

Perspectives and vectors in transpersonal development

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Different perspectives on the spiritual and transpersonal are discussed in relation to historical developments in human thought that occurred during the 'axial period' (c. 800–200 BCE). Key aspects of post-axial ontology and soteriology are identified, and 'ascending' and 'descending' currents in post-axial soteriology are compared. It is argued that previous use of the term 'descending current' has conflated two distinct approaches: (1) the depth psychological perspective, and (2) the relational-participatory perspective. I suggest that the term 'descending' more appropriately applies to the depth psychological perspective while the relational-participatory perspective may be more meaningfully characterised as an 'extending' approach. In consequence, three distinct 'vectors' of transpersonal development may be distinguished: ascending, descending, and extending. The recognition of these vectors in various transpersonal theories is examined, together with the degree to which these theories promote a truly all-vector (AV) integral soteriology (practice).

Perspectives on spirituality and the transpersonal

The question of how to understand and define the transpersonal and spiritual is one that continues to occupy transpersonal psychologists (Daniels, 2005; Fontana, 2003). Currently there is no universally accepted position within the field. Rather, four, more or less distinct, perspectives may be identified (cf. Lancaster, 2004).

1. **The religious perspective.** This typically understands the transpersonal and spiritual in terms of people's relationship to a divine reality that transcends mundane existence (e.g., God, Brahman, Supreme Being, Sachchidananda, Dharma, Tao, Great Spirit).
2. **The psychological perspective.** This attempts to understand transpersonal, religious and spiritual behaviour and experience in terms of psychological

processes. This perspective encompasses, for example, social psychological, cognitive, psychodynamic, and neurotheological approaches.

3. **The humanistic / existential perspective.** This understands spirituality as a fundamental aspect of human experience in which we develop more profound and authentic understandings and relationships with the self and other people.
4. **The ecological perspective.** This focuses on our 'spiritual' connection to, and ethical responsibility towards, the natural world (life, other species, Gaia, cosmos).

One way of considering these different perspectives is to relate them to important historical developments in human thinking about the self and the spiritual. Various writers have proposed that a fundamental change in human consciousness occurred in the period between c. 800 BCE and c. 200 BCE (e.g., Armstrong, 2006; Hick, 1989; Jaspers, 1949/1977; Jaynes, 1993; see also Daniels, 2005). Because this period involved a profound *turning point* (or revolution) in our understanding of ourselves and our relationship with nature and the supernatural, it has been called the *axial* period (after Jaspers, 1949/1977). The axial period thus represents a watershed separating what may be termed the *pre-axial* period (before c. 900 BCE) and the *post-axial* period (approximately corresponding to the Common Era). Because post-axial understanding reflects insights that first appeared in the axial period, some writers (e.g., Armstrong, 2006) do not make a clear distinction between the axial and post-axial eras.

Pre-axial religion is typified by animistic, shamanistic and mythic beliefs and practices. The essential conception in these religions is the interpenetration and co-dependence of the spiritual (supernatural), natural and human worlds. Pre-axial societies emphasise the importance of communal living in harmony with nature and the spirits (e.g., nature spirits, totems, ancestors, Gods and Goddesses, Great Spirit). The function of religion is seen as ensuring maintenance of the natural, human and supernatural order and therefore religious practices are essentially restorative in purpose (involving ritual, sacrifice, magic and petitionary prayer). Most notably, pre-axial religion has no clear concept of 'progress' or evolution. Change (as observed in the tides, seasons, and movements of the moon, planets and stars) is understood to be a cyclical process in which the cycles are themselves ordered and regular. Other,

unpredictable, changes (e.g., earthquakes, epidemics, famines) are understood to represent a disturbance in the world order caused, for example, by the breaking of taboos within the community, or by malicious magical attacks from outside. Here the religious leader of the community (the shaman, priest or priestess) is charged with identifying the offender within, or the attacker outwith, and ensuring that appropriate measures are taken to appease the offended spirits, or to defend against and counter any magical attack.

It is important also to note that in pre-axial societies there is no clear (modern) concept of individuality, or selfhood. Each person in the community (whether tribe or city state) has their own particular role to fulfil, and this applies equally to the chief, king, or Pharaoh, and the shaman, priest or priestess – all of whom are charged with ensuring the continued survival and well-being of the community as a whole.

During the pre-axial period, certain key religious ideas predominated. Firstly, there seems to have been an important emphasis on the feminine principle (fertility, motherhood, nurturing) although whether, at any time in prehistory, this amounted to a universal cult of the Goddess in the way suggested by some (e.g., Gimbutas, 1982) is open to debate. Consistent with this ‘feminine’ emphasis on fertility, care and nurturance, the world is seen as a web of interconnection and interdependency. It is also itself sacred because it is infused with, and dependent upon, its relation with the spiritual realm. Pre-axial religion is essentially life-affirming in its outlook, rejoicing in sensory experience, pleasure, natural growth, wellness and fullness. The most important religious activities are those of healing and ensuring continued prosperity (which applies also to life in the hereafter, hence the use of burial goods in pre-axial religious rites). The spiritual realm (and the afterlife) is also understood as not so different from human life in the present. It is, for example, populated by a community of ancestors and other spiritual beings each of whom have their own personalities, qualities and interests, who maintain their relationship with the human world, and who may be called upon in time of need or crisis.

The pre-axial belief in the close connection between the natural and supernatural realms leads inevitably to the use of magic for religious purposes. Thus communication with the spirits (generally undertaken by the shaman, priest or priestess, often in a state of trance) involves various forms of magical rites and rituals,

as do all forms of healing, even those which, to the modern mind, use seemingly 'natural' remedies such as plants, minerals, or hygienic practices.

All this changed radically during the axial period, beginning around 800 BCE and continuing until around 200 BCE. This period more or less corresponds to the clear establishment of Iron Age cultures in the Near East, Europe, India, China and Japan. This is the critical 'turning point' in human history that is identified by Armstrong (2006), Daniels (2005), Hick (1989), Jaspers (1949/1977) and Jaynes (1993). The axial (Iron Age) period saw the development of new metal-working technologies that coincided with fundamental changes in agriculture, social systems, artistic expression, and religious beliefs and practices. These, in turn, may be seen as representing a 'Great Transformation' in human consciousness (Armstrong, 2006) most clearly exemplified by the philosophies of the Jewish Prophets (c. 800–400 BCE), Buddha (c. 563–483 BCE), Confucius (551–479 BCE), Lao Tse (traditionally a contemporary of Confucius), Socrates (c. 469–399 BCE) and Kapila (no dates, traditionally the founder of *Samkhya* philosophy within Hinduism).

The axial period philosophies saw humankind in a new relationship to the Divine, to nature and to society. In particular, the notions of *progress* and *conquest* became foundational (very likely themselves consequences of earlier Iron Age militarism). In the most developed forms of axial philosophy these notions were allied to a further emphasis on *individuality*. In this way progress and conquest came to be seen as an *individual heroic quest for salvation and perfection* (an idea that, it may be noted, makes little sense from a pre-axial perspective). Conquest also came to be seen as involving the 'rising above', control and subjugation of the individual's physical (animal) desires and imperfections through the cultivation of supposedly 'higher' intellectual and spiritual qualities (rationality, self-knowledge, discipline, dispassion, ethical awareness, compassion and empathy). Also, crucially, such self-development was seen as involving a process of struggle and *suffering* (Armstrong, 2006).

With its emphasis on the individual conquering hero it is, perhaps, not surprising that axial philosophy was sometimes used during this period (and later) to justify social and political conquest and the subjugation (and suffering) of others. It may also be noted that (with its Iron Age origins) axial philosophies idealize and appeal to what were almost certainly perceived at the time (and often since) as essentially *masculine*

virtues of strength, courage, control, rationality, dispassion, and military-style discipline.

These changes in human (or *men's*) consciousness led to a fundamental alteration in the perception of the nature and function of religion as well as to corresponding adjustments to social systems and the mythologies that support them. Some of the important changes involved are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Social, Mythological and Religious Elements in Pre-Axial and Axial Thought

Pre-axial	Axial
Tribal Society; Community	Patriarchy; Aristocracy
Sharing; Communal goods	Possession; Personal property
Co-dependence	Individuality
Heterarchy	Hierarchy
Social function	Heroic quest
Taboo; Custom	Rule; Law
Social conformity	Personal discipline
Mutual control	Individual control
Co-dependents	Masters (human and 'ascended')
Sustenance	Perfection
Stasis	Progress
Healers; Shamans	Sages; Saints
Magic	Mysticism
Mind-body union	Mind-body split
Realism	Idealism
Non-rational knowing	Rational knowing
Many Spirits (polytheism)	One Spirit (monotheism)
Many Ways	The (One) Path
Beneficent Goddess	Ruling God
Female exemplar	Male exemplar
Mother	Father
Healing	Salvation
Passion	Dispassion (Compassion)
Ease; Enjoyment	Struggle; Suffering
Immanence	Transcendence
Fullness	Emptiness
Visionary experience	Enlightenment

As Karen Armstrong (2006) has brilliantly shown, axial themes are at the heart of all the major modern (post-axial) World religions. These include the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), Buddhism, Hinduism (especially Vedanta and Samkhya), Confucianism, Taoism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism. Not

surprisingly, therefore (since transpersonal psychology has itself been influenced by, and incorporated, religious ideas from many of these traditions), axial and post-axial themes also dominate theory and practice within transpersonal psychology. Some of the most important of these themes are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Some Axial (Post-Axial) Themes in Transpersonal Psychology

- Emptiness (formless consciousness)
- Meditation and spiritual discipline
- Enlightenment
- Dispassion, compassion
- Mystical states
- Self-actualization and self-transcendence
- Spiritual attainment
- Levels and stages of transpersonal development (spiritual progress)
- The transpersonal ('higher') self
- Spiritual masters and gurus
- Teleology and process theology
- Transcendence

Ontology and soteriology in post-axial thought

The ontologies of post-axial religions clearly differ from each other in some important respects. For example the Abrahamic religions believe in the existence of a single supreme Deity whereas most forms of Buddhism reject a theistic conception of the divine. However, there are certain ontological assumptions that appear to be common among most, if not all, major post-axial religions. In this sense it may be possible to identify an underlying perennial (post-axial) philosophy among the major

World religions (cf. Huxley, 1947)¹. Central to the perennial post-axial ontology is the view that the only true reality is Spirit and that, ultimately, Spirit is one. Furthermore, Spirit is understood as the prior cause (creator) of the manifest world, implying that the World known to sensory experience is a dependent, secondary reality. This, in turn, leads to the assumption that two ontological realities exist. First there is the absolute, prior, Reality of Spirit; second, there is the relative, dependent, reality (and experience) of the phenomenal world.

These ontological assumptions connect neatly with the soteriological (salvific) agenda of post-axial religion, thereby defining the path to spiritual salvation. This path is essentially that of the refinement (perfection) of consciousness, from a state of ordinary, relative, 'gross', material or sensory awareness to the realization of absolute consciousness of, and union with, Spirit.

This soteriological agenda appears to suggest what Ken Wilber (e.g., 1995, 1996) has termed an *ascending current* in transpersonal thought (see also, Daniels, 2005). This ascending current advocates a spiritual path of transcendence (of the relative, manifest world) in the achievement of 'higher' (absolute) spiritual consciousness. As such it represents an other-worldly perspective in which the purpose of life is to disidentify with our ordinary, sensory experience of the phenomenal world (*prakriti* in Samkhya philosophy), and to identify with the transcendental, absolute reality of spiritual consciousness (*purusha* in Samkhya philosophy). Moreover, taking the essentially *individualistic* position implied in axial and post-axial thought, this path of spiritual transformation through the refining of consciousness is seen as something to be undertaken by each individual in a personal (heroic) quest for absolute perfection and the conquest of unsatisfactory, relative, illusory experience².

There is, however, another soteriological position that can be identified in post-axial thinking. Wilber (e.g., 1995, 1996) calls this the *descending current*. One way of viewing the descending current is to see it as representing a more this-worldly, immanent perspective. The axial emphases on progress, evolution, salvation and transformation are applied, within the descending current, to the manifest world of

¹ These ontological assumptions may be identified most clearly in Buddhism, Vedanta, and Samkhya (in the East) and Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, and Jewish and Christian mysticism (in the West).

² In some cases, for example in Gnosticism, this soteriological agenda is further justified on the grounds that the manifest, material world is corrupt and evil.

human (especially social) experience. Hence the focus is less on individual achievement of transcendent states of spiritual consciousness, and more on the achievement of positive change in the world, on the development of empathy and compassion towards others, and on the path of service. From the perspective of the descending current, the manifest world (although, at present, corrupt, perhaps even evil) is seen as itself perfectible through active spiritually-motivated interventions (both individual and collective).

These ascending and descending currents, while sharing the axial focus on progress, salvation and transformation, clearly differ in important respects (see Table 3).

Table 3. Currents in Post-Axial Soteriology

Ascending Current	Descending Current
Other-worldly	This-worldly
Transcendence	Immanence
Liberation / Release	Involvement / Participation
Wisdom and knowledge	Compassion, empathy and service
Personal transformation	Social and material transformation
Individual / Ego	Community / Eco
Attainment of spiritual consciousness	Manifestation of spirit in the world
One Spirit	Many faces of Spirit

In some respects, the descending current may be seen as continuing some important pre-axial concerns (for example, with community, mutuality and immanent spirituality) and thus as representing a more developmental, less revolutionary, axial perspective than that of the ascending current. It is also significant that Wilber (e.g., 1995, 1996) argues that, in many of its early expressions, the change in religious and philosophical thinking that occurred during the axial and post-axial period represents an effective *integration* of the ascending and descending currents. Thus we may point to the Buddha's focus on both personal enlightenment and compassion for others, or Plato's ideas on both taming the passions and on social justice, or Confucius's ideas about the importance of both personal discipline and the maintenance of social order.

According to Wilber (e.g., 1995, 1996), it was sometime later in history that the ascending and descending currents began to diverge, eventually resulting in one-dimensional 'flatland' philosophical and religious approaches (those of 'mere' ascenders and 'mere' descenders). Thus, for example, Gnosticism and, later, Catharism may be seen as 'merely ascending' perspectives, whereas (according to Wilber) the nature romantics and scientific materialists represent different versions of a 'merely descending' current. For Wilber, these one-dimensional, flatland, perspectives have themselves driven many of the ideological wars between ascenders and descenders that we have witnessed in the past several centuries and which continue to rumble on into the present (e.g., those between religion and science, or between established and indigenous religions). The solution to these unproductive wars, according to Wilber is to work towards the development of religious and philosophical perspectives that are capable of reintegrating the ascending and descending currents. Indeed this is one important aspect of Wilber's own integral agenda, as represented by the work of his think-tank, the Integral Institute (see, for example, Wilber, 2006; <http://integralinstitute.org/>).

Ascending and descending currents in transpersonal psychology

Although Wilber (e.g., 2000) has himself renounced transpersonal psychology as a viable approach to integral knowledge and practice, those of us who continue to work within this paradigm may usefully reflect on the ways in which ascending and descending perspectives are represented within transpersonal psychology, and on the ways in which we might seek to achieve a future integration.

A survey of theories, practices and research topics within transpersonal psychology may suggest a ready division between those that represent primarily ascending or descending currents (Table 4).

Table 4. Examples of Ascending and Descending Currents in Transpersonal Theory, Practice and Research

Ascending Current	Descending Current
Meditation	Indigenous spiritualities and shamanism (e.g., Harner, 1980; Kremer, 1998)
States of consciousness	Neopaganism (e.g., Wicca, Druidry)
Mystical experience	Feminist spirituality (e.g., Achterberg & Rothberg, 1998; Chittister, 1998; Starhawk, 1999; Wright, 1995, 1998;)
Metaphysics of transcendence	Transpersonal ecology (e.g., Fox, 1995; Naess, 1973)
Structural-hierarchical theory (e.g., Wilber's spectrum model) ³	Jungian and post-Jungian psychology (e.g., Hillman, 1977; Jung, 1966; Washburn, 1994, 1995, 2003; also aspects of psychosynthesis, e.g., Firman & Gila, 1997)
Great Chain of Being	Psychedelic and holotropic psychology (e.g., Grof, 2000; Huxley, 1954; Masters & Houston, 1966; Smith, 2003)
Transcendent Witness	Participatory spirituality (e.g., Ferrer, 2002; Heron, 1998)
Spiritual discipline	Relational spirituality (e.g., Wade, 2004; Welwood, 1991)
Eastern spiritualities (especially Buddhism, Vedanta, Samkhya-Yoga)	Aspects of Wilber's Quadrant model ⁴ (e.g., Wilber, 1995)

Although, at first sight, these distinctions and attributions may appear convincing (see also Daniels, 2005), it now seem to me that there are certain problems that need addressing, particularly with respect to the descending current.

In the first place, it might be argued that the term 'descending' is rather derogatory. Indeed the term is often used by Wilber to imply an inferior theoretical position, for example in his characterisation of many descenders as 'retro-Romantics'

³ Somewhat ironically, although Wilber (e.g., 1995, 1996) advocates an approach capable of integrating the ascending and descending currents, his structural-hierarchical theory remains an essentially ascending perspective, even in its more recent presentations (e.g., the Wilber-Combs lattice outlined in Wilber, 2006).

⁴ Notably, the two collective quadrants.

(Wilber, 1995, 1996). Secondly, the descending current attributions presented in Table 4 seem overly inclusive. What exactly, for example, do Jungian or post-Jungian approaches have in common with feminist spirituality and what exactly is the relation between transpersonal ecology and psychedelic or holotropic psychology? Finally, the meaning of the term 'descending' is left essentially unclear and imprecise. What kind of 'descent' is meant? Descent to what?

Descending vs. extending currents

I suggest that the characterisation of 'descending' approaches as presented in Table 4 (also as I have previously presented in Daniels, 2005) actually conflates two fundamentally distinct theoretical positions. These may be characterised as:

1. The depth psychological perspective
2. The relational, participatory perspective

The depth psychological approach essentially argues that transpersonal development involves the exploration and integration of unconscious material (of a spiritual kind). As such, this approach is exemplified by the theories of Jung, Hillman, Washburn, Grof, Huston Smith, and Firman & Gila (op. cit.), and in the practices and interpretations of some neopagans (Adler, 2006).

In contrast, the relational, participatory approach argues that transpersonal development involves promoting a spiritual connection to others and the world. Fundamental to this approach is the implied need to move beyond an egocentric concern with one's own individuation or personal spiritual development towards full participation with, commitment to, and responsibility for, other people, other species, and the world at large. Such relational, participatory thinking is exemplified in indigenous spiritualities, feminist spirituality (e.g., the connected self), transpersonal ecology (ecocentrism), relational spiritualities, and Ferrer's (e.g., 2002) participatory vision (emancipation from self-centredness, cocreative participation).

Because of the clear differences between the depth psychological and relational, participatory perspectives, it seems inappropriate to continue characterising both as 'descending' approaches. Instead, I propose that the term 'descending' should, in

future, be restricted to the depth psychological approach (since this unequivocally implies descent into the 'depths' of the unconscious). To contrast with this, I suggest that the relational, participatory, approach is more appropriately characterised by the metaphor of '*extending*' (since it implies expansion of the boundaries of moral and spiritual concern outwards, from a purely self-referential stance to one that encompasses other people and the larger political, economic and ecological systems).

Three vectors in transpersonal development

The implication of the distinction just drawn is that we may now identify *three* distinct transpersonal approaches or currents, i.e., the ascending, descending, and extending.

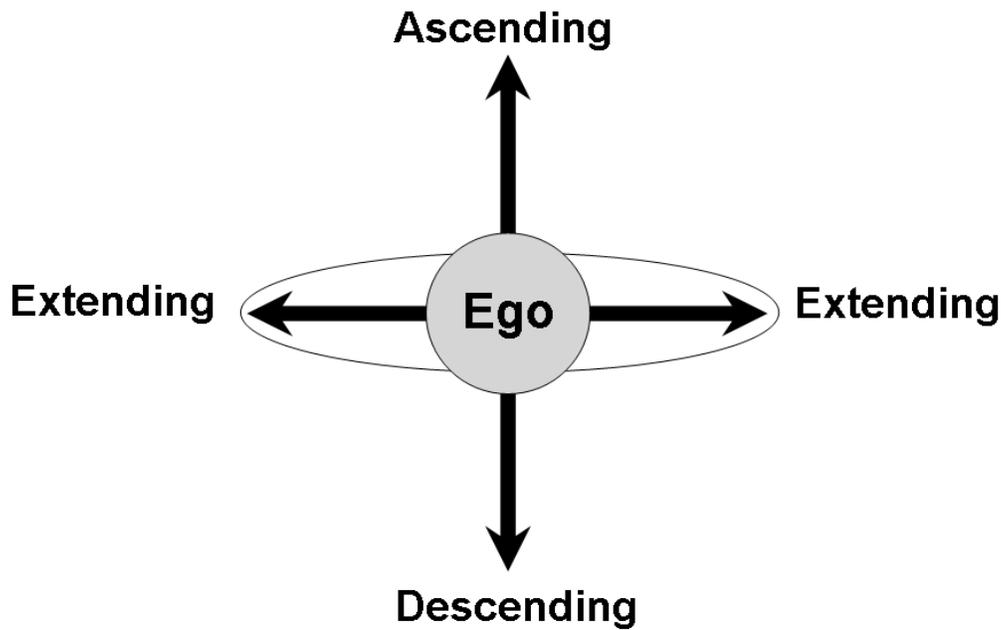
Although (after Wilber) these approaches may be termed 'currents', a more integral approach may be to view them as *dynamic vectors* in transpersonal development, rather than as separate and discrete streams. In this way the possibility of combining and integrating these directional forces becomes more apparent (as opposed to implying that people can swim in only one stream). Before an integration becomes possible, however, it is important to clearly differentiate between the essential qualities and characteristics of the three vectors (Table 5).

Table 5. Three Vectors in Transpersonal Development

	Ascending	Descending	Extending
Metaphor	Height	Depth	Breadth
Key word	Enlightenment	Individuation	Participation
Key virtues	Wisdom; Faith	Integration; Hope (confidence)	Compassion; Charity (love)
Tradition	Religion	Psychology	Humanism
Realm of exploration	Higher mind; 'Superconscious'	Unconscious; Dynamic ground	People; World
Ego as	'Lower' self	Partial psychic system	Egocentrism; Anthropocentrism
Transcending	'Lower' nature	Psychic divisions	Self-centredness
Union of	Self and Divine	Conscious and unconscious	Self and Other

As can be seen from Table 5, each of these vectors advocates a different soteriological direction for the path of ego-transcendence (itself often considered to be the hallmark of transpersonal development). In this respect, the three vectors express the various directions in which we may move beyond egocentrism. Schematically, these vectors of ego-transcendence may be represented as in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Three vectors of ego-transcendence



Towards an integral perspective

The assumption made in drawing these distinctions is that a truly integral transpersonal perspective needs to recognise and incorporate all three vectors. Furthermore, this vectoral model can be used to assess the degree to which particular transpersonal approaches approximate such an integral perspective (Table 6).

Table 6. Recognition of the three vectors in different approaches (suggested dominant vectors shaded)

Approach	Ascending	Descending	Extending	Explicitly all-vector (integral)?
Theology	Transcendence	Dark night of the soul	Immanence	Possibly
Indigenous spiritualities; Shamanism	Ecstatic trance	Vision quest; Spirit possession	Healing; Story telling	Possibly
Psychosynthesis (e.g., Assagioli, 1993)	Higher unconscious; Transpersonal and cosmic psychosynthesis	Lower unconscious; Personal psychosynthesis	Inter-individual psychosynthesis	Yes
Transpersonal (deep) ecology (e.g., Fox, 1995; Naess, 1973)			Horizontal path of ecological concern	No
Wilber (e.g., 2006)	Interior-individual (intentional) quadrant; Spectrum model; Wilber-Combs lattice	Shadow work	Interior collective (cultural) and exterior collective (social) quadrants	Yes
Ferrer (e.g., 2002)	Cocreative participation with 'an indeterminate spiritual power or Mystery' (2002, p. 151)	Cocreative participation with body, emotions, unconscious	Cocreative participation with others, world	Yes
Rawlinson (1997, 2000)	Structured traditions (hot and cool)	Hot unstructured traditions	Cool unstructured traditions	No (traditions as alternatives)
Aurobindo (e.g., 1970, 1990; see also Dalal, 2001)	Superconscious	Subconscious; Subliminal self	Spiritual transformation of world; Spiritual life	Yes
Feminist spirituality (e.g., Wright, 1995, 1998)	Spiritual permeable (unitive experience)	Permeability of self to body, emotions, unconscious	Sociocentric and worldcentric permeable (care and universal care)	Possibly
Jung (e.g., Jacobi, 1968)	Logos; mystical experience	Initiation into inner reality (archetypes)	Eros	Possibly
Washburn (e.g., 1994, 1995, 2003)	Regeneration in spirit	Regressive return of the ego	Integrative life; Embodied spirituality	Yes
Grof (e.g., 2000)	Transpersonal domain (beyond space-time reality)	COEX systems; Basic Perinatal Matrices	Transpersonal domain (within space-time reality)	Yes

As can be seen in Table 6, almost all of these approaches recognise aspects of all three vectors, and many are explicitly all-vector (integral) in their understanding, even if they retain an emphasis on one or two vectors. In particular, in my opinion, the approaches of Assagioli, Wilber, Ferrer, Aurobindo, Washburn and Grof are clearly all-vector (at least in principle). In contrast, only the approaches of transpersonal ecology and of Rawlinson are definitely not all-vector⁵.

Although these theoretical perspectives may, to varying degrees, conceptually recognise the three vectors in transpersonal development, the question remains whether any of them is capable of supporting a truly all-vector, integral soteriology (practice). In this regard, the Integral Yoga of Aurobindo (1970, 1990) and the Integral Life Practice of Wilber (Wilber, Patten, Leonard & Morelli, 2008) may be seen as important developments.

Wilber (e.g., 2006; Wilber et al., 2008) characterises his approach to theory and practice as AQAL (all quadrant, all level)⁶. The AQAL concept is undoubtedly helpful and important in enabling us to recognise that spirituality needs to manifest both individually and collectively, and outwardly as well as inwardly. However, while the AQAL model may be seen as encompassing the ascending and extending vectors⁷, it does not, in my view, clearly identify (or adequately emphasise) the descending (depth psychological) vector⁸. For this reason, I suggest that the AQAL approach needs to be complemented by an explicitly AV (all vector) perspective.

In my opinion, for transpersonal theory and practice to be truly all vector, it needs to incorporate (and be able to balance) the ascending, descending and extending soteriologies. In this way an AV perspective may facilitate the work of overcoming egocentrism through the development of the spiritual virtues of wisdom and faith (through ascending), psychological integration and hope (through descending), and compassion and charity (through extending). However, although the virtues of all three vectors are important, and all should be cultivated in an integral practice,

⁵ Although Rawlinson's model identifies the three vectors, he does not advocate their integration

⁶ In Wilber's model, AQAL is taken to include all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, all types (Wilber, 2003).

⁷ The ascending vector is represented by levels in Wilber's scheme; the extending vector by the collective quadrants.

⁸ Although Wilber (e.g., 2006) now acknowledges the importance of psychotherapy and shadow work, this does not fit neatly into his AQAL scheme.

perhaps we should heed the words of St Paul concerning the spiritual pre-eminence of the virtues of the extending vector. Thus not only do the extending virtues of compassion and charity imply a real and practical point to spirituality, but they also provide an effective antidote to that common and insidious poison of the transpersonal path – spiritual narcissism (cf. Walach, 2008).

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

(1 Corinthians, 13, King James Bible)

Acknowledgements

This article is based on a paper presented at the BPS Transpersonal Psychology Section Conference, Scarborough, September 2008. I wish to express my gratitude and indebtedness to José Jover del Pozo with whom I shared interesting and valuable discussions that led to the formulation of some of the key ideas in this article.

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