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DEANE H. SHAPIRO, JR.

One Reality, Many Paths?

Examining the Universal/Particular Relationship

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Examining the Universal/Particular Relationship

BY DEANE H. SHAPIRO, JR.

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Abstract

This monograph explores the implications of affirmative answers to three questions: 1) Is there a universal ultimate reality which is holistic, unitive, and non-dualistic? 2) Can different particularistic paths and traditions lead to a realization of this reality? 3) Can meditation, within different particular paths, play a role in helping individuals gain an experience of the universal?

The introduction briefly examines each of these propositions, notes the timeliness and importance of such an investigation, and raises several initial caveats. Section one discusses the strengths, limitations, and assumptions of scientific research on meditation as it relates to this universal/particular theme. The second section looks at a religious response as well as two different phases of a transpersonal response to the issue of the universal/particular relationship. The final section explores potential content implications of such an undertaking, and offers caveats about the process.

One Reality, Many Paths?

Examining the Universal/Particular Relationship

ONE REALITY, MANY PATHS?

EXAMINING THE UNIVERSAL/ PARTICULAR RELATIONSHIP
A Challenge for Transpersonal Psychology

Introduction

> *All the earth had the same language and the same words . . . And they said
> 'Come, let us build . . . a tower with its top in the sky . . . '*
>
> —Genesis 11:1,4

We are many individuals, with many different religions, languages, and identifications "scattered over the face of the whole Earth." Yet, according to the tower of Babel story, there was a time when all people spoke one universal language. Further, according to Genesis, all people shared one universal, common ancestry (first from Adam, then, after the flood, from Noah), so we are all brothers and sisters. At a deeper level still, according to the first creation story (Genesis 1:27) God created humans "in the image of God . . . male and female God created them" so that each human is both "male and female" and in the "image of God". Finally, Adam (the first human) came from "the dust of the Earth" (Hebrew: <u>Adam</u>ah), so that humans were considered to be intimately connected to the Earth.

Is there an undifferentiated, holistic, ultimate universal reality which encompasses and enfolds the different forms, languages, traditions, sexes, and Earth? An affirmative response to that question is the first proposition of this paper. The second proposition is that there are many different particular paths which can be used to recognize this ultimate reality. After briefly addressing the two propositions and examining why their exploration is both timely and important, Section One explores meditation research as it relates to the universal/ particular issue. Meditation has often been used as a contemplative tool within particular traditions as a means to experience the Universal. Section Two explores both a religious response and two different phases of a transpersonal psychology response to the question of the universal/particular. Transpersonal psychology is examined because it is the one school of psychology which has been most sympathetically interested in examining the content area of spiritual traditions and experiences. The final comments explore the vision and implications of such an undertaking, and highlight the importance of compassionate attention to the process.

Universal Ultimate Reality

The first proposition of this paper states that there is a universal ultimate reality which is holistic, unitive, and nondualistic. This reality has been called by different names—the Absolute, HaShem, Mind, Atman-Brahman, Nirvana, Ein Sof, Tao, among others, and is referred to within religious, philosophical, and psychological teachings. For example Aldous Huxley, in his classic work on the perennial philosophy (1945/1970, p. 5), calls this universal reality the Highest Common Factor, noting "under all this confusion of tongues and myths, of local histories and particularistic doctrines, there remains a Highest Common Factor, which is the Perennial Philosophy in what may be called its chemically pure state." Huston Smith, discussing the primordial tradition, claims "'no matter where or when' there is . . . first, a Reality that is everywhere and always the same" (Smith, 1988, p. 276). Finally, Ken Wilber in his development of a perennial psychology calls this highest reality Mind (with a capital M), noting: "Mind is what there is and all there is, spaceless and therefore infinite, timeless and therefore eternal, outside of which nothing exists" (1980. p. 76).

The Particular Path

The second proposition of this paper states that this ultimate universal reality can and has been experienced by mystics and contemplatives following different *particular* paths of the world's great religious and spiritual traditions. Particularism within a religious context refers to the specific community, language, and tradition within which contemplative and other techniques are practiced. Although a particular religion can serve multiple functions for its adherents, our discussion focuses only on that aspect of the particular which seeks to teach and transmit knowledge about this ultimate universal reality. Colloquially, this proposition states that particular paths, though different in language, customs, ritual, *can* lead *up* (a metaphorical, not a literal "vertical" descriptor) to the same universal mountain top. Schuon (1984) has called this the transcendent unity of religions (see also Rossner, 1983); and Huxley has stated (1945, vii):

> the highest common factor of all religions . . . has always been the metaphysical system of the prophets, saints and sages. It is perfectly possible for people to remain good Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, or Moslems and yet be united in full agreement on the . . . Perennial Philosophy.

This point has been reaffirmed and emphasized by Joseph Campbell who noted (1972, p. 264):

> When the symbolic forms . . . are interpreted not as referring primarily to any supposed or even actual historical personages or events, but psychologically, properly 'spiritually', as referring to the inward potentials of our species, there then appears through all something that can be properly termed as *philosophica perennis* of the human race.

Meditation and Mystics:
The Importance of Contemplative Knowing

Proposition three involves the epistemological and methodological undergirdings of proposition one, and stresses the importance of the contemplative practice within the particular as a way to experience the universal (see Laughlin, McManus, D'Aquili, 1990). The mystical experience of universal reality, it is argued, is beyond verbal description, and is independent of the particularistic type of meditation practiced. Huxley noted that the perennial philosophy, to be understood, must be experienced through a contemplative mode of knowing: It is "only in the act of contemplation, when words and even personality are transcended, that the pure state of the perennial philosophy can actually be known" (Huxley, p. 6). Ken Wilber (1983b), borrowing from St. Bonaventure, has called this knowing through contemplation the "eye of the spirit".

Throughout history, meditation has been an essential technique of the esoteric aspect of particular contemplative religious and spiritual traditions, a means to experience the Universal. The phenomenology of mystical experience (see Stace, 1960; Underhill, 1955; James, 1958; Vaughan, 1989; Rossner, 1983) suggests that there are fundamental similarities between religious experiences across diverse spiritual traditions. Subject/object dichotomies disappear, and there is a recognition of a sacred unity. Based on these commonalities, it is argued that an independent, context-free state of consciousness (and reality) exists (see Smith, 1976; Rothberg, 1989), and that this universal actually forms the heart of all religions (see Steindl-Rast, 1989).

Why this Topic is Both Timely and Important

Timeliness. An in-depth exploration of issues regarding the universal and particular may be unique to our historical, cultural, and scientific times for three reasons. First, in terms of the study of comparative religion, it is only within the last one hundred and fifty years that all religious systems have become available to us. Second, the field of transpersonal psychology is now twenty-five years old, and has matured to a point where greater attention is being paid to its philosophical assumptions and core definition (Wittine, 1989; Rothberg, 1986; Lajoie and Shapiro, 1992). Finally, the consciousness-related base of empirical psychology continues to expand, and there is a now a relatively substantial body of research on meditation (see Shapiro and Walsh, 1984; Murphy and Donovan, 1988).

Importance. The exploration of the relationship between the universal and the particular may help to provide insight in five areas: 1) Stimulating enhanced understanding of contemplative religious practice in the modern world, including greater insight *within* a particular religious tradition and enhanced dialogue and respect *between* particular traditions; 2) Recognizing, understanding, and challenging the limits of a strictly scientific, reductionistic approach to understanding these issues; 3) Examining the assumptions of the field of transpersonal psychology itself; and, 4) Detailing implications and areas of possible interface between science and religion. Finally, if there is one

ultimate reality, and many different paths can facilitate recognition of and insight into that reality, this exploration might provide additional guidance and insight into helping those on a psycho-spiritual search more thoughtfully determine which path or paths make most sense for them to follow. Since the final four of these topics build upon subsequent discussions and are covered in the remaining sections of the paper, only the first one is discussed in more detail here.

Enhanced dialogue and understanding between particular traditions. One hope of such an exploration is that it may be relevant in helping to address pressing and divisive particularistic issues of religious diversity.[1] Certainly one aspiration of those who have argued for the existence of a universal reality has been to help heal the negative divisiveness of the particular. As Campbell noted, it is no longer possible or useful for one group or tribe to claim superiority at the expense of another. Huxley (1945, pp. 17-18) stated:

> to affirm this truth [of the perennial philosophy] has never been more imperatively necessary than at the present time. There will never be enduring peace unless and until humans come to accept a philosophy of life more adequate to the cosmic and psychological facts than the insane idolatries of nationalism . . .

Rossner has argued that acceptance of the existence of the "universal" can be a uniting and harmonious principle among religious traditions, without causing any loss of distinctiveness or specialness within a given tradition (1983, Vol. 2, Book 1, xi):

> It is this author's conviction that persons of spiritual vision and intellectual integrity, in East and West, might profitably begin to work together in a great global and transcultural effort toward a recovery of the sense of a primordial tradition of intuition and insight—leading to higher forms of consciousness in the human species and resulting ultimately in an expanded awareness in our culture of the Transcendental origins and destiny of the human species.
>
> The very admission of the existence of such universally verifiable 'spiritual sciences' would therefore be a tremendous influence toward agreement, harmony, and peace among all of the presently divided creeds and ideologies of mankind.
>
> The recognition by academics, at last, that there are indeed universal forms of spiritual, psychical, metaphysical, and mystical perceptions, actions, and phenomena would undercut the Babel of confusion which now prevails in the field of comparative studies in religion . . . without threatening the rights of persons in various traditions or systems of thought, Eastern and Western, ancient and modern, to interpret those same kind of phenomena or experiences with different 'collages' of ideals, symbols, myths, etc., according to culturally developed and conditioned predilections.

Psychological theory and research suggest that at a certain developmental stage (Erickson, 1959; Wilber, 1983; Heath, 1983; Vaillant, 1977; Maslow, 1968, 1971), it is important for the person to develop a sense of uniqueness and specialness. However, individual self-worth can lead to narcissism, prejudice, and criticism of others. So too does that danger exist within any particular religion. One may become overidentified with a particular path and its specialness "when the texts are interpreted literally, as history, in the usual ways of harshly orthodox thought" (Campbell, 1972, p. 264) One may come to feel special *and* exclusive: "A doctrine of a universal God Whose eye is on but one Chosen People of all in His created world; . . . [or] the Nazarene as the *unique* historical incarnation of God" (Campbell, 1972, p. 262). In acknowledging multiple paths to the universal truth, there is an effort to avoid what Schuon (1984) has called the "scandal of particularity"—when one particular tradition believes that it is the sole, restricted, and dominant path up the mountain, and by virtue of that has not only a unique but an exclusive relationship with the godhead. Joseph Campbell stated (1972, p. 264):

> In earlier times, when the relevant social unit was the . . . religious sect . . . it was beneficial to the order of the group . . . to represent all those beyond its bounds as inferior . . . and its own local inflection of the universal human heritage . . . as the one, the true, and sanctified. Today, however, we are the passengers, all, of this single spaceship earth . . . (and) the fruit of such ethnocentric historicism is poor spiritual fare.

The hope is that the desire for uniqueness and specialness that each tradition needs to feel (and should feel) can be maintained—each religion retains a sense of "chosen-ness", each person is special—without having this orientation become exclusive (this is the only path) or pejorative of others (other paths are less effective). Again, the goal is that the particular, at its greatest depth and refinement, can transcend itself, draw from the experience of the universal source from which it sprang, and in so doing (re) evolve into a level in which a common core of understanding, respect, and shared values across traditions is reached.

Increased insight and experience within particular traditions. It has been claimed that the esoteric heart and "mystical core" of religion is the experience of the universal, but that inevitably the founder's mysticism, in the hands of subsequent historical influences, becomes exoteric religion, involving dogmatism, legalism, and ritualism (Steindl-Rast, 1989). Focus on meditation and the contemplative core of the different particular paths can provide a technology through which individuals in different particular paths can re-experience the universal. As discussed in Section Two, there is a belief that an experience of universal ultimate reality can enlarge and expand the particular, returning the "heart" to exoteric religions. Michael Washburn (1992) has noted that the very positing of the universal as a goal provides motivation and impetus for those within various particular traditions. Brother David Steindl-Rast, paraphrasing Huxley's view that it is possible for people to remain good Christians, Jews, Moslems, while remaining in full agreement with the perennial philosophy, notes (1992) that "it is *only* when they

are in full agreement with the perennial philosophy that they can be good Christians, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists . . . "

Many philosophers, psychologists, and theologians believe there is a connection between experience of the universal and ethical behavior and values (see Maslow, 1970; Smith, 1989; Kohlberg, 1981). Gimello has stated (1983, p. 85):

> The mysticism of any particular mystic is really the whole pattern of his life. The rare and wonderful 'peaks' of experience are a part of that pattern, but only a part, and their real value lies only in their relation to the other parts, to his thought, his moral values, his conduct towards others, his character and personality.

A detailed discussion of the relationship between mystical experience, values, beliefs, and behavior goes beyond the scope of this paper, and has been discussed elsewhere (see Shapiro, 1989a; Novak, 1989). However, the implicit assumption is that the experience of the non-dualistic state of consciousness can lead to a more permanent shift in a person's values, attitudes, and behavior, a shift from an altered state of consciousness to an altered trait (see Brown, 1977; Goleman, 1988; Brown and Engler, 1984). As Rossner notes (1983, Vol. 2, book 3 pp. 129, 132):

> the main goal of spiritual development is ego transcendence and participation in the divine nature; . . . after the kingdom of God is attained, or nirvana, samadhi, after identification of atman with brahman. . . . Higher consciousness implies ethical transformation into a new being . . . the goal is to learn in oneself what the divine qualities are . . . love, compassion; what you do to others is done to Self.

Although there are differences and complexities in efforts to determine unifying principles across spiritual traditions (Heath, 1983; H. Smith, 1965; 1976) there are some common goals and values. These include emotional transformation—decreasing unwholesome qualities/evil inclinations, while increasing qualities of love and compassion; service to others; justice; ethical living; right action (see Smith, 1976; 1982; Wilber, 1983; Maslow, 1969, 1970).

Initial Caveats

To summarize, this introduction has posited that an ultimate universal reality exists; that different particular paths can lead to a realization of this reality; and that meditation has been and is a technique which can be used within different traditions to gain experiential awareness of ultimate reality.

The three positions have been stated as boldly as possible. Collectively, they suggest that there is a fundamental reality not fully graspable by the human mind in ordinary states of consciousness. Different levels of inner knowing are possible, and the higher and deeper this inner knowing (historically accessible to few people), the greater

the convergence and the more universal their experience. These propositions, taken together, provide the assumptions, starting point and foundation upon which this monograph rests, and from which subsequent explorations are made. However, it should not be surprising to any casual observer of contemporary culture that these three assumptions might not be commonly accepted. The view of a universal reality violates secular, technological, and existential tenets of separatism and philosophical assumptions of materialism and logical positivism (Harman, 1992, 1992a; Tart, 1992). The proposition that many paths may lead to a universal reality violates literalist, fundamentalist, and strictly orthodox religious traditions (see Novak, 1989; Steindl-Rast, 1989). The belief that a contemplative, non-dualistic state of consciousness, such as that accessed by meditation, can be a legitimate and valuable mode of knowing runs counter to mainstream and standard scientific reductionistic methodology and procedures (see Wilber, 1983b; Wilber, Engler, and Brown, 1986). Finally, it has been argued that the very field of transpersonal psychology is not psychology at all because it does not deal with the person (May, 1986), and is therefore a "latter-day religion" (Brewster Smith, 1989), with beliefs in the absolute (Ellis, 1986, 1989).[2] In addition to the above concerns from outside the field regarding the three propositions and those who believe them, there may also be concerns about the three propositions from within the field of transpersonal psychology. I would like to briefly suggest some initial caveats—both from without and within—so that even though I will speak declaratively in the following sections of the paper, the reader will be aware that these presuppositions are just that—beliefs and assumptions. They reflect age-old questions about the nature of the universe and how do we "know" what we believe about the nature of reality. Further, the answers to these propositions may not be ultimately provable (see Shapiro, 1989). There are philosophical, scientific, and religious approaches and understandings about what is real, the nature of being (ontology), and how we know it (epistemology). Different starting points with diverse methodologies can lead individuals to quite divergent views of the nature of truth and reality, whether in science, philosophy, or religion (Kennick, 1967; Schmitt, 1967; Streng, 1987).

Three specific concerns are raised: 1) Does ultimate reality exist? What is the relationship between truth and reality? 2) How can we "prove" it, with special attention to the argument from religious experience; 3) Do all particular paths converge on this reality?

Does Absolute Reality Exist?

The first concern about proposition one is most boldly stated by Albert Ellis (1986, p. 149) who says that transpersonal psychologists believe that "Absolute reality exists and when we find the true doctrine that reveals it, we reach absolute, invariant, unchangeable, ineffable truth." In this claim, Ellis is conflating the thesis of a single reality with a single coherent philosophy about that reality. In our terms, he is stating that transpersonalists believe there is "one reality, one particular path", a proposition more easily applied to fundamentalist religious doctrines, but not accurate for transpersonal

psychology. As Wilber (1989, p. 67) notes, transpersonalists "certainly do not think that reality can be put into any doctrine, no matter how elaborate." Walsh (1992a, p. 23) further adds that any model or theory reflects "necessarily partial, limited perspectives. No theory or school, including the transpersonal, is *the truth*." Although one definition of the term "truth", in religious parlance, is considered to be "reality that is permanent, immeasurable" (Streng, 1987), truth has historically been defined in philosophy as a property of language (Rothberg, 1992). Therefore, Ellis is also conflating philosophical terms of truth and reality. Truth, in so far as it is linguistic, resists universality, whereas reality refers to being, and therefore allows for the possibility of ontological universality (Novak, 1992).[3]

If we ignore the second part of Ellis' statement and just focus on his first three words, "Absolute reality exists", we can see that those words are indeed the first proposition of this paper. Yet, not only does Albert Ellis attack transpersonalists for this belief, both Ken Wilber (1989) and Roger Walsh (1989), in their replies to Ellis, note that not all transpersonalists would agree that "Absolute reality exists."

Let us look at this issue a bit more carefully from the historical perspective of definitions and assumptions of transpersonal psychology. For most of its first twenty-five years, transpersonal psychology has been defined "with a desire to keep it open and take a process approach to defining it" (see Sutich, 1969; *ATP Newsletter*, 1977, p. 4; Vich, 1992). Even today, Walsh (1992) notes that "it is not at all clear, and currently under debate, whether transpersonal psychology has any ontological assumptions. I for one would strongly argue against precommitting the field to any ontological assumptions." Walsh's view is certainly in accord with Sutich's original statement regarding "the optional individual and group interpretations . . . with regard to the acceptance of its content as essentially naturalistic, theistic, supernaturalistic, or any other designated classification" (Sutich, 1969, p. 16).

I do not disagree with the practicality and usefulness at certain stages in a movement's development to be as inclusive as possible in defining itself. However, at this point it may be important to develop, in Wittine's phrase, "basic postulates for a transpersonal" approach (1989). It should be clear that the first proposition of this paper goes farther (or narrower) than previous definitions and assumptions of transpersonal psychology. This proposition is more in accord with an emphasis on Lajoie and Shapiro's (1992, p. 91) definition of transpersonal as involving "the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness." The proposition of a non-dualistic, unitive reality easily fits within and can be enfolded by a transpersonal umbrella. Further, following Rothberg (1989), I believe that these views are an ontological presupposition and foundational assumption of transpersonal psychology, a central claim "whose validity seems vital to the very possibility of transpersonal approaches" (Rothberg, 1989, p. 5). This point is similarly reflected in Wilber (1993), who, in clarifying his comments to Ellis about the existence of absolute reality, noted the following (see also, 1989, 1993a):

The verbal proposition that absolute reality exists, said to someone who has had no experience of that ultimate reality of emptiness, makes no sense. For absolute reality is non-dual, and neither exists nor does not exist. There is no way for our language to capture this seeming paradox without falling prey to what appears to be a dualistic conceptualization. This is why strict transpersonalists like Shankara, Nagarjuna, or Eckhart maintain that you cannot strictly say that absolute reality exists.

However, from the perspective of those involved in a transpersonal approach, either there is the contention that ultimate spirit or reality does exist or it does not. I do not believe there can be a transpersonal approach that does not finally hold that unitive, non-dualistic emptiness exists, although it is not qualifiable at all in mental terms—*shunyata, nirguna, apopathic.*

As discussed in the second caveat below, this first presupposition—that there is a universal ultimate reality which is holistic, unitive, and non-dualistic—may not be ultimately provable (see Shapiro, 1989). Therefore, from one perspective, it may be important to continue to honor different and diverse views within a transpersonal "umbrella". However, this monograph attempts to illustrate that progress can be made by articulating one such claim, and then proceeds to investigate how a deeper level of understanding might be developed based on such a proposition.

How Can We Prove that Absolute Reality Exists?

The second caveat has to do with how do we prove that ultimate reality exists. Throughout history there have been many ways in which philosophers, theologians, and others have tried to "prove" the existence of God. Such attempts include the argument from morals; degrees of perfection argument (the fourth of Thomas Aquinas' five ways) (Sanford, 1967; 2:324-326); the teleological argument noting orderliness, design and purpose; the ontological argument of ultimate "being" proposed by Anselm (Hick, 1967; 5:538-543); the cosmological argument—the existence of the universe itself, and how it came to be. Especially germane to our discussion is a sixth argument, what has been referred to as the "argument from religious experience" (Hepburn 1967, 7:163-168). Hepburn, in examining this view, asks whether we need to distinguish between the "truth" of a person's experience and the truth of "God": "Do we have in theistic experience mere projection? Or do we have a projection matched by an objectively existing God?" He goes on to note (p. 164) "not all [humans] have (or are aware of having) distinctively religious experiences, and to those that do have them religious experiences are apt to be short-lived . . . events that are not publicly observable." Novak (1992) articulates the issue as follows: "Are *claims* to have experienced the universal the same as experiencing the Universal? And, is the Universal that is claimed to be experienced the self-same 'thing'?"

These caveats and questions directly challenge the claim embedded in our three propositions that "phenomenology can equal ontology." In other words, this paper is arguing that mystical experiences (phenomenology) within different traditions do point

to and are representative of experience of "ultimate reality" (ontology). As Rossner (1983 p. vi, Vol. 2, Book 1) states, "there is a primordial tradition of psychic intuition and spiritual insight which has been shared by religions of the East and West in both ancient and modern times . . . arose out a common, or universal phenomenology of human psychic and spiritual experience. It was thus rooted in the human psyche and in perennial modes of consciousness and experience which cut across traditional cultural and religious barriers."

More recently, Katz (1978, 1983) and Gimello (1983) have argued that even if people within different particular traditions have had verifiable mystical experiences, there is no experience of "pure consciousness" (that is, epistemic purity). Therefore, they assert, two claims are refuted. First, contrary to what Stace and others have argued, there is no ultimate similarity between mystical experiences; and secondly, the claim of commonality about mystical experiences cannot be used to "prove" that an ultimate reality exists. As Katz (1983, p. 41) noted:

> The metaphysical naivete that seeks for, or worse, asserts, the truth of some meta-ontological schema in which either the mystic or the student of mysticism is said to have reached some phenomonological 'pure land' in which he grasps the transcendent reality in its pristine pre-predicative state is to be avoided.

The socio-cultural context and language create the "contours of the experience and thus make pure experience a chimera" (Katz, 1982). As Gimello stated (1983, p. 63):

> Mysticism is inextricably bound up with, dependent upon, and usually subservient to the deeper beliefs and values of the traditions, cultures, and historical milieu which harbor it.

Even within the transpersonal movement, there are cautions voiced. Walsh (Walsh, 1992) has suggested that it is safer to talk about a universality of phenomenology, but not to equate that phenomenology with reality. Rothberg has noted that it might be helpful to "couch" the universality of mystical experiences by saying that they are "cross culturally identical or highly *similar*" (Rothberg, 1989, 1992), emphasis mine. Finally, Novak (1992) noted that it is not at all clear that there is only one ultimate, highest mystical experience, versus a range of experiences. Further, previous research has noted the problems with subjective reporting of internal events (see Shapiro and Walsh, 1984).

However, in spite of the above concerns expressed within the transpersonal movement, this does not mean that there are no rebuttals to Katz et al.'s claims. These include methodological critiques such as category error, limits of constructivistic approaches, and insensitivity to the contemplative mode of knowing. Since these critiques have been detailed elsewhere (see Laughlin, McManus, D'Aquili, 1990; Rothberg, 1989; McDermott, 1989), they are only briefly mentioned below.

Differences in the reports of contemplatives from diverse traditions are considered to be "translation" problems resulting from socio-cultural and linguistic filtering (Rothberg, 1989). Specifically, it is acknowledged that the particularistic traditions can form the context, setting, and preparatory environment for the contemplative practice. Subsequent expressions of the content of the experience (such as Buddha, Jesus Christ, the Ein Sof, Atman and Brahman) and subsequent interpretation of the experience reflect the language used by the individual after the experience to try to describe the experience. The problem lies in the fact that labels subsequently applied to this non-dualistic, ineffable experience are, by their very nature, approximations, symbolic and dualistic: e.g., "beyond words", "source of all wisdom", "all loving", "all knowing", "all powerful", "God", the "Tao".[4]

Further, it can be noted that within some traditions there is a similarity of language and expression, such as that used to express the relationship of the self and the ground of being (see Walsh, 1993; Idel, 1988):

The Kingdom of heaven is within you (Christianity)

He and he become One entity; There is no One except God (Judaism)

Look within, thou art the Buddha (Buddhism)

Atman (individual consciousness) and Brahman (universal consciousness) are One (Hinduism)

He who knows himself knows the Lord (Islam).

Thus, although we certainly do not have definitive proof that "absolute reality exists", it can at least be argued as a working proposition, based on the argument from religious experience, that different paths can lead to an understanding and experience of ultimate reality. Further, based on the first proposition of this paper, that there is an ultimate reality, the continued exploration of mystical experience certainly seems an avenue worthy of further and continued exploration.

Do All Particular Paths Converge?

The third caveat combines aspects of both the first two, and looks more carefully at the proposition that there are many paths to ultimate reality. Does this mean that all the great religious and spiritual teachings of the world, though couched in particular language and customs, ultimately converge at the deepest level on a universal reality? The question might more precisely be framed as whether the spiritual teachings actually converge, or point to a convergence? Further, do all, or just some, of the teachings converge? (Rothberg, 1992).

Ultimate universal reality, our first proposition, is considered to be radically unqualifiable—shunyata, the void, advaita—yet it is also considered to be the common source from which the different traditions (and all multiplicity) evolved.

It is argued that in the world of form, there is considered to be a great chain of being, in which this universal reality manifests itself on different levels. Those different levels are considered to be hierarchically structured with the higher levels ontologically superior to the lower levels (e.g., Lovejoy, 1936, Smith, 1988; Wilber, 1993 in press), with the realization of higher levels often seen as a sign of developmental maturity and advancement (Heath, 1983; Laughlin et al., 1990). Washburn, at the end of his article exploring different Eastern and Western paths to transcendence, (1990, p. 109-110) notes that perhaps the Western "spiral" path to transcendence, in which the self partakes of the ground of the Self but stays "two in One", might be a penultimate stage. The ultimate stage may be where the self disappears, and only God remains. He notes that this view could unite the "Eastern ladder and Western spiral perspectives . . . by giving them a common destination, not a common route to this destination." Washburn's view leads us back to the title of the paper, "One Reality, Many Paths?"[5] Finally, as Wilber has noted (1993a), once there is awareness and realization of the highest levels—the top of the ladder of the great chain of being, the ladder falls away and one realizes that the ladder never existed.

Therefore, based on the propositions of this paper, all particular traditions have emerged from and are part of this universal ultimate reality. As such, all traditions have the *potential* to converge in a similar understanding and awareness of universal, ultimate reality. Whether and to what extent they do, as well as the routes they take for so doing, and how that might be investigated, is discussed in Section Two of the paper. We now turn to a discussion of scientific research on meditation, and its relevance to the universal/particular relationship. Further exploration about the way a liberal theological position and a transpersonal position might examine the universal/particular relationship occurs in Section Two.

Summary

The introductory section has stated three propositions: 1) that there is a universal ultimate reality; 2) that different particular spiritual paths can lead to this reality; and 3) that meditation and contemplative knowing are important methods for experiencing ultimate reality. The timeliness and importance of exploring these propositions was discussed, as well as several initial caveats.

One Reality, Many Paths?
Examining the Universal/Particular Relationship

A Challenge for Transpersonal Psychology

BY Deane H. Shapiro, Jr.

Section One
Science, Meditation Research and the Universal/Particular

If the only research tool a person has is a hammer, then all questions begin to look like the head of an undriven nail.

—Abraham Maslow

When a pickpocket meets a saint, all he sees are pockets.

—Anon.

Meditation as a Contemplative Technique

A focus on meditation research over the past three decades can be a helpful case study in clarifying some of the difficulties, seeming paradoxes, and tensions involved in the universal/particular relationship. Although the vast majority of meditation research studies have been carried out with individuals practicing Eastern techniques from the Hindu/Vedic (Transcendental Meditation) or Buddhist (Zen, Vipassana) traditions, there is also a strong and deep contemplative core in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Goleman, 1988; Kaplan, 1985; Novak, 1984; Inayat Khan, 1989).

In vectored form, meditation (M), practiced within the context of a particular (P) tradition, has been one of the essential tools by which individuals have gained an experiential recognition of ultimate reality (U):

$$P(M) \rightarrow U.$$

Scientific Research Removing the Particular

During the past three decades, there have been nearly a dozen books and hundreds of studies addressing questions relating to the psychology of meditation. An annotated bibliography (Murphy and Donovan, 1988) cites over thirteen hundred and fifty references, divided into physiological effects, behavioral effects, and subjective reports. The primary

strategy and focus of these studies has been reductionistic, trying to extract the essence of the technique from its original particularistic context. This methodology was followed in order to make the technique of meditation measurable and replicable, whereas the religious trappings often seemed esoteric and obscure. When the religious context and tradition were mentioned, they were lumped with "nonspecific factors" such as demand characteristics, preparatory environment, and group attention.

Most scientists and clinicians saw the removing of the religious, cultic context as essential (such as Ellis, 1984; Woolfolk and Franks, 1984), which led to an effort by some to develop generic, secular forms of meditation (such as Carrington, 1978; Benson, 1975; Shapiro, 1978). This reductionistic strategy may have been necessary to establish meditation as a credible technique within Western science. In 1977, the American Psychiatric Association called for a critical examination of the clinical effectiveness of meditation, including "the specific usefulness, indications, contraindications, and dangers of meditative practice" (p. 720). In order to fulfill this charge, it was necessary to develop an operational definition of meditation. Therefore, a non-cultic working definition based on brain attentional mechanisms (Pribram, 1971) was proposed (Shapiro, 1982).

At that particular historical and cultural time, the context-free approach to meditation research made sense for several reasons. First, the field of meditation research was quite new. Jung (1947) had been one of the first psychologically trained Westerners to even investigate Eastern thought, and in Tart's (1969) collected work he noted that by publishing two articles, he was publishing two-thirds of the English language experimental work on meditation. Second, there was already a somewhat negative bias by many scientists against meditation and mystical experience (e.g. Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry report on Mysticism, 1975; Alexander, 1931), calling them delusional, catatonia-like, psychotic. Therefore profound issues of paradigm clash existed between the origin, intent, and nature of meditation on the one hand, and scientific methodology and rationality on the other (see Tart, 1975; Walsh, 1980; Wilber, 1977; Shapiro, 1980). This paradigm clash caused even examining the effects of the content of meditation to involve a certain amount of swimming against the scientific mainstream. To try to define and refine meditation as a simple, replicable technique was task enough, without also trying to examine the seemingly arcane particularistic rituals, dogma, and "mist" within which the technique appeared to be embedded.

Removing the Goal of Experiencing Universal, Ultimate Reality

One aspect of different particularistic contemplative traditions is the goal of experiencing ultimate, "universal", reality. Therefore, without specifically acknowledging it, by removing the context, research on the use of meditation as a means to experience

the Universal was also almost completely neglected. However, once the technique of meditation was operationalized, and divorced from its original particularistic context, it was possible to begin to compare the components of meditation with other self-control strategies on issues such as stimulus cues, nature of physical posture, the use of preprogrammed punishments or reinforcers, cognitive statements and images involved, the nature of observation and attentional focus; type of breathing practiced (such as Shapiro and Zifferblatt, 1976; Shapiro, 1978). Efforts to differentiate active from inert components could be made, and it was possible to identify the mechanisms that may be mediating meditation's effects (Shapiro, 1980; Shapiro and Walsh, 1984). In fact, as noted below, using this non-sectarian approach to meditation, a considerable amount of research has been done in a relatively short time, using many different types of meditation (such as concentrative; opening-up/mindful; combination; theistic; non-theistic; generic; particularistic; secular; non-secular) for a wide variety of different clinical and health care problems.

Meditation as a Self-Regulation Technique in Stress Management

Physiological research has shown that meditation can bring about a state of relaxation by causing a generalized reduction in multiple physiological and biochemical markers, such as decreased heart rate, decreased respiration rate, decreased plasma cortisol (a major stress hormone), and increased EEG alpha (see Shapiro and Walsh, 1984). For example, studies have shown meditation's effectiveness in addressing stress and pain management and enhancing relaxation (see Benson, 1975; Shapiro and Giber, 1978; Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1990; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1985, 1986); as a tool in psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) in helping to control the immune system (such as G. Smith, 1985; Pelletier, 1991); as a health care intervention in terms of decreased medical usage (thereby helping to lower insurance premiums) (Orme-Johnson, 1987); and in increasing longevity (Alexander, Langer et al., 1989).

There have also been a number of studies comparing meditation clinically to other cognitive focusing, relaxation, and self-control strategies: such as guided imagery, hetero-hypnosis, self-hypnosis, biofeedback, progressive relaxation, autogenic training. Three different sets of conclusions have been drawn from these studies. I have argued that the results indicate that meditation appears to be equally but no more effective than other self-regulation strategies for clinical problems such as anxiety, anxiety in alcoholics, alcohol consumption, insomnia and borderline hypertension (Shapiro, 1982, 1985a). Holmes (1984, 1987) has stated that meditation is no more effective than simple resting, and has concluded that "I can strongly recommend that persons who are interested in reducing arousal spend their time exercising rather than meditating or resting" (Holmes, 1987, p. 102). Finally, Dillbeck and Orme-Johnson (1987) and Eppley, Abrams, and Shear (1989) doing meta-analysis found Transcendental Meditation had a significantly larger effect on trait anxiety than other meditation and relaxation strategies. Potential reasons for these discrepancies in evaluating the same literature are discussed in the final section.

Meditation as a Self-Exploration Technique in Psychotherapy

When meditation is denuded of its religious, cultic, or esoteric mythology, it should be grounded in another culturebound ideological framework in order to provide a meaning. For example, the physiological benefits of the relaxation response have allowed for the incorporation of meditation in the meaningful framework of medical therapeutics. Psychotherapy can provide one similar structure of the practice of meditation in the context of self-exploration (Kutz, Borysenko, Benson, 1985, p. 6).

There has also been an interest in examining meditation as a possible adjunct to psychotherapy (Goleman, 1981). The nonreactive, detailed, systematic, and impartial observation of one's own cognitions and emotions through the technique of meditation can be a source of personal insight and self-understanding. For example, Kutz, Borysenko, and Benson (1985, p. 5) noted that even among patients with little psychological mindedness, approximately 20% "with a wide range of psychophysiological disorders, who joined stress reduction and relaxation programs involving mindfulness meditation, became interested in psychotherapy for further expansion of self-understanding." Within this framework, they refer to meditation as a "psychobiological form of introspection." Psychodynamic therapists have used meditation for controlled regression in the service of the ego and as a means of allowing repressed material to come forth from the unconscious (Carrington and Ephron, 1978; Shafii, 1973); humanistic psychologists have used it to help individuals gain a sense of self-responsibility and inner directedness (such as Keefe, 1975; Schuster, 1979; Lesh, 1970); behaviorists have used it for stress management and self-regulation (such as Stroebel and Glueck, 1977; Shapiro and Zifferblatt, 1976; Shapiro, 1985; Woolfolk and Franks, 1984).

Thus, through the use of traditional scientific methodologies and reductionistic strategies, it has been possible to gain a great deal of information about the content of meditation: its components, effects (both positive and adverse), and mechanisms mediating those effects (Otis, 1984; Delmonte, 1984; Shapiro, 1980; Shapiro and Walsh, 1984; West, 1987; Murphy and Donovan, 1988; Kwee, 1990). By removing the original context, researchers and clinicians have been able to tailor the technique to our cultural and health care needs, which has helped in our understanding the mind-body relationship, and in bringing clinical and health related benefits to the individual. Further, it is apparent from some of the controversy regarding meditation's effect on somatic stress (Holmes, 1984, 1987; Shapiro, 1985a; Benson and Freedman, 1985; West, 1985; Dillbeck and Orme-Johnson, 1987; Eppley, Abrams, Shear, 1989) that the reductionistic task in this area is not yet complete, and further double-blind, placebo-controlled studies are still needed.

Limitations of Traditional Science and Impossibility of a Reductionistic, Context-Free Approach

Scientific Assumptions

Science in general, and psychology specifically, in so far as it attempts to emulate the scientific tradition, seeks "understanding, prediction, and control" based on certain assumptions and worldviews about the nature of reality (Kuhn, 1971; Harman, 1992).[6] Five assumptions of science, often unexamined, are that knowledge can be gained by 1) reductionistic research; 2) in an amoral, value free, context; 3) primarily by sensory and mental modes of acquisition; 4) based on ontological assumptions of separateness and a non-teleological universe; and that 5) control influences are exerted "bottom to top": that is, the biological and material level exerts causal control upward over higher levels of reality. Those assumptions provide the rationale and the methodological underpinnings for meditation to be examined as a generic technique, and reductionistically investigated. In so doing, traditional science, if it deigned to investigate meditation at all, ended up denuding meditation both of its particularistic context and its universal goal.

Science removed the original particularistic context of meditation from the left hand side of the equation to focus on defining a non-cultic, replicable generic technique: M. We might call this generic technique universal with a small u,[7] for although it is aiming at developing a universal technique which transcends specific cultural contexts, it is not aiming at experiencing what the contemplative spiritual traditions would call knowledge of the Universal. In meditation research, the original particulars were replaced by new particulars derived from the specific orientation of the clinician and/or researcher using the meditation technique. As Ornstein noted (1971), citing Cohen's ganzfield experiments, someone who has an experience of nothingness in a scientific experiment will subsequently interpret it very differently than someone who has that experience within a faith community. The often unrecognized scientific assumptions and beliefs had a potentially distorting and biasing effect in meditation research when science substituted its own context (x) for the particular. Further, the goals of the technique became in many cases the context within which it was used—the cultural values of the society, such as stress management and self-regulation. Thus, the Universal was removed from the right hand side of the vector: M———>SR; and, within a therapeutic context, the goal of meditation sometimes became self-exploration: M———>SE. The vectored equation became

$$X(M)———>SR/SE$$

Finally, in examining generic meditation, the contemplative mode of acquiring knowledge was substantively ignored; and the philosophical assumption of upward causality largely unchallenged.

In spite of the gains from utilizing a reductionistic approach to the study of the content of meditation, it can be argued that no technique is truly examined context-free. Therefore, without consciously specifying the context, there are two possible consequences. First, the investigation of a technique such as meditation may be methodology-driven—limited to that which we have the tools to examine. Second, as Nolan (1972) suggested regarding behavioral strategies, if one does not posit an explicit framework of values and/or psychological health, the technique (whether meditation, biofeedback, or behavioral self-control) may become merely an amoral technology to serve the often unexamined values and cultural assumptions of the larger society. The culture in which the technique is used becomes, by fiat, the context. Thus, there was the suggestion by Kutz et al. (1985) that medical therapeutics become the context for meditation as a self-regulation strategy; and that psychotherapy become the context for meditation as a self-exploration strategy. At the very least, it was apparent that an exclusive, reductionistic, context-free approach to the study of meditation, though necessary, was insufficient.

While agreeing with Kutz et al. that the reintroduction and broadening of context is important, this paper suggests that they have not gone far enough (see Deikman, 1984). They stop at enlarging context to include the religious and spiritual dimension, stating this is not necessary, and that a Western medical and psychotherapeutic context is sufficient:

> Most people find the renunciation of their own cultural roots and adoption of foreign beliefs and habits unacceptable. It is also unnecessary. It is our assertion that psychotherapy can provide one Western context for the practice of meditation, just as Buddhism provides an Eastern one (Kutz et al.,1985, p. 7).

Kutz et al. are arguing that the contextual issue is a battle between Western psychotherapy and Eastern Buddhism. That is certainly an understandable assumption since, as we have noted, most of the meditation research has been conducted on "Eastern" techniques—TM, Zen, Vipassana. However, as also noted, meditation as a contemplative tool is by no means limited to only the Eastern traditions.

Therefore, the task of examining the original context of meditation needs to explore the spiritual/religious context (East and/or West), including both the particularistic tradition and the Universal goal. From the standpoint of the particular, since the vast majority of people in the United States subscribe to a religious orientation (Gallup, 1985, 1991), sectarian meditation need not be incompatible and "foreign", and in fact one's own religious orientation can provide a legitimate context. From the standpoint of the Universal, as Bergin (1991, p. 401) recently noted, summarizing a decade of research on values and religious issues in psychotherapy and mental health, "there is a spiritual dimension of human experience with which the field of psychology must come to terms more assiduously."

Reintroducing the Particular and the Universal

You can learn from Buddhist meditation even if you are not Buddhist.
—Shinzen Young

Western Therapy as Context?

There are different approaches to stress management (Burchfield, 1985); different schools of psychotherapy (Corsini and Wedding, 1989); and different religious traditions (Smith, 1965). However, even when there are heated disagreements and debates in science and psychology, nothing compares to the untold atrocities done in God's name, often because of particularism and attachment to that particularism (H. Smith, 1965; J. Campbell, 1972). One of the reasons why Western science initially may have tried to develop a generic, context-free meditation was to avoid the dilemmas and divisiveness of particularism.

Interestingly, not only did science try to remove the cultic, religious trappings around meditation, so did many meditation organizations. For example, the Transcendental Meditation movement argued that meditation was not part of a religion.

Certainly one cannot necessarily call cognitive focusing on the repetition of a word religious, if only looked at within a secular context, or as the content component of a technique.

Research is suggesting that in the initial stages, Shinzen Young's statement above can be correct. For example, in one study, people learning Vipassana meditation who identified themselves as belonging to a specific monotheistic religion, cited their initial reasons for learning meditation as "self-regulation", and the primary effect "self-regulation and self-exploration" (Shapiro, 1992). These goals and effects would involve a minimum of religious conflict with their religious identification, thereby echoing the words of Shinzen Young.

However, although there was an initial effort to present "non-sectarian" context-free meditation, as the meditative faith communities have matured (such as Vipassana in America; Transcendental Meditation outside India), there is increasing incorporation of additional religiously oriented rituals and activities (such as Vedic/Hindu with TM; Buddhist teachings with some Vipassana communities, etc.). As this occurs, some of the particularistic issues have re-emerged. For example, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1989) in Catholicism has issued a letter suggesting that Eastern techniques of meditation and yoga may be misused by Catholic practitioners unless they are incorporated within a Christian framework.

Preliminary data from meditation research also confirm that for longer term meditators (mature contemplatives), the issue of the particular context becomes increasingly relevant, and cannot be ignored. In a cross-sectional analysis, data revealed that there is a relationship (Brigham, 1989) between the length of time a person meditates and the identification with the particularistic context of the technique as their religious orientation (Shapiro, 1992; cf. Compton, 1991). Individuals in the group which had practiced the least were more likely to identify with a specific monotheistic religion, or no religion at all; individuals who practiced the most, more likely to identify with the particular context of that meditation technique.

Therefore, it has become clear that we need to reintroduce the P back into the left side of the equation: P(M)———> . Particularism cannot be summarily dismissed, and therefore it is necessary to clarify and be precise about the context, for a new context is inevitably substituted, and the goals of the new context may be methodologically or culturally driven. Certainly within its original particularistic context, meditation was not used primarily as a means of reducing blood pressure! In addition, just because a technique can be expressed in universal (small u), context-free language does not necessarily mean attention to its original particular context is not also important, at least for some people (Cox, 1977; Benson, 1984).

Spiritual Perspective as Context and Goal

In addition, the goals of meditation from the original particularistic context—self-liberation/compassionate service—appear to become predominant in relation to the length of time a person has practiced. Data have shown that there is a correlation between the length of time a person meditates and the goals of meditation. Shifts in goals and effects of meditation along a SR (self-regulation), SE (self-exploration) SL, (self-liberation/ compassionate service) are related to length of practice. In one research study (Shapiro, 1992), the longer that individuals had practiced meditation, the more likely that the goals and effects of meditation were related to self-liberation/compassionate service. In many cases, this goal involved experiences of varying strength and intensity about the nature of ultimate universal reality. Therefore, it is necessary, given the focus of this paper, to reintroduce the phenomenological experience of the Universal back into the other side of the equation: P(M)———>U. We are now back to the vectored equation with which we started Section One. Has there been any progress? From one perspective, the answer is yes. There are benefits to a narrow-based scientific model, and much of the data on the health care and clinical benefits of meditation are the product of that assumptive framework. As we have seen, although it is theoretically possible to extract the technique of meditation from its original, particularistic cultural context, there are limiting assumptions built into that process, which affect both the context and the goal. Therefore, to answer the major question which this monograph is addressing regarding the universal/particular relationship, a strictly reductionistic science model has severe flaws. If the assumptions and methodological strategies of traditional science, when

addressing the topic of meditation, end by denuding both the particular and the universal, where might we turn for additional insights into the universal/particular challenge? Certainly one place is to the religious traditions themselves. A second place is to the field of transpersonal psychology. It is those topics that are examined in Section Two.

Summary

Because meditation has often been used as a contemplative tool within particular traditions as a means to phenomenologically experience ultimate, Universal, reality, Section One examined the scientific research on meditation. Specifically, it was shown how and why, based on traditional scientific assumptions, the original particularistic context was removed to focus on a generic, replicable technique; and that the goal of experiencing Universal ultimate reality was removed, replaced primarily by self-regulation; and less frequently by self-exploration. Section One also examined the importance of reintroducing the particularistic context back into the left hand side of the equation as context, and the Universal into the right hand side as goal.

Section Two
Religion, Transpersonal Psychology and the Universal/Particular

The Tao that can be named is no longer the Tao.

—Lao-Tzu

Zen is a special transmission outside the scriptures. No dependence on words and letters.

—D. T. Suzuki

Theology should not be discussed until after a person has meditated.

—Anon.

As meditation research matures, the limitations of traditional science discussed in Section One are being increasingly acknowledged. Specifically, the problems of using reductionistic research as a sole strategy have been detailed; the limitations (and even impossibility) of developing a "context-free" generic meditation have been recognized; and the importance of the contemplative mode as part of an expanded epistemology is being emphasized. Further, a model of control downward as a model of causality is being identified and investigated. This control downward model argues that mind and consciousness and other order emergent properties "on the macroscopic scale supersede, envelope, and enfold lower level activities on the microscopic one." (Sperry, 1986, p. 84)

This section is based on the premise that to move the discussion of the interface between the Universal (large U) and Particular to the next level, broader assumptions need to be considered and integrated. What is needed is an enlarged view of science, one which honors hypothetic-deductive reasoning, but is not exclusively reductionistic; utilizes the contemplative mode as one important (and in this discussion critical) mode of knowing; includes a value component; recognizes control downward causality—the role of consciousness in effecting the "lower" rungs of the great chain of being; and is based on ontological assumptions of wholeness (see Harman, 1992).

In the following section, a religious response and a transpersonal response are examined as they relate to the question of how the particular can serve as a context for experiencing the universal: P————>U; how the Universal, once experienced, can affect the Particular: U————>P; and how the Universal, once experienced, is reciprocally influenced and also grounded by the Particular: U<————P. Finally, a fourth question is addressed: Once having experienced the universal, might there be a next step other than

reinvigorating the Particular, what we might call Universal—only particular, or beyond the particular: U——>P only?[7]

Introduction to Comparing a Religious and a Transpersonal Response[8]

In order to investigate a religious response and a transpersonal response to these questions, it is helpful to imagine two institutions, one a religious seminary of a particular faith, the other a school of transpersonal psychology. For the purposes of this discussion and to avoid setting up ersatz "straw" dichotomies, it is stated at the outset that both institutions (and individuals within them) share the propositions with which this paper began: 1) there is a universal, ultimate, reality which is holistic, unitive, and non-dualistic; 2) there are several different particular paths which can lead to a realization of this reality; and 3) the contemplative mode of knowing is an important method for helping an individual gain an experiential awareness of this reality.

There are three additional subassumptions which form the basis for the ensuing discussion. These three can logically (but not inevitably) follow from our three propositions and are therefore noted here: 1) The first subassumption is that the goal of both institutions is in service of the sacred, utilizing the meaning of religion (from the Latin) as to link back to, to reconnect to the Source; 2) The second subassumption is that these training institutions have a commitment to try to ensure that a particular path does not become an end in itself but is a means—language, ritual, ethics—to the universal. 3) The third subassumption is the recognition that with only the rarest of reported secondary accounts, the ineffable, non-dualistic experience of the universal, that unmediated experience that transcends culture, cues, context, conceptual frameworks, particularistic rituals, conditioned modes of knowing, does not last.

A Religious Response

P——>U: Honor Others, but Practice Your Own

A religious response says that even if several particulars can lead to the universal, the religious institution should teach its own particular tradition. As Soygal Rinpoche stated: "Honor other traditions, but practice your own." Further, it could be argued that the choosing of one particular is a necessary vehicle to reach the universal. Huston Smith, responding to a question regarding how to best transmit knowledge of the "universal", wrote (1981):

> It is as impossible to teach the essence of religion without teaching a particular religion as it is to teach the essence of language without first learning a particular language.

At a certain point on the seeker's path, the techniques and rituals of a particular religion can provide motivation, inspiration, progressive awareness and sign posts along the path. Since "mystical" experiences do not appear to be something that one can predict and control, the rituals and doctrine provide a collective framework and structure within which one can proceed and work toward "mystical understanding" even if one has not yet had such an experience. "Mystical understanding", and experience itself, allow individuals to know that a promised land exists, and awaken them from the constricted consciousness of ordinary reality. Therefore, one critical function of religious traditions may be providing means that help individuals in subsequent generations both with guideposts and with the techniques and framework to *experience* this understanding of the universal.

U—>P; U<—P: To Open or Reground

With the rarest of exceptions, the experience of the universal, no matter how deep or how profound, ends (see Fischer, 1971; Davidson, 1976; Pribram, 1988; West, 1987; Steindl-Rast, 1989; Novak, 1989; Stace, 1960; Vaughan, 1989; Elliade, 1987; James, 1958; Underhill, 1955). A religious response argues at this point that there is a potentially reciprocally positive influence between the universal and the particular. Once having experienced the universal, that experience can imbue the particular with greater heart and understanding: U—>P (see Steindl-Rast, 1989; Schachter, 1983; Inayat Kahn, 1989). For example, Martin Buber has discussed in *Daniel* (1965) the importance of the mystical state of consciousness for subsequent ethical transformation; and in *I-Thou* (1958) and *Between Man and Man* (1965) how that unitive experience can be a context for the life of dialogue and relationship.

Reciprocally, the particular can provide a framework—beliefs, values, and goals— within which the universal is understood, influence how the universal is interpreted (belief), and be determinative of how the experience is subsequently integrated back into the individual's life (goals and values): U<—P. In each tradition there is what has been called the "dark night of the soul". Buber (1955) describes this as the loss of faith for even the most believing. Religion can provide a faith community of support during those times.

Thus, a particular religion can utilize rituals and doctrine in order to provide a framework of shared collective memory and myth about how to understand and interpret mystical experience. Religious traditions can involve rituals and means by which to help individuals actualize that experience and live it in the world—to move from altered states of consciousness to altered "traits" of consciousness and behavior (Goleman, 1988). The rituals and doctrine may provide a structure and framework to guide and harness the inspiration and awareness of the mystical experience for both trait transformation (Wilber, Engler, Brown 1986) and societal transformation (Walsh, 1984). In these ways, the particular tradition can be both impetus and context for the non-temporal experience, and in turn ground the non-temporal vision and experience in the culture of the time.

Limitations of a Religious Response

In terms of our universal/particular discussion, the religious response has several advantages over a traditional scientific approach: The contemplative mode of knowing is honored; questions of the universal are treated as important; and the importance of the particular path is certainly not ignored. However, even defining the faith community as liberal (that is, many particular paths can lead to the universal), a religious response can not actually address questions beyond its own self-contained particular/universal loop.

A Transpersonal Response

Historical Background

Transpersonal psychology has two historical roots. One is psychological, drawing from the scientific tradition and methodologies of that discipline while at the same time trying to broaden both those methodologies and the content area addressed. Specifically, transpersonal psychology has been involved in a struggle to investigate, explicate, and validate several areas which contemporary psychologies have pathologized, denied, or ignored, and which the spiritual traditions, and transpersonal psychology, have argued are essential (GAP, 1977; Alexander, 1931; Ellis, 1989). These areas include examining levels of human development and maturation beyond normal ego psychology theories; stressing the importance of experiential knowing; and seeking to define and refine a class of experiences and states of consciousness—altered states, peak experiences, awareness of the numinous. All of the above tasks have been missing within contemporary Western psychologies, which do not even acknowledge, much less address, these realms (Goleman, 1977; Walsh, 1980; Smith, 1988; Lajoie and Shapiro, 1992). The second historical root is religious, drawing from the contemplative core of the world's spiritual traditions (see Tart, 1975; Walsh and Shapiro, 1983). The stuggle to interface these two historical roots—to bootstrap on the knowledge of the spiritual traditions and integrate that with the empiricism and developmental knowledge of psychology—has served the field well during the past twenty-five years, what we might call phase one of transpersonal psychology. In the process, there has often been a blurring between the psychological and the religious, one which heretofore in many ways was not problematic in addressing the universal/particular relationship.

However, this paper argues that in order to address the relationship of the universal/particular (for the individual and the collective) with greater precision and sophistication, an unfolding challenge for the field of transpersonal psychology is to more carefully investigate its own assumptions, and to differentiate, where appropriate, from its religious roots.

A Phase One Transpersonal Psychology Approach

A phase one transpersonal psychology approach has the same advantage in addressing the universal/particular question as a religious response in that there is an openness to addressing the issue; an honoring of the contemplative mode of knowing; and a willingness to honor those who believe in the assumption of the existence of a universal ultimate reality.

Further, it has the advantage over the religious response in that it can try to address these issues head on, standing outside of any particular tradition. The major contribution of a phase one transpersonal psychology approach was to highlight the similarities between particular approaches across traditions, and to detail aspects of the convergence toward a universal, ultimate reality.

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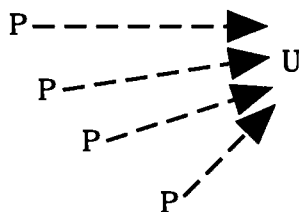
Bootstrapping: Noting Similarities

However, there was really a bootstrapping that occurred in the Phase One approach, in that the language used was almost entirely religious language, and the techniques were primarily those of the religious traditions.

Up to this point, Wilber (1977, 1980,a,b; 1983,a,b) has been the clearest and most ambitious in delineating a multi-leveled hierarchical schemata within which different psychological and spiritual traditions can be shown to fit. A careful reading indicates that although Wilber says he is drawing from Western disciplines of ego psychology, in fact he only makes use of ego psychology for the lower levels of the developmental matrix. For the highest level, the Mind level, that "core insight of the psychologia perennis . . . that [our] innermost consciousness is identical to the absolute and ultimate reality of the universe" the language he uses as examples are all religious: "Brahman, Tao, Dharmakaya, Allah, the Godhead" (p. 83). Further, Wilber says, the "therapies addressing this level [Mind] include Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism, Vedanta, Hinduism, Sufism, and certain

forms of Christian Mysticism." Wilber and others (see Tart, 1975) are using the language of particular spiritual approaches to name the universal, and citing the contemplative methodologies within those particulars—that is, technologies of transcendence—as the "therapies" which can be used to address the subject-object split and create a non-dualistic state.

Because there was no discussion of these topics within Western psychology, some bootstrapping was necessary from the spiritual traditions—both for the language, the vision, and the techniques, as indicated by the Wilber excerpts above. In several ways, as noted, this is a pioneering and critical contribution to the field. But the question must now be asked: How is a phase one transpersonal response, represented by Wilber's model—at the level of Mind—different from a religious response? Is this new schemata merely adding a religious "topping" to Western psychology, and adding additional clarity and developmental rigor from ego psychology to the lower, less filled in bands of the religious? Can transpersonal psychology, which in many ways owes its existence to a bootstrapping from the religious traditions, have potentially anything more to offer to the discussion of the universal other than a recycled religious response in which the names for the universal come from the religious tradition, and the paths for addressing it are the particular spiritual traditions?

A Phase Two Transpersonal Response

Topics to Address: Open Questions

P(s)——>U.

Sometimes I frequent the Christian cloister and sometimes the mosque; But it is Thou whom I search for from temple to temple. Thine elect have no dealings with heresy or orthodoxy. For neither of these stands beside the screen of Thy truth.

—Sufi Abu-'l-Fazl al-Allami, 16th century

Descriptively, how are particular traditions selected; and proscriptively, how might they be selected? Currently, the issue of selection of a particular spiritual tradition and/ or nonsecular universal analogues is, colloquially speaking, a bit of a hodgepodge—whatever works. The choices individuals make in the transpersonal field, and the techniques and paths taught, may be as accidental and no more refined than the accident of "birth" used by the religious institutions.

Phase one transpersonal psychology, as addressed by this paper and noted in the introduction, is based on the proposition that a universal ultimate reality exists, and that there are many paths which can lead to an awareness of that reality. In many respects this view is no different than a liberal theological position of a given faith, although it is certainly different than the assumptions of traditional science. However, to evolve to the next level of sophistication, it may be necessary for those within the transpersonal psychology movement who believe these two assumptions to borrow from and expand the methodology of science to ask questions that a theological position, no matter how liberal, would have great difficulty objectively addressing.

A liberal theological view, as posited here,[8] states that even if there are many paths to the universal, an individual should follow his or her own tradition's path to reach the Universal. A transpersonal response, as posited by this paper, would agree that the above is not wrong, as far as it goes, but would argue that it may be limiting. For example, sufficient consideration has not been given in a religious response to how a particular path might be selected. Is being born into a religion sufficient reason from a religious perspective to pursue a particular path? Certainly this would not necessarily be so from a transpersonal perspective.

Further, a phase two transpersonal response would question the assumption that the transmission of the universal is most effectively accomplished by learning only one particular. Based on anecdotal case studies and naturalistic observation, it can be seen that many individuals in contemporary society attracted to the transpersonal perspective have experienced "the universal" in different ways than by following one particular religious path. For example, Jewish combinations include Ram Dass, who at times has called himself a Hinju (Hindu plus Jew). Many in the Vipassana community call themselves "Bujew" (Buddhist plus Jew); and Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi has added a Sufi name in recognition of the Islamic contribution to his understanding of the universal. In addition, some have experienced the universal through pharmacological means (Grof, 1980), non-sectarian breath work, and other psychological analogues and universalistic "distillations" of Eastern contemplative practices.

The question of whether two (or more) particular paths are more effective than one in opening the practitioner to an experience of the universal is an empirical question better addressed by an institution of transpersonal psychology than by a religious institution of a particular faith, no matter how liberal or broadly conceived. At this point in our culture, there is a large group of individuals who currently represent an untapped database. How have these individuals chosen their particular path or paths? How does their current path relate to their religion of birth? If different, have they, in Gurdjieff's terms, made peace with their religion of birth (see Tart, 1986)?

A phase two response for transpersonal psychology would involve utilizing an empirical methodology, broadly conceived, to investigate not only the above question of

which particular path works for which individual, but, more refined still, which aspects of which particular, or combination of particulars, might be best suited for an individual in helping them attain what specific goals. In this article, the goal we are positing is an experience of ultimate universal reality. At the very least, an institution dedicated to transpersonal psychology would want to investigate and refine this question of "matching" and choice using empirical tools of the behavioral and social sciences. Initially, the task would be descriptive to determine how and under what circumstances individuals made certain choices. Eventually, with a sufficient database, it could possibly be proscriptive, helping to match individuals to traditions and/or techniques—secular and non-secular. Theoretically, in terms of our universal/particular discussion, a research program conducted by transpersonal psychologists can look with more "objectivity" at this issue of which particular path (or paths) might be best for which person. The matching of type of meditative technique, support community, philosophical structure, etc., to a given person could be undertaken similar to the research on psychotherapy on matching of strategy to person to "clinical" problem (Garfield and Bergin, 1986). This could provide us valuable information that has not currently been addressed as to how an individual is to decide which particular path (or paths) is the best way for him or her to reach the universal: P—>U. Such a databank could also help us determine, beyond religious rhetoric, what are the consequences of raising children simultaneously with two particular traditions? And could it provide information about how knowledge (and experience) of the universal can be transmitted most effectively to the next generation?[9]

U—>P Only?

Having experienced the universal, what is the role of the particular: U—>P? A phase one transpersonal response would not disagree with the religious response that the experience of the universal can reinvigorate the particular. For example, a transpersonal approach would note that some of those who have experienced the universal and then returned could become "gnostic intermediaries"—either for their own particular faith community, or for the society at large. However, a phase two transpersonal response needs to grapple with more precision regarding the need and relevance of returning exclusively to one's particular after an experience of the noetic. There is an old Chinese proverb that says:

The finger points to the moon.

One version continues by saying:

Do not confuse the finger with the moon.

Another version states:

Once the moon has been seen, the finger is no longer necessary.

Two questions are being raised here. The first asks whether, once the universal, ultimate reality has been realized, a person needs to necessarily return to his or her particularistic tradition. In other words, once the top of the mountain has been reached, is a return to the particular tradition necessarily the most effective possible strategy?

A liberal religious perspective, as we have described in this paper, takes an advocacy position, argues for itself—albeit from a broader perspective than before—and says yes. But might there be other alternatives?

For example, in a previously mentioned study of individuals at a Vipassana retreat (Shapiro, 1992), there was a percentage of individuals (25%) in the long-term group who, in response to the question of religion, specifically wrote in under the category "other"— *all*. Novak (1992b) and others have suggested not only that the technique of meditation may help individuals experience the Universal, but also that the non-reactive awareness involved in the process of meditation may help teach them a non-attachment to thoughts, including the identification with their own particular path. What does the phrase all religions mean? Is this a rainbow of particular religions? A transcendence of particular religion, a reflection of the universal experience from meditation? How would this be transmitted to the next generation? Would it be possible or even desirable to examine and develop a new, non-particular model on the other side of the universal: U—>NP? If so, who should be involved in such an effort?

Toward An Expanded Science

Limitations of Traditional Science and a Religious Response

It is argued here that the above issues and questions can be most candidly addressed by a transpersonal approach, representing an integration and sensitivity to both the limitations and strengths of a religious response and a traditional scientific response. It has been shown that just as a traditional scientific approach is limited, so too is a religious approach, no matter how liberally conceived. Therefore, it has been suggested that there needs to be a differentiation between a transpersonal response and a religious response to the issue of the relationship between the universal and the particular. The transpersonal response can include but need not and in fact should not be limited by the religious response, just as the transpersonal approach can include but should not be limited by traditional scientific assumptions. This phase two transpersonal response has the potential to combine the contemplative knowledge from the religious tradition with the knowledge of traditional science. In so doing, it can be built upon more appropriate assumptions necessary for a thoughtful and careful inquiry into the above open questions raised regarding the universal/particular challenge.

Assumptions and Characteristics of an Expanded Science

What might an expanded science, represented by a phase two transpersonal response, look like, and what might it add in drawing from and incorporating aspects of both traditional science and a religious response? Just because there are difficulties with a traditional scientific approach does not mean there are not helpful aspects that can be learned from utilizing scientific methodology, if appropriately expanded. As previously noted regarding meditation research (Shapiro and Walsh, 1984, p. 696):

> ... What we scientists have only recently come to recognize, and what is important for us to remember as we begin this exploration of meditation, is that any and every method of investigation, any concept, hypothesis, or theory, only affords us a partial and elective picture of reality. From the vastness of 'what is', our chosen technologies and concepts dissect nature along corresponding lines and provide a selective and limited perspective of the whole. Thus what we observe is ultimately a function not only of the reality we wish to know, but of the tools and concepts by which we seek to know it, and ultimately ourselves. Nowhere is this recognition more important than in the investigation of meditation which, as a discipline, traditionally aimed at the deepest and most fundamental types of knowing.

First, an expanded science would honor the contemplative core as a mode of knowing. Since our belief systems affect what we study (see Kuhn, 1970), those of us who are both trained in the behavioral sciences and in meditative practice are in a unique position, and, at the same time, have a major responsibility, to be aware of, articulate, assess, and evaluate our own beliefs as they interface with the study and practice of meditation. In so doing, we can examine, to the limits of our ability, the effects of meditation on our lives (and vice versa). I believe this type of investigation can be a rich source of information, insights, observations, and hypotheses about the nature of the meditative experience, and can complement the more traditional scientific models. Further, within the philosophy of science (such as Polanyi, 1958; Kuhn, 1970; Popper, 1972), I believe this approach to personal knowledge can represent the scientific tradition at its best, one that honors but is not limited to the reductionistic approach and is not limited to mental and sensory modes of knowing, but includes the contemplative.

Second, subjective hunches and intuitive personal understandings can contribute significantly to scientific progress (see Koestler, 1964; Vaughan, 1979). As Donald Campbell has stated (1975, p. 1103):

> We are being convinced . . . of the message of Hume and Kant: All scientific knowing is indirect, presumptive, obliquely and incompletely corroborated at best. The language of science is subjective, provincial, approximate, and metaphoric, never the language of reality itself.

Third, there is a place within the scientific tradition for examining values. Although some believe that science can (and should) be value-neutral (see Sagan, 1980; Smith, M. D. 1961); and some believe that values can never be determined through empirical/analytic efforts (see Einstein, 1956), it can also be argued that there is an area of interface in which what is fact and what is value become fused (see Maslow, 1963, 1970; Kantor, 1971; Shapiro, 1983; Heath, 1983; Wilber, 1983). There is the realization that in the realm of human behavior and activity, an amoral, value-free posture is already a values statement. Values can help define for some what is studied, and how it is studied.

Fourth, and related to the above three, is the idea that values, beliefs, cognitions, and other forms of consciousness exert a downward causality on other levels of reality, such as atoms, molecules, neurotransmitters, etc. (Sperry, 1985; Josephson, 1985). Therefore, there is a recognition as part of the cognitive revolution (see Pribram, 1988) that mind and consciousness, whether with small or large Ms and Cs, need to be integrated into an expanded science.

Refining and Deepening the Level of Investigation

While honoring the expanded assumptions, what might be the next steps in addressing the open questions facing a phase two transpersonal approach? In many ways, the task becomes increasingly daunting as one tries to pinpoint and refine the variables and issues involved. For example, the issue of comparison involves making a determination as to which variables and dimensions within and between traditions are (should be) considered the most salient, and what language to use to delineate and explicate the variables. The issue of "better" involves defining what is the goal (dependent variable) and what is the means (independent variable)—such as experience of the universal; belief system; self-transformation; societal transformation.

Depending upon how the question is framed, each of the above could be considered an independent variable (iv) or dependent variable (dv): such as how does an experience of the universal (iv) affect beliefs (dv); or how do beliefs (iv) affect an experience of the universal (dv). Each can affect the other, and the questions raised about one are not in isolation from the other. There is feedback and reciprocal influence. Therefore, to refine our investigation, what is needed is 1) a universal language with which to develop a 2) generic template delineating core dimensions; 3) and those dimensions connected by a system's approach showing feedback and reciprocal influence. Each of these is addressed below.

Toward a Universal Language

A religious response uses its own language. A phase one transpersonal approach, as we have seen, borrowed from the language of many different particular approaches. Laughlin et al. (1990), in facing the task of trying "to construct a framework for cross-cultural comparison and scientific theory construction", underscore the dilemma faced

in trying to create a language to describe the universal. At first they considered trying to address the issue by selecting what they considered the most sophisticated from among the different particular languages, that of the Indian Vedantic and tantric traditions. However, they go on to argue that a language cannot be lifted from its philosophical context, or "we could end up in the ludicrous position of making sense of, say, Christian mystical experience using Hindu insights and interpretations . . . " (Laughlin et al., 1990, p. 297). Therefore they choose the "language of science", a proposition with which this paper agrees. We now turn to how this language might be exemplified in the development of a generic template.

A Generic Template: Rationale and Dimensions

If we are in agreement that claims about universal ultimate reality are not provable, why develop a generic template, and what dimensions might be used? In response to the first question of why, Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1981) in his book *Toward a World Theology* has stressed the importance of trying to understand human religiousness universally as a planetary and evolutionary phenomenon: "to interpret intellectually the cosmic significance of human life generically" (1981, p. 86). To do this Novak has noted we need "to leave the valley of theological particularism . . . to seek a theological universal, a tract of conceptual land belonging to everyone and owned by no one, where universes of discourse can meet and make common cause" (1992a, p. 5). Although a generic template such as the one being proposed here may not answer the question of proof regarding ultimate reality, it can help us note the areas of "generic" commonality (as well as actual differences) across particular traditions. This can help meet the need which Rossner has also posited, (1983, p. 6) namely to seek "universal dimensions of traditional religious faiths in a modern, Global Village context." A generic template could identify and delineate, regardless of language and custom, common important components across particularistic traditions. Such a template could be derived both from particular religious traditions and other psycho-spiritual paths.

In terms of the second question, regarding dimensions, a primary initial task would be to establish the core dimensions of such a template, and to integrate already existing data from the empirical sciences. As a beginning effort, the following four core dimensions are considered: 1) individuals' experiences of the universal; 2) individuals' beliefs about the nature of the universe; 3) techniques which can be used to help individuals gain an experience of the numinous; and 4) individual personality and development.

Certainly one major component of the template would involve *experience(s) of the Universal*—including length, intensity, duration, nature. An exploration of this dimension could be helped by exploring both classical contemplative texts, relevant philosophical and cross-cultural works, as well as the behavioral science literature on the phenomenology of meditation, mystical experience, and states of consciousness (state dependent learning, altered states) (Davidson, 1976; Wilber, 1980b; Wilber, Brown, and Engler, 1986; Tart, 1975; Walsh, 1980; Pakula, 1987; Shapiro, 1980, 1983; Laughlin et al., 1990).

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A second dimension would involve *beliefs about the nature of the universe,* including components, nature, assumptions, and process of development. These beliefs would need to be examined both within the organization and socio-cultural context as demand characteristics (see Orne, 1962) as well as within the individual. Even if there is assumed to be a universal ultimate reality, there still remain differences among traditions in the beliefs that are verbally expressed about that reality. For example, four relevant dimensions of belief previously identified (Shapiro, 1989a) include (a) theistic versus non-theistic universe; (b) is ultimate reality thought to be benign or indifferent; (c) what is the role of human control, effort and free choice in relationship to this ultimate reality (Shapiro, 1989, 1993a,b); and (d) what claim, if any, does the belief make to universal applicability (for all people) and to what degree is a particular path (with what level of exclusivity) reflected in the belief statement.

A third dimension is *techniques.* Narrowly defined, these techniques would include specific "tools of transcendence". However, as Fischer (1971) and others have pointed out, quite disparate tools can be used with quite similar effects. For example, just looking at meditation, it has been pointed out that there are many different types of techniques. Some involve sitting quietly and produce a state of quiescence and restfulness (Wallace, Benson, and Wilson, 1971). Some involve sitting quietly and produce a state of excitement and arousal (Das and Gastaut, 1955; Corby, Roth, Zarcone, 1978). Some, such as the Sufi whirling dervish, tai chi, hatha yoga, and Isiguro Zen, involve physical movement to a greater or lesser degree (Hirai, 1974; Naranjo and Ornstein, 1971). Sometimes these movement meditations result in a state of excitement, sometimes a state of relaxation (Davidson, 1976; Fischer, 1971). Accordingly, depending on the type of meditation, the body may be active and moving or relatively motionless and passive. Attention may be actively focused on one object of concentration to the exclusion of other objects (Anand, Chinna, Singh, 1961). Attention may be focused on one object, but as other objects, thoughts, or feelings occur, they too may be noticed and then attention returned to the original focal object (Vipassana and Transcendental Meditation, for example). Attention may not be focused exclusively on any particular object (Zen's shikan taza for example) (Kasamatsu and Hirai, 1966; Krishnamurti, 1979).

Even within traditions, there are often a variety of different techniques and paths through which an individual can work toward experiencing and understanding the nature of ultimate reality. For example, within a given tradition there may be different paths, one path emphasizing intellectual learning, such as Torah study or jhana yoga practice; another path emphasizing more "ecstatic" celebration, such as bhakti yoga, Sufi Dervish, Hassidic dancing; a third path within a tradition may emphasize the path of doing deeds of service in the world, such as karma yoga or Judaism's mitzvot and tikkun olam—healing the world; and a fourth path may emphasize faith and grace (Rosenthal, 1987). Even within these different groupings, some take a more "strict" interpretation of the law, ritual, and tradition, placing greater emphasis on the roots as an anchor. Others within a tradition, while honoring the roots, also emphasize looking for ways to grow new branches and leaves.

Rossner, in discussing techniques, noted that we need to include both the "spiritual and psychic technologies of the past: rituals, prayer, meditation, yoga, liturgies, sacraments" as well as current mind technologies, such as Silva mind control, bio-feedback, psychosynthesis.

There are several areas in which dimensions related to the *individual personality and development* may also be important. These include issues of individual needs (Maslow, 1969; Wilber, 1983), issues of ego and self (such as need for uniqueness and belonging; narcissism and altruism) (Erickson, 1959; Wilber, 1983; Kanfer, 1979); personality styles (such as tolerance for ambiguity, introversion/extroversion) and dominant mode of expression (such as intellectual/ verbal; body/ kinesthetic; visual/ imagery; feeling/ emotional); developmental stages—human life cycle, growth, and maturity—(D. J. Levinson, 1978; Heath, 1983; Vaillant, 1977; Chinnen, 1987); the importance of control in our lives (choice, responsibility, self-control, control by a benevolent other) (Weisz et al., 1984; Taylor, 1983; Rodin, 1986; Shapiro, 1992a,b; in press a,b); as well as the empirical literature on faith development and moral stages (Fowler, 1981; Kohlberg, 1981).

The above is not intended to be an exhaustive list of possible dimensions for a generic template. More systematic research may expand and refine the dimensions explored. However, it is hoped that, as a baseline, there would be little disagreement about the importance of the above issues as part of such a template.

A Systems Approach

The universal/particular relationship has been portrayed up to this point as a linear vector: P——>U. However, as noted there is a reciprocal influence and therefore a system's feedback loop (Bertanlaffy, 1968; Schwartz 1979a,b; 1983) is a more accurate representation. For example, in looking at a religious response within the feedback loop of a system's model, it can be seen that the particular faith community (P) provides the context for the universal experience (U). The experience of the universal can then reinvigorate the particular; which in turn can be a grounding for the universal experience.

Figure One
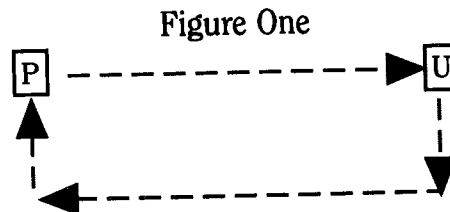
With two elements in the model, this is referred to as reciprocal determinism; with more than two elements, omnideterminism (Bandura, 1978; Minuchin, 1974). As dimensions from our generic template are added, the systems model becomes more

complex. The particular forms the context for the types of techniques (T) that are taught, including both the belief and value system in which they are taught. Further, the techniques are ultimately selected by the individual (I), based on his or her personality and development. That individual is both influenced by and influences the particular tradition, just as the individual both selects the techniques and is, in turn, affected by them. Further, the experience of the universal not only affects the particular, but also the individual experiencing it. A system's model can show the interactive nature between these dimensions:

Figure Two

P ← → U

Techniques

Individual
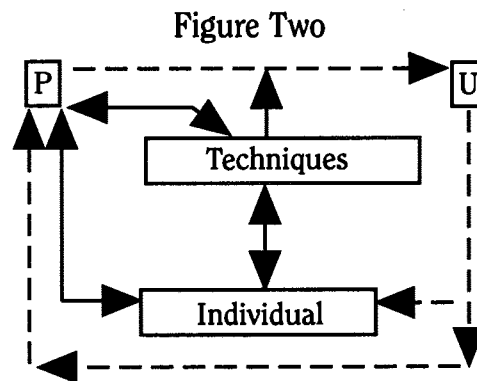
In addition, a system's approach can look at refinements within dimensions. For example, within the dimension of techniques, there are several different ones we have discussed within particular traditions. They include not only meditative and contemplative techniques, but paths of the intellect, service, ecstasy, faith, etc. A systems approach could examine within a given dimension how and to what degree practice in one (or more) techniques affects, influences, and/or catalyzes practice in the others.

Figure Three

TECHNIQUES/PATH/RITUALS
Intellect
Ecstasy
Faith
Contemplative
Service

FIGURE FOUR—   A Systems Approach to Examining Core Dimensions of the Universal/Particular Relationship
A Generic Template

PARTICULAR
    Nature of Community
    Socio-Cultural Linguistic Context
    Demand Characteristics

Experience(s) of
UNIVERSAL
    Length
    Intensity
    Duration
    Nature

TECHNIQUES/PATH/RITUALS
    Intellect
    Ecstasy
    Service
    Faith
    Contemplative
    Other NP Approaches

BELIEFS
    Nature of Universe: Theistic or Non-Theistic
    Valence of Universe
    Role of Human Control
    Role of Particular

INDIVIDUAL
    Religion of Birth

    Where in development
        Personality Style
        Faith Development
        Moral Development

    Motivation for Search
    Nature of Search

VALUES
    Self-Transformation
    Societal Transformation
    Moral Values

SUBSEQUENT
CHANGES IN . .

OTHER PARTICULARS
    Religious
    Psychological
    Other Approaches

Finally, to address the open questions which were raised at the start of this discussion of a phase two transpersonal approach, it is also necessary to add to our systems approach techniques (and contexts) which come from psychological and pharmacological approaches, as well as noting that rather than just one P, there can be one or more particular traditions (Ps), including religious, psychological, and others yet to be developed.

Although somewhat complex, a preliminary systems model, using universal language, and reflecting core dimensions of our generic template, would look like Figure Four on pages 26-27.

Figure Four illustrates the dimensions of belief, techniques, and values within one or more particular paths. Those dimensions can reciprocally interact with the individual's motivation and development, affecting the nature of the search. The dimension of experience(s) of the universal is also illustrated, and through a feedback loop its potential effect on subsequent changes in the individual, the nature of the search, beliefs, values, and techniques is highlighted.

Because of the beginning assumptions of this paper, the main emphasis in Figure Four is the dimension of the experience of the Universal—both the path(s) leading to it, and the subsequent effect the experience of the universal can have on other areas. However, a dimension other than the experience of the universal could be emphasized in Figure Four (that is, self-transformation; societal transformation; beliefs). Then, it could be determined through path analysis (see Bandura, 1989) what other variables interacted with and influenced that dimension, and to what degree.

Potential Advantages and Uses of a Generic Template

There were several open questions raised earlier in this section that a generic template could help address. Six specific ones are discussed below.

Delineating Commonalities

A cursory acquaintance with history suggests how attached different traditions, and even different paths within the same tradition, can become to "their way" of understanding, and some of the unfortunate results that can occur in the name of religion. Utilizing a non-particular template such as the one suggested here might be useful in helping us compare and understand the varying emphases that different religious traditions have placed on these dimensions, and to realize that these differences may often not be so much ones of kind as of degree.

As an example, issues of faith versus deed (law) have historically been one differentiation used by some to distinguish between Judaism and Christianity (such as

Galatians 4:21-5:1). However, the issue also occurs within Christianity itself. For example, Paul, drawing on a verse in Genesis (15:6) argues that merit depends on faith rather than law (Romans 4:2,3; Galatians 3:6-11). But James draws the opposite conclusion: Man is justified by works, and not by faith alone (James 2:23-26). Further, the issue of faith versus deeds occurs *within* Judaism, as well as in other religious traditions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. First, a generic template could help increase precision regarding commonalities and differences within and between traditions. Topics could include the relative emphasis placed upon each of the dimensions (such as values, beliefs, techniques), as well as on subsets of dimensions (such as path of service, path of contemplation within the technique dimension). At the very least the use of such a generic template could, on one level, help promote interfaith dialogue and understanding. Further, at a more ambitious level, it may help assist in what Rossner referred to as (1983, p. x):

> the ultimate development of more integrative models for the reconciliation of the emerging sciences of the future with the authentic spiritual, in universal terms.

Assessment, Feedback, Matching

Second, the generic template could serve as an overarching model to assess how effectively a particular tradition was serving individuals in reaching an experience of the universal, and then in subsequently integrating that experience back into their lives. Part of the task could initially be descriptive, examining, for example why a person is drawn to a certain subset of the technique's dimension: such as intellectual/philosophical; "ecstatic" celebratory path; the doing of external deeds in the world; faith; the contemplative path. If the "goal" is an experience of the "Universal", an assessment could be made of that path's effectiveness for a given person at a specific time in that person's lifecycle. Such a template could then provide feedback to a particular tradition and individual to help ensure a better match between the individual, technique, belief, and developmental phase.

Framed in this way, issues of faith versus deeds; mystical experience versus legalistic doctrines; collective understanding and tradition (roots) versus individual experience and progressive change become not "versus" but rather different paths for different individuals, and perhaps for the same individual at different stages of the journey.

Assessment, Evaluation: Which is Better

Although intellectually and conceptually challenging, neither of the above two uses of the generic template should be too emotionally difficult for those either within or outside of religious particulars. Both of them ask questions that can be addressed and evaluated without making any one approach appear wrong, or less good.

However the next four topics may be more difficult, for three of these (three, four, five) have to do not just with helping a particular tradition, or addressing "translation" problems, but in actual assessment and comparisons among particulars. In some ways, the very question of evaluation—asking which is "better"—may make us uncomfortable. If the mystical experience is one of "ultimate" belonging and non-differentiated unitive awareness, then the question of "better" or "ultimate goal" seems to immediately move us from that position of unity and inclusiveness to one of duality and a demarcation. Better implies worse; and more true seems to imply, at best, "less true" if not "wrong". If history hadn't raised this question of "better" so often before, and often with such devastatingly ugly consequences, there is a part of us that might prefer just to ignore the question altogether. Might there be a danger that in evaluating which particular is better, fuel is potentially added to the already existing problem of "my group is better than your group"?

In any undertaking such as this, there is a serious concern about *inappropriate* reductionism and oversimplification, as well as trying to understand a tradition from the outside rather than the inside. However, the intent of the generic template discussed here is not to be a tool of harsh judgment, but rather one of evaluation and guidance. With the sacred as the context, it is suggested that the question of "which tradition" is better can be asked in a more thoughtful and helpful sense. Although there is a danger that the answers may be misused, certainly one important purpose of asking the questions and seeking the evaluation is for feedback and greater assistance.

Throughout history, traditions have learned from and borrowed from each other. The application of a generic template to evaluate and assist particular religions with knowledge from other traditions and from the sciences, it is suggested, *can* work to help and enhance each particular. If we find one set of techniques of values or understandings helpful, we should try to frame that not as having shown that one path is best, but as a way of helping others learn from it, and incorporate it. Each tradition needs to learn what is still working, what to leave behind, what are the best ways to help an individual understand and experience the Universal. Although this type of evaluation and assessment across traditions may be used for a primitive type of evangelizing on behalf of fundamentalist belief systems, it is hoped that within the current context, it could be done with great care, sensitivity, and in service of the sacred at the deepest level.

Reinvigorating a Given Particular

Third, there could be an assessment among particulars to determine relative efficacy. If there were found to be differences in efficacy on a specific dimension, the template could be used as a vehicle to operationalize the difference in generic terms, so that it could then be "translated" back into the particular in a way that both honored the particular and assisted it. This may not be as radical as it first seems, for, as noted above,

in a relatively random way traditions have been influencing each other and borrowing from each other throughout history.

Matching Individual and Techniques Within and Across Particulars

Fourth, and perhaps more emotionally difficult still, would be the determination that a particular person was better matched with a particular tradition different from the one in which he or she was currently practicing. In terms of matching individuals to strategies (technologies of transcendence) and traditions (one or more particular or psycho-spiritual combinations) this template could draw from the empirical knowledge and methodology from the behavioral and social sciences on psychotherapy research.

Research in psychotherapy is attempting to refine the question of which technique or path is best by making it more specific: that is, what techniques are most helpful for which individuals with what kind of clinical problem (Bergin and Lambert, 1978; Strupp, 1973; Paul, 1966). If we substitute the words "goal of transformation" for clinical problem, we could then frame our question as follows: "To reach the goal of transformation of consciousness, behavior, and society, which techniques are most beneficial for which people at which stages of the journey?"

A generic template might be able to set up at least the beginnings of a system for a more broad based matching, not only within particulars but even possibly between particulars. Although this may initially sound like a disservice to a given particular, it is not meant to be. Let me suggest why.

The generic template proposed here would establish in one model both similarities and differences between traditions. As we have seen, there are different views of the nature of the universe; different paths, techniques and practices between and sometimes within traditions; different emphases in terms of the relationship of faith, experiencing the universal, statements of belief, values and behavior—such as changing lifestyle, including both self- and societal-transformation.

Finally, there could be major advantages for the individual. From a psychological viewpoint, there are differences in individuals along personality dimensions, and individuals with different needs at different developmental stages. A generic template might be helpful in asking the broad question of which beliefs, techniques, values appear to be most helpful for which individual for which goal (e.g, experience(s) of the universal). Such a template could help provide an evaluation and assessment of a particular tradition or traditions (Ps) and an individual to help decide which particular path (or paths) is the best way for him or her to reach the universal at what point in their maturation and developmental process.

Assessing Underlying Assumptions: What Do We Mean by Better?

Based on the assumption of the importance of experiencing the universal, the question of which technique is "better" can be relatively easily framed. The question of "better" would revolve around which traditions (or which aspects of which traditions) most effectively access (and/or create) the experience of the universal (for which people, under what conditions, and at what stages of their development). We could also examine which techniques are most helpful, for which individuals, in not only accessing, but also re-accessing and maintaining the experience of that reality. Wilber (1983a) has referred to this as one aspect of the "authenticity" of a religion; and Walsh (1992a) has refined the issue by calling it "effective authenticity".

But there are certain assumptions that have not yet been addressed, and which go beyond the question of "Whether a universal reality exists." These assumptions, stated as questions, include: Does an experience of the universal affect a person's belief and value system? Are individuals with such an experience more motivated to try to change and transform themselves? Are there certain techniques that are not only more effective in helping a person reach the universal, but also in helping individuals deal with changing their lifestyle, behavior and consciousness to address unhelpful human habits in themselves and the world? Do individuals who have experienced the universal evidence more effective changes in behavior and action, such as, are they gentler and more compassionate with themselves and others?

The addressing of the above questions is based on differing views of the question "Which is better?" Is there any way to determine whether the experience of the universal is (or should be) the highest goal of different particularistic traditions? Many would argue that the experience of the universal truth is one of the highest functions of a religion. However, others would disagree. The relationship between mystical experience; a person's beliefs about the nature of the universe; ethical values; and individual behavior is a topic worthy of further investigation.

For example, there have been reports indicating that experiences of the universal were life changing; and others where they seemed to be irrelevant to subsequent personal change (Novak, 1989; Goleman, 1981, 1988; Brown and Engler, 1984). To assess this issue a generic template, using a systems approach, could examine those two variables to help determine more precisely the relationship between ethical behavior and experience of the universal. If we assume that there are certain absolute values that transcend particular traditions and cultures, then, a first order question to the issue of "better" would be to set up an agreed-upon standard, typology and/or hierarchy of "values" and see how well different individuals, with different levels of mystical experience, reflected and/or informed those values. Second order questions would include the following: a) how does ethical behavior, as antecedent preparation, help influence the likelihood of an experience of the universal; b) how does an experience of the universal affect subsequent values and ethical behavior; c) the question could also be

asked and assessed both within as well as across traditions, and comparisons made to other paths, to help determine the importance, whether and/or to what extent the experience of the universal is necessary for ethical behavior. For example, Walsh (1992) asks about traditions, such as shamanism, which do not access the universal. Can a tradition or path which does not believe in the Universal, and therefore does not have techniques for experience of that universal, be as effective as traditions that do (see Kohlberg, 1981; Kohlberg and Ryncarz, 1993)? This would need to be evaluated not only for individuals within one generation, but in terms of how well ethical behavior could be transmitted across generations (see Praeger and Telushkin, 1978). On the one side, Dostoevsky (through Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov*) and Nietzsche would argue "If God is dead, [that is, no Universal exists] all is permitted." Secular humanists would disagree, arguing that the potential within the humans independent of a belief in an ultimate universal reality is sufficient.

The questions in the paragraph above look at the question of whether the belief and experience of the Universal has a necessary impact on ethical behavior. Even if there could be agreement that there is an absolute truth (rather than a relative one), the question of "better" is a difficult one. There would still be the issue of different models of the ultimate goal: that is, transcendence of the world; transcendence, then integration; transcendence through integration. Do we consider all these goals equally good? Are we willing to let each tradition be judged based on its own definition? These are central questions that need to be addressed (Wilber, 1983; Smith, 1982, 1976; Maslow, 1969).

Another assumption is that mystics, following the contemplative path within particular traditions, who have experienced the universal are more similar to each other than to others within their own tradition. A generic template could be used as a basis for making both within and across-particular comparisons on the core dimensions cited. A further comparison could be made between types of contemplation, as well as between contemplation and other technique-related paths. In looking at different traditions, one important issue of "better" might be the way in which a particularistic path views other paths—such as, is there a sense that "ultimate reality" is available to all, through a variety of paths, or is there a sense of exclusiveness— an "entrapment" in the particular? It would be hypothesized that mystics would "hold" their particular tradition more lightly, and see it as less exclusive.

Thus, at the least it should be clear from the above discussion that how the question of "better" is approached may depend upon the context, values, and framework of the person doing the investigation, and that not all the assumptions are yet clarified and agreed upon.

Universal—>Particular Only? Or Beyond the Particular?

Sixth, and perhaps most emotionally difficult for those within a particular religious tradition, is to ask the question of whether once the universal has been experienced there is any alternative model, other than returning to one's particular tradition. Some individuals might wonder whether, having experienced the universal through following a particular path, it perhaps is time for the goal to be the construction of some new, broader, more integrative and evolutionarily wiser model. Once the moon has been seen, how necessary is it to return to the specific finger? Can a new, generic model, comprised of the best of the different religious and other psycho-spiritual traditions, serve as a model for a new phase in our collective psycho-spiritual evolution, the recreation of one universal language, such as is reported to have been the case when the tower of Babel was being built?

Although certainly an ambitious project, and one fraught with potential dangers, I believe the utility of such a project is of sufficient scope and potential to warrant its further investigation.

Summary

This section has been concerned with examining both a religious response and phase one and two transpersonal responses to the universal/particular relationship. It has shown the overlap between the religious and the phase one transpersonal; and how in many ways phase one transpersonal bootstrapped itself from the contemplative religious traditions. It is argued that the field of transpersonal psychology has sufficiently matured to address more carefully the relationship between the universal and the particular. A phase two transpersonal approach, representing an expanded science, drawing from a religious response and traditional science but avoiding their respective limitations, is proposed to address the universal/particular issue. Regarding the Particular to Universal vector, questions raised include the selection of a particular path, and the matching of one (or more) path(s) to an individual. Regarding the Universal to Particular vector, the issue of regrounding the universal experience is examined. The rationale for a systems approach using a universal language is presented, core dimensions of a generic template are described, and six questions which such a template could address are examined. These include: 1) delineating commonalities among particulars; 2) assessment, feedback and matching within a particular; 3-4) assessment, evaluation among particulars asking "which is better", including both efforts to reinvigorate a particular, or matching individual and techniques within and across particulars; 5) assessing underlying assumptions: What is meant by better; and 6) asking whether the development of a generic model on the other side of the Universal is worth exploring.

Section Three
Final Comments, Potential Implications, Future Directions

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

—Proverbs 29:18

The purpose of the tower of Babel was to reach heaven. Etymologically, "Babel" is thought to mean "Bab-ili", Gate of God, but the Bible derives it from the Hebrew root balal "to confuse" (Werblowsky and Wigoder, 1986, 54). In the passage used to open this monograph, God confounded the speech of the builders, and they are scattered over the face of the Earth. At that time the individuals of the Earth were of one language, and "The Lord said 'If, as one people with one language for all, this is how they have begun to act, then nothing they may propose to do will be out of their reach'."

The generic template proposed here is suggesting the importance of a return to one language. In some ways this proposal has the same potential hubris as those building the tower of Babel. Could such a template help be a "Gate to God" or will it only cause "to confuse" further? What was the goal of the builders of the tower of Babel? Was it to find God? To become God? Were their actions born in service or in rebellion? Certainly in suggesting that a task such as the one proposed here be undertaken, questions need to be asked about vision, motivation, as well as about potential problems and implications.

This monograph has attempted to raise some fundamental questions about the universal/particular relationship. Historically, these issues have not been systematically addressed, and may be unique to our cultural, historical, and scientific times. That these topics have not heretofore been articulated within the transpersonal field does not represent a problematic omission, but rather a sign that the field has sufficiently matured to an extent that this topic can now come to the fore. Like fish and water, this relationship is and has been "right before our eyes", the medium in which we are swimming, yet somewhat hard to step back from, observe, and articulate.

Heuristic remarks have attempted to begin the outline sketch of how we might proceed to answer questions about this relationship. Raising these questions, no matter how important, is not to suggest that answering them will be easy. The sheer complexity of the task is staggering—involving potentially multiple variables, multiple causes, and ineffable "phenomenological" experience. However, the very intricacy of the endeavor should, I believe, only be a caution, not a deterrent from proceeding.

Further, the undertaking is not designed to be exclusively descriptive. A careful exploration of the universal/particular relationship may be able to offer some small assistance in helping explore the next step in our psychological and spiritual evolution, and some of the implications of that evolution. For example, could (or should) such an exploration as proposed here potentially mean the end of particularistic religion? An end to generic religion? Would (or should) such an exploration help cause the creation of a new universal world religion? A new broader, more comprehensive science?

Participants, Vision, Implications

One of the major collective projects being undertaken in molecular-based science is the genome project, in which the goal is to map each gene and determine its function and purpose. Might not the time be right to consider a goal analogous to the genome project, a collective exploration, development, construction, and refinement of a broad, generic template such as the one initially outlined in Section Two?

Let as assume that there were unlimited funds to create what Lawrence LeShan has called a "Los Alamos of the Mind", and that its "Manhattan Project" was to address the universal/particular challenge. Whom would we want to gather together to be participants in such an endeavor? What might be the nature of such a program or institution, and what might be its ultimate goal and vision?

Participants and Disciplines

Trying to imagine whom to gather as experts to address the universal/particular challenge helps define and clarify some of the difficulties and complexities of the task. For example, from a religious perspective, we have previously cited Huston Smith's belief that one cannot teach the universal without teaching a particular religion any more than one can teach universal language without teaching a specific language. Continuing the analogy, it would be possible and even easy to recognize individuals who are literally bilingual and can fluently translate between different languages. What would be the religious counterpart? Who, raised in one religious faith, would be considered religiously bi-(or tri-) lingual? Further, if we use science as the "universal language", do we not need someone who can translate between the language of science and the language of a faith community? Who might that be? Further, what disciplines from science would we want? And what belief systems and experiences would we want them to have had?

As a first cut, let me suggest the following. The participants would be those who agree with the basic propositions with which the paper started—that a universal ultimate reality exists, and that there are many particular paths to reach the universal. For those from a religious perspective, it would be important to have individuals who were wise and deeply practiced contemplatives from each of the spiritual traditions. It would be a bonus if they were exposed to and knowledgeable about one or more other spiritual

traditions. It might also be helpful if they had at least some grounding in the empirical sciences.

From the scientific side, it would be important to have scholars from multiple disciplines, who agreed with the above two assumptions, and who based their work on the tenets of an expanded science as outlined earlier. It would also be important that these individuals were also involved in some type of contemplative practice, or at least some type of spiritual path through which they sought to access and experience the Universal. It would be a bonus if they were knowledgeable about one or more religious paths, regardless of whether they were committed to a particular path.

In terms of disciplines to be represented, Rossner (1983) has suggested the importance of historical analysis; anthropological and ethnographic studies; phenomenological studies; comparative studies in mysticism; emerging paradigms from physics and consciousness studies; philosophy and psychology of religion; religious studies; and ethics and morality. Information from other fields could be utilized as needed; and other approaches added as appropriate.

Does it make sense to require a "litmus" test in terms of basic assumptions, holding to certain scientific tenets, being involved in a contemplative practice before one would be invited to participate in such a program? I believe it does, and I further believe that this does not violate academic freedom as it has evolved and been understood in institutions of higher learning in America (see WASC guidelines, 1988). Institutions, programs, departments of higher learning are allowed to have certain basic orientations and assumptions guiding their work. Academic freedom only requires that within those assumptions individuals are free to challenge and critique.

This paper has consistently focused on the importance of a transpersonal approach, and specifically transpersonal psychology as an umbrella under which to address this universal/particular topic. There are several reasons for this. The discipline which currently best encompasses an enlarged view of science discussed in this paper, while still being sensitive to the contemplative and experiential core of religion, is, I believe, the transpersonal approach. Of all the disciplines within the transpersonal field, transpersonal psychology has the longest and most explored history (see *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*). It is that discipline and approach that seeks to develop both the conceptual knowledge, the experiential knowledge, and has the requisite "liberal theology" to be willing to address and tackle this challenge with the integrity, thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and rigor that it deserves.

This does not mean that a multi-disciplinary approach is not important. But it does suggest that unless the noetic is kept at the forefront, either this topic will not be investigated at all, or, if it is, there will be a *reduction a nihilo* as occurred with meditation research. If these multi-disciplinary fields could be kept within the context and

assumptions of a transpersonal philosophy, then the noetic, the universal, the contemplative core of the religious would be both acknowledged and honored. Yet, a transpersonal approach can also honor the best of the scientific tradition, and can be critical and thoughtful as to when evaluation and reductionism might be useful.

In this task, then, we would want transpersonal theorists as well as those rare adepts who have actually had the deeper levels of mystical experience. Further, as Walsh (1992) has noted, "since complete realizers are so few, we would want those who have had some transcendent experience and not just the complete realizers." In addition, to address the question of the "U—>P only?", we would also want to seek out certain "mutant" teachers—across particular traditions—who collectively might wonder whether, having experienced the universal through following a particular path, it is at least worth considering the value of developing a new, more inclusive generic model.

Vision

Content goals of a generic template were discussed at the end of Section Two. Here, honoring the potential synergistic nature of the project, only questions regarding vision are raised. It is hoped that these questions, if not exhaustive, would at least be considered essential to address. If these teachers, scholars, and practitioners were gathered at such a training institution, what type of "collective wisdom" might they develop regarding the universal and the particular? What would be the nature of the courses and training experiences they would recommend for future psycho-spiritual counselors? What would be their advice to parents and religious educators regarding how best to transmit "universal" wisdom to the next generation? What knowledge would they want in order to best recommend a particular training, or tradition, to a particular person seeking guidance on how to access and experience and then live "the perennial philosophy"?

Implications and Questions

Would the goal of such a program or institution be to have a transpersonal approach supersede religious institutions? Create a generic religion? Would it mean an end to some particular traditions? All particulars?

I love God immensely. I'm not Hindu, Jew, Christian. I'm not sure who I am and I do not care.

—Ram Dass

If chosenness helps to divinize the planet, yea; if it doesn't, let go.

—Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

I am a religious person first. A Jew second.

—Rabbi Jonathan Omerman

One of the strongest concerns voiced about such a program is whether exploring the universal/particular, as described in this paper, might, whether intended or not, eventually bypass the particular, create a return to one people, one language, an Esperanto of the soul, a generic religion.

Recently it was shown that over 55% of individuals in the United States affiliate with a particular denomination (Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, 1992). There is great beauty and richness in the multifaceted diversity and particularism of different traditions, and it can be argued that we as a species would not be well-served by a generic religion if that meant creating a Waring blender homogenization of all particulars. The goal is not unity at the price of uniformity or conformity. To paraphrase the Russian philosopher Berdyaev, "To negate Russia in the name of humankind is to rob the humankind."

Further, religions serve multi-level functions for their adherents (Novak, 1992b; Wilber, 1983a). This paper, by focusing on the experience of "universal reality", does not mean to minimize the importance of other areas touched by the religious life, such as group affiliation, social needs, ethics, values, organizing principles for understanding the universe. Religions provide roots, guidance, and understanding on many levels. They can provide a structure that helps people to "experience the universal", which is the primary aspect of religion to which this paper is addressed. Even for this goal of religion, it can be argued that for many people a generic would not be as effective, for it lacks the advantages of the particular: heroic figures of the past, models to emulate; rootedness to draw strength from; a context within which the teaching is transmitted and passed on.

On the other hand, some sort of overarching template as described in this paper might, at the least, be helpful to those within a particular framework to help guide and match individuals more carefully to various aspects of a religious life. On a larger scale, it appears that there are many individuals today who are involved in a psycho-spiritual journey seeking the spiritual, and who for any number of reasons are not comfortable exclusively following a particular spiritual path. It may be important to examine whether it is possible (and/or advisable) to try to develop a "generic" "beyond particular" model for these individuals, and how effective a "pick and choose" approach among the different traditions and other psycho-spiritual paths can be. Such a generic model might provide guidance to those who do not feel comfortable belonging to a particular tradition. A new generic model would have the advantage of being able to more freely borrow from the best of differing traditions and modern science. A further potential positive outcome of such a generic model could be a breaking down of "exclusiveness" between traditions,

a removal of "unwanted baggage" from the particular. Future research would need to investigate the "cost" of a generic model in terms of lost particularistic rootedness and tradition, and to assess how effectively a "generic approach" can be transmitted to the next generation.

Although the outcome cannot be definitively seen, this paper argues that the topic of universal/particular and a generic template does need to be addressed, and that it is most likely best addressed outside the context of a religious institution, albeit with the assistance of those who have had experience from within religious particulars. Addressing the question may at the least create an interesting dialogue within and between religious traditions, and may have a profound effect on the nature of religious observance.

Examining Science and Religion: Potential Cautions

In trying to examine areas of overlap and interface between science and spirituality, we are in many ways entering new territory. There are potential dangers, some of which can be foreseen, some of which may not. Further, just because a potential danger can be foreseen does not mean it can be avoided. However, this section attempts to suggest some cautionary notes.

Sacred as Goal

Some would suggest that the type of analysis and reductionism espoused in this paper is antithetical to religious experience, and the goal will become the academic and intellectual, not the sacred. Religion, as noted previously, comes from the Latin re-legio, and means, at its deepest level, a way to reconnect with the Source. Erickson (1958) referred to this as the vertical dimension of religion. The ultimate goal of a religious institution is, at the deepest level, the sacred. As David Steindl-Rast notes (1992) "Life bursts forth from the institution." However, as Erickson and others have noted, religious institutions often may become caught in a horizontal dimension of administration and self-perpetuation, in which the vertical focus is not as central as it might be. Similarly, an academic institution, enterprise, or program such as the one described here, which is attempting to utilize intellectual rigor, also may become trapped in its own analysis and reductionism. Although this can present difficulties, I would suggest that this type of research and evaluation need not be problematic. Rather, it may help us better understand how religious techniques and experience can best be transmitted, might help remove some of the barriers and stereotypes among traditions, and might ultimately be helpful in serving the goals of transformation of both the individual and of society. However, this does not mean that analysis and a reductionistic approach cannot at times become ends in themselves, and this is a problem to which we need to be sensitive. The goal of a program described here is without question the sacred, and not the intellectual. The contemplative is not meant to be used only as one more device of knowledge in and of itself. Rather, the intellect and the contemplative are both meant to be means serving a sacred end.

Outsider Evaluating Insider

A second concern is whether it is possible to take a generic template that is not connected with a faith community and use it to evaluate the efficacy of that faith community. This concern suggests that the development of a generic template, which, by its very nature is analytic, systemic, and dualistic, might be a poor vehicle by which to assess and evaluate particularistic faith communities. There is indeed a danger that such a template, or institution, could be used inappropriately as a tool of outsiders looking in and trying to advise "insiders" (that is, those of the particular traditions) how to best address certain "insider" issues. However, the intent of the generic template and the universal/particular program described here is just the opposite. The goal is a collective effort, including representatives of each tradition, who have conceptual, intellectual, and experiential understanding, and who come together to try to delineate common threads and bonds, and to evaluate thoughtfully, with integrity, and within the context of shared assumptions.

To some, the cautions raised in the preceding pages may be of such seriousness that they would suggest that many of the questions raised in this monograph should be filed as items in the sermon of Buddha entitled "Questions Which Tend Not To Edification" (Warren, 1969). They might argue, "If we believe in it, or have experienced it, there is no need to then examine, explore, or prove it."

There is indeed the danger of the intellect becoming an end in itself, and the potential arrogance of believing "intellectual schema" can or should be imposed from outside. The history of psychology and/or religion is replete with one school or tradition being criticized by outsiders without accurate knowledge or understanding of its internal working. However, it is also true that schools of psychology and religious traditions often have difficulty recognizing, challenging, and even evaluating effectively their own assumptions. This paper is arguing, contrary to e.e. cummings, that rather than being merely irrelevant "probing fingers of science", the study of the universal/particular, using a generic template, a systems approach, and one language, has the opportunity to make a contribution that outweighs some of the potential dangers.

Thus, it should be clear this paper is based on the premise that exploration of our beliefs and experiences about ultimate reality, no matter how true we may experience those beliefs to be, is an undertaking that is worthwhile, and *can* "tend toward edification." The ultimate goal here is the sacred, but not the particular. It is argued that the intellect and the contemplative mode of knowing can both be used in service of the sacred.

Attachment to Beliefs and Experiences

The questions about the personal rationale for studying an area and one's attachment to certain preconceived beliefs about that area have been raised in Section One regarding meditation research. But the question (in practice, not in theory) of what

amount of disconfirming information is required for us to change our paradigmatic beliefs is clearly an important question to examine in this context as well.

Both science and religion are based on initial assumptions (belief systems, faith) about the nature of reality, and the means best utilized to discover, integrate, and understand that reality. One of the basic assumptions of science is that beliefs are open to change based on disconfirming data. Although this may not always be practiced (such as Kuhn, 1970), it is still an underlying tenet. This is not the case in religion. To address that question we have to recognize a distinction between beliefs as science and beliefs as religion. For example, many are using "scientific" research on meditation and prayer to bolster their theological position. Ironically, science, in this way, is "reinspiring" religious practice. But, as one of the theologians in Benson's research said, "I don't want to lose my faith if science changes its point of view" (Kiesling and Harris, 1989, p. 65).

Two studies—involving interactions at a distance—may highlight this issue. Orme-Johnson, Alexander, Davis, et al. (1988) studied the effects of group size in Transcendental Meditation (independent variable), using dependent variables ranging from crime to war deaths. The results showed a positive correlation between the group size of meditators (ranging from 54 to 241) and a Composite Index Score (measuring coherence in society, e.g. stock market, national mood) and an inverse correlation with a Lebanon war intensity scale and negative variables, such as auto accidents, fires, crime in Jerusalem and Israel. The larger the number of meditators (increase in group size), the larger the distance over which the effect occurred (that is, Jerusalem, Israel, Lebanon).

Whereas Orme-Johnson's study involved TM within a Hindu/Vedic context, Byrd (1988) did a study involving "born again" Christians, who prayed outside the hospital for individuals recently admitted to a coronary care unit. In a prospective random assignment double blind study, it was found that "intercessory prayer" had a significant impact on patients admitted to a coronary care unit. Compared to a control group, the experimental group's severity score was significantly less during the course of the hospitalization, and the control group required significantly more ventilatory assistance, antibiotics, and diuretics than the intercessory prayer group.

At one level, these studies challenge strictly localist and materialistic assumptions. Certainly, if there are more systematic and replicable data confirming these findings, traditional science will need to begin to question whether we are on the verge of a "Copernican" revolution that we cannot yet fathom.

But the challenge is also to those doing the investigation. In Section One on meditation research, differing views on the effects of meditation on anxiety were discussed by Holmes, TM researchers such as David Orme-Johnson, and myself. What might be the relationship between our views about the nature of reality, our initial sets about the nature of meditation, and our findings? Holmes (1984, 1987), whose interest in

meditation appears to be limited to its effects on somatic arousal, decided to leave the field of meditation research because he found exercise more effective than meditation in reducing certain measures of somatic arousal. Byrd, in his acknowledgements to the intercessory prayer study cited above, writes "I thank God for responding to the many prayers made on behalf of the patients" (Byrd, 1988, p. 829). But what if the patients in the experimental group had not improved, or the results in Orme-Johnson et al.'s study had been disconfirming? Would Byrd have still thanked God? Would the "born again Christians" who were praying have changed their religious belief about the nature of God? Would Orme-Johnson and the Transcendental Meditation practitioners have stopped practicing TM if the study had not worked, or if the data cited in Section One regarding TM's effectiveness over other types of relaxation and meditation had been different? I believe they would not.

In other words, although there are areas in which scientific data are being used to support religious positions, it is unclear whether any amount of disconfirming data would change the underlying belief structure. This may or may not be a problem, but it is certainly an area that needs to be honestly examined.

West (1987, p. 194), in raising the thoughtful question why meditators research meditation, suggests one reason is to find intellectual and conceptual documentation for what they have already experienced. He then candidly notes that even when the research is not sufficiently clear, "I keep on meditating and wait for the research to catch up" (1987, 194). Rossner asks (p. 212, book 3, vol. 2) "Is it indiscrete to use scientific studies . . . in an attempt to prove specific religious constructs, dogmas, doctrines, or conceptions?"

It appears that no matter how wide a net we throw for an expanded science, there are potential problems. Giving the same power to a contemplative mode of knowing as to hypothetic-deductive science does not change the fact that inherent in both is the potential for biases and distortions. Most of us would agree that experiential understanding, no matter how deeply felt and believed, is not necessarily or always sufficient evidence of reality. When Schumaker (1977) stated, "There is nothing more difficult than to become critically aware of the presuppositions of one's own thought," this could apply equally well not only to "traditional" scientists viewing the consciousness disciplines "from the outside" but also to those of us who attempt to study them *and* practice them. As suggested throughout this article, even with such a commitment, the task of recognizing one's own assumptions and biases is not an easy one. The "standard" scientific problems may be encountered, such as expectation effects and demand characteristics (Orne, 1962; Weimer, 1970; Rosenthal, 1969; McReynolds, 1973); the use of "paradigms" (models, beliefs) as organizing principles in conducting research and empirical investigations (no matter how broadly conceived), and the possibility that these models might determine, in large part, the scope and nature of what is investigated and the ways in which results are interpreted (Kuhn, 1970; Popper, 1972; Polanyi, 1958; Tart, 1972).

Certainly, there are potential advantages to having these questions explored by individuals who practice consciousness disciplines. Not only is there a greater sensitivity to the experiential and phenomenological component involved in belief, but also there is at least a stated commitment to exploring one's own beliefs and presuppositions. The above discussion is meant merely to point out that as we seek to pioneer an expanded science there are still potential dangers to which we need to be sensitive.

Attention to the Process

In addressing these questions, it is helpful to remind ourselves of a line from the Talmud (*Pirke Avot—Sayings of the Elders*) stating that "When arguments are for the sake of God, they will be productive; when they are not for the sake of God, they will not be productive" (5:20). The saying suggests that there will always be arguments and disagreements. Our task is to try to ensure that they truly are for the highest purpose we can make them serve. In exploring these issues, there needs to be great care and sensitivity to the potentially delicate nature of what is being investigated. The examination of the particular tradition of an individual may involve exploring one of the most tender and emotionally significant areas of an individual's life, some of their deepest and most heartfelt experiences, and the most deeply held beliefs about ultimate reality. These experiences and beliefs may be a core principle upon which a person lives his/her life, and represent a foundational "lens" that informs how a person perceives the world and how events are interpreted.

From a psychological perspective, to even discuss these core beliefs might be difficult, but to pose the question of which one might be "better" means potentially evaluating and questioning our own deeply held and potentially very fundamental belief system. Therefore, until we have incontrovertible proof of the effectiveness of a given approach, tradition, or belief as "better" it seems that compassionate attention to the *process* of asking and exploring the questions is required. Again, compassionate does not mean we should avoid asking and exploring these questions, but rather that we make every effort to be careful, humble, and sensitive in our approach. Further, even if we could find incontrovertible evidence of "better", as outlined in the foregoing, then it is incumbent upon us to direct careful thought, attention, and sensitivity to the process by which the teaching, sharing, and imparting of this information to others would occur (Taylor, 1983; Lewinson et al., 1980).

Summary

These final comments have looked at what the goals of a "Los Alamos of the Mind" focused on a Manhattan Project of the universal/particular might be, and who might be selected as participants in such a project. Implications of such a project were also

addressed, including whether this paper is calling for a transpersonal approach to supersede a religious approach; a generic religion; and/or the end of some or all particulars. Potential dangers of such an undertaking were explored, including the academic versus the sacred being the ultimate goal; outsiders evaluating insiders; and attachment to beliefs and experiences. Finally, there was a call for caution and sensitivity to how these topics are approached.

A Final Thought

One of the assumptions with which this paper began is that there is a universal ultimate reality. Based on that assumption, each of us is part of that ultimate Source, and each of us within our own particular path, paths, or eclectic journey is a reflection of that Source.

Hence, it is important to acknowledge that even while we evaluate, examine, and explore, as we dissect and probe for understanding and the meaning of "better", we are actually only looking into our own Self, reflected in the eyes of the multiple forms of our brothers and sisters.

There is a story of a single candle, surrounded by a prism, located in a hall of mirrors. If a person looks in the mirrors, there appear to be thousands of different candles, and multiple hues and colors. Approached in this way, our modern analogue of the tower of Babel, rather than creating confusion, can potentially become a project in which all humanity, in its diversity, pulls together. The reflected colors of light in the mirrors can be refracted through the prism toward the Source of light. In this way, and working as a team, "nothing they may propose to do will be out of their reach," including helping each of us in our own way find the "Gate of God".

Appendix A
An Experiential Exercise to Explore the Universal/Particular Relationship

On the second day of the 1991 meeting of the Meditation Research Seminar sponsored by the Institute of Noetic Sciences, Esalen, and Marius Robinson, I had the opportunity to present some of my preliminary ideas about the universal/particular theme. Later in the week the group agreed to spend an evening devoted to a discussion of the universal/particular relationship, and then to participate in an experiential exercise led by Charles Tart (1991). It was felt that wisdom about the universal/particular could come from our discussions, but that perhaps discussion alone was insufficient. The exercise was designed to allow us to try to move into a contemplative mode, and then to see what wisdom, thoughts, or feeling might emerge. Participants in the group included Mary Coombs, Frank Echenhofer, Tom Hurley, Joel Levey, Michelle Levey, Michael Maliszewski, Barbara McNeill, Patricia Norris, Philip Novak, Marius Robinson, Deane Shapiro, Charles Tart, and Alan Wallace.

The Exercise (from Charles Tart)

"I'll just briefly lead us into a quiet space where we can follow certain basic rules: Say as much as you can in the present, usually by being aware of ongoing sensations in your body and experiencing mental quieting. When something comes up from that quiet space in you relative to the concerns that have been going on here this evening, say it, but keep it down to a few words or a sentence at the most, so that there is no dialogue. Just come back to the silence. If nothing comes up that wants to be said, that's fine because it is asking for a higher process so that it is not 'you' who is giving orders here. Our set is essentially that we have really important issues on the table, and these are deep personal concerns to all humanity, not just ourselves. So now we just relax into the quiet and spacious space. OK. I do not want to use big words like universal mind and all that which may make us try too hard . . . but just sort of relax and let yourself be more spacious within your body and in your mind. And if there is something in your heart that needs feeling, just say it and return to the physical moment, the spaciousness."

The statements were tape recorded, transcribed, and have been grouped into several categories: openness to experience; interconnectedness with all; self and other effort; compassion; appreciating the here and now.

*Statements Emerging
from an Experiential Exercise on the Universal/Particular*

(Conducted at the Institute of Noetic Sciences Meditation Research Seminar, 1991)

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE

      Trust is happening.

      Cleanliness, sunlight, and the air, fresh air.

      Please allow your highest wisdom to come through.

      Intensely yearning, listening for the words.

      It does not have to be difficult.

      Illumination.

      Watch.

      Go deeper.

INTERCONNECTEDNESS WITH ALL

      The voices of children for generations.

      Partnership—we are all in this together.

      It houses our network of body.

      Arm in arm let's dance.

      Fundamentalism is me.

      Fundamentalist is unjust, yet part of the highest deity.

      A hidden holiness fills us all.

      Mystery moves us, who is not part of God?

      Hear the stranger's cry, it is our Being.

      Each of us matters.

SELF AND OTHER EFFORT

      Our prayers speak.

      Realization that I can talk to mu.

      To reach the many, the spirit is with us.

      Work as if everything depends on work. Pray as if everything depends on prayer.

COMPASSION

      It is we who must contribute compassion—even to those, such as fundamentalists, whom we sometimes see as other.

      Love as if everything depends on love.

APPRECIATING THE HERE AND NOW

      Each moment is sacred.

      Life is a gift.

      The grass is growing.

      Crickets soft coast to coast, the ocean.

      Keep laughter.

Amen.

Footnotes

1. The hope has also been expressed that in addition to helping heal the wounds between religious particulars, the discussion might also have relevance to related issues of ethnic and cultural diversity, nationalism, race, and gender.

2. Specific comments on these positions relevant to the topic at hand are discussed in this paper. For more detailed rebuttals to the May, Ellis, Brewster-Smith positions see Walsh, 1989, 1992a; Wilber, 1989; Valle, 1986, 1989.

3. As noted by the Streng (1987) comment, the issue of the relationship between "reality" and "truth" is quite complex. For example, Smith (1988, p. 276), commenting on the perennial philosophy and primordial tradition, has called it a "reality that is always the same"; but has also noted (1989, p. 9) "the feature of that position that grasped me was the way it joined universality to final truth." (Emphasis in both cases mine).

4. For a thoughtful discussion based on brain mechanisms of the apparent individual and cross-cultural diversity of these experiences, see Laughlin et al., 1991, pp. 321ff.

5. This discussion is not meant to overly simplify either the diversity of views nor the ease of the task. For example Fox (1991), arguing for a transpersonal ecology, follows the model of Gould (1990) that there is a random, non-teleological (and nonvertical) evolutionary cosmology. This may be perceived as an evolutionary developmental model in which new structures (leaves) may be added to the "tree of life" but which is heading in no preordained or teleological direction. In this model "transpersonal" refers to going beyond self-identification to an increasingly wide, horizontal identification with this "Evolutionary Tree of Life". In contrast, there is an "already there" model in which a cosmic Reality already exists, and the developmental task is to recognize that existence. Yet, even here, there is what Washburn (1992) suggests "an up-hill battle . . . . Both Eastern and Western traditions agree in opposing dualism and in aiming at a higher unity. The higher unity aimed at, however, is differently conceived, either as a unity of pure emptiness or a unity of I-Thou duality-within-unity. Specifically, there is a deep fissure, I believe, between those mainline Eastern paths which stress non-duality and Western paths which stress duality. For myself, I follow Buber: Spirituality is a sacred relationship . . . this does not preclude moments of undifferentiated illumination . . . it does, however, mean that these moments may not be the 'highest' spiritual experiences. Rather, deep respect and love between persons may represent the 'highest' spiritual experience. This I think is the most difficult stumbling block for transpersonal psychology, phase two." This issue raised by Washburn is addressed further in Section Two, under a "religious response"—the effect of the universal on the particular; and the effect of the particular on the universal: U—>P; U<—P. It is also discussed at the end of Section Two, topic five: What do we mean by better.

6. For a discussion of assumptive beliefs systems about the nature of the universe evidenced in most Western medical therapeutics and psychotherapies, see Woolfolk and Richardson, 1984; Sampson, 1981, 1985; Yalom, 1980; May and Yalom, 1989. For a discussion of values and psychology, see Albee, 1986; Campbell, 1975; Sperry, 1977; Tart, 1979; Shapiro, 1983d; Woolfolk and Richardson, 1986; Bergin, 1991. For a discussion of different models of control, see Sperry, 1985, 1988; Shapiro, 1993a,b.

7. I am using the term "universal" here in the sense of generic. To avoid confusion, the following clarification of terms might be helpful. Throughout the paper, the term Universal refers to the proposition that there is one universal ultimate reality; the term generic refers to universal (small u) commonalities across particular traditions. The generic template discussed in Section Two is an effort to examine these universal commonalities across particular traditions, including the universal experience of the Universal. A clarification may also be necessary regarding the term particular. Particular paths/ particular tradition generally refers to different spiritual and religious traditions. However, as discussed in Section Two, life is always lived in the particular. Therefore, it became unclear how best to discuss the idea of what might come after an experience of the universal other than a return to one's particular tradition U—>P. At first the concept of Universal—>non-particular was tried. But, as noted, life involves particulars to give expression to the universal, so that idea was shelved. Instead, the idea was left more open-ended as U—>Only Particular? This leaves several options: going beyond one's particular; developing a new "generic" particular; incorporating strengths from many different particulars, etc. Washburn (1992), commenting on a previous draft, has noted "if you are suggesting that transpersonal psychology will be able to translate particular practices into nonparticular [generic] language, then it seems that, implicitly, you have two different distinctions in play: a universal/particular distinction, and a universal/non-particular distinction. Both of these distinctions are forms of the goal/means distinction, the former stressing particular historical means to a universal goal, the latter stressing transpersonal psychology, phase two prescribed means to a universal goal."

8. It should be clear from the clarifications made in this paper that there can be more than one religious view about the nature of the universal/particular, just as there can be more than one transpersonal view. For purposes of comparison and contrast, however, this paper is seeking to generalize a "liberal theological" position, and a specific transpersonal position.

9. This view is not without its detractors. For example Novak (1992) says that even if we knew (which we don't) what "this" ultimate reality is or if "it" is one thing, and even if we knew its nature, the job of custom-fitting individuals is "like trying to monitor GRACE—utterly impossible." He further notes that "the complex combination of innumerable interdependent factors that give rise to every moment of 'inner' and 'outer' experience is not only wholly incomprehensible (even by a supercomputer), but, what is more, it is changing faster and more complexly than anyone can get a fix on it." As will be noted later in the article, there is no disagreement with Novak about the complexity of the undertaking. However, there is disagreement about whether the effort involved in such an undertaking is worthwhile.

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