

**Hazel Guest**

## **TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY**

In spite of being relatively unknown in academic psychology departments in this country, transpersonal psychology is slowly making its way into our universities, mainly via adult education departments and student counselling services. The only courses on TP in British universities so far, are John Heron's at Surrey University, and my own at The City University, London.

My first venture in the teaching of TP was an evening course called 'The Growth of Transpersonal Psychology', which started in October 1977. It has run regularly every year since then, but with a change of title to 'The Consciousness Revolution: A Transpersonal View' - a title which seemed to me to be less off-putting than the original one.

For some thirteen years before that, I had been exploring various transpersonal avenues, even before the word 'transpersonal' was first coined in 1969 to apply to this field (see *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, vol.1, no.1, 1969); and I felt the wish to share with others what I had gathered. With all this accumulated input, there was a need to balance it with some output. Being a university lecturer by profession, the natural outlet for me was to provide a course. I drew up a syllabus for ten weekly evening sessions, and described the course as 'a survey of the religious, cultural and sociological influences' upon the development of transpersonal psychology. This syllabus was accepted by the Adult Education Department of the university, and so the course was made available to the public at a nominal fee.

For an evening course to be allowed to run, it must attract at least ten enrolments, and much to my joy ten people turned up. This included three colleagues on the lecturing staff; so for the sake of my reputation the course had to be good.

The amount of work that has to be done when preparing a new course is daunting. It is made even worse when one is working in an intellectual vacuum, with no contacts to consult, because the whole subject area is new - new in this country, at any rate. Much of my factual

information came from books bought after browsing on many different occasions along the shelves at Compendium, where I spent a small fortune.

The job of tracking down suitable research journals was the most difficult task of all, as they are all published in America, and some are virtually unknown here in Britain. For instance, after despairing of ever finding a journal relevant to my own research field, (skin resistance meters as a monitoring device in analysis), I happened to come across a reference to the Journal of Altered States of Consciousness, which was first published in 1974. I found a copy in the Science Reference Library; this was probably the only copy anywhere in this country at that time.

In 1979 the course was approved as one of the General Studies options offered to all second year degree students at The City University. As far as I know, it is the first course of its kind to be included as part of a degree programme in a recognised British university. The style of the course is a mixture, consisting of lectures and experiential workshops. The lectures include slides and tapes, and plenty of information in the way of book lists and addresses. The workshops involve meditation, guided imaging, co-counselling and biofeedback; and the course includes a visit to the university's bio-electricity laboratory.

According to the university's regulations some method of assessing the students at the end of the year is required, and this is done by an end-of-course essay on a topic chosen by the student himself. Extra reading around the topic is expected in preparing the essay.

Eighteen students chose this option in 1979. This year, the second time round, nearly sixty students have chosen the course, which is now running under the simpler title of 'Transpersonal Psychologies'. Two years ago the General Studies Department generously provided ten skin-resistance meters for use when studying biofeedback. But with the current size of the class, this number of meters is going to be hopelessly inadequate. Current economic problems may prohibit the provision of more meters, which will cause inconvenience this year. However sixty is too large a class anyway, and I intend to limit the size of the class next year to a maximum of twenty-five, each applicant having to have an interview with me first before being admitted onto the course. This will ensure that those who attend the course are the ones who seem most likely to benefit from it.

As a mathematics lecturer specialising in logic, this right-brain addition to my teaching gives me a much needed balance to the usual left-brain activity. It is interesting to observe how difficult most of the students find it at first, when they are asked to try some imaging exercises. This is a technological university; the gods of logic and reason are worshipped, while imagination and intuition tend to be regarded as aberrations. It is uphill work trying to get past these barriers, but worth the effort in the long run, when one witnesses the freeing of blocked imaginations and creativity.

### **Course Description** (from the General Studies brochure)

'Transpersonal' means 'beyond the ego'. The phrase 'transpersonal psychologies' was coined in 1969 to describe the study of mystical and transcendental states of consciousness, and the various systems of personal growth involving techniques for exploring the unconscious in order to achieve increased awareness and realization of the higher self.

This course introduces the basic concepts of the transpersonal psychologies in the context of a survey of the religious, cultural and sociological influences on the development of this field of study. Topics include: altered states of consciousness, brain rhythms, biofeedback, the theories of Carl Jung, Gurdjieff's teaching, personal growth, counselling, humanistic psychology, yoga, meditation, Buddhism, Zen, occultism, the hippy movement. A certain amount of experiential work will be included in the lectures.

Transpersonal counselling and biofeedback are both new fields of study. The material presented in this course will put students in touch with the latest developments and research in these areas.

### **Syllabus**

**Transpersonal psychology in the USA and in Britain today:** Current theories, techniques and research; the current leading figures. History and background. Carl Jung, the four functions, archetypes and the collective unconscious, animus and anima, individuation. Imaging techniques and guided fantasy. Self-actualization and self-realization. Psychosynthesis. Subpersonalities. Sequential Analysis. Co-counselling.

**Humanistic psychology:** A survey of the main branches, namely Transactional Analysis, Primal therapy, Gestalt, encounter and Rogerian groups, Bio-energetics, counselling, etc.

**Biofeedback:** Functions of the left and right brains. Transpersonal techniques are designed to bypass the rational function. EEG, alpha waves, etc. The voluntary control of physiological functions. Skin resistance meters used in connection with meditation and Sequential Analysis.

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## **John Reynolds**

### **THE LIE IN STEPPENWOLF (1)**

Humanistic psychology espouses a dynamic view of human behaviour, seeing man as an active, choosing and conscious entity coming into being as he transacts with the social world. There is also an emphasis on the optimising personality being an integrated personality. It is the intention here to argue that the idea of 'integration' is often misconceived leading to a rather diminished notion of it. And it will be further argued that this is due to a false analogy being made between the single body and the single self leading to the misleading imagery of the actualising self as somehow becoming progressively 'streamlined', shedding conflicts and 'sub-personalities' on the way. What will be stressed is that as people move towards self-realisation they are moving towards increasing complexity and that a simplistic view involving the ongoing elimination of less 'pleasant' aspects of the healthy personality must be discarded. Self-fulfilment involves working towards a higher unity where conflicts fall away to be seen as no more than aspects in correlation. Hence while the model of becoming is illuminating, when coupled with the idea of integration it must not by some slight-of-consciousness distract attention away from man's evolving manifoldness. When people respond, it is as total beings and one must not reify 'pleasing' and 'displeasing' aspects and see them as at odds with each other and in need of resolution.