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## **RIPPLES OF CHANGE: IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER DISCIPLINES**

*Every response you make is determined by what you think you are, and what you want to be is what you think you are. What you want to be, then, must determine every response you make.*

ANONYMOUS

Whatever observations a particular discipline is designed to handle, its underlying meaning cannot be divorced from the beliefs and models of reality shared by individuals involved in it. If those beliefs and models shift, then so do the purpose and meaning of the discipline. Furthermore, since "facts" are not isolated entities independent of the knower, but are actively created by observation and interpretation, then what is "fact" may also shift. Thus the development of transpersonal psychology and the spread of its ideas and models may hold implications for a variety of disciplines.

There exists a little-recognized but pervasive dynamic interplay between cultural beliefs and psychological models. Psychologies and the premises on which they are based are products of the culture from which they spring. Indeed, they are to some extent an autobiography and projection of their originators. Psychologists pose models consistent with their own beliefs and experience and these reflect the stamp of both the culture and the individual that produce them.

Thus theories of human nature in general naturally reflect culturally shared beliefs. A feedback cycle may be set up in which psychologies spring from a given cultural context, become popularized, and then per-

meate the culture and formalize beliefs about the nature of self, human nature, norms, potentials, and limitations. This dynamic interplay and positive feedback between culture and psychology holds immense potential for either benefit or harm. Alterations in either component could set in train self-reinforcing feedback cycles, with the possibility of producing major shifts in cultural beliefs.

Because everything we do, think, or feel stems in part from who and what we think we are, it may be that one of the most important tasks confronting us is to shift the prevailing limiting cultural beliefs about our basic nature and our relationship to the world. Let us then examine the possible effects of such shifts on a number of disciplines: science, education, philosophy, parapsychology, and social science.

Perhaps the most widely respected general discipline in Western society today is science. Science is, fundamentally, a way of knowing, a way that relies heavily on the logical analysis of sense data. As such it has largely excluded the investigation of subjective experience except inasmuch as this can be shown to correlate with sensorially observable physical effects, e.g., brain wave activity. Such an exclusion maintains the power of the scientific approach at the cost of significantly limiting its range of application.

Many have wondered about the possibility of extending this range and Charles Tart raises the question anew in "States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences." He suggests the training of scientists to function in altered states as participant observers to report on their experiences. Tart argues that, due to the limitations of state dependency, we may need a number of different state-dependent sciences. While knowledge gained in one particular state may complement that gained in another, it cannot directly validate or invalidate it. He also suggests the creative possibilities inherent in stimulating interactions between different state-specific sciences.

The next reading, "Different Views from Different States," consists of two letters written in response to Charles Tart's article. These must surely be among the most unusual and remarkable responses ever written to a scientific paper. For the two letters were written in two different states of consciousness and come to diametrically opposite conclusions about the validity of Tart's hypothesis. Here we have the unique situation of a professor of psychiatry, a man respected as both a researcher and philosopher of science, denying the need or usefulness of state-specific sciences while he was in his ordinary state, yet finding the suggestion appropriate while in an altered state. This is compelling support for the power of state-dependent phenomena. Interestingly, the journal *Science* declined to publish the letters.

In "Eye to Eye: Science and Transpersonal Psychology," Ken Wilber takes a different position. He points to the traditional distinctions between

empirical, rational, and contemplative knowledge. What can be known by observation, says Wilber, should not be confused with what can be known by reasoning. Moreover, what can be known through contemplation is accessible neither to observation nor reason, transcending both. Knowledge gained through one of these modes of knowing cannot be adequately defined solely in terms of the other two. Science takes as its domain knowledge gained by the application of reason to empirical observation. Wilber therefore questions Tart's assumption that science can be expanded sufficiently to apply to areas of knowledge that are actually the province of contemplation. He proposes instead that *transpersonal* psychology is in a unique position to be able to employ all three modes in a balanced fashion, thus allowing a fuller psychology than anything heretofore.

In the next paper Roger Walsh points to "The Possible Emergence of Cross-Disciplinary Parallels" as a result of increasing sensitivity to reality. This sensitivity may be enhanced either directly by disciplines such as meditation or indirectly by instrumentation. The resultant view of the fundamental nature of reality may be similar, independent of the object *observed or the mode of observation. Our usual pictures may then appear as the illusory products of limited perceptual sensitivity. Thus, with growing scientific sophistication and sensitivity, illusory distortions may be seen through and the fundamental descriptions of reality may show increasing parallels, not only between different branches of science, but also between science and the consciousness disciplines.*

Our current educational systems are almost entirely addressed to the mode of reason. Training of the observational and contemplative modes and affective dimension is almost completely lacking. Even within the *mode of reason, most emphasis is placed on the acquisition of data and less on actual training and developing skill in reasoning itself.*

One of the goals discussed by Tom Roberts in "Education and Transpersonal Relations" is therefore the expansion of the educative process into these other dimensions. Roberts suggests that though the field is very young, a number of useful and enjoyable techniques exist for facilitating the attainment of traditional and nontraditional goals. One of the most important tasks awaiting transpersonal educators is the exploration of the optimal goals and potentials of such an expanded educational curriculum.

Although it has been described for centuries, Western philosophers and scientists have tended to forget the distinction between the two major types of knowledge, symbolic and intimate. Symbolic, map, or inferential knowledge is the knowledge about something given us by symbols such as language, as opposed to the direct knowing of an object that comes from nonsymbolic intimate knowledge. In "Two Modes of Knowledge," Ken Wilber reminds us of this distinction and points out that the failure to

remember it results in forgetting that our ordinary conception of the world is only a symbolic knowledge map—a conceptual creation rather than the real world itself. Only by moving to the intimate nonsymbolic knowledge of the contemplative mode and its corresponding state of consciousness can we know the real world.

Parapsychology has traditionally generated both fascination and aversion among scientists. Willis Harman notes in "The Societal Implications and Social Impact of Psi Phenomena" that, thanks to the shifting paradigms and cultural movements of the last few years, the emotional climate has changed and the data of parapsychology is becoming increasingly acceptable. It appears that a number of so-called paranormal abilities may actually represent normal human capacities that are commonly suppressed or disregarded. By examining the premises of the scientific paradigm, Harman points to the reconciliation of science with the exploration of consciousness and psychic phenomena and notes that scientists are forced to confront questions they had previously relegated to philosophers. Harman calls attention to the fact that changing values and images of humanity must inevitably affect the whole fabric of society and wonders whether the transformation he foresees can be accomplished without severe social disruption.

The social implications of a commitment to the inner life and development of transpersonal awareness are not to be underestimated. It has frequently been suggested that the pursuit of self-knowledge is inherently a selfish one that detracts from an involvement with, and contribution to, society. However, such criticism is not valid inasmuch as the product of this work is necessarily a transcendence of limited self-interest. Concern with the general good of one's fellow beings and a desire for harmony with the broader universe is intrinsic to the work. E. F. Schumacher writes:

It is a grave error to accuse a man who pursues self-knowledge of "turning his back on society." The opposite would be more nearly true: that a man who fails to pursue self-knowledge is and remains a danger to society, for he will tend to misunderstand everything that other people say or do, and remain blissfully unaware of the significance of many of the things he does himself.<sup>2</sup>

In "The Tao of Personal and Social Transformation," Duane Elgin suggests that expanded awareness is reflected in a quality of life that seeks harmony with nature, both inner and outer, rather than domination over it. For the person working in these areas there is no question of their connection with, and responsibility for, the larger whole of which they experience themselves to be an inseparable component. For a person beginning to experience what was formerly "other," as "self," it makes no sense not to acknowledge responsibility and the need for ethicality and service. With the attendant reduction in egocentric desires, there is less wish to impose one's will on nature and others and more interest in har-

monizing with them in an ecological and Taoistic manner. Fewer desires means less need for consumerism or susceptibility to advertising pressures, resulting in a tendency toward a choiceful life of voluntary simplicity.

A new vision of social interaction and lifestyle emerges as we learn to integrate all aspects of human experience, inner and outer, Eastern and Western, personal and transpersonal. The capacity of human beings to transcend the limitations of social conditioning and to take responsibility for designing their lives in harmony with nature and others becomes increasingly apparent to those individuals who commit themselves to the self-exploration necessary for direct experience of the deeper nature of their being.

If life and living are experienced as an unbroken pattern of interconnection that extends from the most minute details of daily existence to the largest scale features of the cosmos, then withdrawal from worldly responsibility is not possible. If a person engages life consciously and directly, there is literally no place to go where one can escape the experiential connection with all of life. . . . The task then becomes one of bringing one's life, in all of its diverse expressions, into increasingly conscious and harmonious alignment with the changing web of relationships of which one is an inseparable part.

—Duane Elgin<sup>3</sup>

### Notes

1. Anonymous. *A course in miracles*. New York: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975.
2. Schumacher, E. F. *A guide for the perplexed*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.
3. Elgin, D. *Voluntary simplicity*. New York: William Morrow, in press.

## SCIENCE

### *States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences*

**CHARLES TART**

An increasingly significant number of people are experimenting with ASC's in themselves, and finding the experiences thus gained of extreme