

História da ITA – International Transpersonal Association

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The Four Forces in Psychology

In the middle of the twentieth century, American psychology was dominated by two major schools — behaviorism and Freudian psychology. Increasing dissatisfaction with these two orientations as adequate models of the human psyche led to the development of humanistic psychology. The main spokesman and most articulate representative of this conceptual revolution was Abraham Maslow. He offered an incisive critique of the limitations of behaviorism and psycho-analysis, or the First and Second Force in psychology as he called them, and formulated the principles of a new psychology.

The primary interest of the humanistic school, the Third Force in psychology, was in human subjects, and it honored consciousness and introspection, together with an objective approach to psychological research. This contrasted sharply with the behaviorist emphasis on observable behavior and animal experiments, primarily in rats and pigeons. While Freudian psychoanalysis drew conclusions about the psyche from the study of psychopathology and tended to reduce it to base instincts, humanistic psychology focused on healthy populations, human growth and potential, and higher functions of the psyche. It also emphasized that psychology had to be sensitive to practical human needs and serve important interests and objectives of human society.

Within a few years after Abraham Maslow and Anthony Sutich launched the Association of Humanistic Psychology (AHP), the new movement became unusually popular. It provided a broad umbrella for the development of a rich spectrum of effective therapeutic approaches, replacing the exclusively verbal techniques of traditional psychotherapy with emphasis on direct expression of emotions and body work.

Transpersonal Psychology

In spite of the popularity of humanistic psychology, its founders Maslow and Sutich themselves grew dissatisfied with the school they had created. They became increasingly aware that they had left out an extremely important element — the

spiritual dimension of the human psyche. The renaissance of interest in various mystical traditions, meditation, ancient and aboriginal wisdom, and oriental philosophies, as well as the widespread psychedelic experimentation during the stormy Sixties made it absolutely clear that a comprehensive and cross-culturally valid psychology had to include observations from such areas as mystical states; cosmic consciousness; psychedelic experiences; trance phenomena; creativity; and religious, artistic, and scientific inspiration.

In 1967, a small working group, including Abraham Maslow, Anthony Sutich, James Fadiman, Stanislav Grof, Miles Vich, and Sonya Margulies repeatedly met in Menlo Park, California, with the purpose of formulating the principles of a new psychology, one that would honor the entire spectrum of human experience, including various non-ordinary states of consciousness. During these discussions, Maslow and Sutich accepted Grof's suggestion and named the new discipline "transpersonal psychology," replacing their own original name "transhumanistic." Soon afterwards, they launched the Association of Transpersonal Psychology (ATP) and the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology.

The newly born transpersonal psychology, the Fourth Force in Maslow's terminology, although comprehensive and well substantiated in and of itself, represented such a radical departure from academic thinking in professional circles that it could not be reconciled with either traditional psychology and psychiatry or with the monistic materialism and the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm of Western science. As a result, it was extremely vulnerable to accusations of being "irrational", "unscientific", and even "flakey", particularly by scientists who were not aware of the vast body of observations and material on which the new movement was based.

This situation has changed very dramatically during the first two decades of the existence of transpersonal psychology. As a result of revolutionary new concepts and discoveries in various scientific disciplines, the materialistic philosophy of traditional Western science, its basic assumptions, and its Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm were increasingly seriously challenged. Among these challenges were the findings and philosophical implications of quantum-relativistic physics as pointed out by Fritjof Capra, Fred Alan Wolf, David Peat, and many others; David Bohm's theory of holomovement, Karl Pribram's holographic model of the brain, Gregory Bateson's brilliant synthesis of cybernetics, information and systems theories, logic, psychology, and other disciplines, Rupert Sheldrake's work on morphogenetic fields, Prigogine's studies of dissipative structures and order by fluctuation, the anthropic principle in astrophysics, and many others.

It has been very exciting to see that all these new developments, while irreconcilable with the seventeenth century mechanistic thinking still dominating most of modern science, are compatible with transpersonal psychology. It is now possible to imagine that transpersonal psychology will, in the near future, become an integral part of a new emerging paradigm, offering a synthesis of spirituality and the scientific world-view.

The International Transpersonal Association (ITA)

Since its inception in the late 1960's, the Association of Transpersonal Psychology (ATP) has held regular conferences in California. As the interest in the new movement was growing and extending beyond the San Francisco Bay Area and outside the United States, occasional international transpersonal meetings were organized in various parts of the world. The first two took place in Bifrost, Iceland, the third in Inari, Finland, and the fourth in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

By the time of the Brazilian meeting, these conferences were so popular and well attended that it was decided to create a special institution, which would guarantee continuation of these events in the future, the International Transpersonal Association (ITA). The ITA was founded by Stanislav Grof, jointly with Michael Murphy and Richard Price, the co-founders of the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, CA, the first human potential center. Stan became ITA's first president and remained in this function for many years, organizing with his wife Christina a number of its conferences in different parts of the world.

In comparison with the Association of Transpersonal Psychology (ATP), which was an American (or initialleven Californian) institution and was limited to psychology, the ITA was explicitly international and interdisciplinary. By this time, the transpersonal orientation had appeared in many branches of science and other areas of human endeavor. In the following years, the ITA held fifteen international conferences in different parts of the world. The programs of these conferences reflected the interdisciplinary nature of the ITA. They thus featured not only prominent psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychotherapists, but also physicists, biologists, physicians anthropologists, mythologists, philosophers, mathematicians, artists, spiritual teachers, educators, politicians, economists, and many others.

A Brief Survey of the Past International Transpersonal Conferences:

The first two of the fifteen international transpersonal meetings were held in Bifrost, Iceland, and the subsequent ones in Inari, Finland; Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Boston, MA,

USA; Melbourne, Australia; Bombay, India; Davos, Switzerland; Kyoto, Japan; Santa Rosa, CA., USA, Eugene, OR, USA, Atlanta, USA, Prague, Czechoslovakia, Killarney, Ireland,, Santa Clara, USA, and Manaus, Brazil. Among the presenters have been many outstanding representatives of the scientific, cultural, and political life.

Psychology: Frances Vaughan, Roger Walsh, Ram Dass, June Singer, John Perry, James Fadiman, Arthur Hastings, R.D.Laing, Virginia Satir, Dora Kalff, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Marie-Louise von Franz, Jean Shinoda Bolen, Claudio Naranjo, Ken Pelletier, Ralph Metzner, Angeles Arrien, Christopher Bache, Stanislav Grof, Christina Grof, Charles Tart, Steven Larsen, Robin Larsen, Kenneth Ring, Arthur Hastings, Judith Cornell, Richard Tarnas, Jean Houston, Arnold Mindell, Amy Mindell, Roger Woolger, Gilda Moura, Raymond Moody, John Bradshaw, Pierre Weil, Marion Woodman, Massimo Rosselli, Paulo Rzezinski, Linda Leonard, Jane Middelton – Moz, Rokelle Lerner, Charles Whitfield, John Mack, Robert Jay Lifton, Robert McDermott, Andrew Weil, Seymour Boorstein, Dean Shapiro, Hércules Jaci, Richard Yensen, Donna Dryer, Rick Strassman, Phillippe Bandeira de Melo, Michael Grosso, Don Juan Nuñez del Prado, Roberto Baruzzi, and others.

Other Sciences: David Bohm, Karl Pribram, Fritjof Capra, Rupert Sheldrake, Fred Alan Wolf, Willis Harman, Albert Hofmann, Orlando Villas-Boas, Stanley Krippner, Vasily Nalimov, Ilya Prigogine, Lee Sannella, Elmer and Alyce Green, Michael Harner, Sandra Harner, Peter Russell, Richard Katz, Russell Targ, Arthur Young, Jean Achterberg, Duane Elgin, Ivan Havel, Zdenek Neubauer, Carl Simonton, Frederic Leboyer, Peter Schwartz, Brian McCusker, Terence McKenna, Brian Swimme, Amit Goswami, Igor Charkovsky, Luiz Augusto de Queiroz, Michel Odent, Rachel Naomi Remen, and others.

Spiritual and Cultural Life: Mother Teresa, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Swami Muktananda, Brother David Steindl-Rast, Pir Vilayat Khan, Sheikh Muzaffer and the Halveti-Jerahi dervishes, Jon Voight, Sogyal Rinpoche, Ram Dass, Chungliang Al Huang, Matthew Fox, Jack Kornfield, Nishitani Roshi, Gopi Krishna, Rusty Schweickart, Huston Smith, Cecil Williams, Robert Bly, Zalman Schachter, Robert Schwartz, Olotunji Babatunde, Shlomo Carlebach, Burnum Burnum, Sulak Sivaraksa, Alarmel Vali, Paul Horn, Mickey Hart, Steven Halpern, David Darling, Randall Bramblett, Michael Vetter, Gabrielle Roth, Nina Wise, Wes Nisker, Jiri Stivín, Patricia Ellsberg, Alex Grey, Silvia Nakkach, Lorin Hollander, Jai Uttal, Geoffrey Gordon, Russell Walder, Gloria Steinem, Isabel Allende, Jill Purce, Brooke Medicine Eagle, Georgia Kelly, Thomas Banyacya, Don Manuel Q'espí, Andrew Harvey, Lauren Artress, Alex Polari de Alverga, Raizes Caboclas Orchestra, Mar Azul Capoeira group, and others.

Politics: Karan Singh, Václav Havel, Jerry Brown, John Vasconcellos, Jim Garrison.