasingly integrated into the collective vision of psychological development.

To prepare humanity for this emergence of the sacred in psychology, much has already been accomplished. Many would agree that the analytical psychology of C. G. Jung (1969) laid the foundation for a psychology that encompasses spiritual development. His writings on the collective unconscious, the Self archetype, and alchemical symbolism, along with his focus on the individuation process, provide a basic psychological framework for understanding and working with individuals walking a spiritual path. The Italian psychiatrist, Roberto Assagioli also provided guidelines and tools for fostering spiritual growth. In his writings on psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1971, 1973), his emphasis on disidentification, subpersonalities, the higher Self, and the transpersonal and universal Will, combined with the creative use of guided imagery, gave individuals much greater access to the transformative energies arising from the soul.

In recent years, the preparatory work has become more of a group effort. Representing the third and fourth force respectively within the field of psychology, the specialty fields of humanistic psychology (arising in the late

1950s) and transpersonal psychology (arising in the late 1960s) have provided an enormous stimulus for exploration and research into human potentialities and the realms of spiritual experience.

In order to complete its transition from *Old Age* to *New Age*, the field of psychology must significantly deepen and expand its spiritual focus, thereby developing a true *psychology of the soul*. Of all the areas of study within the field of psychology, transpersonal psychology seems the most fitting context for such a development. Such a view is supported by the following definition offered by two leading spokespeople for transpersonal psychology, Roger Walsh and Francis Vaughan:

Transpersonal psychology is the psychological study of transpersonal experiences and their correlates. These correlates include the nature, varieties, causes, and effects of transpersonal experiences and development, as well as the psychologies, philosophies, disciplines, arts, cultures, lifestyles, reactions, and religions that are inspired by them, or that seek to induce, express, apply, or understand them. (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993, pp.34).

Adding to this definition, transpersonal psychologist Bryan Wittine offers the following:

Transpersonal experiences may be defined as experiences in which the personal self encounters the contents of the Archetypal and Transpersonal unconscious. Consciousness expands

beyond our personal self and world constructs to encompass wider and deeper realities. (Wittine).

If we adopt these definitions of transpersonal psychology and experiences, then a soul-centered psychology could indeed be viewed as a psychology inspired by transpersonal experiences, thus falling within the scope of transpersonal psychology.

To further the development of a soul-centered psychology within the field of transpersonal psychology, one crucial area worthy of investigation would be the field of esoteric psychology. For esoteric psychology, as presented via Alice A. Bailey (Bailey) in the extensive writings of the Tibetan Djwhal Kuhl, brings a cosmic perspective to the process of psychospiritual development. Accordingly, it challenges even the most advanced theoretical writings within the field of transpersonal psychology.

Perhaps the most widely accepted of these writings on transpersonal theory, and in particular the evolution of consciousness, are those of Ken Wilber. In his first book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (1977), and in most of his subsequent writings (1980,1986), Wilber presents and develops a spectrum model of consciousness evolution that many view as the most comprehensive and influential of its kind. Indeed, he persuasively defends his model by citing parallels to numerous other psychological and spiritual traditions that support a similar sequence of stages in consciousness evolution. However, on examining his model from the perspective of Djwhal Kuhl's teachings on the most advanced stages of consciousness, the limitations are apparent.

Wilber divides the *farther reaches of human nature* into the subtle and causal realms leading up to the realm of the *Ultimate*, which he interchangeably refers to as non-dual awareness, Absolute Subjectivity, and the ultimate Unity. He divides the subtle realm into lower and higher. As described in *The Atman Project* (Wilber, 1980), the lower subtle is *composed of the astral and psychic planes of*

consciousness, (p. 66) involving the full range of parapsychological experiences and psi phenomena.

Within the framework of esoteric psychology, this lower subtle realm would correspond to various subplanes of the astral plane. Wilber then describes the higher subtle realm as *the realm of high religious intuition and literal inspiration, ...of symbolic visions, ...of revelations of light and sound, ...and of higher presences and Archetypal Form.* (pp. 68-69) This realm would correspond to the higher mental plane (mastered by the third degree initiate), which interfaces with the buddhic plane of true intuition.

Similarly dividing the causal realm into lower and higher, Wilber describes the lower causal realm as representing *the pinnacle of God-consciousness ...revealed in a state of Consciousness known as savikalpa samadhi.* Here one experiences *the ground or essence of all archetypal ...manifestations; ...all archetypal Forms simply reduced to their source in final-God.* (p.71) This would correspond to the consciousness of the 4th degree Initiate, which is centered on the buddhic plane.

Then in the higher causal realm, *all manifest forms are so radically transcended that they no longer need even appear or arise in Consciousness. This is total and utter transcendence and release into Formless Consciousness, Boundless Radiance. There is here no self, no God, no final-God, no subjects, and no thingness, apart from or other than Consciousness as Such.* (p. 72) Here one achieves nirvikalpa samadhi, an awareness of boundless Consciousness and Formless Self-Realization beyond the archetypes. (p. 73) This would correspond to the consciousness of a 5th degree Initiate or Master of the Wisdom, centered on the atmic plane.

Finally, Wilber describes a final transformation of consciousness as one passes through nirvikalpa samadhi into sahaja samadhi or *ultimate Unity, wherein all things and events, while remaining perfectly separate*

and discrete, are only One... This is the final differentiation of Consciousness from all forms in Consciousness, whereupon Consciousness as Such is released in Perfect Transcendence. (p. 74) He concludes by saying: And this, finally is the ultimate Unity towards which all evolution, human and cosmic, drives. And, it might be said, cosmic evolution -- that holistic pattern -- is completed in and as human evolution, which itself reaches ultimate unity consciousness and so completes that absolute Gestalt towards which all manifestation moves. (p. 75) Wilber's ultimate Unity would correspond to the monadic consciousness of the 6th degree Initiate or Ascended Masters/Chohans, centered on the monadic plane.

If we now chart Wilber's subtle, causal and ultimate realms with the corresponding planes of being and Initiations of esoteric psychology (see diagram #1), it's clear that his spectrum of consciousness is limited in its scope. Recognizing that the end point of his spectrum is aligned with the end point of numerous spiritual traditions, esoteric psychology nevertheless addresses consciousness development beyond the level of *ultimate Unity*. It introduces the *divine* consciousness of the 7th degree Initiate, centered on the highest plane of the Cosmic Physical plane or the logioic plane. It also alludes to the cosmic consciousness of the 8th and 9th degree Initiates, ultimately centered on either the Cosmic Astral or Cosmic Mental planes.

SUBTLE ----> CAUSAL ----> ULTIMATE

Lower – Higher	Lower --- Higher
Astral/Higher Mental	Buddhic Atmic Monadic
	Logoic
3rd	4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th

Diagram 1

To develop a clearer picture of the limitations inherent in Wilber's spectrum of consciousness, let me focus on esoteric psychology's fundamental triplicity at the

heart of consciousness evolution -- that of Personality / Soul / Monad. First of all, this tripartite framework is found in many psychological traditions, some of which are listed in diagram #2.

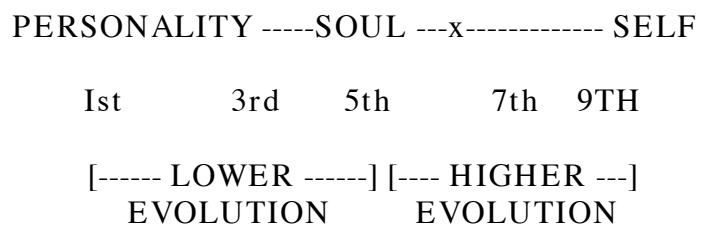
Esoteric:	PERSONALITY	SOUL	MONAD
Psycho-synthesis:	Personal Self	Transpersonal Self	Universal Self
Trans-Personal:	Lower Self	Higher Self	Universal Self
Aurobindo:	Mind	Overmind	Supermind
Turner:	EGO	SOUL	SELF

Diagram 2

If we then superimpose upon this triad a spectrum of consciousness unfoldment that is in alignment with the esoteric teachings of Djwhal Kuhl (DK), two fundamental phases of psychospiritual development emerge:

- (1) from PERSONALITY/EGO ----> SOUL
- (2) from SOUL ----> MONAD/SELF.

These two phases would roughly correspond to what DK refers to as the Lower Evolution and the Higher Evolution respectively. The corresponding Initiations would then be as follows:



On this spectrum, the culmination of Wilber's consciousness evolution falls at the point of the 6th Initiation (marked by the x). Interestingly, this marks only the *doorway* into the Higher Evolution; both the 5th and 6th Initiations are regarded by the Lodge on Sirius as *initiations of the threshold* -- that is, the higher correspondence to the 1st and 2nd initiations on the Way of the Lower Evolution.

Only in the esoteric teachings is the Way of the Higher Evolution presented in its entirety. DK's writings introduce the full scope of that higher octave of psychospiritual development from the Soul to the Monad/Self, which leads off the Cosmic Physical plane altogether and brings about contact with the supreme center to which all the seven Paths of the Higher Evolution eventually lead -- *the Central Spiritual Sun*.

Recognizing that the 5th Initiation represents perfection from the perspective of human existence and that the 6th Initiation marks the point of liberation from any hold by the Law of Karma, it's understandable that Wilber's spectrum -- and teachings from other spiritual traditions -- culminate as they do on the monadic plane. In effect, in reaching the monadic consciousness of a 6th degree Initiate, an individual has mastered all aspects of earthly existence and has thus completed strictly human evolution.

However, if we take into account the cosmic perspective of the esoteric teachings, then Wilber's contentions that *Absolute Subjectivity* and *non-dual awareness* mark the culmination of all evolution represent a significant distortion of that higher level of psychospiritual development postulated in the esoteric teachings. As DK points out in *The Rays and the Initiations*, *all happenings on our planet [i.e. the five initiations of strictly human evolution] are in truth simply preparatory to other much greater events and opportunities (i.e. the Way of the Higher Evolution) (p. 720) ...that usually lead ...(with one exception) away from all that [an individual] has hitherto known (p. 396).*

The true nature of the solar and cosmic consciousness experienced in the final three initiations remains understandably incomprehensible from the perspective of human consciousness. However there are some hints to be gleaned from DK's writings about certain aspects of experience at these highest levels of consciousness. First of all, a profound reorientation occurs as one shifts from planetary to solar to universal consciousness

and from the group-conscious focus on the One Soul to the God-conscious focus on the One Self.

Secondly, a profound relocation occurs as one shifts from the Spiritual Hierarchy or Kingdom of God within our solar system to the Great White Lodge on Sirius. As DK writes, *The Master, as He makes His decision [i.e. the 6th initiation of Decision] and chooses one of the seven Paths, ...faces a solar or a cosmic future of which he knows relatively little...* (Bailey, 1960, p.724). Indeed, the 7th degree Initiate is liberated *from the hold of the phenomenal life of the seven planes of our planetary Life [i.e. the Cosmic Physical Plane]*, moving off of the Cosmic Physical Plane altogether en route to either the Cosmic Astral Plane (the source of Cosmic Love) or the Cosmic Mental Plane (Bailey, 1960, p. 686).

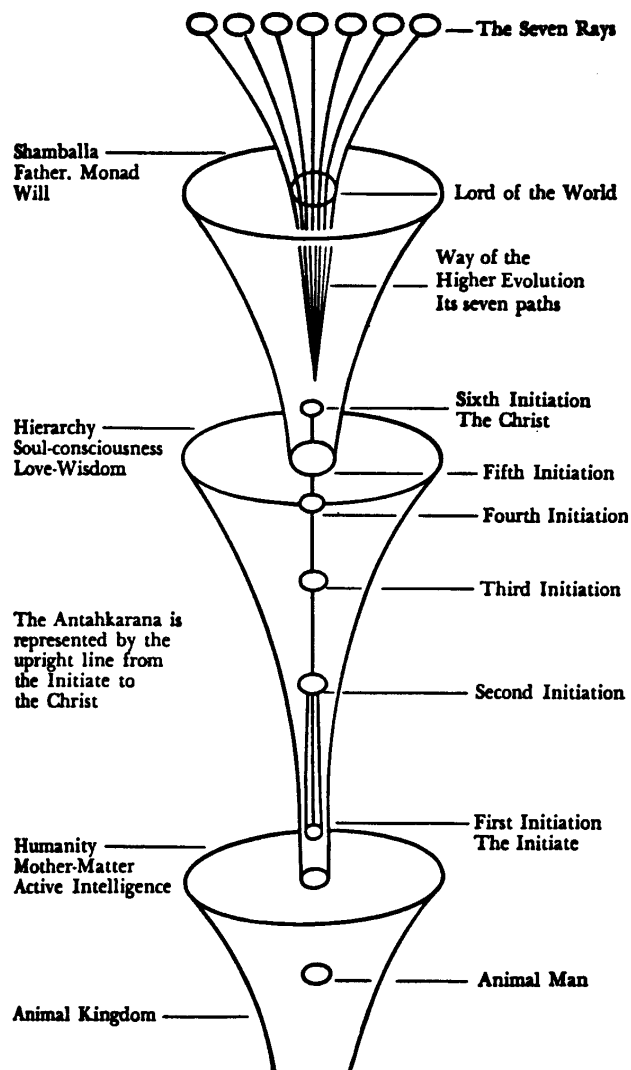
Thirdly, one develops qualities of the Ist aspect of Will. As DK writes in *The Rays and the Initiations*, *the seventh, eighth and ninth initiations are 'occultly' inspired by the first divine aspect, that of the Will (p. 535). On the Way of the Higher Evolution, [the human being must use] the dynamic and the potency of Will... (p. 718). He develops an occult perception ...that permits him to penetrate increasingly and to cooperate understandably in the purpose of the Lord of the World (p. 118). The eighth and ninth initiations ...relate to the initiations of those methods and techniques whereby the 'seed of will,' which will later flower into the third solar system, can be nurtured and fostered and its growth promoted (p. 660).*

Finally, there is a progression of revelations involving the significance of creation (6th Initiation), of quality (7th Initiation), of purpose (8th Initiation), and ultimately of Being and existence itself (9th Initiation). (Bailey, 1960, pp. 726-728.) So, full Self-Realization and the attainment of true Cosmic Consciousness does not occur until one takes the final three Initiations and reaches either the Cosmic Astral or Cosmic Mental Plane. As DK concludes: *Only, therefore, at the ninth initiation is the human being a full*

and true expression of divinity; he then realizes that in him all the divine aspects meet. Through them he is consciously, creatively and constructively in rapport with the consciousness of the One in Whom we live and move and have our being (Bailey, 1960, p. 535).

Worthy of note here is DK's diagram in *The Rays and the Initiations* (p. 525) of the evolution of consciousness (see diagram #3). The series of upward-opening cones emphasize the expansion of awareness that occurs as one progresses on the Path. Also the placement of

the base of the highest cone (representing the second door of initiation leading into the Way of the Higher Evolution) at the level of the fully-expanded middle cone (representing the culmination of the Way of the Lower Evolution) nicely highlights how the successful completion of the Lower Evolution -- representing perfection from the human perspective -- is merely the preparation for stepping onto the Way of the Higher Evolution.

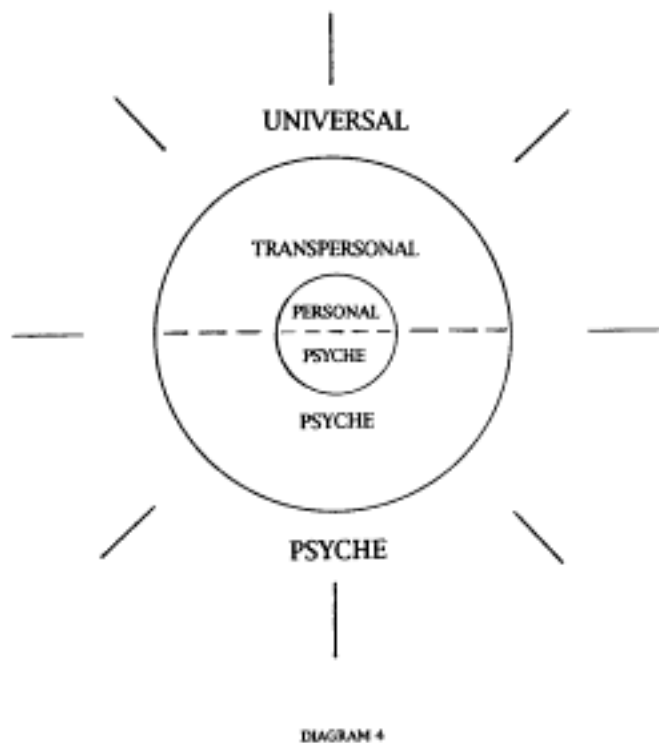


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DIAGRAM 3

This incorporation of a cosmic perspective to fully clarify that profound phase of psychospiritual development from the Soul --> Monad/Self is important for several reasons. First of all, it provides a humbling perspective on our earthly existence, serving to decentralize our all-too-human ego world view. Secondly, it promotes what Wilber calls *vision logic*, with which we begin to see the vastness of cosmic realities. Thirdly, by extending the *end point* of consciousness evolution to cosmic realms, it de-emphasizes any future-oriented longing for personal liberation and promotes the never-ending opportunity for service in the present. And finally, it links the individual to the cosmos, providing a context within which to fulfill his or her unique, destined role not only within the planetary Whole but within the cosmic Whole as well.

To help acknowledge the full scope of divine potential that the esoteric teachings maintain is awaiting all of humanity, I would also propose a diagram of the Psyche (see diagram #4).



The innermost circle represents the Personal Psyche, within which the locus of consciousness is the Ego. The lower half of the circle would correspond to the personal unconscious, which Freud and traditional psychiatry/psychology have explored and described in considerable detail. The upper half, corresponding to the personal conscious, was best elucidated within the field of Humanistic Psychology, with its focus on creative, self actualizing individuals. Within this innermost circle occurs the full scope of Personality life experienced in both the conscious and unconscious realms. The overall study of this Personal Psyche would be traditional psychology, including Ego Psychology, Self Psychology and Humanistic Psychology.

The next circle represents the Transpersonal Psyche, or Collective Psyche, within which the locus of consciousness would be the Higher Self or the Soul. The lower half of this circle would correspond to Jung's collective unconscious, and the upper half to the collective conscious and/or Assagioli's superconscious. This middle circle is the realm of all experiences that move beyond the personal or transcend personal reality. The overall study of the Transpersonal Psyche and its link to the Personal Psyche would be Transpersonal Psychology.

Finally, the outermost, unbounded circle represents the Universal Psyche, within which the locus of consciousness would be the Universal Self or SELF. This represents the realm of Spirit and/or Universal Intelligence, which is often viewed as the foundation or ground of all Being, as well as the fundamental Reality of all existence. It is in the Universal Psyche that the Way of the Higher Evolution unfolds, and the many dimensions of the Self -- including and beyond the Absolute Subjectivity and ultimate Unity described by Wilber -- are actualized. The study of the Universal

Psyche, and its link to the Transpersonal and Personal Psyches, would be Esoteric Psychology.

Significantly, this diagram provides a context for each of the three major loci of consciousness (i.e. the Ego, Soul, and Self) to operate and ultimately achieve full realization. In addition, it highlights two significant interfaces – that between the Personal and Transpersonal Psyches, and that between the Transpersonal and Universal Psyches. The former represents the existential and perinatal realms of human existence, documented in the fields of existential and perinatal psychology respectively. The latter interface represents a realm of psychological experience that has yet to be fully developed and recognized. It is from this interface that many psychospiritual crises or spiritual emergencies arise (Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990), along with many of the diseases and problems of disciples and mystics documented in *Esoteric Psychology, Volume II* (Bailey, 1942). In addition to a growing interest in this interface within the field of transpersonal psychology, Robert Gerard's *Integral Psychology* (Gerard, 1988a, 1988b, 1990) stands out as a concerted effort to elucidate this realm and thereby link the fields of esoteric and transpersonal psychology.

It is precisely at this interface between the Transpersonal and Universal Psyches that the transformative potential of esoteric psychology might well give rise to a whole new specialty field or fifth force perhaps to be called Integral Psychology or Spiritual Psychology -- that would integrate into clinical practice the extensive and profound psychological teachings contained within the Ageless Wisdom. Only in this way will the overall field of psychology be able to meet the ever increasing psychological and spiritual needs of the collective at this crucial turning point in humanity's evolution.

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