Increasing interest in transpersonal psychology has led to innovative programs in higher education which are defined as transpersonal. Transpersonal education is concerned primarily with the study and development of consciousness, particularly those states commonly called higher states of consciousness and with the spiritual quest as an essential aspect of human life. This is of course nothing new. It has been going on for thousands of years, yet today it needs to be formulated in new ways which are uniquely appropriate to this particular time in history.

Transpersonal education, like science, is concerned with knowledge and discovery of truth. It does not, however, limit the search for truth to objectively verifiable measurement, prediction and control. It is also addressed to questions of value, meaning and purpose, which have traditionally been the province of religion or philosophy. Since human consciousness cannot be studied apart from the experiencing person, subjective empiricism is the predominant mode of investigation.

Unlike religious education, transpersonal education is not concerned with teaching a particular doctrine or inculcating a particular belief system. It focuses, rather, on the process of discovery and transcendence of self which results from spiritual practice, affirming subjective experience as valid and even essential for determining the nature of reality and the relative validity of revealed truth. Making the distinction between teaching spiritual doctrine and spiritual practice is important if we are not to slip into the trap of defining the way rather than discovering it.
Emphasis on the development of cognitive skills in our institutions of higher learning has relegated spiritual development to the province of religious education, which is accorded little importance in our secular society. It is evident that we should no longer segregate cognitive and affective learning, nor can we overlook the fact that individuals are continually seeking to integrate their lives in accordance with their own inner truth rather than authoritarian doctrines of prescribed truth. The individual who, a decade ago, was facing a personal identity crisis concerning his place in a world whose traditional values were disintegrating, is now barraged by innumerable teachers, gurus, and religious systems claiming to be the only way, and promising a revised version of salvation called enlightenment. Increased unwillingness to accept religious teaching on faith has not diminished the search for truth, meaning and a place in this expanding universe. Seldom has mankind been so bereft of believable external authority, and so much in need of finding new myths to provide an image of the universe which accords with current knowledge. According to Campbell (1972) it is through mythology that the individual may recognize that he participates in the mystery of the universe, and that its mystery is the mystery of his own deep being as well. It is by turning inward, therefore, that individuals are now seeking to feel at home in the universe rather than alienated in the world.

Humanistic psychology is helpful in learning to trust one's experience on the emotional level. Learning to distinguish what we really feel as opposed to what we think we ought to feel can sometimes be surprisingly difficult. Likewise, learning to trust one's intuition, rather than external authority, as the deepest source of inner wisdom can be an arduous task. The central question in transpersonal education is as old as self-consciousness-namely, what is true? The answer is not given. Each person is directed to search within himself for his own answer. Each is responsible for choosing his own discipline, but the assumption is that both student and teacher are on a path. The analogy of truth as a mountain which is perceived from different angles and having different shapes is useful in considering the question of paths. Some paths are well-travelled, well-worn systems that guide the seeker up the mountain along the way prepared by teachers. Today we are no longer limited to choosing between the collective way of our own heritage and the solitary way of individuation. We have a broad range of choices, and the collective wisdom of both East and West is readily available to us in the form of books, teachers, schools and systems designed to lead to an awakening of higher consciousness, and a clear perception of truth,
uncluttered by conditioning, free from egoistic distortion. Somehow, in his unawakened state, the individual makes a choice to follow one of many paths purported to be the way of truth.

In a discussion of the goals and implications of humanistic education, Maslow (1971) suggested that education should help children look within themselves, and from this self-knowledge derive a set of values. These are the values which are affirmed in transpersonal education. Maslow also made a distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic education. Extrinsic learning is rewarded by grades, degrees, recognition and approval; intrinsic learning is lifelong and is concerned with the discovery of identity and the discovery of vocation. It needs no secondary reinforcement. It is self-validating. Maslow goes on to discuss the concept of self which is implicit in a philosophy of education which affirms the importance of intrinsic teaming. In contrast to the existential emptiness experienced by those philosophers who conceive of man as entirely his own project and the product of an absurd free will, there is an affirmation of essence, an intrinsic, essential nature or higher self that may be evoked, or uncovered. However, since extrinsic learning can obstruct the deepest impulses from within, it becomes necessary to create the space in which a person can attend to them, learning to listen to his inner impulses. The assumption that these impulses toward realization and transcendence can be uncovered is inherent in a transpersonal perspective. The experiential emptiness which Maslow terms the absence of impulse voices from within, need not be conceptualized as a dreadful endpoint, but rather as the matrix of creativity, as the space in which those impulses may be experienced. The assumption is that we can, and indeed must, trust our biological nature in order to allow the evolution of our highest potentials. The passive quality associated with allowing implies that there is within us a source of wisdom which transcends the conscious ego. This inner source may be tapped through intuition or what Maslow called being-cognition. Being-cognition is characterized by unitive, self-validating perception in which the ego as well as time and space are transcended. Attitudes associated with being-cognition are humility, receptivity, passivity, disinterest and acceptance.

The focus on intrinsic learning is not meant to be exclusive. On the contrary, in the context of expedient transpersonal teaching, everything may be included when appropriate for the student. However, the final teaching, wherein all things are seen as one Reality, remains central to the transpersonal approach. Expedient teaching continues to be necessary for
those who are not ready to hear the final teaching, and at the same time it lays the foundation for approaching the highest truth (Chang, 1970).

Although each observer presumably is capable of perceiving only those aspects of reality to which he is receptive, the relative importance of distinguishing self-transcendence from self-deception remains constant. The expansion of consciousness is inevitably attended by the dangers of getting trapped in a delusional system which leads away from rather than towards the truth of a cosmology which affirms and validates all human experience. Calling attention to man’s intuitive capacity for discernment of truth, transpersonal education challenges the mind to revise outmoded conceptual structures, discarding those belief systems, be they rational or revealed, which do not account for the full range of human potential.

The perennial search for truth is frequently obscured by our preoccupation with factual knowledge and technical skill. This applies as much to parapsychology as to any other field of scientific inquiry. Not that we should neglect the practical aspects of training in any area, but one of the objectives of transpersonal education is to keep every effort in perspective. We know how to create conditions which facilitate learning and how to train minds, but the question of what is really worth learning remains elusive. One of the problems inherent in the implementation of transpersonal education is to avoid formulating a new package which can be labeled transpersonal and be delivered as neatly as any other theory which claims to convey knowledge, rather than leaving the process open.

Teaching about transpersonal psychology may serve as a means of introducing transpersonal concepts in a form which is readily acceptable. It should be clearly distinguished, however, from the actual implementation of transpersonal education, a process that seeks to balance knowledge about a subject with direct intuitive knowing of particular states of being. For example, reading a discourse on the difficulties of quieting the mind does not convey the same sense of knowing that is conveyed by actually wrestling with one’s own undisciplined mind in an effort to concentrate. It could therefore be misleading to designate courses in parapsychology or transpersonal research as transpersonal education per se, although the content might be accurately defined as transpersonal psychology, and such courses could well form a part of a program in transpersonal education. Courses in spiritual practice, such as meditation, may also be designated as transpersonal, but the criteria for defining them as transpersonal education must include the attitude of the teacher, since a
dogmatic attitude on the part of the teacher would be incompati-
ble with the objectives of transpersonal education.

Like humanistic education, transpersonal education affirms
the authenticity of subjective experience and values self-ac-
tualization. It goes a step further, however, in affirming the
human potential for self-transcendence. In his later work,
published posthumously, Maslow (1971) makes a distinction
between transcendent and non-transcendent self-actualizers.
This distinction is useful, as those whose fulfillment is ap-
parently complete in a non-transcending state sometimes
regard the spiritual quest as nothing more than a neurotic
illusion. In affirming the central importance of man's spiritu-
tual quest, transpersonal education remains rooted in the
humanistic tradition, but brings another evolutionary pos-
sibility into focus. The possibility of transcending separateness
as the inevitable human condition, of finding a way to move
from dependence through independence to interdependence
with conscious acknowledgement of our essential unity and
connectedness with all life energy, is regarded as an essential
part of education for human survival and fulfillment. In dis-
cussing education for transcendence, Murphy (1969) called
attention to the expansion of personal boundaries and the
greater sense of meaning, freedom, vitality and joy associated
with the experience of transcendence.

Paradoxically, the first step in this process is a deliberate
shifting of attention from external to internal reality. In cul-
tivating a sense of harmony and unity within, the individual
may be guided through his own intrapsychic processes to the
discovery of meaning inherent in his own being, rather than
being subjected to one more form of external authority for the
attainment of predetermined goals.

The intrapersonal focus of transpersonal education also
differentiates it from humanistic education which emphasizes
interpersonal communication and interaction. The deliberate
withdrawal of attention from the external world for the pur-
pose of gaining self-knowledge or self-transcendence is not an
end in itself, but rather a step along the way of transpersonal
realization. Without self-awareness knowledge of facts may be
of little value. It is, after all, the personal affirmation of trans-
personal experience that manifests its living reality in the
world. In exploring the nature of this reality transpersonal
education seeks to affirm the deepest insights of human
experience, be they scientific or religious, rational or intuitive.

Perhaps the most important distinction between transpersonal
education and other approaches is the personal commitment
experience of surrender
to Self-discovery. The process invariably involves the subjective experience of surrender to something greater than oneself. This experience typically emerges out of the regular practice of meditation. Self, with a capital S, refers to what Assagioli (1965) terms the higher self, and what Jung has posited as the center of psychic awareness which transcends ego consciousness and includes those aspects of the psyche which are ordinarily unconscious. Man is by no means equated with his consciousness. Each individual consciousness is based upon an indefinitely extended unconscious psyche (Jung, 1938). By descending through the depths of his own psyche a person may also experience the deepest layer of transpersonal consciousness, from which every particularized ego consciousness is derived (Neumann, 1954). Campbell (1949) has pointed out that willed introversion is a classic device of creative genius, and Jung (1958) asserts that in learning to experience his own inner being the individual may come to understand the meaning of his life. The paradoxical assumption is that self-knowledge leads to self-transcendence, and the way involves recognition that truth, meaning and values which are commonly sought in the outside world are inherent in each of us and may be discovered within.

A personal commitment to this approach does require faith in the process. Self-knowledge is considered a way to self-transcendence as well as self-mastery. Closing the gap between inner and outer reality, establishing the link between conscious and unconscious processes, becoming whole in the sense that every aspect of being is integrated and harmonized—these are some of the emerging guidelines of transpersonal education.

Chogyam Trungpa (1970) reminds us that teaching is also a way of developing oneself. The process is defined as one of continual rapport in which the students develop their own ability. All the teacher can do is create the situation in which learning takes place. The focus of transpersonal education is not on what is given by the teacher, but on what is discovered within oneself.

The aim of transpersonal education is not to substitute a new form of education for an existing form, but rather to expand our existing forms to include the development of those functions which have been neglected in order to bring about a balance between intellectual and intuitive, conscious and unconscious, verbal and spatial, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual processes. According to Harding (1963) the individual who increases awareness of the hidden realms of the psyche enters into a new relationship to the dynamic forces within
himself, and the personal "I" becomes relatively insignificant. Increased insight and understanding of life's meaning and purpose releases him from unconscious drives, and it is this transformation of consciousness which is now essential to the survival of mankind, whose spiritual development lags so far behind his technical skill.

In summary, the objective of transpersonal education is the realization and maintenance of higher states of consciousness in which intrapersonal and interpersonal actualization is subsumed, not bypassed. The individual who chooses transpersonal education is setting out on a path of discovery. The path is inevitably one of many leading to the source of wisdom within, but in making a commitment to transpersonal education a person makes a commitment to truth—the deepest, most inclusive truth he is capable of knowing, recognizing both his personal limitations and his transpersonal possibilities.

REFERENCES


