First, to capture the flavor of the book, I offer a quick description from the voice of the author:

The Awakening of Intelligence explores images of the unconscious realms of mind as if it was a Science-Fiction landscape or Shiva’s heaven or Sufi’s mundus imaginalis weaving a symbolic tapestry better known as the Dance of Shiva, the archaic and primordial Source renowned by mystics and visionaries of all the ages.

The doorway final scope of this endeavor is to bring together ancient religious systems, Eastern traditions, in connection with the newest symbols and science of transpersonal psychology—a bridge with the Sacred lies in the famous keyword Tat Tvam Asi: You are It. The Awakening of Intelligence restores the knowledge of the ultimate spiritual dimensions to humanity. –Diego Pignatelli, from a preview introduction to Awakening of Intelligence on the author’s blogsite. (http://transpersonal-discovery.blogspot.com/2007/11/diego.pignatelli-is-gifted-visionary.html). Retrieved 22 June 2008.

This creative work by Diego Pignatelli is an integrative approach to raising consciousness of the public as well as psychology thinkers. The book presents several humanistic and transpersonal theories, and ties them in with various ancient Eastern philosophies. The book attempts to demonstrate how current psychology is at a fulcrum of evolution out of the behavioral and analytical forces of psychology and into a new paradigm which includes the transhumanistic movement.

Pignatelli, who writes as though he is a devotee of Krishnamurti, also draws on Zen/Buddhist, Taoist, and Hindu/Upanishadic, and Tantric worldviews. Simultaneously, the author presents contributions of various humanistic and transpersonal powerhouses such as Alan Watts, Abraham Maslow, Ken Wilber, Stanislav Grof, Carl Jung, and other less known theorists. The result is an eclectic presentation that attempts to justify the need to move more actively into a paradigm of human science, or Maslow’s “psychology of being,” that acknowledges the spiritual experience as a part of an expanded reality, thus justifying the need for more transpersonal study.

Ancient Eastern sciences and philosophies are used throughout the work in support of a metaphysical and metapsychical urgency. Pignatelli suggests that, in the face of cosmic involution, a need for a return to mysticism is justified by
modernity’s rejection of spirituality in favor of the mundane. Transpersonal psychology is thus framed as a modern mysticism and psychology of the sacred, in that it is rooted in the humanistic movement, and can relate to ancient world views such as Hinduism, Sufism, and Buddhism. The author reinforces this throughout the book by weaving various Eastern notions together with Ken Wilber’s Integral psychology and psycho-spiritual development model, Stanislav Grof’s peri-natal psychology, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Jungian psychology, and various works on quantum physics. The end result suggests a validation of the transpersonal as a necessary science.

The work does not present any original science but rather is a compilation of research and historical information that resists being ignored by “hard sciences.” It has a technical vocabulary, thus being better understood by psychology students. However, to those schooled in transpersonal, it will not hold much new information. Moreover, it can serve as a motivational tool for encouraging critical thinking about integrative and transpersonal science for today’s psychology students.

Pignatelli is pushing metaphysical enthusiasm in his book, which he uses to support the revitalization of mysticism. This does support the field of transpersonal psychology. In addition, the book’s poetic form is one of its greatest strengths, enriching it with a certain charm.

Ironically, the author’s emphasis on demonstrating a creative way to link spiritual modalities in a testimony for their metaphysical validity is a selling point as well as a target for critics. This is because it appears to downplay the more scientific parts of the book, as well as the academic rigor that transpersonal scientists have been working relentlessly to demonstrate to the greater community of psychologists, scientists, and clinicians.

Editor’s Note

At the time of publication this book was listed in Italian on the web site www.webster.it.

The Author

Diego Pignatelli describes himself as an intuitive visionary and writer with a theoretical understanding of spiritual psychologies, transpersonal psychology, and Eastern mysticism as well as “tantra,” Vedanta and Shaivaism.

The Reviewer

Natale Teodoro, MACP, is a graduate of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, where he received his degree in Counseling Psychology.