FROM MOSES AND MONOTHEISM TO BUDDHA AND BEHAVIORISM: COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY’S TRANSPERSONAL CRISIS

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ABSTRACT: Philosophers of science in psychology have traditionally defined the field in such a way as to keep it distinct from inquiry into external referents of transpersonal experience. The cognitive behavioral mindfulness therapies (MTs) provide a forum for increased assimilation by the mainstream discipline of knowledge and skills drawn from the perennial psychologies and technologies of transcendence, and for accommodation of psychology’s own world hypotheses, root metaphors and truth criteria. The science-metaphysics debate in psychology is presented, including the pragmatism of William James, the radical behaviorism of B.F. Skinner, and the functional contextualism of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. Classical and operant behavioral approaches to mysticism are explored, with a proposal for an integral behaviorism incorporating “putative events” associated with anomalous states. The authors recommend a Transpersonal Cognitive Behavior Therapy drawing from the full range of wisdom tradition teachings in a manner that is entheo-syntonic with a given client’s world view.

Reality may be merely an inference and, according to some authorities, a bad one. What is important may not be the physical world on the far side of the skin but what that world means to us on this side.

—B. F. Skinner (The steep and thorny way to a science of behavior, 1975, p. 43)

With our thoughts we make the world.

—S. G. Buddha (Byrom, Dhammapada: The sayings of the Buddha, 1976, p. 1)

In 1939, the reigning psychological explanatory model of the day, psychoanalysis, ventured into scientifically uncharted territory to investigate the “true” relationship between Moses and Monotheism (Freud, 1939/1967). In 1984, behaviorism employed its own investigatory method, behavioral analysis, for a similar feat. Here, the quest was nothing short of scientifically explaining mystical experiences such as nothingness, immortality, unity and omnipresence (Hayes, 1984). In both cases, a prevailing scientific theory was used as an alternative to unfavored truth criteria (i.e., the Bible, mystics and the man in the street) to arrive at a scientifically palatable conclusion (in the former, that Moses learned monotheism from Akhenaten, and not from God; in the latter, that metaphysics, for the game of science, is overvalued linguistics).
In a recent survey of historians of American psychology and founders of transpersonal psychology, it was suggested that “… the emergence of mindfulness practice and Buddhist psychology as flourishing domains in mainstream academic and clinical psychology” may be a sign that “Perhaps American psychology is just now, 40 years following Maslow’s declaration of a fourth force, ready to embrace a transpersonal perspective on psychology” (Ruzek, 2007, p. 173). The integration of historically esoteric spiritual techniques such as meditation and mindfulness into mainstream scientific psychotherapy has been a welcome development in the evolving field. As to be expected, the theoretical and technical implications of the endeavor have provoked both controversy and cautions (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Moran, 2008; Styron, 2005). We might even consider the discipline’s rising tide of existential self-inquiry, provoked by the “Third Wave” cognitive behavior therapies, as indicative of a crisis of spiritual emergence (Grof & Grof, 1986/1993) for a nascent “transpersonal behaviorism” (Tart, 1979). There is nothing better for science than some healthy disagreement and finger pointing (at the moon or otherwise), and the advent of the cognitive behavioral mindfulness therapies (MTs, or “empties”) promises to provide both.

THE JAMESIAN PARADOX: HOW PSYCHOLOGY LOST ITS SOUL AND BECAME TRANSPERSONAL

In a historical sense, “transpersonal psychology,” far from being oxymoronically neologistic, as some would have us believe, is redundantly archaic. Until the mid- to late 19th century, psychology was the doctrine of the soul and an ally of religion (Reed, 1997). William James broke with this tradition in his Principles of Psychology (1890/1950), defining psychology as “… the Science of Mental Life, both of its phenomena and of their conditions” (p. 1). He took pains to divorce his “natural science” of psychology from “metaphysical” concepts such as the soul or “transcendental ego” (1892/1920, pp. 321–322). James differentiated psychology, which as a natural science would gather data, and philosophy, which could then speculate on the meaning of the findings.

While rejecting psychology as the proper disciplinary home for debates as to “first principles,” James embraced the spiritual as a potential source of data and as a valid object of scientific inquiry, albeit by psychic, rather than psychological, science. He was among the founders of the American Society for Psychical Research in 1885, was President of the London-based Society for Psychical Research from 1894–1895, and the aim of a course that he taught on metaphysics in the 1905–1906 academic year was “to unite empiricism with spiritualism” (Perry, 1935, p. 443). In his mission to make of psychology a science, he in no manner meant for it to become a scientism (Wellmuth, 1944) which “… goes beyond the actual findings of science to deny that other approaches to knowledge are valid and other truths true” (Smith, 1976, pp. 16–17). James was a great proponent of the philosophy of pragmatism, which “… is completely genial. She will entertain any hypothesis, she will consider any evidence … She will count mystical experiences if they have practical consequences …” (James, 1907/1992, p. 53).
In sum, James helped to remove metaphysical speculation as the primary focus of psychology, but remained keenly interested in the unbiased search for and study of phenomena, metaphysical or otherwise, involving the brain, mind, and consciousness. For this reason, it is entirely appropriate to consider him both the father of scientific psychology and its transpersonal subdiscipline (Ryan, 2008; Taylor, 1978, 1996).

P.O.E.T.-ical Correctness

History has taught us that unless a theory or practice is acceptable from the standpoint of the spatiotemporally dominant arbiters of political, ontological, epistemological or theological (P.O.E.T.-ical) “truth” regarding power, existence, knowledge or God, respectively, it risks marginalization and persecution. The birth of scientific psychology in the late 19th to early 20th century corresponded with an ideology of scientific materialism characterized by (a) objectivism (the use of empirical methods to test empirical facts and arrive at third-person verifiable results); (b) reductionism (redefinition of the unfamiliar/poorly understood in terms of the more familiar/understood); (c) the “closure principle” (that even if non-physical phenomena exist, they remain causally closed-off from the physical universe); and (d) physicalism (“… that the universe consists solely of configurations of matter and energy within space and time”) (Wallace, 2007, pp. 30–33).

This hodgepodge of procedures and assumptions represented “baggage from ancient Greek atomism, scientific views drawn from Christianity, and 19th century European materialism” (Wallace & Hodel, 2008, p. 87). Modern psychology would nonetheless have little argument with mid-19th century proponents of scientific materialism who “reduced the mind and consciousness to physical brain states produced by active matter …” (p. 21). In the 20th century, this opinion was further reinforced due to the adoption by psychiatry, psychology and psychotherapy of the Western medical model, itself inspired by the preceding century’s dogma.

Over the course of the last hundred years, there has been increasing attention to the risk posed by scientific materialistic hegemony to the progress of science and psychology. This may be found in the literature treating of the philosophy of science (e.g., Ouspensky, 1920/1982); limitations of traditional science and psychology (e.g., Maslow, 1966/2002); the role of metaphysics in empirical inquiry (Trusted, 1994, p. 179); alternative models such as “state specific sciences” (referring to states of consciousness; Tart, 1972, 1975/2000, 2008), “contemplative science” (Wallace, 2007), and “sacred science” (Nasr, 1993); relationships among science, psychology, psychotherapy, religion and spirituality (Nelson, 2009); and the “psychology of the future” (Grof, 2000).

Huston and Kendra Smith observed in their Foreword to Charles T. Tart’s The End of Materialism that “… science begins when experience doesn’t jibe with what we know or think we know. From that, an explanatory theory is spun, with hypotheses that can be tested under controlled conditions” (in Tart, 2009,
Not knowing, and the unknown, are the proper and perpetual beginnings of the scientific endeavor, not the end of it, as scientism would have it. If anything, it is the illusion of knowing that is most tenuous. “Theories pass. The frog remains” (Rostand, 1959, cited in Jacob, 1982, p. 355).

One important barrier to transpersonal psychology’s integration into the mainstream may be its lack of a Division within the American Psychological Association (for a history, see Aanstoos, Serlin, & Greening, 2000) – a catch-22, to be sure, but one that must be approached from one end or the other. According to Tart (1992), “… the challenge faced by the spiritual psychologies in taking root in our civilization is very much a challenge of accommodating themselves to the physicalistic worldview” (p. 115). The Achilles’ heel of transpersonal psychology could be that its name, originally employed by James in 1905–1906 in the mundane intersubjective sense of “… when my object is also your object” (cited by Perry, 1935, p. 445), confounds the individual’s phenomenology of a subjective personal experience as “ultimate” or “transcendent” with the discipline’s ontology of a controversial explanatory model of objective reality that includes meta-, para- or trans-physical phenomena and causation. This amounts to a P.O.E.T.-ically incorrect manner of interrelating Wilber’s (2000a) Upper-Left (“interior of the individual, the subjective aspect of consciousness,” p. 62) and Upper-Right (“objective or exterior correlates of those interior states of consciousness,” p. 63) quadrants. While it is just this distinction that to some extent differentiates transpersonal psychology from parapsychology (with no value judgment implied), it would be foolish to expect those without knowledge of, or interest in, these areas to engage in such hairsplitting. Incidentally, parapsychology’s own chosen name is problematic as well, obscuring as it does that (a) its hypotheses (as all hypotheses) are scientifically legitimate to the extent that they are testable; (b) it tests these by employing the scientific method (Evans, 1996; Tart, 2009); and thus (c) to the extent that it investigates aspects of consciousness, cognition and behavior, it too fits squarely within, rather than beyond the field of psychology.

Because the term “transpersonal,” for the reasons outlined above, is P.O.E.T.-ically incorrect from the standpoint of mainstream psychology, a solution might be to propose an APA Division title that, within psychology, has legitimacy similar to that of “non-locality” in physics. One possibility is a Division of the Psychology of Anomalous Experience, taking as a cue the APA-published book entitled Varieties of Anomalous Experience (Cardena, Lynn & Krippner, 2000), with this latter defined as

… an uncommon experience (e.g., synesthesia) or one that, although it may be experienced by a substantial amount of the population (e.g., experiences interpreted as telepathic), is believed to deviate from ordinary experience or from the usually accepted explanations of reality. (p. 4)

The word “experience” in both the book title and chapter titles is definitional to the approach. Echoing the Jamesian distinction between science and metaphysics, and between psychology and philosophy, the authors specify that “The focus of this book is on experiences, not on testing the consensual validity
of such experiences … the focus is on the experiences people have, not on the external phenomena to which they may refer … ” (p. 4). This clarification is important for the integration of transpersonal psychology into mainstream psychology because, again, mainstream psychology’s argument is most likely not with the fact of anomalous experiences, but with their interpretation.

Given that discrete states of consciousness (d-SoCs; Tart, 1975/2000) are implicated in many types of anomalous experience, and that the nature of consciousness is of special significance to a scientific psychology, another option would be a Division of Consciousness Studies and the Psychology of Anomalous Experience. A third solution would be a Division of Complementary/Alternative Psychology, consistent with the phraseology employed by Western medicine. By marginalizing the holistic paradigm, mainstream psychology has fallen behind both of its role models, the hard sciences (especially physics) and medicine. Physics has its non-locality; the National Institutes of Health has its Energy Medicine (NCCAM, 2005); and the American Medical Association (AMA, 2010) has in its House of Delegates the American Osteopathic Association, which holds as its first tenet that “The body is a unit: the person is a unit of body, mind and spirit” (AOA, 2010). For all its efforts to emulate science, modern psychology would appear to be mired in philosophy, and a defunct 19th century philosophy, at that (and this not from the standpoint of soft science, but of the “hardest” of sciences, physics, confirming in many ways the prescience of pre-science).

**REMYSTIFYING BEHAVIORISM**

Behavioral psychology clearly has the potential to assimilate and accommodate to transcendental realities and take its place among the Wisdom Traditions. In a *Letter to the Editor of American Psychologist*, Charles D. Hoffman (1975) refuted the implication of B. F. Skinner (1975) that behavioral techniques are “antithetical to mysticism” (Hoffman, 1975, p. 943), feeling that Skinner “…misses the essential point of mysticism, and of transpersonal psychology” (p. 943).

Skinner, like James, effectively exiled the metaphysical from psychology due to a methodological preference, in Skinner’s case, for observation over introspection. He was suspicious of those who, citing Diderot, find it “…easier and shorter to consult oneself than it is to consult nature” (Skinner, 1975, p. 49). While he did not object to “… the metaphysical nature of mind stuff” (p. 44), he held that “…the self-observation that leads to introspective knowledge is limited by anatomy…” (p. 44). One might speculate whether he would have been less categorical in his objections were he to have personally experienced the “enhanced introspection” reported by those skilled in the meditative arts.

As a radical behaviorist, Skinner believed that what determined behavior, including private behavior such as thinking, was the environment, which is within reach and manipulable, as opposed to “the remote fastness of the so-called human spirit” (Skinner, 1975, p. 49). In sum, he exiled the metaphysical from his behaviorism for three reasons: (a) he was ambivalent about its “so-
called” referent; (b) he did not consider it as accessible to observation; and (c) he did not view it as controllable and thus found it irrelevant to behaviorism’s goal of creating “… a world in which people feel freer than they have ever felt before, because they will not be under aversive control” (p. 47).

Hoffman (1975) took issue both with Skinner’s marginalization of metaphysics and with his judgment that it was not amenable to the scientific method. Hoffman observed that both Eastern philosophy and the therapies derived from humanistic psychology provided examples of (a) behavioral correlates of transcendental experience, (b) conditioned emotional responses serving as barriers to such experience, and (c) “… the means (Behaviorally) to attain by approximations (shape) so-called higher states of consciousness” (p. 943). He maintained that “The systematic applications of behavioral control techniques to various related behaviors we might wish to obtain are in keeping with a behavioristic stance and may well prove highly effective” (p. 943).

Hoffman’s suggestions for a behavioral mysticism relying on predominantly operant conditioning principles resonate with the writings of Albin R. Gilbert (1967, 1969, 1971, 1978), who explored a classical conditioning model of transcendence in which he likened Pavlov’s conditioning techniques to those of the Buddha:

The “mystic intent” of the aspirant can be compared with an unconditioned stimulus, having an adequate response: effulgent serenity. The specific life-pursuits of the aspirant can be taken as stimulus situations, originally neutral to effulgent serenity, but eventually conditioned to it. (Gilbert, 1967, p. 125)

For Gilbert,

There is no far cry from Buddha to Pavlov. Conditioning indifferent stimuli to the unconditional stimulus of food, as performed by Pavlov, requires the same technique as conditioning everyday life to the unconditioned mystical potentiality in man, as practiced by the active mystic. (p. 128)

There is indeed a line from Buddha’s to Pavlov’s conditioning techniques. Should not this line be directed “from Pavlov to Buddha” in the future of mankind? That this turn shall come to pass is the transcendent faith of every mystic. (p. 128)

Gilbert may have provided us with the first Western behavioral model of a mindfulness therapy. He sets forth as examples “A number of practices, implementing the conditioning of everyday life to the ‘mystical intent’” (1967, p. 125). These include concentrating with “penetrating intent” on every task at hand (p. 125), and “concentration on every step of life … with equal intent, regardless of personal involvement” (p. 126).


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He who conditions and counter-conditions his daily life by the continuous mindfulness of the One (stemming from “equally-intent-concentration”), with its outgrowth of tranquil serenity, does not only repose in radiant happiness, but is also distinguished by a remarkable effectiveness in carrying on the affairs of his life. (Gilbert, 1971, p. 191)

Just as Dollard and Miller (1950) provided psychology with an integrative approach to the behavioral and psychoanalytic, Hoffman and Gilbert sketched the beginnings of a behavioral reconciliation with the spiritual. Contemporary work along these lines is that of “Psychosomatic Mysticism” (Louchakova & Warner, 2003), which correlates physiological, psychological and transcendent experience with techniques that involve focusing attention on “subtle energies” in various “body centers of consciousness.” According to Chia and Huang (2005) in their esoteric interpretation of the Tao Te Ching and instructions on meditational practices symbolically referenced therein,

By tapping into our internal resources and channeling the energy around us, we can perceive much more than the senses normally report to the mind. We extend our perception from the limited perspective of the sociologically conditioned senses to the unlimited awareness of the universe. (pp. 40–41)

As an example of how a given “psychotechnology” (Ferguson, 1980/2009) is usually found in some form across the entire spectrum of ancient and modern spiritual, psychological and medical disciplines, the concept of subtle energies and their manipulation is present in all of the following: Judaism (Scholem, 1991, 1995); Christianity (Hesychasm in Cutsinger, 2003); Islam (Sufism in Khan, 1982); Hinduism (Kundalini Tantra and Shaktta Vedanta in Woodroffe, 1919/2003; and the Kashmir Shaivism of Lakshmanjoo, 2000, one important text of which, the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, was popularized as Centering in Zen Flesh Zen Bones by Reps & Senzaki, 1957/1998); Buddhism (Tibetan Tantra and Dream Yoga in Norbu, 1992; and Vajrayana in Gyatso, 2003); Taoism (internal alchemy in Chia & Huang, 2005; Kohn & Wang, 2009; Luk, 1977; Wilhelm, 1931/1962); Shamanism (Eagle Feather, 2007); Theosophy (Powell, 1969); Western Esotericism (Stavish, 2008); the Western Mystery Tradition (Matthews & Matthews, 1986); Western Magic (e.g., the Middle Pillar Exercise in Regardie, 1981); integrative approaches such as the “Inner Guide Meditation” (Steinbrecher, 1988) drawing from depth psychology, astrology, tarot and pathworking (Ashcroft-Nowicki, 1987); Western research-based psychotherapies such as Focusing (Gendlin, 1978/2007); energy healing (Mark, 2009); energetic psychotherapies (e.g., Reichian therapy); and systems that teach induction of a “vibrational state” associated with the out-of-body experience (OBE; Monroe, 1979; Rogo, 1986; Vieira, 2002). Mary Scott’s (1975) Science and subtle bodies is interesting in this regard, as are Joseph Chilton Pearce’s (2004) The biology of transcendence and Childre and Martin’s (2000) HeartMath solution. Experimental psychology, while cautious as it should be in interpreting the reported experience of subtle energy, is clearly up to the task of studying its observable manifestations, antecedents and consequences in an empirical manner.
THE FUNCTIONAL CONTEXTUAL PARADOX: HOW BEHAVIORISM REGAINED ITS SPIRIT WITHOUT BECOMING TRANSPERSONAL

If one detects a pattern emerging, in which philosophers of psychology grapple with the role, if any, for metaphysics within their discipline, the plot thickens when Steven Hayes’ Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, pronounced like the word “act”) appears on the scene (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2003). ACT has been defined as

... a psychological intervention based on modern behavioral psychology, including RFT [Relational Frame Theory], that applies mindfulness and acceptance processes, and commitment and behavior change processes, to the creation of psychological flexibility. (Luoma, Hayes & Walser, 2007, p. 22)

While ACT comes out more or less on the same side as James and Skinner, it does so with a major twist: its status as a scientific approach to psychotherapy that counts among its core processes the primary esoteric technique of one of the world’s major religious traditions.

ACT’s stance on science and spirituality is that of functional contextualism, a philosophy of science inspired by Skinner’s radical behaviorism and Stephen C. Pepper’s contextualism. Philosophical systems are seen as clustering around worldviews, themselves characterized by root metaphors and truth criteria. Contextualism’s root metaphor is the “act in context,” and the truth criterion for an idea is its workability rather than its correspondence with whatever is culturally held to be reality (Hayes, Hayes, Reese, & Sarbin, 1993). In this it is akin to the historical Church-supported philosophy of scientific instrumentalism that contented itself with serving as a heuristic to “save appearances” and made no claim to scientific realism, which sought to explain the “truth” about phenomena (Wallace, 1996).

Hayes (1984) addressed the historical tension between science and metaphysics in Making Sense of Spirituality, to which the origin of ACT has been dated (Hayes, 2002b). This appeared in the journal Behaviorism and had as its purpose “… to attempt to analyze the distinction between matter and spirit from a behavioral point of view” (Hayes, 1984, p. 99). Functional contextual behaviorism hypothesizes spirit to be “You-as-perspective”:

Spirit is defined as an “immaterial” being; and matter is the stuff of things. Spirit is thus a being non-experienceable as a thing. You-as-perspective seems to fit this definition rather well … As soon as perspective is viewed as content from what perspective is it viewed? Perspective must move one step back. It seems plausible, then, that the matter/spirit distinction has as its source the content/perspective distinction established as a necessary side effect of language. Quite literally, it may be that verbal behavior gave humankind a soul. (Hayes, 1984, p. 104)
Whereas James succeeded in extracting the soul from a psychology defined by its presence, functional contextualism reconceptualizes the spirit for a psychology defined by its absence. The article goes on to explain such concepts as temporal immortality, physical infinity, unity, nothingness, omnipresence, and love as making sense from the point of view of the self as perspective trying to gain a perspective on itself. For example, a perspective has no temporal perspective of not having existed before itself, or of ceasing to exist subsequent to itself, thus, Immortality. A perspective has no spatial perspective of having ever been anywhere in which it had no perspective of itself, thus, Infinity. And so on.

To grossly simplify this stance, spirituality is seen as a linguistic game. This viewpoint is consistent with some Eastern psychologies, such as Taoism, for which “… The Named [or, Naming] is the Mother of All Things” (Yuting, 1948, p. 41, cited in Watts, 1961, p. 85). Functional contextualism, as a school of scientific contextualism, does not claim to be searching for or stating the Truth (big “T”), but rather employs its chosen (little “t”) truth criteria to arrive at its own (little “t”) truths functioning as expedient (big “T”) Truth proxies. This reiterates the Jamesian and Skinnerian pragmatic stance that science is not ultimately in the reality business, and certainly not in the Ultimate Reality business.

PERCEPTUAL EXPANSION REVISITED

A number of other hypotheses in the subjective-versus-objective debate surrounding spiritual phenomena have been proposed by Arthur Deikman in his writings on the psychology of the mystical experience. He uses as an example the meditator’s experience of “unity”:

I have already referred to explanations of this phenomenon in terms of regression. Two additional hypotheses should be considered: On the one hand, the perception of unity may be the perception of one’s own psychic structure; on the other hand, the experience may be a perception of the real structure of the world. (1966a, p. 335)

These have been labeled by Deikman as the “reality transfer hypothesis,” the “sensory translation hypothesis” and the “perceptual expansion hypothesis” of the mystical experiences reported by participants in his study of “experimentally induced contemplative meditation” (1966b). Whereas the first is a function of the “ego” (1966b, p. 110) and the second of an “altered cognitive mode” (p. 109), the third involves

... the widening of perceptual intake to encompass “new” external stimuli, with a new perceptual route strongly implied. Perceptual expansion is made possible by de-automatization of the selective gating and filtering process that normally are in constant operation (p. 111) ... Such a process of de-automatization might then be followed by an awareness of aspects of reality that were formerly unavailable to us. (p. 113)
Here, Deikman has proposed, as has Hayes (1984), some hypotheses in which mystical experiences are epiphenomena of internal processes. However, Deikman additionally suggests that these perceptions may correspond with external realities that are experienced by some and merely and temporarily inaccessible to others.

**Meditation, Mindfulness and MTness**

The “Third Wave” cognitive behavior therapies are broadly conceived in terms of contextualism (which, incidentally, may be a better candidate for a Fourth Force in psychology than either of those heretofore proposed, transpersonal psychology and multiculturalism, reflecting as it does the essence of these as well as the movement toward increasing interconnectedness of previously compartmentalized areas of inquiry). Each has as a central feature some form of meditation or mindfulness. They include Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2003), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) (Linehan, 1993), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), and Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) (Marlatt, Chawla, & Bowen, 2010). Not to be mistaken for an MT, Jon Kabat-Zinn’s (1990) Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, upon which MBCT is modeled, does not conceptualize itself as a psychotherapy.

The MTs are presented as fundamentally different in focus from traditional CBTs: “Unlike CBT, there is little emphasis … on changing the content of thoughts; rather, the emphasis is on changing awareness of and relationship to thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations” (Segal, Teasdale, & Williams, 2004, p. 54). For Hayes, “That is a different organizing idea – regardless of the term used to describe it” (2008, p. 151).

Although religious and spiritual traditions are acknowledged to accomplish some of the ends of psychotherapy, they are seen as doing so “… in a way that psychotherapy cannot adopt in whole cloth because of their sectarian and supernatural conceptual content …” (Hayes, 2002b, p. 104). The article *Operationalizing Mindfulness Without Unnecessary Attachments* (Hayes & Shenk, 2004) falls within the Jamesian tradition of attempting to “clear metaphysical entanglements” from a scientific psychology’s path (James, 1892/1920, pp. 326–327). This includes a recommendation to “uncouple mindfulness from any given technology, including meditation” (Hayes & Shenk, 2004, p. 249) by distinguishing between psychological process and method. A perusal of the transpersonal literature indicates that the authors are in good company in seeing past the apparent differences among meditational techniques (Naranjo & Ornstein, 1971).

The controversial issue of transcendence, central to the definition of transpersonal psychology (Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992), has now made its way into cognitive behavioral psychology as well. One of the goals of ACT involves contact with “a transcendent sense of self” (Hayes, 2002b, p. 60). In order to
facilitate this, ACT employs exercises to create “… a safe place … that will allow the client to open up to previously avoided private events without being overwhelmed. That safe place is consciousness itself” (p. 61). Here Hayes echoes the transpersonal psychological model’s dimension of “identification,” in which “… Identification with mental content renders the individual unconscious of the broader context of consciousness which holds this content” (Walsh & Vaughan, 1980/1991, p. 17). Likewise, Jung noted in his commentary on the Taoist text Hui Ming Ching (The Book of Consciousness and Life): “… consciousness is at the same time empty and not empty. It is no longer preoccupied with the image of things but merely contains them” (Wilhelm, 1931/1962, p. 123–4).

To “… help the client find a transcendent part of themselves” (Hayes, 2000b, p. 61), ACT contains an “observer exercise” based on the “self-identification exercise” of psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli (1971), a contemporary of Freud and Jung, who in the early 20th century developed the positive, transpersonal, holistic paradigm of psychosynthesis as an alternative to pathology-focused psychoanalysis. A chapter section on ACT entitled A Transcendent Sense of Self similarly presents the need for providing “psychological space” within which clients can “experience private events fully and without defense” (Hayes, 2004, p. 20). Finally, an ACT exercise used to teach transcendence-as-perspective-taking employs a chess metaphor, in which one sees oneself as the board rather than as the pieces which represent thoughts, feelings and beliefs (p. 21).

In addition to sharing content with and at times drawing directly from transpersonal psychology, the ACT notion of transcendence would appear similar to the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi (Godman, 1985), Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj (Nisargadatta, 1973), Jnana Yoga, and Advaita Vedanta in which “neti neti” (not this, not this) is a reminder of Who the I is not. It might even have similar results. However, it is very important to note that “transcendence” in ACT is more mundane than mystical, with corresponding worldly, and entirely valid for its purpose, goals of emotional regulation and well being. This is the case, as well, for DBT’s psychotherapeutic use of Zen koan-like paradox (Mace, 2008, pp. 67–68) and MBCT’s employment of mindfulness and meditation (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002).

The de-transcendentalization of transcendence in the mindfulness therapies is somewhat in keeping with the Buddhist “ordinary mind” view of enlightenment. As such, it raises the issue of complementary approaches to spirituality, namely, the “immanent” versus the “transcendent” (Kornfield, 1993), the “way of forms” versus “the expressive way” (Naranjo & Ornstein, 1971), “alpha means” versus “beta means” (Ring, 1976), and the “here and now” versus the “everywhere and always” (Khan, 1982, p. 4). While the characterization of transcendent states as mental events unworthy of cultivation is an aspect of some perennial teachings, mystical approaches to meditation do exist within various schools of Buddhism (Kornfield, 1993; 2008); Hinduism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Naranjo & Ornstein, 1971); the diverse esoteric schools constituting the Western Mystery Tradition (Matthews & Matthews, 1986); and contemporary New Age
approaches. Jewish mysticism (Laenen, 1998/2001), for example, employs “mystical weeping” to “establish contact with other realms” (Idel, 2009). Indeed, from some Buddhist perspectives, the mindfulness element of Vipassana or insight meditation as adopted by the MTs can be important as a preliminary to prepare the mind for practices such as (a) Shamatha, deep concentration to cultivate the Jhanas, “states of mental function … beyond the operation of the ordinary conceptual mind” (Gunaratana, 2009, p. 12); (b) Tonglen, a meditative technique that includes breathing in the suffering of others, and breathing out to them lovingkindness (Rinpoche, 2002); and (c) the Buddha’s Third Vehicle of Vajrayana (also known as the Tantric/Attachment/Secret Mantra Vehicle) that involves, among other methods, circulating bodily energies in the yogic tradition (Gyatso, 2003).

Probably all systems of religion, spirituality and mysticism combine elements of paths both immanent and transcendent, passive and active, striving to reconcile Prentice Mulford’s “impossible possibility” of “Infinity in a finite fact and eternity in a temporal act” (cited in Khan, 1982, p. 4). One or another of these may be more “theo-syntonic,” “entheo-syntonic” (or even “atheo-syntonic”) with a given client’s own beliefs regarding God without or within (or neither), or simply appealing to the client for one or another reason (e.g., a preference for an approach that employs imagery, sound, movement, bodywork, energy, dreamwork, consciousness projection, etc.). The mindfulness therapy movement could therefore begin to explore these other traditions and their potential clinical utility within a more broadly conceived school of Transpersonal CBT.

WALK LOUDLY AND CARRY A BIG SCHTICK

Modern psychology need no longer limit itself to de Back’s (1653) “doctrine of the soul,” (cited in Lake, 1966, p. 63), James’ (1890/1950) “science of mental life,” nor Watson’s (narrow) or Skinner’s (general) “science of behavior.” Its evolution as an experimental science over the past century has brought it to a point at which it is firmly enough established to be able to accommodate all three, soul, consciousness and behavior, without fearing for its scientific integrity. It can consider and test hypotheses based upon metaphysical speculation and mystical insights and experiences without the risk of becoming a para-psychology, God-As-Perspective forbid.

Psychology is now comprehensively defined as “the study of human consciousness and its manifestations in behavior,” including the functions, structures, states, modes and development of consciousness, as well as its “relational and behavioral aspects” in terms of “its mutual interaction with the objective, exterior world and the sociocultural world of shared values and perceptions” (Wilber, 2000a, p. 1). Its proper domain is consciousness and behavior in all of their manifestations, including those yet to be experienced by a sufficient portion of humanity to be generally considered as what consciousness explorer Robert Monroe (1979) referred to as “knowns.” Its proper method is that of empirical science, which differs from philosophy not
in ignoring or denying unknowns (the investigation of which constitutes its very raison d’être), but in its approach to formulating and testing logical hypotheses regarding these. To the extent that an hypothesis can be formulated regarding behavior or consciousness and an experiment carried out, one is practicing experimental psychology, whether the phenomena under investigation be social strategies to gain approval or cognitive strategies to “project” (or believe to be projecting) one’s consciousness to a given “location.” Arguably, an experiment such as the latter is no more para-psychological than quantum physics is meta-physical.

From a contextualistic standpoint, transpersonal psychology will truly become a redundancy in terms only when mainstream psychology’s world view expands such that (a) its root metaphors, or assumptions about the nature of existence, permit hypotheses regarding referents of transcendental experience that are external to the experiencer or even orthogonal to space-time itself, and (b) potential evidence for these is not rejected a priori by its truth criteria. For this to take place, the burden is on likeminded psychologists to continue patiently to affirm the relevance of its subject matter for their mother science. Reasons for optimism include evidence that mainstream science is indeed evolving in the direction of open-mindedness. Perhaps the best example is the National Institutes of Health (NIH) recognition of “research challenges and opportunities” in the domain of Energy Medicine, which it defines as

... a domain in CAM [complementary and alternative medicine] that deals with energy fields of two types: Veritable, which can be measured [and] Putative, which have yet to be measured … The veritable energies employ mechanical vibrations (such as sound) and electromagnetic forces … In contrast, putative energy fields (also called biofields) have defied measurement to date by reproducible methods. Therapies involving putative energy fields are based on the concept that human beings are infused with a subtle form of energy. This vital energy or life force is known under different names in different cultures, such as qi in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), ki in the Japanese Kampo system, doshas in Ayurvedic medicine, and elsewhere as prana, etheric energy, fohat, orgone, odic force, mana, and homeopathic resonance. (NCCAM, 2005, p. 1)

In effect, science without the putative reverts to dogma, good science being a perpetually recursive process by which the veritable is expanded via testing of putative hypotheses. There is no good reason not to extend the NIH definitional compromise into the domain of behavioral psychology by broadening existing theories based upon “veritable” variables to include as yet unmeasurable phenomena inspired by the Perennial Philosophies and other metaphysical bodies of knowledge. After all, the “putative” placement of the sun at the center of the planetary system proved a fairly useful thought experiment (incidentally validating ancient Greek “pre-science”).

As one example of what a transpersonal cognitive behavioral model might look like (behaviorists, hold on to your hats), we could transpersonally “retrofit” Kurt Salzinger’s (1980) Behavioral Mechanism, which explains behavior in
terms of “the occasions for the behavior (that is, the stimuli that precede it) and the consequences of the behavior (that is, the stimuli that follow it)” (p. 67). To existing “veritable” variables, we might add “putative” states of the organism (e.g., biofields in NCCAM, 2005; cosmic consciousness in Bucke, 1901/1991); physical environments (e.g., parallel universes in Kaku, 2006); social environments (e.g., extraphysical intelligences in Vieira, 2007); reinforcement or learning histories (e.g., prior conditioning during conscious or unconscious anomalous experiences in wakefulness, sleep, other states, or even past lives as in Roberts, 1972); behaviors (e.g., activities during out-of-body experiences in Muldoon & Carrington, 1929/1989; Tyson, 2007; during near death experiences in Moody, 1975; Parnia, 2006; Ring, 1982; and during lucid dreams in LaBerge, 2009; Waggoner, 2008); discriminative stimuli (e.g., binaural brainwave entrainment patterns for triggering anomalous states such as those developed by the Monroe Institute, 2010); reinforcing stimuli (e.g., valued mystical states or occurrences that increase the likelihood of the conscious or unconscious behavioral chains that preceded them); and contingencies of reinforcement (e.g., relationships among discriminative stimuli, behaviors, and consequent stimuli in “putative” physical and social environments). An example of the latter is the phenomenon in which, upon realizing that one has successfully induced an OBE or lucid dream (discriminative stimulus), one thinks in a positive or negative manner (Skinnerian “private event” or cognitive behavior) that triggers strong emotion (consequent conditioned emotional response), this in turn serving as a stimulus for the aversive response of waking up. Here, the entire stimulus-response chain, upon sufficient repetition, conditions equanimity during OBEs and lucid dreams that is rewarded by prolongation of the experience.

A transpersonally retrofitted Behavioral Mechanism of the conditioning of cognition, affect and action during anomalous states could facilitate the interfacing of modern science, psychology and psychotherapy with paradigms of more ancient (one might say more “time-tested”) traditions that focus on similar interrelationships among parallel, if putative, variables. For example, in the Tibetan Buddhism of the Dalai Lama, one learns to conquer habits of attachment and aversion in the two “natural bardos of this life” (meditation and sleeping/dreaming) via practices of the day (meditation) and of the night (dream yoga). This training is considered the “whole preparation” for navigating the four bardos, or “dimensions of mind” (Rinpoche, 2002, pp. 112–114) to be encountered when we one day “… leave this compound body of flesh and blood” and “know it to be a transitory illusion” (p. 227). Just as Skinner’s radical behaviorism expanded Watson’s methodological behaviorism to include “private events” of the personal mind (among other internal processes), so too could a transpersonal behaviorism, following the National Institute of Health’s approach to energy medicine (NCCAM, 2005), invigorate Skinner’s model by allowing for “putative events” of the transpersonal Mind.

The migration of meditational theories and practices into cognitive behavior therapy, the most empirically-oriented psychotherapeutic modality, may be an indication that mainstream psychology is growing its “third eye” (Wilber, 1983) as a mode of empirical, or experiential, investigation. Whereas sensory
empiricism recognizes evidence gathered by the “eye of flesh” from the sensorimotor world, and mental empiricism allows for evidence gathered by the “eye of mind” in the form of mathematics and logic, spiritual empiricism permits as evidence that which is gathered by the “eye of contemplation” (Wilber, 1998), which is especially active during anomalous states of consciousness. And just as we wonder at the 16th century mindset that considered the mental empiricism of mathematics to be a branch of magic (Hopking, 2001), a 21st century science that rejects spiritual empiricism on a similar basis may be judged by future scientists as equally primitive.

As Walsh (1992) observed,

... Psychological schools that focus on one of these three eyes (or epistemological modes) and realms of knowledge often deny the importance or even the validity of others. However, all three modes may be necessary for a psychology seeking to encompass the full spectrum of human experience, nature, potential, and development. (pp. 27–28)

Within the behavioral tradition, whereas behavior therapy initially recognized data available only to the eye of the senses, and cognitive therapy introduced the second eye of reason, the MTs have invited into cognitive behavior therapy the third eye of contemplation which, when fully developed, is said to function as “Samadhi, a telescope for the mind” (Wallace, 2009, p. 82), “… a direct perception of reality, not by the five physical senses or by thinking, but by mental perception” (p. 7). Similar to the use of sensory-enhancing instruments such as the microscope and telescope by Western science, Buddhists and adepts of other spiritual systems have for thousands of years employed contemplation as a method of refining introspective (and reportedly interoceptive and exteroceptive) observation and investigation (Wallace, 2007). The modern cognitive behavioral MTs walk loudly, carry a big schtick, and are well situated to help integrate this newly borrowed tool, and its effects, into its own Wisdom Tradition of Western Science.

**Toward a Transpersonal Cognitive Behavior Therapy**

In 1980, Walsh and Vaughan proposed that

If the field of transpersonal psychotherapy is to be advanced, it needs empirical testing and validation of many current assumptions and practices. Here, the behaviorists have much to teach us. Similarly, as behaviorists appreciate the need for a broader, less restricted and dehumanizing perspective, they may turn to the experiential psychologies for guidance. Although it may still be far off, some type of [r]approchement is clearly desirable. (1980/1991, p. 25)

In the thirty year interim, behavior therapy has indeed broadened its scope by accommodating approaches with experiential, cognitive, psychodynamic and, now, transpersonal elements. To be fair, Joseph Wolpe, the father of behavior
therapy, founded the *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry* in March, 1970, and began publishing research with a transpersonal flavor just as soon (e.g., Boudreau, 1972). The same was true of the journal *Behavior Therapy*, founded in 1970 (e.g., Berwick & Oziel, 1973). With its empirical focus, inquisitiveness, emphasis on adaptive as well as maladaptive functioning, and current embrace of Eastern tradition, cognitive behaviorism is an ideal candidate to serve as a modern forum for scientific advancement at the interface of the functionally defined “Four Psychologies” (as distinguished from the temporally defined “Four Forces” in psychology) that have evolved over the past century. These former are: (a) Negative, curative, or deficit-focused psychology, focusing mainly on problems and pathology (e.g., psychoanalysis, behavior therapy and cognitive therapy); (b) Positive, or growth-focused psychology, concerned with human potential and self-actualization in the ordinary sense (e.g., existential/humanistic psychology); (c) Transpersonal, or transcendence-focused psychology, with its sight set on the “farthest reaches of human nature” (Maslow, 1971) and “ultimate states” (Sutich, 1969); and (d) the “Integral Approach,” or “the endeavor to honor and embrace every legitimate aspect of human consciousness” (Wilber, 2000a, p. 2). It should be noted that Wilber sees the Integral Approach not as a separate “force” or even a “psychology,” but rather as a coherent “Kosmology” that will “transcend and include” the diversity of traditions within the currently fragmented field (Wilber, 2000b, p. 8). This is consistent with the blurring of lines between psychology, parapsychology, physics, metaphysics, religion and spirituality that has been taking place over the past century, and with an eventual “unified theory” of “metapsychophysics.” Psychology will apparently have been on the right track from the start. It had its scientific origins in subjective correlates of the physical (Fechner, 1860/1966), and its future may lie in objective correlates of the perceptual.

Within the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) are Special Interest Groups both for “Mindfulness and Acceptance” and for “Spiritual and Religious Issues in Behavior Change.” The goals of this latter are to “integrate spiritual and behavioral approaches to change,” “encourage personal integration of spiritual and professional pursuits among behavior therapists and students of behavior therapy,” and “encourage research on spiritual aspects of behavior change and on behavioral aspects of spirituality” (ABCT, 2010). This is similar to the model of transpersonal cognitive behavior therapy (TCBT) outlined here, which may be defined as (a) the use of cognitive and behavioral techniques to (b) cultivate discrete anomalous or transcendent states of consciousness or experience in the researcher, therapist or client, (c) in the service of developing, implementing or benefiting from the effects of curative, positive or transpersonal modalities of psychological change. Still shy of Wilber’s Kosmology, but hopefully a step in the right direction.

There are any number of ways in which therapists could draw from among the diverse Wisdom Traditions and their psychotechnologies (what we might collectively term the Perennial Psychologies and Technologies of Transcendence) to enrich their practice. A potentially useful strategy for conducting transpersonal cognitive behavior therapy in an “entheo-syntonic” manner that honors the
client’s own cultural, subcultural or idiosyncratic metaphysical belief system is that of “explanatory model negotiation” (Kleinman, 1981; Tanaka-Matsumi, Seiden & Lam, 1996) in the transcultural psychiatric tradition. Adapting this to the transpersonal therapy context (in which a client, or “co-evolutient,” desires a modality that addresses religious, spiritual, or otherwise metaphysical issues), the therapist would (a) assess the client as to preferred beliefs and practices, (b) evaluate whether there exist theories or practices that are theo-, entheo-, or atheo-syntonic (for example, variants of meditation, mindfulness or equanimity drawn from the client’s own religious tradition) and for which there is evidence of therapeutic utility, (c) employ these in the course of treatment, and (d) evaluate their effectiveness. An integral model of ideographic assessment that resonates with cognitive behavioral, transpersonal, and negotiation models has been outlined by Marquis (2008).

With time, the empirical method could be applied to compare the efficacy of techniques drawn from both scientific and religious/spiritual/metaphysical schools of thought for the attainment of curative, positive and transpersonal psychological goals. Within the MT movement itself, it would be helpful to compare the therapeutic efficacy of different approaches to mindfulness and meditation. Beyond the MTs, given the widespread practice of cultivating, focusing upon and circulating energy through the body in traditional and modern systems of healing and transcendence, variants of this procedure would be a logical area for psychological research.

Anomalous states such as the lucid dream and out-of-body experience have therapeutic potential as well. The lucid dream, a controllable, realistic, multisensory “bio-psychological virtual reality” (Tart, 2009, p. 223), can be used for behavioral rehearsal (LaBerge & Rheingold, 1997). Lucid Dreaming Treatment (LDT) has been employed for chronic nightmares (Spoormaker & van den Bout, 2006) and could help with this and other symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Gavie & Revonsuo, 2010). Lucid dream exposure therapy for Panic Disorder with Agoraphobia, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and the various phobias is also worth exploring as the most vivid alternative to in-vivo procedures.

The out-of-body experience, in which consciousness is perceived as existing independently of the physical body, may lead to more positive attitudes regarding death (Alvarado, 2000) and therefore has special relevance for work with hospice patients. An intervention that bridges the three or four functional psychologies is the Going Home program (Monroe Products, 2005) created by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, Charles T. Tart and Robert A. Monroe for individuals with terminal illness and their families. Here, portable audio-administered brainwave manipulation technology (binaural beats and guided imagery listened to with headphones) is used to induce OBEs during which the individual can get acquainted in advance with the after-death environment (or that which is perceived as such), thereby reducing fear of dying and instilling hope. The effects of this program and other OBE-induction strategies on optimizing the cognitive, emotional, behavioral and physiological adaptation of this important population could be studied and compared with standard hospice care.
This article has considered ways in which cognitive behavior therapy could both build upon and go “beyond mindfulness” by delving deeper within Buddhist psychology, expanding its scope to encompass the full range of Wisdom Traditions, and drawing from the existing field of transpersonal psychology. The strength of the spiritual traditions is the full development within each of qualities specific to its unique historical breadth and depth. The beauty of transpersonal psychology is its attempt at integration of the wide variety of ancient and modern, Eastern and Western, spiritual and psychological systems of thought and practice. What cognitive behavior therapy has to contribute (in addition to its affinity for parsimony, which could be useful in distilling the operative elements across diverse psychotechnologies) is its modus operandi of putting newly acquired theories and techniques to the test of empirical validation. As the MTs and the CBTs in general pursue this new direction, it behooves us to heed the advice of Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003), here regarding mindfulness but applying as well to the broader category of transpersonal phenomena, that

... intimate sensitivity will be necessary to understand, evaluate, and preserve essential elements of the universal dharma dimension of mindfulness practice as it is analyzed by and incorporated into Western science. It in no way contradicts the call by Hayes [2002a] to find ways to fit practices and knowledge from spiritual traditions into the theoretical matrix of scientific psychology. The challenge is to find a fit that honors the integrity of what may be different but complementary epistemologies. (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, pp. 146–147)

It has been said that science and mysticism cannot be synthesized (Capra, 1976). If this is so, it is mostly in the paradoxical sense that when meta-physical and para-psychological theories and techniques are accepted as objects of empirical scrutiny, rather than science and mysticism combining to form something new (as in synthesis), the epithets meta- and para- fall away, and what was formerly labeled “mystical” is subsumed by science, becoming Science itself, at its Jamesian, “genial,” best.

REFERENCES


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A therapy in which therapists seek to understand their patients’ problems from a cognitive framework, and then use a variety of cognitive and behavioral techniques, as well as techniques from many modalities to bring about change in thinking, behavior and mood. We recommend that patients interested in this form of treatment seek treatment from Cognitive Therapists certified by the Academy of Cognitive Therapy (which is the only Cognitive Therapy certifying body for mental health professionals from all disciplines that has a thorough review process prior to granting certification) and is based Behavior And Cognitive Behaviorism. Reminder. Edit a Copy. Study these flashcards. Wisconsin. University of Wisconsin - LaCrosse. Psychology. Coping with the negative consequences. contingency contracting. a behavior therapy technique whereby agreements are made between family members to exchange rewards for desired behavior. self reinforcement. used to identify. antecedents and consequences. what works & what doesn't. Positive Self Talk. Telling yourself positive, encouraging things that help you succeed in accomplishing your goals.