

Transpersonal Psychology as Critical/Radical Psychology

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Despite its designation as the 'Fourth Force', Transpersonal Psychology often occupies a peripheral and precarious place within mainstream Psychological approaches. Its historic focus on mystical/spiritual and non-ordinary states of consciousness, coupled with its continued emphasis on subjective and experiential inquiry, have often led to it being excluded in favour of more materialist, positivistic paradigms that currently dominate the discipline.

Rather than attempt to simply adapt and assimilate into more mainstream, conventional forms of Psychology, Transpersonal Psychology has a unique opportunity to actively embrace its otherness and outsider status; to pursue authentic interdisciplinary encounters and pioneer more inclusive and radical approaches to research methods.

In contemporary Humanistic and Engaged expressions of Eastern Wisdom Traditions (specifically Hinduism, Buddhism and Daoism) one may observe the increasing emphasis on ecological awareness, recovery of the Divine Feminine and more spiritually-informed approaches to social justice. In order to avoid accusations of remoteness, solipsism and spiritual bypassing, Transpersonal Psychologists also need to better attend and creatively respond to prevailing political and socioeconomic conditions.

In this keynote I will demonstrate how Transpersonal Psychology has, at its heart, always constituted a critical/radical approach to Psychology and still retains the capacity to reinvigorate, re-enchant, transform and transcend.