



Methodology and Philosophy of science

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Ideas of the indian philosophy in transpersonal psychologies

The article is devoted to problems of development of transpersonal psychology and the analysis of ideas of the Indian philosophy used by representatives of transpersonal psychology for understanding of consciousness and prospects of development of mentality.

In the article there is considered the model of human consciousness offered by S. Grof, come to light its connections with representations about the world and the person in the Indian philosophical tradition.

The author opens an essence of integrated approach to person of K. Wilber, shows, that the given approach bases on the idea cholarchy. Representation about a reality as cholarchical structure goes back to a substantiation of the world as the Great circuit of the being, formulated for the first time in an ancient philosophy, as well in the Hinduism and the Buddhism.

Key words: *Transpersonal psychology, the Great chain of being, cholarchy, cholotropic breath, the changed conditions of consciousness, spirituality, the Indian philosophy, the Buddhism, lila, sat, chit, ananda.*

In the 80th years XX century a new trend in the Western science, Movement for Development of Human Potential, starts to be formed. A theoretical basis of the given movement is the idea about the Great Chain of Life. The concept of the Great Chain of Life in modern Western philosophy has been developed by American philosopher A.Lavejoy. According to Lavejoy, the given concept was the dominating official concept of a greater part of the civilized mankind during a greater part of its history. For the first time it has been formulated by Platon in the European antiquity as well as Hinduism and Buddhism. Its essence consists that ideal and material life is display world-raising function of the absolute and accomplished Unity. Lavejoy believes, that the idea of completeness of being, its integrity is the main concept allowing to explain the world in its variety of forms and potentialities as being good and accomplished. Owing to this idea such a concept about the intention and structure of the world in which a vast « infinite number of a links, located in the hierarchical order is formed: from the insignificant being balancing on the verge of « not-existence », on « each possible» steps and up to ens perfectissimum, ... up to the highest type of possible kinds of creatures» [2; p. 62]. The reality appears as cholarchy - a developing sequence of concentric circles where each subsequent level surpasses the previous one.



Such understanding of the world is shared by the representatives of Transpersonal psychology.

The term «transpersonal» means the sing that is behind the habitual «body-ego» structure. Transpersonal psychology investigates the experience of hereditary memoirs, mythological images, юнговских archetypes, memoirs from the last life, this experience overcoming the borders of space. Research of this experience assumes the reference to various systems of influence a body and the thinking, expanding and changing the consciousness that allows to look into the very depths of psychology.

By virtue of the fact that the idea about life as integrity and the technics of meditation, leading to the expansion of consciousness, have been developed in the east philosophical systems, transpersonal psychology widely borrows and interprets the ideas of the Indian philosophy in the description and an explanation of the changed conditions of consciousness (CCC).

As the modern researches show, the changed conditions of consciousness («peak experiences» as they were named by A.Maslou), often called mystical, are not the synonyms of a pathology and have nothing in common with psychiatry. They can be present in common people in usual life. Various circumstances and reasons may cause them. For example, power and beauty of nature, its perfection can result in the experience of unity. Pieces of art can cause similar effects. The feelings resembling mystical ecstasy are experienced by the artists, musicians during the specific moments of creativity, the sportsmen reaching outstanding results. All these show the necessity of studying the changed consciousness condition. Especially as the whole cultures, and first of all, the Indian one, did not simply developed psychotechnical practices of the transpersonal condition achievement but declared them as a highest value without which understanding the truth is impossible. As E.A. Torchinov has noticed, «as for CCC we may affirm that they do not refer to psychiatry at all if they do not lead to any destructive influence on the person and his degradation ... » [3, p. 350].

Transpersonal psychology is based on the interpretation of mystical experience. The experience in the given case is understood as mental experience, the sum of mental conditions and experiences in the widest sense of this word. Such understanding of experience still latest back to U.Jams. It is not mere chance that the supporters of such an approach to consciousness call him one of the pioneers of the transpersonal movement.

Jams has put forward the concept of the universal, or pure, experience according to which the experience and the reality are all the same. Pure experience for Jams is an infinite vital stream representing the material for the following its reflection by its subject. The given principle is called «neutral monism»: the substance of the world – is not spirit, not matter, but something preceding both of them. Thus the knowledge appears to be like relation between the two portion of pure experience. The ideas being a part of the experience of the learning subject, help him to communicate. Thus the «the subject – object» relation in the experience is removed, eliminated.

Transpersonal experience is an experience in which the overcoming of «subject-objective» relation is supposed. The achievement of such states cannot be character-



ized as the states of consciousness (in the Indian philosophy they are called адвайтой – non-duality, in Buddhism - jnana - the highest form of knowledge) because consciousness as the product of subject-objective relations disappears. There remains a mental experience in which nothing is given, this is the consciousness as itself, the consciousness feeling itself, experiencing itself as «pure sensibleness» (R.Formen).

Besides, the removing of the subject-objective opposition in pure experience allows to look at the correlation of a part and the whole in other way. Nonclassical science has already shown, that the person is not an autonomous subject resisting the nature and changing it randomes according to his purposes and needs. The person himself is included in the nature and is its organic part. On the other hand, the object is included in the subject as its part through perception and interiorisation as the experienced world. The whole appears to be a complex system of mutual reflection of the subjective and objective sides of the experience. Consequently, the subject in such a system of the whole does not learn objects, but experiences them as an objective component of experience, representing it its turn its subjective aspect.

In pure experience the subject and object envelop some unity which cannot be presented only phenomenally. Here is the conclusion to which most of the scientists of different areas of knowledge investigating a person, come: phenomenally unity is preceded a certain intrinsic unity in which the subject and the object act as the two poles of pure experience. In its turn, the transpersonal experience is a real opportunity of experiencing the unity of ontological basis of the world and of a special, transcendental the subject-objective dichotomy дихотомии, knowledge.

It is possible to distinguish two main lines of research in transpersonal psychology. One is directed on formation of new idea about human consciousness which would overcome limitation and mechanistic character of its Newtonian-Cartesian understanding. The other line is connected with the prospects of the mentality development. Both in this and that cases we deal with the use of the Indian philosophy ideas which enable «to develop» a new understanding of the problems named.

One of the most famous representatives of the transpersonal psychologies S.Grof has developed technics cholutropical breathing, going back to the practice of pranajana in the yoga, using continuous rhythmic breathing for achieving CCC.

The technique of the cholutropical breathing at which the quantity of oxygen in a bark of a brain decreases, has revealed, that a person can experience concrete episodes of a fruit or an embryo life anew, to realize the process of ovule by spermatozoon, to experience going outside space and time limits up to experiencing the unity with all creation and planetary consciousness, to meet archetypical images of the collective unconscious, to restore the past embodiments in the consciousness, to go through the stages of planetary evolution.

Under the influence of this material Grof creates the model of human consciousness which differs from the dominating model of modern natural sciences and corresponds to those ideas which existed in «eternal philosophy». He considers various



spiritual and mystical traditions as «eternal philosophy» - Vedanta, the Buddhism, gnosticism, Christian mysticism and others enlisted above experiences and spheres of life.

In the model of consciousness offered by Grof, the problems of death, sex and a birth play an enormous role as they are particularly connected with the transpersonal sphere irrespective of the fact whether an individual meets the given situations really in life or symbolically during the profound empirical self-research. Having met experience «death – revival» on the perinatal level the person starts to realize that many present problems are mistaken, he begins to feel that life is constant change. Besides, the person feels the picture of the physical world change, the sensation of isolation and absence of connection between the things in the world.

The data revealed by Grof in researching perinatal experience, have shown, that the person can actualize the experiences which are outside the limits of his «biographic» experience. They have also shown the possibility of understanding consciousness not as product of a brain, but of the primary principle of existence.

These discoveries have denied the ideas of modern science about neurophysiological and mental functioning of a fruit, proceeding from which scientists considered, that the formation of memory is possible only after myelination nervous fibres. As myelination of the cerebral neurons shell of newborn is not still over, scientists made the conclusion about the impossibility of recording the experience before and at the moment of giving birth to a child in his memory.

Grof's experiences have also demonstrated availability of communication between the changed of consciousness states and that very picture of the world which is present at the Indian philosophy and confirmed with some modern physics date nowadays.

On the basis of the analysis of various chlotropical state aspects, Grof offers the image of the Universe having direct analogies with cosmological ideas of the Indian philosophy.

So Grof asserts that the Universe, a life and consciousness could not develop without participation of the Highest Creative Reason – the Absolute. Absolute Consciousness may be taken as a certain Unity or as or as Space Emptiness, Nonexistence, nothing. But both this and that is the hollowness of space scale showing absolute completeness because there is everything in it. It contains nothing in the concrete shown form, but comprises all life in its potential form. The material world is the expression of Absolute Consciousness that is why it is maja – illusion. Hence it becomes clear, « that the world of a dense matter characterized by three-dimensional space, linear time and inexorable causality and experienced by us like in usual states of consciousness, by itself has no independent existence. It is not a single true reality as it is represented with a science, it – creation of Absolute Consciousness» [1; p. 45].

Process of creation of the phenomenal world, according Grof, may be understood only through direct personal feeling as well. It represents that thing which is defined as lila or Divine Game in the Indian philosophical texts. Lila is an intricate, extremely



complex cosmic game which takes place at will of the Absolute and inside of it. This cosmic game has vast scales and many levels of measurement. It can be compared with playing chess where the figures, according to the roles, move on a chessboard and create huge number of game situations, or with a kaleidoscope which tube rotation gives endless transformation of new and figures.

Dynamics of cosmic creation, Grof says, cannot be adequately verbally represented, it is expressed in a symbolical form as generation of the images which differs from the source of creation, but keeping communication with it and realizing intrinsic identity with it.

Cholotropic experiences not only give us an adequate picture of the Universe. They also contain practical instructions by means of which it is possible to build the optimal vital strategy allowing a person to realize completely his creative potential. The research of unusual states of consciousness for Grof is the necessary process of understanding the true nature of a man, its spirituality. It is the changed states of consciousness that enable to realize that a person is not «an ego contained in a leather» as A.Watts said. They reveal various aspects of spiritual life measurement for which there are no special terms in modern psychology. According to Grof, spirituality is harmony with all the completeness of being, the integrity of man's existence. It is based on the direct experiences of unusual reality measurements and in contrast to religion it does not require to observe contact with divine in a special place by means of officials.

Thus, spirituality is the experience of unity with a source, Absolute Consciousness. Cholotropic states, allowing to realize this unity, change understanding nature and daily material reality by a man, open such measurements of being that are usually hidden from his perception. They open the sacred nature of daily reality and the unity underlying the material world.

Grof points to the existence of communication between so treated spirituality and fundamentals of quantum physics. The theory of «the Big Explosion», Einstein's four-dimensional spatially-temporal continuum, «hypothesis of words plurality» to which our Universe splits into infinite quantity of universes, D.Boma's idea that the world we know, represents only one aspect of reality, its «obvious» or «developed» order, confirm a reality cholotropic experiences.

Grof is sure that cholotropic breath can resolve deep emotional, moral and other problems of the person. The person participates in the phenomenal world, and this demands from him to accept of the world of a matter. The main thing in this is to not identify himself absolutely with a corporal ego and not to consider the world as a unique reality. Individual's realizing his divine nature and intrinsic emptiness of all the things, being found out in the transpersonal experience, forms the basis of the meta-structure, which enables a person to cope with complexities, problems and losses accompanying its life. The transcendental consciousness connecting a man with the highest realities, helps him to solve vital difficults.

The transcendental consciousness experience make the possibility to estimate life from the positions of goods and evil. If at an empirical level of person existence the



problem of defining what good is and what evil is, will be fulfilled by means of the fixed everyday criteria, then at the transpersonal level there appear serious questions concerning the nature of good and evil. Violence grows constantly in a modern society - wars, terrorism, power of the modern weapon simply horrifies. Millions of people in the world live in misery, illness and starvation. How can it be correlated with the order reigning in the nature?

Grof's researches have shown, that under cholutropical states the person can experience not only a uniform creative principle, but its good and malicious form separately like two discrete units. The essence of this experience is most deeply expressed in the concept of the Indian philosophy «sat-chit-ananda». Sat-chit-ananda is a definition of true nature of Spirit-Absolute where sat means existence, chit – consciousness, and ananda - pleasure. In Absolute experience the person identifies himself with shining, a boundless, out-of-time state of essence, the being of which is infinite and which possesses infinite consciousness and experiences infinite bliss. Along with these it has infinite ability to create the forms and empirical worlds out of itself.

This experience Sat-Chit-Ananda has a reverse side - a cosmic principle, including the whole negative potential of the Divine, operating as the turned mirror reflection at other levels of being where there is a time loss of primary Divine existence.

A positive quality – Sat – real or infinite being – is transformed into limited existence, birth and death at these levels of being.

The second positive quality – Chit – boundless consciousness, wisdom, reason – corresponds to various forms of the limited consciousness and ignorance. The ignorance means misunderstanding daily life questions, and deception, and incomplete information, and ignorance of metaphysical problems of being. The Indian philosophy and Buddhism paid the great attention to this question, considering that it is ignorance (avidja) that is the reason of suffering.

The third positive quality – Ananda – Boundless Bliss – «overturns» at lower levels of being into distressing emotions, physical pain, anger, fury, feeling of inferiority, depression and other negative ones. The experience of evil in its any form both as huge cosmic shadow and as the fields of sinister energy, and as well as substantial abstraction, allows the person to form a new system of the values. This system is not based on the generally accepted standards but on the knowledge and understanding of the universal of the Universe low according to which the person is an integral part of creation and consequently, doing harm to others, he does bad to himself. Besides the person understands, that evil is included into the texture of being, therefore it is impossible to win or destroy it. However if the man cannot exclude evil from the world order he can change himself and find other ways of overcoming the dark side of being.

The man realizes, he cannot do without experiencing pain and suffering as they are inherent in the incarnated existence and thus are the ontologic characteristic of this world. Moreover suffering is still defined with a karmic past of the person. But the man can influence on the duration and the form of sufferings, reduce their duration



under cholutropical states that facilitates his fate. The man also finds out, that he is not a body – an ego. Cholutropical experiences allow him to identify himself with everything, beginning with one cell of matter up to Absolute Consciousness. Person's life depends on the fact how he sees and imagines himself and it is therefore that there may be more suffering his life or more joy.

The present stage of the transpersonal psychology development is associated with K.Wilber who paid attention to the fact that it is necessary to investigate the person as an integral system in order to understand his physical and spiritual changings and, consequently, to unite western and eastern approaches to the explanation his mentality and consciousness, to transform the ideas of the western psychoanalysis and the ideas of the eastern psychopractics into the integral theory of consciousness spectrum.

Wilber emphasizes the necessity of the integrated approach to a person. The integrated approach is the approach at which the achievements of various fields of knowledge (from physics and biology to art and poetry), different schools of philosophy, anthropology, psychology, psychotherapy, as well as great spiritual traditions of the East and the West are understood not as competitive but as fair only in some separate parts of a full consciousness spectrum, and, therefor supplementing each other.

According to Wilber an integrative approach corresponds to that picture of the world which was build in the science of the second half of the XX century. Modern natural sciences cannot already explain the Universe from positions of philosophical materialism without including (in some fundamental sense) consciousness itself. Still more and more scientists incline to the opinion that the only way to explain the Universe is to believe that it exists «in the consciousness of some eternal spirit» [4; p. 31]. This idea changes opinion about man's consciousness. Wilber affirms that a human person is multilevel manifestation of the integral consciousness as well as in physics the spectrum of electromagnetic waves is considered to be a multilevel expression of one wave. The research of consciousness assumes the interdisciplinary, polymodal and intercultural approaches converging to «the basic matrix» of various stages, structures and states of consciousness which is named by Wilber as «a consciousness spectrum». According to Wilber transpersonal psychology studies the consciousness spectrum most fully. It pays much attention not only to all the aspects of individual psychology and psychiatry, but also deeper and the higher aspects of human experience named overpersonal and superpersonal.

Wilber believes that nowadays studying of consciousness is possible only from the positions of cholarhy. In this case the deepest consciousness of the person is identical with the Absolute reality which is called differently in spiritual traditions: Tao, Brahman, the God. The prime target of evolution of a man and mankind is the realization of a Spirit that is understood as not dual experience. Wilber says that it is not impossible to define the Spirit from the point of view of mentality, it is «suchness, being and the essence of any and every existing» [4; p. 77]. The spirit display itself in a sequence of steps, layers, measurements and levels. In the Indian philosophy such understanding



of the integral nature of spirit was formed in the doctrine about the koshches of Atman – the shells or covers hiding Brahman, in the Buddhism – in the doctrine about the eight vijñānas – the levels of consciousness, each of which represents a more limited variant of an above lying level.

But the person usually acts in the state of the dual consciousnesses for which the division between the subject and the object is characteristic. This state represents one of the lines of consciousness existence. The task of a science today - Wilber calls this task «the project Atman» - is to show that the base of all is Unity (Buddha, God, Atman) and each level of consciousness which is lower than the level of Unity represents the distortion of true universality nature. The person is the expression of the united Absolute and his psychological development has the same purpose as one of nature evolution: achieving ever fields of Unity. Wilber believes that the idea of evolution continuation subjected by many Indian mystics and philosophers is unquestionable.

The further man's evolution is expressed in development of consciousness. The consciousness development assumes exceeding the limits of "ego", disappearance of feeling "I" as separate human essence. According to Wilber the way of transcendence is the way of developing spirituality. Wilber supposes that the concept of spirituality cannot be treated unequivocally as the Indian mystics did. He bases it in the categories developed with the western psychological and psychoanalytic idea, in particular, with neofreudism and Jung. Wilber comes from the fact that there are a lot of lines of the individual development which are coordinated with system of «oneselfness». The term of «oneselfness» is explained by Wilber as the form of development, the form of transformation, the invariable constant from the uterine condition to the God himself, it is the very thing which forms «I». Wilber puts the dual sense in the term «I»: first, "I" is «I myself», a watching one, direct oneselfness and, second, "I" as an observed one, indirect oneselfness. Connected together they are formed into the combined oneselfness. Wilber sees the following stages of the oneselfness development: pleromical, uroborical, tiphonical, oneselfness of membership, egoistical oneselfness, centaurical oneselfness and transformation of oneselfness in thin areas. Development of oneselfness occurs as a result of a disidentification with its current structure of a higher order. Besides, the lower structure is not rejected with the oneselfness at all. It is not just identified only with it. It transcends this structure and can operate with it, simultaneously using the elements of a new arising structure: «Hence, at each stage of growth or development we find out, that (1) a new structure of a higher order arises in consciousness; (2) oneselfness identifies its being with this higher structure; (3) a structure of still higher order appears sooner or later; (4) oneselfness disidentifies with a lower structure and transfers its direct identification to a higher one; (5) by this consciousness transcends a lower structure; (6) it gets able to operate it from higher level; (7) so that all the previous levels may be integrated in consciousness and, finally, in the highest Consciousness » [4. p. 288].

Thus, during the development "I" of one stage becomes an indirect "I" of the following stage, that is with what the person identifies itself (or in what he is completely



included) at one stage of development, at the following stage is, as a rule, surpassed by him.

Besides Wilber does not reject understanding the spirituality formulated by the Indian philosophers-mystics who believe that spirituality forms its separate line with its own expansion. In this case spirituality exists only in higher spheres and can develop only after the lowest spheres realization. Spirituality in such understanding is the level of development on which a subject is guided by his highest interests.

Hence, recognizing all the approaches developed by the European science for an explanation of consciousness, Wilber believes that they will be incomplete if to exclude from them the eastern traditions which affirm that usual consciousness is the narrow and limited version of higher and deeper forms of comprehension. To awake these forms, special practices, for example, yoga and meditation are necessary. Also it is necessary to consider a role thin energies (in the Indian philosophy – a prana, in Chinese one - chi) which play a special role in consciousness and its activity, and are «the missing part» between intentional intelligence and a physical body. Wilber insists on the idea that the researching of consciousness at modern stage requires new psychology. Such psychology would offer a way of uniting the East and the West, ordinary and substantial, orthodox and mystical, and it would include a lot of approaches – from Freud up to the Buddha, from a Gestalt-psychology up to Shankara, from Piaget up to yogachara, from Kolberg up to Krishnamurty and offers such a model.

The Literature

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