

Transpersonal Models of Ken Wilber, Stanislav Grof, and Michael Washburn:

Dialectics of the Transpersonal: Mapping the Perinatal

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Introduction: Beyond postmodernism

The traditional metaphysical quest for the all-embracing Truth, for a grand overarching picture of 'Reality' that has inspired the 'heroic' trajectory of Western culture, has been pronounced dead. From Nietzsche's "God is dead" to Lyotard's cosmopolitan "incredulity toward all metanarratives," the postmodern rejection of metaphysics, and specifically of the Enlightenment paradigm, has decisively outlawed the possibility of the 'transcendent' whether conceived as God, Spirit, mystical experience, non-reductive 'mind', deep universal structures, or archetypal meta-principles. Challenging the Enlightenment's conviction that it is possible to arrive at objective truth through logical/empirical methods, is the insight that world views (i.e. cosmologies and paradigms) do not tell us the way the world actually is, but rather, indicate how it is that human beings in diverse cultures and historical epochs believe and perceive "the world" to be.

The so-called 'modern' paradigm is a Cartesian/Newtonian mechanistic, atomistic, and objectivist world view with an accompanying yet disengaged, rational and instrumental ego, a 'correspondence theory of truth' and a sharp dualism of mind and matter. Rather than asserting a contrasting cosmology, the postmodern perspective is a methodology of deconstruction, exposing the historical, cultural, and linguistic factors as well as the strategies of power which have shaped successive paradigms. The postmodern view that the 'mind' does not simply mirror the order of reality but rather structures or constitutes it, goes all the way back to the late Enlightenment philosopher Emmanuel Kant. Kant decreed that the only possible subject of metaphysics (that field of philosophy that seeks to describe the fundamental nature and structure of reality) is a study of the nature of the structure of human knowing itself, for the world as it actually is "in itself", the "thing-in-itself," is ultimately unknowable. The world that presents itself to us (for Kant, a Newtonian/mechanistic world disclosed through logical/empiricism) is a phenomenal construction of the 'a priori categories of the understanding,' structures that inhere in the mind of the perceiver and shape and condition that which one perceives. Prior to the view that the mind shapes the world it perceives, was the naive realist view

that the mind, like a photographic plate, simply reflected what was 'out there' -- of course, allowing for distortions of the particular perceptual apparatus. Despite Kant, this naive view remains the unchallenged cognitive bias at the heart of contemporary common sense experience, indicating that the postmodern epistemology has not yet saturated mainstream culture.

Decisively rejecting the metaphysical enterprise (but validly, only in its most narrow rationalistic form) while fostering an intellectual diversity free of the hegemony of positivistic science, the postmodern perspective, nevertheless, perpetuates a subtle form of 'naturalism'. Although the postmodern approach elevates the hermeneutic or interpretative mode of knowing beyond the simple sensory empirical, it has no place on which to ground the constitutive linguistic structures other than in the determinisms and contingencies of material nature. It simply identifies cultural and linguistic practices in addition to physics and biology as the ground of a now relativistic and free floating "truth". Implicit within trenchant postmodern critiques which expose the cultural and linguistic nature of all world views including, to a large extent, that of science, is a naturalistic denial of the metaperspective, a declaration of the impossibility of any overarching and integrative view. Admittedly, to attempt to understand the transcendent through the force of pure reason alone, to try to achieve the necessary meta-position by abstracting from time and history, will naturally end in failure. But this does not mean that the transcendent is either unintelligible or unreal. The prevailing postmodern ethos denies the possibility of a bird's eye view by denying the possibility of the sky because our conventional and narrow window of experience does not face toward the sky.

The quasi-positivist and quasi-mystical young Wittgenstein wrote: "That of which we cannot speak, let us remain silent", thus echoing the familiar words of the Taoist philosopher Lao Tsu: "He who speaks does not know; he who knows does not speak." Yet fortunately, as if in denial of this wisdom, the great metaphysicians of the ages -- Patanjali, Shankara, Nagarjuna, Asvaghosha, Plotinus, Meister Eckhart -- have interpreted the ineffable world revealed through their contemplative insights, producing the great metaphysical mappings of the path to the transcendent realm. But as Huston Smith, Ken Wilber and others have been at pains to point out, the experiential disclosures of these sages, though skillfully employing reason and language, imply access to a broader spectrum of cognitive dimensions than logical empiricism and its technologies.

In disagreement with both Enlightenment objectivism and postmodern

constructivism, I believe that it is the central challenge and opportunity of our age to develop large, synthesizing, and inclusive models which are adequate to the diversity and multidimensional complexity of historical and current experience. Such models will include female as well as male perspectives; imaginative and meditative modes of cognition as well as reason; relationship and connection as well as will and action; altered states of consciousness as well as ordinary experience. Yet heeding the postmodern call, our present search is not for certainty, the irreducible and self evident ground, but for an overarching adequacy -- the best story available. An integrative model is judged not by the criteria of truth and falsity but by its adequacy to coherently handle the multidimensional data with which we are so far acquainted. Unlike the ultimate foundational and indubitable principles sought by traditional metaphysics, our principles or metaphors of explanation are not the rock bottom and certain foundation of 'all that is' but the circumference of an ever evolving and expanding integrated sum of all experience and knowledge.

Transpersonal theory in the postmodern context

Beyond, yet inclusive of the abstract concerns of the intellect per se and beyond the specifically soteriological needs of the individual, the field which dares to approach transcendence in an entirely new way appropriate for our postmodern era is transpersonal psychology. Touching many fields, the transpersonal perspective goes beyond the postmodern deconstruction of the 'received view', beyond the underlying rational/empiricist and objectivist paradigm which has shaped our age. Just as the apparent substantial materiality of a mechanistic nature has given way under the new physics and the holistic concepts of systems theory, the substantiality of the ego is now seen as ultimately 'illusory', or both are seen at least as non-ultimate perspectives. A natural developmental step forward beyond the rational-empirical mind space and even beyond the valid *self-actualizing* concerns of humanistic psychology, transpersonal psychology is unique in that it approaches and engages realms of human experience which have not only been marginalized and ontologically devalued by the rational-scientific and culturally modernist world view but also inadequately comprehended from within the postmodern 'cage of language'.

Transpersonal theory (which includes transpersonal psychology) is a multidisciplinary approach to the questions of the nature and development of human consciousness and the larger philosophical, social, political, ethical, and spiritual

implications of experiential dimensions which lie outside the "privileged" matrix of "every day" consciousness. But it neither engages the big philosophical problems in the strictly theoretical spirit and terms in which they have generally been framed, nor does it approach these questions in the linguistic, pragmatic, quasi-naturalistic and relativistic fashion of postmodern thought. Going beyond the postmodern investigation of the cultural and linguistic structures which have been implicated with the various historical paradigms, transpersonal theory affirms and articulates certain deep and universal structures or constitutive principles which lie deeper and behind the developments of language and culture.

Although in agreement that the old objectivist cosmology is inadequate to account for twentieth century scientific and psychological discoveries, the essential difference between the contemporary postmodern perspective and the transpersonal is that transpersonalism is willing to take a stand within the shifting sands of endless meaning contexts. Foundational to the transpersonalist stand is the contention that the experiences and reports of mystics and advanced practitioners of certain trans-rational and trans-linguistic cognitive modes reveal domains which include, yet go beyond, all previously 'constructed' worlds. Naturally, arguments rage between, on the one hand, the perennialist, archetypal, and universalist interpretations of these linguistically unmediated domains and, on the other, the multicultural, perspectival and linguistically mediated view. (For an account of this debate as it unfolds *within* the transpersonal field itself, see Ferrer 2001).

Despite a serious non-reductive, non-naturalistic addressing of mystical and transcendent dimensions and a positing of trans-historical (not ahistorical) and trans-cultural universal principles, the ambitious models of transpersonal theory cannot simply be equated with ancient speculative and rationalistic metaphysics. Transpersonalism's fundamental commitment to an overarching universalism is not a reactionary return to a "totalizing" a priori. Rather than opposing the relativistic perspectival school, transpersonalism most effectively embraces this crumbling of certainty, this wandering among the dizzying halls of contextual illusions, as the necessary and transitional clearing for a possible entry into the realms of the transpersonal. From its earliest existential prophets to its later linguistic and constructivist sophisticates, the voice of the postmodern is our most appropriate wisdom. Any rejection of its radically decentering message in order to embrace a premature intellectualized promise of transcendence would constitute a metaphysical retrogression. Just as Milarepa was bidden first to build

and then destroy before he could 'realize', so the historically necessary and inevitable Promethean project of the building of the ego -- an ego standing so powerfully yet so dangerously outside of Nature -- must now come to face its denouement before a truly new process can begin to possibly unfold.

Based on empirical evidence from non-ordinary states of consciousness and theoretical arguments engaging complex East/West philosophical issues, transpersonal theory declares a cross cultural universality beyond the 'totalizing' vision which postmodern thought understandably eschews. Transpersonalism is not guilty of what postmodern critics assert to be the pretension of traditional thought to attain universal Truth beyond culturally mediated experience; not guilty of that intellectual imperialism which subsumes all diversity under a particular cultural historic perspective which falsely claims objectivity. It is not guilty because it jumps outside of the limited cognitive context or framework which gave rise to both modernism and postmodernism in the first place. It becomes an ever expanding and inclusive conversation taking place in a cognitive space larger than, yet inclusive of, the modern scientific/rational and postmodern historical-cultural-linguistic space. Transpersonalism accomplishes this through a grounding in the larger spectrum of experience, the full range of experiential states which underlie the production of world views. From a globally inclusive approach to history, science, philosophy and religion, it can take its stand in the universality of human experience beyond diversity, the diversity of creation, pointing to a higher unity, rather than resulting in a relativistic leveling.

But like all human fields of knowledge, transpersonalism has generated its own dualisms and differences. Different models of consciousness are derived from paradigmatically varied ways of viewing the relation of the transcendent to the immanent, the transpersonal to the personal and prepersonal dimensions, and of course, the relation of 'matter' (nature) to 'psyche'. The most ambitious of these models at present include those of the 'neoperennialist' account of Ken Wilber and the more dialectical and depth psychological perspectives of Michael Washburn and Stanislav Grof -- although Grof [1998] is also an admitted perennialist. I wish here to address a central issue which tends to separate Wilber's model from the models of Washburn and Grof across a paradigmatic divide and suggest, most specifically, a possible reconciliation of Wilber's hierarchical ontology and Grof's 'perinatal matrices'. The 'perinatal' deep structure of consciousness, identified by Grof as the interface of personal and transpersonal domains, finds no logical room within Wilber's strictly vertical model without a severe truncation of its

archetypally pivotal significance. This theoretical divide -- itself a dialectic within an inevitably open-ended conversation -- reveals an underlying dialectic identified by another theorist of central importance in the working out of an overarching transpersonal vision, namely, the cultural historian and transpersonalist Richard Tarnas.

Two Stories of History

A fruitful tension within the contemporary understanding of our world has been noted by Richard Tarnas (1998) who has identified two grand metanarratives or major guiding stories which underlie many of the paradigmatic differences in current conceptions of human history; namely, "The Story of Progress" and "The Story of the Fall". The first is the usual story of a "progressive, heroic advance from an earlier state of relative constriction, ignorance, and suffering, moving toward an ever-brighter modern future characterized by increasing human knowledge, freedom, and well-being....The apex of this development is seen to coincide with the modern period, with the emergence of both modern science and individualistic democracy." But more recently, a counter story, itself with historic roots, has begun to play more forcefully upon the modern imagination, acutely aware as it is of the tragic shortcomings of this hubristic perspective. As Tarnas puts it, "the evolution of human consciousness and the history of the Western mind are seen not as a progressive advance toward modern enlightenment, but rather as a tragic story of a radical fall and separation from an original state of relative unity -- from a sense of interconnectedness between humankind, nature, and the spiritual dimension of existence. In this view, the influence of the Western mind, and particularly the modern mind, has brought about a deep schism between humankind and nature, a deep desacrilization of the world."

But rather than seeing these two contrary views locked in an inevitable either/or battle for supremacy on the field of Truth, they can be reconciled in a larger encompassing grand narrative. Most inspiringly, Tarnas (1998) presents us with a vision to guide our quest:

There is something about both of these deep historical perspectives, these myths...that resonate with the reality of our situation. Each is correct in a certain way, but they are both only partial readings of a larger, deeper, and complex story. Not only are they simultaneously true, I believe they actually constitute each other, they are embedded in each other's truth in the way that the gestalt image of two black faces in profile can also be seen as a white vase....our history can be seen as a long evolutionary dialectical development in which there has been a painstaking forging of an autonomous rational and moral self, differentiating it out of the whole, out of the matrix of being,

but...this autonomy has come at a great cost. Gain and loss have been simultaneously working with each other until, in our own time, this dialectic has reached an almost climactic moment of transfiguration...We may now be able to see that inherent in this bipolar movement is the possibility of a new synthesis, gradually emerging out of the dialectical tensions of our own time.

Within the interdisciplinary field of transpersonalism a number of grand theories or models stand out, each one embodying some combination of these two ways of holding human history and the development of consciousness. Any adequate theory must address the paradox of the simultaneous developmental 'gains' and 'losses' particularly obvious in our contemporary situation.

Ken Wilber's Progressive Developmentalism

The highly influential yet often contentious grand synthesizing theory of transpersonal philosopher Ken Wilber (1997, 1997a, 1980, 1981, 1990, 1995, 1999, 2000) weighs heavily toward the 'progress' pole, though not in a conventional or narrowly scientific sense. Wilber is the foremost spokesperson for the evolutionary 'perennialist' or multileveled 'Great Chain of Being' orientation which maps both collective history and individual development in terms of 'deep structures of consciousness' unfolding successively from a magical and mythic 'body-ego' level, to a self reflexive and rational 'mental-ego', then possibly (in future collective terms) onto higher trans-egoic or transpersonal levels. Each level represents a greater complexification of consciousness than the previous level, holarchically enfolding and integrating with the subordinate level prior to new higher level differentiations and integrations. This stage by stage awakening of consciousness through ever higher stages and levels is -- in its broad structures but not its surface details -- an unfolding of what was already implicit following the prior process of the involution (or emanation) of the Absolute into the natural universe.

Wilber will have nothing to do with views which explain contemporary pathologies as the loss of an earlier state of harmony with nature, with the anima mundi; a state of sacred Unity which we must recapture in order to realize a higher spiritual Integration. Rather, he explains the obvious contemporary pathologies in a number of ways. For one thing, the more complex a stage or level of development, the more complex are the problems which inevitably accompany that stage; as he baldly puts it, "atoms don't get cancer; dogs do". For another, rather than making the rational ego the bad guy, many of the existent problems indicate a failure, as yet, of a sufficiently large number of people to move beyond the more primitive level of mythic ethnocentrism to

the space of 'universal reason' -- our Enlightenment heritage. This is contrary to the outlook, associated with the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century view of Romanticism, that Enlightenment reason is responsible for the final disenchantment of nature and the schism between subject and object, self and other, thinking and feeling.

Yet Wilber does acknowledge that things 'went wrong' in that what constituted a 'natural' development of the capacity for universal reason became distorted, so that science and objectivity -- fine in themselves concerned as they are with the exterior domain -- came to dominate 'interior' domains of value, morality, art and religion. His theory recognizes that successive evolutionary developments, from nature's beginnings all the way up to contemporary humans, unfold as a sequence of differentiations followed optimally by new and higher level integrations, producing higher more complex structures, each level holarchically enfolding the previous 'subordinate' levels. But if, following a differentiation, there is a failure to successfully integrate, there may occur either a pathological regression to a previous level or a condition of repression where one emergent dimension represses the other. In this way, science has indeed come to dominate the rich interiors of human subjectivity which should now be given an equal value. But, for Wilber, the higher integration called for -- a goal in superficially apparent agreement with the perspective expressed by Tarnas -- by no means implies a going back, previous to the differentiations of the Enlightenment, to a unity that we once knew but have now lost. (Wilber does recognize a Nondual Ground, but not as a point in history; rather as a Unity altogether prior to time-space). According to Wilber, it is not the subject/object differentiation which is at fault, but what happened afterward which stands to be corrected before we can further evolve.

Ken Wilber and Michael Washburn -- a paradigm difference

As reasonable as Wilber's transpersonal progressive view may appear -- and my brief paraphrase hardly does it justice -- it is questionable whether it goes deep enough to engage the dialectical processes which have driven both the development of the individual and the grand sweep of history. If Wilber's account inclines strongly to the progressive view -- albeit a view which embraces interiority and the goal of the transcendent -- then the psychological developmental account of the transpersonal theorist Michael Washburn (1994, 1995) inclines toward the opposite pole, though offering a possible integration of both views in the above spirit of Tarnas. Washburn recognizes the development of the rational mental-ego as indeed a developmental step

forward, but a step necessarily involving a primal division or separation, a primal repression of the matrix -- in his terms, the 'dynamic ground' at the core of things. In order to move beyond the subject/object split, beyond the limitations of rational egoity and its existential angst, we must reconnect with the matrix through a "regression-in-service-of-transcendence" where the 'damn' of primal repression is broken and unconsciousness and consciousness begin to commingle and interpenetrate eventually leading to regeneration and integration. But such a rejoining occurs at a higher and more developed level than primal 'participation mystique', at a more complexified level of consciousness. From this perspective, the relatively autonomous egoic self is seen as a developmental advance even though consciousness finds its greatest fulfillment only through an ultimate conscious unity with the 'dynamic ground'.

Just as Wilber draws heavily on the work of numerous developmentalists (Piaget, Loevinger, Kohlberg, Habermas etc.), so too does Washburn, but with a greater emphasis placed on social and psychological dialectical processes. Washburn draws mainly on object relations theory with its emphasis on the developmentally formative early mother-child dynamics and enframes his account in terms of the interplay of Jungian archetypal polarities and the depth psychological perspective. The logical infrastructure of Washburn's model, by his own admission, is paradigmatically incommensurable with the model of Wilber around the matter of the 'necessity' or 'inevitability' of primal repression and alienation as the underpinning of the mental-ego. This incommensurability becomes apparent in the profoundly different ways each of them models the structural and dynamic relationships among prepersonal, personal and transpersonal dimensions. Strongly opposed by Wilber, Washburn's account clearly belongs to that consensus which describes the nature and development of the consciousness/world process as an evolutionary movement unfolding from an original state of pre-differentiated unconscious fusion through an increasingly differentiated, distinct and dualistic sense of egoic self experiencing alienation from an ultimately unknowable world. Then, as an individual and a collective possibility, there follows a process of reuniting with the original 'ground' or totality -- but now in full all-embracing consciousness where all previous dualities and conflicts have become reconciled and resolved.

The 'pre-trans' distinction

Washburn's view comes under attack by Wilber who considers such thinking 'retro-regressive'. By that, he means that such an account confuses infantile or primitive

unconscious fusion with higher conscious integration -- a different thing altogether. The level of non-dual consciousness preceding the self consciousness of the mental-ego and the level of non-dual consciousness transcending self consciousness are distinct, but have become confused in much of the Western psychological literature since the pre-personal and the trans-personal are both non-personal, non-rational, and non-linguistic. Here is Wilber's by now famous 'pre-trans distinction' which establishes a pivotal separation between prepersonal and transpersonal levels. Such confusion, he terms the 'pre-trans fallacy' committed both by reductionists and by those of a romantically mystical persuasion.

Most traditional psychologists, Freud included, were guilty of the reductionist error. On the reductionist side, the fallacy manifests as an explaining away of the higher in terms of the lower such as the explanation of art as sublimated sexuality or of mystical experience as a mere reliving of the intrauterine state, if not as some form of schizophrenia. The 'fallacy' is present in its mystic form in the thought of the humanistic 'body-wisdom' school (e.g. Reich, Brown, Watts, Berman) and in the Gaia/Goddess deep eco perspective. Here is an exalting of the lower, simply released from the oppression of mental culture, as the higher. This form of the 'fallacy' (Tarnas's second story) believes that some degree of transcendent purity existed in the historic past and as the spontaneous innocence of young children, but is a state of knowing and being which has been repressed rather than nurtured by a dualistic and pathological society. In this ostensibly 'regressive' view, the transpersonal state is attainable through a releasing of the natural pre-existing ecstasy/wisdom of the body from the oppressive and negative distortions of social conditioning. It remains debatable whether Wilber's pre-trans distinction is, or is not, an overly rigid demarcation. On the face of it, Wilber's logic is seen by his critics as tacitly disparaging indigenous spirituality as a more primitive mode of knowing than the modern urbanized ego, or as a rare level attained only by the most advanced shamanic members of the tribe having little to do with the collective level of consciousness reached by the tribe. Similarly, Wilber's logic tends to judge the earlier Goddess religions as more primitive than the scientific and patriarchal mind which followed.

Although concerned with individual development rather than history, Washburn engages the grand polarities at the core of the dialectical interplay of consciousness and unconsciousness more adequately than does Wilber. Although I feel that Washburn's precise formulation of the foundational dialectic is not quite logically adequate and actually leaves him open to some of Wilber's criticisms, a more adequate model would

incorporate a foundational dialectic resonant to Washburn's general object-relations and Jungian orientation, and would be in broad agreement with him as to the necessity of some sort of primal division of polarities involving a 'primal repression' (or foundational schism) upon which the mental-ego is based -- precisely a mapping of the simultaneous gains and losses to which Tarnas is referring.

Stanislov Grof and the Perinatal Dimension

From decades of clinical research with numerous subjects who have accessed the realms of the unconscious through the use of psychotropics and later through holotropic breathing (and other shamanic techniques), the transpersonal psychotherapist Stanislov Grof (1975, 1985, 1988, 1998) has constructed an archetypal cartography of the domains of the transpersonal in a confluence with fundamental biological and psychodynamic dimensions. Whereas the models of both Wilber and Washburn begin with the advent of birth, Grof's model begins with the domains of prenatal existence and the processes of birth itself. (In response, Wilber would later adapt Grof's findings to his own hierarchical model, but in the process he would truncate what is of greatest significance in Grof's perinatal work). Beyond accessing the personal or biographical dimensions of the unconscious, subjects eventually come to relive the traumatic processes of their births in such a way as to open out beyond individual biography into symbolic, visionary, collective, archetypal, and transpersonal levels of experience.

Associated with the intrauterine state and the sequential stages of the birth process, there appear to be four essential deep structures of the unconscious which Grof calls the perinatal matrices. The matrices function as deep archetypal structures which constellate whole classes of pre-personal, personal, collective, and transpersonal experiences in a non-reductive, multidimensional, and interpenetrating cosmic nexus.

Briefly, the sequence goes like this: From an original state of undifferentiated unity in the womb (Basic Perinatal Matrix I, or BPM I for short), the birth process begins with the first uterine spasms with as yet 'no way out' (BPM II). Then, with the dilation of the cervix, the fetus is gradually propelled through the birth canal (BPM III) and the child is eventually born (BPM IV). The experiences and disturbances at any stage of the intrauterine and birth process have been established by Grof as corresponding to certain generic existential conditions and psychopathological categories. The dissolution of boundaries in BPM I constellates experiences of cosmic and mystical unity, but also such

pathologies as paranoia, hypochondriasis and a confusion of day dreams with reality. BPM II is an experience of cosmic engulfment, of 'no exit' or hell, and connects with depression, inferiority, guilt and so on. BPM III is characterized by a death-rebirth struggle with sadomasochistic, titanic and scatological themes leading to the moment of birth. BPM IV, which is the moment of birth, is a sudden release and relaxation from the build up of tension; the termination and resolution of the death-rebirth struggle and is associated in terms of the therapeutic encounter, with experiences of spiritual liberation, redemption, and salvation following the experience of total annihilation and of 'hitting the cosmic bottom'. Complex modes of human experience and behaviour, both 'normal' and pathological can, then, be understood and therapeutically influenced by relating them to these foundational structures; not simply in a cause/effect biographical fashion, but most interestingly, by approaching them as critical access points to the complex dimensionality of the psyche.

Stanislav Grof's clinical and experiential regression of thousands of subjects back to their actual birth experiences and beyond the 'perinatal' doorway to transpersonal and deeply transformational dimensions, has revealed a powerful sequence of stages and structures which, rather than being reducible to a biological birth trauma, reveal an underlying archetypal and developmental structure with religious, philosophical and psychological implications. Richard Tarnas (1991) describes, in terms of his own overarching transpersonal historical narrative, the archetypal process implied by Grof's findings:

...the archetypal sequence that governed the perinatal phenomena from womb through birth canal to birth was experienced above all as a powerful dialectic -- moving from an initial state of undifferentiated unity to a problematic state of constriction, conflict, and contradiction, with an accompanying sense of separation, duality, and alienation; and finally moving through a stage of complete annihilation to an unexpected redemptive liberation that overcame and fulfilled the intervening alienated state -- restoring the initial unity but on a new level that preserved the achievement of the whole trajectory...In psychological terms, the experience was one of movement from an initial condition of undifferentiated pre-egoic consciousness to a state of increasing individuation and separation between self and world, increasing existential alienation, and finally an experience of ego death followed by psychological rebirth; this was often complexly associated with the biographical experience of moving from the womb of childhood through the labor of life and the contraction of aging to the encounter with death....On the philosophical level, the experience was comprehensible in what might be called Neoplatonic-Hegelian-Nietzschean terms as a dialectical evolution from an archetypally structured primordial Unity, through an emanation into matter with increasing complexity, multiplicity, and individuation, through a state of absolute alienation -- the death of God in both Hegel's and Nietzsche's sense -- followed by a dramatic *Aufhebung*, a synthesis and reunification with self-subsistent Being that both annihilates and fulfills the individual trajectory. (pp 429,430)

Grof in Relation to Wilber

Grof sees his work as entirely compatible with the evolutionary and holarchical perennialist perspective, respectfully acknowledging Wilber's grand synthesis while pointing out certain of its inadequacies in light of his own research and his model of the perinatal matrices. According to Grof there are three essential inadequacies in Wilber's model. First; it lacks an account of the pre-birth level. Grof is not satisfied with Wilber's later truncating incorporation of the matrices into the bottom strictly biological 'fulcrum' of his (Wilber's) grand perennialist hierarchy. Second; Wilber's earlier concept of thanatos (a dialectic of eros and thanatos at each stage of development) does not give a sufficient account of the nature and effect of death. Grof (1985) writes:

..it is essential to distinguish the process of transition from one developmental stage to another from the birth trauma and other events that endanger the survival of the organism. The latter experiences are of a different logical type and are in a meta-position in relation to the processes that Wilber includes under the description of thanatos. They endanger the existence of the organism as an individual entity without regard to the level of its development. Thus, a critical survival threat can occur during embryonic existence, in any stage of the birth process, or at any age, without regard to the level of consciousness evolution. A vital threat during prenatal existence or in the process of childbirth actually seems to be instrumental in creating a sense of separateness and isolation, rather than destroying it, as Wilber suggests. (p 136-137) par

And third: while Wilber's pre-trans distinction is valid in one sense, transcendence of the ego level actually implies a re-encounter with the original ground unconscious. Transformation beyond the dualistic mental-ego lies through a re-encounter with the original matrix, which is not so in Wilber's model. Grof's findings in particular suggest that there is no sharp distinction between these dimensions and that the transformational encounter with the unconscious is not restricted to the personal biographical level 'this side' of the transpersonal level. According to Grof (1985), Wilber's emphasis on linearity and on the radical difference between pre-phenomena and trans-phenomena is too absolute a distinction. He writes:

The psyche has a multidimensional, holographic nature, and using a linear model to describe it will produce distortions and inaccuracies...My own observations suggest that, as consciousness evolution proceeds from the centauric to the subtle realms and beyond, it does not follow a linear trajectory, but in a sense enfolds into itself. In this process, the individual returns to earlier stages of development, but evaluates them from the point of view of a mature adult. At the same time, he or she becomes consciously aware of certain aspects and qualities of these stages that were implicit, but unrecognized when confronted in the context of linear evolution. Thus, the distinction between pre-

and trans- has a paradoxical nature; they are neither identical, nor are they completely different from each other. When this understanding is then applied to the problems of psychopathology, the distinction between evolutionary and pathological states may lie more in the context, the style of approaching them and the ability to integrate them into everyday life than in the intrinsic nature of the experiences involved (p. 137)

Any adequate synthesis of Grof's and Wilber's perspectives must certainly incorporate this more holographic and individual/collective wrap-around nature of consciousness within the grand spectrum. As Tarnas (1991) puts it:

...this archetypal dialectic was often experienced simultaneously on both an individual level and, often more powerfully, a collective level, so that the movement from primordial unity through alienation to liberating resolution was experienced in terms of the evolution of an entire culture, for example, or of humankind as a whole -- the birth of Homo sapiens out of nature no less than the birth of the individual child from the mother. Here personal and transpersonal were equally present, inextricably fused, *so that ontogeny not only recapitulated phylogeny but in some sense opened out into it.* [My italics] (p.429)

A synthesizing model must provide precisely such a nonlinear, holographic and personal/transpersonal interpenetrating structure while at the same time preserving, albeit in modified form, the essential insights of holarchical perennialism. It is the idea that the necessary re-encounter with the 'ground unconscious' constitutes the first levels of the transpersonal domain which is also the main feature of Michael Washburn's model, namely, his 'regression-in-service-of-transcendence' which in its darker shadow aspects, is phenomenologically resonant to the transformational experience of the matrices.

This view of a primal separation from nature impelled by a Promethean impulse toward a heroic egoic self, an autonomous yet painfully alienated self driven by its pain to seek a conscious reunion with the ground of Being -- this view indeed enjoys an experiential confirmation in the work of Stanislav Grof and a deep philosophical resonance with the work of Jung, Neumann and Michael Washburn. Tracing the development of the West as it emerged from the archaic mythological consciousness through a complex dialectic of foundational principles, and wedding his account to an archetypal sequence inferred from the revolutionary transpersonal depth psychology of Stanislav Grof, Richard Tarnas (1991) sums up his overarching and archetypal conception of history:

The collective psyche seems to be in a grip of a powerful archetypal dynamic in which the long-alienated modern mind is breaking through, out of the contractions of its birth process, out of what Blake called its "mind-forg'd manacles," to rediscover its intimate relationship with nature and the larger cosmos. And so we can recognize a multiplicity of these archetypal sequences, with each

scientific revolution, each change of world view; yet perhaps we can also recognize one overall archetypal dialectic in the evolution of human consciousness that subsumes all of these smaller sequences, one long metatrajectory, beginning with the primordial participation mystique and, in a sense, culminating before our eyes.....The masculinity of the Western mind has been pervasive and fundamental, in both men and women, affecting every aspect of Western thought, determining its most basic conception of the human being and the human role in the world...This masculine predisposition in the evolution of the Western mind, though largely unconscious, has been not only characteristic of that evolution, but essential to it. For the evolution of the Western mind has been driven by a heroic impulse to forge an autonomous rational human self by separating it from the primordial unity of nature.... the evolution of the Western mind has been founded on the repression of the feminine -- on the repression of undifferentiated unitary consciousness, of the participation mystique with nature: a progressive denial of the anima mundi, of the soul of the world, of the community of being, of the all pervading, of mystery and ambiguity, of imagination, emotion, instinct, body, nature, woman. But this separation necessarily calls forth a longing for a reunion with that which has been lost....For the deepest passion of the Western mind has been to reunite with the ground of its being. The driving impulse of the West's masculine consciousness has been its dialectical quest not only to realize itself, to forge its own autonomy, but also, finally, to recover its connection with the whole, to come to terms with the great feminine principle in life: to differentiate itself from but then rediscover and reunite with the feminine, with the mystery of life, of nature, of soul.....The telos, the inner direction and goal, of the Western mind has been to reconnect with the cosmos in a mature participation mystique... (p.440-444).

But is this story, in its general features, a philosophically adequate account? Wilber thinks not. In his view, the condition of experiential Unity with the Absolute which the mystics report is not a recapturing of anything which lies in our collective or biographical past. In terms of time and history, the advent of the universe at the Big Bang constitutes an involutory fall of the Absolute into unconsciousness as matter. Harking back to thinkers from Plotinus to Hegel to Aurobindo, the universe is seen as sleeping Spirit in a long slow process of evolutionary awakening all the way up to human forms. The self-conscious ego that we know only too well is a step along this path; the transpersonal realms where Spirit will gradually awaken to itself as Spirit, though presaged by a number of advanced individuals lie in our collective possible future.

Wilber (1980) also describes the foundational involutory/evolutionary interplay as occurring across the interface of life and death, the domains of the Bardo where the soul briefly experiences an unfolding to the highest level (the clear light of the void), then unable to sustain the experience, once more falls back, in accordance with the actual level to which it unfolded in life, into a new incarnation to experience another chapter in its long evolutionary journey back to fully awakened Spirit. There is then, no archaic condition, no original matrix in nature to return to, either in the past of the child or in the past of the species; least of all with which to recognize its original Unity as a mystical Realization. Primordial unity and the original event of separation lies ontologically and historically prior to time/space. Of course, in terms of personal growth,

there is the challenge of integrating the conscious self sense with the personal unconscious, recovering disconnected and repressed fragments from one's biographical past which need to be integrated; but the taking back of projections, attaining a more realistic self-sense, derepressing emotions and memories -- all these personal therapeutic processes lie 'this side' of the transpersonal. What the mystics are speaking of as the "farther reaches of human nature", lie in higher domains beyond this.

par Consequently, according to Wilber, Grof's 'perinatal' structure can properly refer to nothing other than the original birth experience itself. Despite their insistence that they are not causatively explaining historical and psychological conditions solely in terms of the original birth experience, Grof and Tarnas are, nevertheless, accused of 'pre-trans' reductivity. Further, since the birth experience is at the bio-emotional level, it is simply not necessary to re-experience it at the transpersonal level, except as possibly unfinished business dragged along from the personal level. Logically speaking, the biological domain cannot, according to Wilber, be ontologically adjacent to the transpersonal; specifically, it cannot lie between the existential centaur and the transpersonal as Grof claims.

I believe that Grof, has made it very clear that he is not reducing higher levels to the biological level and has a satisfactory answer to this accusation of reductivity, an answer which provides the key to a more adequate model than Wilber's linear model, yet at the same time, friendly to much of it. In Grof's (1996) words:

In discussing perinatal experiences, we are not talking about the fetus, but about an adult who is reliving the experiences of the fetus. This regression is experienced by an individual with differentiated personality and intellectual faculties that include and integrate the development through all the postnatal fulcrums. This vast amount of information is not lost during the regressive experience and forms an integral part of it. It certainly is conceivable that the NOSC facilitates an entirely new creative integration of all structures with the transpersonal domain, thus facilitating the unfolding of still new structures. (p.21).

Wilber objects that the perinatal domain to which Grof is referring is actually just a *looking back down* at the lower level from the vantage point of the higher, thereby *infusing* the lower level biological structures with higher level transpersonal meaning, rather than the perinatal structures themselves being the source of such meaning. But contra Wilber, rather than a relationship of a subject *observing* an object (i.e. the higher level as subject observing the lower level as object), such a *relationship* is one of a profound *participation* which nonlinearly opens into transpersonal domains. It is such a participatory relationship that actually *constitutes* the 'perinatal' structure in the larger

sense of the term. This is obviously more and other than a simple illumination of the lower by the light of the higher as Wilber maintains

Wilber also attempts to refute Grof's claim that the perinatal lies at the threshold between the centaur and the domains of the transpersonal proper on the grounds that some people have transpersonal experiences and do *not* experience a literal reliving of their birth. But as Grof (1998a) points out, cellular level transformation still *re-enacts* birth as "fetal position, flections, deflections, ramming movements of the head, rotations of the body, choking" etc (p. 377) even while not necessarily implying concrete *memories* of birth. Nevertheless, Grof (1998a) makes clear that he is not claiming that "an experiential confrontation with birth is a necessary prerequisite for spiritual opening." (p379) But the fact that the perinatal level can sometimes be bypassed (depending on context, expectations, tradition and access method e.g shamanic breathing, prayer, concentration or insight meditation etc.) does not mean that it is not ontologically present, anymore than the fact that premodern tribal shamans can access psychic/subtle levels without passing through the mental-egoic levels negates the reality (and larger developmental appropriateness) of the conceptual self-reflexive level.

Taken together, there are two points which make it difficult to refute Grof's claim as to the threshold nature of the perinatal: That the relived birth experience often reveals certain of the concrete features of one's original birth that one could not have otherwise known confirms that the full dimensionality of all structures from the mental-egoic 'down' to the point of involution (conception) are engaged. At the same time that they are so engaged, it has been empirically confirmed that when such experiencing of the birth process occurs, dimensions of the collective unconscious, phylogenetic history, the paranormal and the transpersonal are evoked.

Given the compelling insights of Wilber on the one hand and Grof et al on the other, we need a synthesizing framework, one that can reconcile Wilber's developmental hierarchy in its general features with the so-called regressive feature of Washburn and Grof. Such a synthesizing framework needs to be articulated in terms of Wilber's general holarchical scheme while at the same time incorporating the dynamic/dialectical depth dimension of Washburn and mapping Grof's matrices as foundational enactments of the archetypal topography of the conscious/unconscious dialectic and the life/death boundary. But I believe that the nature of the fundamental dialectic; namely, the birth/death, ego/ground, and conscious/unconscious relation, can be more adequately

pictured than it is by Washburn (cum Jung/Neumann) in such a way as to reconcile the deepest insights of Wilber, Washburn, Grof, and Tarnas.

Toward an Archetypally Conceived Synthesis

Beyond their essential difference, there is a general agreement between these two broad paradigms that higher level mystical Realizations presuppose the development of some sort of autonomous self sense. Even the post-Jungian view -- if we can call it that -- is not saying that the Realizations of mystics are literally a straightforward reliving of previous levels of consciousness which had become lost. What then is the 'post-Jungian' view actually claiming, and what is it precisely that it is entitled to claim without violating the pre-trans distinction? What is the post-Jungian view trying to articulate that is clearly not being addressed by, and incorporated within, Wilber's level by level, stage by stage evolutionary model -- the model which Washburn refers to as the linear 'ladder paradigm'?

The post-Jungian view is, I believe, articulating the intuition that something of great value, something that we were once connected to and once experienced, however dimly, has been lost. (I am not referring here to the unconscious longing for the original absorption in the Absolute prior to the advent of the big bang, or for that brief absorption in the 'clear light of the void', postulated by the Bardo Thodol as occurring at the outset of the Bardo experience following death). Furthermore, this 'something' *had* to become lost for us to take the next developmental step, which has brought us to our present condition. But to move on from here, we must reclaim that which we have lost and integrate with it. Such an integration is not merely some modification of the ego and its drive to greater self actualization, but a *radical transformation which necessarily accesses the transpersonal dimensions*. We are speaking here, not of a buried aspect of the personal self, but of an archetypal dimensionality as ontologically significant as, and dialectically related to, the essentially agentic and masculine dimensionality which came to form the infrastructure of civilization, and of Western culture in particular.

I propose that both these broad views -- the level-by-level vertical and the spiralic dialectical -- are correct in certain essential respects and can be reconciled. The key to such a reconciliation is to understand 'reality' -- psyche and nature -- in radically archetypal terms; that is, in terms of those foundational principles necessarily posited as informing and constituting such 'structures as the egoic self and the ground or matrix

(themselves reified concepts). I believe we are logically compelled to establish a multivalent archetypal polarity as ontologically central and foundational. Only when we reconceive the interplay of the 'self' and 'matrix' in terms of this primary polarity, can we understand the way in which Grof's perinatal dimension exists at both biological and ego-transcendent levels.

If we picture the development of consciousness as informed by a dynamic interplay of archetypal bi-polar principles -- part and whole, agency and communion, autonomy and connection, individual and society, masculine and feminine -- we can map a process moving from a primal and interpenetrating balance toward an increasing distinction which, because of this polar distinction, then moves through a state of severe imbalance, thence along to a new level, a now repolarized integrative balancing of the principles. Such a process can still be pictured as the awakening of consciousness at successively higher levels of a Great Chain of Being, described by Wilber -- adequately enough in its most broad strokes -- as the levels of matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit. ¹

In such a bi-polar, archetypal, and dialectical formulation, we are not speaking of a 'something' separating from something else and then rejoining it at a higher level as does Washburn with his concept of the 'self' and the 'dynamic ground'. Neither are we framing the perinatal simply as a self separating from a mother-matrix, experiencing trauma, then later finding resolution through the catharsis of a therapeutically regressive reliving of the birth process. Yet we are certainly acknowledging a process of distinction and separation which eventually and optimally, at a new and higher level, leads to a reconnection, an integration at a higher level than original fusion. Such an interpenetration of consciousness and unconsciousness, though occurring epistemically at a higher level, *ontologically embraces the conscious/unconscious division 'all the way down' to origins*. But contra Wilber's accusations, we are not positing some retrogressive return to primal levels which were allegedly more 'spiritual' than the mental-egoic level. Yet this higher level integration is not something as entirely different and distinct from original fusion as Wilber would have it, but is a higher level enactment of the same archetypal dynamic which informed the original fusion

The Agency/Communion Dialectic and Gender dimorphism

The metaphor of primal separation and consequent return at a higher level -- the changing relation of the 'self' and the 'matrix' -- actually grows out of a very real

psychological condition, but one that primarily characterizes the male perspective as distinct from the female. Although as Tarnas (1991) describes it, "the masculinity of the Western mind has been pervasive and fundamental, in both men and women", history and the whole complex dynamic structure of consciousness can be adequately pictured, not solely in terms of the dominant masculine mode, but as the fundamental dialectical interplay of the male and female journeys, involving at the deepest level the relationship of consciousness and that which is marginalized by consciousness, namely, unconsciousness.

The relationship of the sexes is to be understood, not simply as a social arrangement arising out of historical dominance and submission, nor as one form of prejudice among prejudices, but as something more archetypally foundational. It is not just one of several equivalent valencies of the archetypal polarity, but constitutes the very core structure of the psycho-social levels of post-birth development enacting the archetypal polarity of consciousness and unconsciousness as the foreground and the background of culture. This gendered differentiation is a key to the logic of the archetypal polarity as it informs development up to the advent of the trans-egoic level, fulfilling the agentic trajectory set by the birth process.

Every psyche 'contains', or is centrally constituted by, an archetypal interplay of two poles; namely, a need for autonomous assertion and a need for connective relationship. While both these needs and ways of experiencing are originally intertwined or predifferentiated, as consciousness develops *as* the conscious self, one or other of the poles (it can't be equally both at the same time) tends to act as the primary structural nucleus of consciousness. This fundamental polarity of agency and communion, autonomy and connection, dictates that consciousness will constellate around one pole more than the other pole which remains relatively unconscious -- this polarity will be expressed as a proportion rather than all or nothing. (Wilber himself states that the more *agency* the less *communion*, and vice versa). Where 'agency' constitutes the nucleus of differentiating consciousness as it does, or is encouraged to do, historically in most males (the experience of separation and distinction), the self as the self/not-self structure is central. But where 'communion', the experience of relationship and connection, constitutes the nucleus of differentiating consciousness as it does historically in most females, the nature of the self is structured by a 'self/self' identity. (Within the patriarchal family constellation where, as the feminist psychoanalysts Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein have pointed out, the mother is always the primary parent beyond the very

first stages of infancy, such a separative consciousness is grounded in, or at least reinforced by, the fact that the boy, being male is not-mother, and hence, not-other, while for the girl a more connective consciousness results from being the same as mother.)

The conflation, in most developmental accounts (Object relations etc.), of the concept of the generic differentiation of the conscious self with the mode of separative agency perpetuates and justifies the dominance of the male way as the 'paradigm' or 'default' mode of differentiation. It is the *agentive* self which has become paradigmatic for self or ego, unfolding according to the traditional mythology of the hero, while the female self has constituted the absolutely foundational and necessary, yet devalued infrastructure of all male achievements. Historically, femaleness has functioned as the relational glue which maintains fundamental social cohesion which has allowed individualistic male heroics. But it is both genders which undergo a process of differentiation of conscious selfhood from the primal matrix -- nature and mother -- as they both equally undergo the birth process. However, the nature of this generic post-birth differentiation process has been different for males and females (though in light of the plasticity of the human 'hard-wired' brain, these modes will not be as polarized under historically later post-patriarchal family constellations). Arising from the situation of mother as primary nurturer (Chodorow etc.), if the infant male's differentiation from the mother is that of *separation* producing *distinction*, the infant female's process of differentiation is that of *emergence* producing *relationship*. (Neither of which is adequate or complete in itself). The male intuitively relationship -- the communal pole -- mainly as the primal fusion with the mother against which he had to struggle in order to establish his autonomous identity, in order to accomplish the primal differentiation which all selves -- male and female -- must accomplish. Consequently, feminine connectivity -- the potential for mature relationship -- is equated in the masculine mind (and culture) with foundations and regressivity. But the female does not fail to establish a self, or succeed only in establishing a weaker self because of her remaining more fused with mother; she simply does not establish the kind of separative and assertive self as primary.

The valid insight that the trajectory of history -- the development of consciousness -- has up to now been an archetypally Promethean and 'masculine' project and that such autonomy and separation has been a necessary and inevitable step in a farther reaching teleological unfolding, is indeed of central significance in the working out of an adequate transpersonal model. But such a state of imbalance and division -- self and other, subject and object, male and female -- needs to be understood, not solely as a

condition of separation from a 'matrix' (mother/nature/other) which expresses only the male half of the picture, but more profoundly as a *dialectical interplay of two polar and fundamental ways of knowing and experiencing*. These two modes of the self/matrix and self/other relation, which have been generally aligned with, and culturally reinforced by, the dominant male and subordinate female perspectives, have also found expression in the dualisms of reason and intuition, science and values. In this more complex dialectical interplay -- more complex than the simple self/other, subject/object relation -- as consciousness increases, it is, collectively and interpersonally, the male way of knowing and experiencing which achieves dominance over the female way of knowing and experiencing.² It is the polar interplay of these gender differentiated epistemologies which constitutes the formative force of development, *not the adventures of an agentic self which separates from matrix and then finds its way back -- the story which tends to colour and skew the post-Jungian story of development*.

The foundational division within egoic consciousness is not the division between the self and the not-self specifically (the male mode) which inevitably gives rise to the subject/object Cartesian world view and structure of consciousness, but *the division that exists in all of us between the agency and communion poles of our being*. The two poles of the story of separation have tended to become subsumed within the masculine story and such conflation result in inadequate mappings of the relationship of the prepersonal and personal domains with the transpersonal dimensions. Western epistemic polarities are not direct enactments of this basic polarity but are dualities generated from one pole as it dominates and marginalizes (remaining oblivious of) the other. Hence, as the agentic subject longs to be rejoined with the alienated object or 'other', he longs for the impossible. Only by awakening to the archetypal polarity which subtends all the others can the source of all dualisms be exposed.

For the male dominant or Promethean society, this means that the collectivity must now reclaim the marginalized and forcefully repressed feminine epistemology, must move to embrace the feminine in all its forms (see Tarnas quote above). This implies a process which essentially undermines the structure of the ego. In individual terms, this means that men (in general and to varied degrees) must now try to contact and awaken their communion but it does not apply to women in the same way since women were never full participants in society and still stand outside of the history that they inherit. Women (in general) must now try to contact and develop their agency which, in terms of social evolution, at first takes place through liberal feminism, even though radical

feminism comes closer to grasping the archetypal fundamentals of patriarchy.³ ar

The logic of the agentic principle, grounded as it is in distinction and separation, is that of 'either/or'. The logic of the communal principle, grounded as it is in connection and inclusion, is that of 'both/and'. However, the dialectic between these polar principles must be expressed at a meta-level -- through either a meta-level 'Either/Or' or a meta-level 'Both/And'. (This avoids the tendency in some feminist thought, e.g. see Eisler (1987), to present the feminine connective mode as essentially 'higher' than the masculine assertive mode, rather than to see the *integration* of both principles as constituting the higher). Only in relative unconsciousness, or in super-consciousness, can an archetypal polarity manifest as anything other than a state of relative division and imbalance. It is in the nature of archetypal polar logic -- e.g. the two faces-one vase gestalt picture -- to appear in various degrees of 'either/or' unfolding between the 'both/and' ends of unconsciousness and superconsciousness. The changing relations of these fundamental polar principles logically imply a topography of an upwardly spiralic 'Outward arc' and a 'Return arc' of development where self and matrix on an *Outward arc* of development (prepersonal and personal levels) are distinct, while on a *Return arc* they begin to interpenetrate. On the Outward arc, consciousness is possible only through a meta-level 'Either/Or' division, the distinction between an increasingly complex individual consciousness and collective *unconsciousness*. This means that the direction of development of embodied consciousness on the Outward arc 'up' to the boundary of transpersonal development is skewed toward an increasing dominance of the archetypal (individual) agentic pole *over* the communal pole. Historically, the dominance of agency over communion has meant that the developmental path of patriarchal culture has rested on the suppression of half the human race and the 'other' epistemic pole. The Return arc -- from the perinatal through the transpersonal -- is characterized by a meta-consciousness where both the consciousness and the unconsciousness of the Outward arc can be reconciled and held within the higher level awareness/space of an increasingly superconscious or meta-level 'Both/And'.

Situating Grof's perinatal domain in answer to Wilber

The dynamics of the agentic/communal polarity of the individual psyche, social gender di-morphism in relation to this polarity (primarily agentic for males, primarily communal for females), the resultant socio-historical increasing emphasis on the agentic/male pole, and the marginalization into unconsciousness of communion and femaleness -- this whole complex post-birth expression of the archetypal polarity is

grounded in a prior and deeper enaction of the ontological and epistemological dynamic polar structure. The primary enactment of the fundamental dialectical polarity at the core of the Outward arc *is* the birth process.

The Outward arc is an agentic trajectory grounded in the separative event of birth, and is defined as an archetypal 'either/or' by the separation of consciousness as *individual consciousness* and *unconsciousness*, where unconsciousness is actually *collective* unconsciousness. The uniquely male experience of distinctive separation from the mother-matrix (through what Mahler termed the dyadic individuation-rapprochement crisis moving on to the triadic Oedipal resolution) meshes most naturally with the primary pre-gendered archetypal bias toward the agency pole established at birth. The Return arc begins with an awakening to those dimensions which were marginalized on the Outward arc, namely, the realms of the collective unconscious, and is defined by a 'both/and' interpenetration of individual consciousness and collective unconsciousness. Beyond this initial *perinatal* interpenetration, the Return arc is characterized, not simple by a joining of consciousness and unconsciousness, but by an archetypal integration of the agentic and communal poles -- distinction and connection, the particular and the universal -- rather than a simple subsumption of the individual *within* the universal or collective. At all levels of development, both self and matrix, both consciousness and unconsciousness, are ontologically present and dialectically interactive, just as the feminine, though marginalized, must be mapped at the same level as the masculine all the way up.

We need to understand that Grof's 'regression' process, even though it *includes* the biographical and original biological birth experience, takes place *from* the first levels of the transpersonal structure as much as we can say it *opens into* the transpersonal. Operating at a deep cellular level, the spiritually intentional ingestion of psychedelics or the practice of holotropic breathing, irrefutably access trans-egoic modes of cognition as effectively as various forms of deep meditation (though we can argue about relative levels of the transpersonal so accessed). The perinatal doorway is an embracing of the *totality* of the *lower*. But the 'lower' which is thus embraced includes a lower that is *more whole and total than the lower that was originally experienced by the developing self* and whose archetypally prescribed limited perspective constituted the very core structure of that self. It now includes what has been lying 'on the other side' of the original bifurcation, namely, the collective unconscious levels and the domain of the historically marginalized 'feminine' (i.e. that domain that is best 'participated' by the female connective way of

knowing -- what I [1998] have called elsewhere, the 'subject/subject' epistemology in distinction from the subject/object [male] epistemology).

This Grofian regression process is a '*coming from*' the higher level of the heretofore unconscious *communal* pole which includes the *collective unconscious* -- that which was 'other' to the developing self. (Remember, as Tarnas says above, "ontogeny not only recapitulated phylogeny but in some sense opened out into it.") From this higher level of the *communal* pole, there is a 'going-back-down' to a more 'complete' polarity-embracing, re-experiencing of the original biospheric holon in its agentic *and* communal, individual *and* collective poles; that is, a going 'down' to the holon before consciousness became structured through the division between the developing individual and the nature/mother/matrix, down to the *original organism/matrix bifurcation of the birth process itself*

So rather than an infant coming back to the matrix (a metaphor involving unequal poles as in Washburn's account), a more suitable metaphor is that of twins (equal poles), who separated at birth, are then *re-united* despite both developing separately into adults. In this way, our account of the *re-union* of the primal poles which *necessarily* involves the downward embrace, does not violate the pre-trans distinction because it is not a unity with an 'Ultimate Ground' which is claimed to have been present at birth and is now simply being consciously realized. The dynamic and collective unconscious 'matrix' is not the Absolute, the Void, the Ultimate Source. We are not asserting that the perinatal threshold is a re-uniting with the Ultimate Source (though it can lead to that), but a deep and necessary healing within the Outward arc's structures of being, embracing both self *and* world, a process that cannot occur by regressing back along the path of the outward arc. By reaching down to the ground *through both agentic and communal spheres* (not possible from the egoic and centauric perspectives), the core bifurcation *can be healed all the way up and down*: and this ground level includes the intrauterine and birth process itself. Such a process is precisely that which *constitutes* the higher level truly holarchic trans-egoic structure, that which Grof identifies as the threshold to the transpersonal lying between the existential 'centaur' and the transpersonal domains proper.

In the natural sequence of transpersonal experience, following the *relative* integration of Wilber's pre-transpersonal centaur, the perinatal level must come first. From the point of view of the Return arc, *the underlying ontological unity* (behind the epistemological differences) of each epistemologically differentiated structure on the

Outward arc is transpersonally realized from the original ground up, which then takes us beyond the perinatal. Most emphatically, the perinatal experience is not merely *an incidental* accompaniment of transpersonal experience nor a personal regression back along the individual biographical line to awaken certain memories of birth which, as Wilber claims, just happen to be accompanied by transpersonal influxes. The perinatal domain is not simply a higher structure encountered by the 'integrated' centaur, *but a realization of the conscious/unconscious nature of the 'lower' from the standpoint of the 'higher'*. This *lower* includes the structures of the communal pole which were *dialectically alienated* on the Outward arc of development beginning with, and constellating around, the birth separation. Thence, the 'going back down', the downward embrace, is an embrace *from the higher*. As said, this 'going back down' is not regressive in the ordinary sense since it does not retrace the biographical history (outward arc) of the self. As we enter the Return arc, it is through a transpersonal embrace that the deeply rooted dualisms and divisions can begin to be reconciled; the epistemic losses, which have dialectically occurred on 'the other side' of our most partial epistemic gains, are thus redeemed. It is a *reclaiming* of all the inevitably alienated dimensions of collective unconsciousness (laterally conceived at each developmental level of the outward arc). Any truly overarching model must be capable of illuminating such a journey.

This story, clothed in the unconscious past, which can be opened *inonly* on the Return arc of the transpersonal domain, is indeed the story of primary separation from the matrix on a purely biological, physical and sensory level. Here is nothing other than the life/death boundary, a play of archetypal principles which cannot be adequately mapped in terms of a developmental logic as does Wilber. The door *in* to incarnate existence is archetypally the same as the door *out* (death and/or transcendence) despite different epistemic levels. The particular epistemological situatedness of embodied consciousness, of every biological organism in relation to its environment, establishes the foundational perceptual organismically situated subject/object distinction long before the advent of the Cartesian modernist mental-ego. In the original birth process, the incarnating 'soul' is becoming identified with the particular human organism and its situatedness in time-space. The birth experience occurs from the point of view of the situated consciousness -- the neophyte body-self in relation to the matrix (womb, mother, nature, other). Grof's model from BPM I to BPM IV is the story of the nine-month interface of disembodied consciousness and fully embodied consciousness.

In the relived perinatal, consciousness has expanded beyond the body-ego (and

beyond the mental-ego grounded on the body-self) to include and embrace the matrix, a matrix to be ontologically mapped at the same level as the biologically-based self. The self/matrix split which constellated the consciousness of the Outward arc, cannot *logically* be experienced as an integrated whole until the Return arc, the trans-egoic domain, which settles the Wilber/Grof disagreement in favour of Grof. Although birth is a separation and a distinction, following birth, a new level of unconscious fusion sets in between infant and mother -- that is, from the point of view of the infant. But the fact of birth constitutes the prototypical division that constellates the ensuing (either/or agentic) individuation process of the Outward arc.

A differentiation takes place at birth, and then again through pre-personal developments after birth which are constellated by this primary distinction. This is as inevitable and developmental as it is painful -- life, including birth, is suffering; hence, the particular difficult experiential qualities of the re-lived BPM II and BPM III. This pain carries through and is amplified at the mental ego level as *alienation*. Wilber's (1995, 751-753) criticism that Tarnas invalidly conflates differentiation with pain, separation and alienation just as Washburn invalidly equates the mental-ego with alienation, is not well taken, for Wilber is de-emphasizing the profound and radically constitutive nature of the primary core pain. This is the fundamental feeling/experience of the birth trauma that cannot be downplayed -- it is the driving force for the formation of the body ego and later for transcendence of the mental-ego. It is this differentiation of birth -- the organism/environment differentiation at the primal stages -- which is the *foundation* of the mental-ego. The differentiation of the mind from the body, which according to Wilber constitutes the structure of the mental-ego, rests on this prior and deeper differentiation.

The Overarching Perinatal

I believe that the matrices holographically reflect and reveal, along the lines envisioned by Tarnas (see above quote.1991, 429-430), an overarching fourfold structure of human development and the evolution of consciousness. If so, it is necessary to situate them, not only as experientially accessible from their threshold position at the beginning of our Return arc (between the centaur and the transpersonal), but in relation to the whole sweep of the Outward and Return arcs. BPM I archetypally enframes the original relatively undifferentiated state in history (largely pre-individual and pre-selfreflexive): the archaic, magical, and mythic stages within the natural matrix, a structure and process

nevertheless marked by increasing developmental complexity and individuation (and which, as the intrauterine state itself, also archetypally recapitulates animal history up to the dawn of humans). BPM II, the painful onset of human birth itself, is implicated archetypally with the dualistic and uniquely human self-reflexive phase with its division, separation, alienation, and existential 'no-exit'. Together, these matrices constitute the Outward arc of development based on an organismically situated differentiation of consciousness and unconsciousness as an either/or interplay of bi-polar principles (individual/collective) which constitutes the structures.

BPM III refers archetypally to Grof's perinatal domain as a whole denoting the conscious journey inward and the dramatic and titanic encounter with the deeper 'underworld' dimensions. Presaged by traditional shamanic 'travelers', here is the stage that awaits us in our collective future opened for us by pioneers such as Grof as more and more people undertake the transformational journey deeply into themselves. The perinatal process as a whole which accesses all the matrices, but which as a stage lies between the centaur and the transpersonal domains proper, must be included in the overarching picture -- a self reference necessary in any inclusive model to avoid the error of the detached 'bird's eye view' (Laplace's demon). It can be understood, both in the larger sense of Grof's psychotherapy (or any deep experiential therapy which opens into the transpersonal) and then in the more specific sense of breaking through from BPM II (the phase most archetypally resonant to our mental-egoic level and its entrapment in the subject/object epistemology) to the dynamic and heroic underworld journey. So BPM III (which Wilber [1995, p. 586], in his misleading identification of the matrices with his threefold dynamic [fusion; differentiation; integration] conflates with the more dualistic and fixed BPM II) is precisely the one that archetypally resonates to the so-called *spiral of return*, that mobius-like dimensional feature that turns in upon itself beyond the linear trajectory of the ego, opening up into a multidimensional interconnected reality. Interestingly, this matrix uniquely produces the phenomenon of polar dialectical reversal revealing the ontological mutuality of victim and victimizer, sadist and masochist, thus capturing the inherent unity of the foundational polarities upon which all egoic identifications dualistically rest. Finally, in overarching terms, BPM IV archetypally denotes the higher levels of the transpersonal which potentially open up beyond the High Subtle -- namely, the Causal and the Ultimate Non-dual levels. BPM III and IV together constitute the increasingly integrative (though by no means smooth) Return arc where consciousness and unconsciousness interpenetrate as a 'both/and' relation of the fundamental constitutive archetypal polar principles.

Conclusion

Having first situated transpersonalism in general relation to contemporary postmodern deconstruction, I have identified and analyzed a pivotal disjunction between two prominent transpersonal paradigms. I've suggested some directions for a reconciliation of Wilber's hierarchical-perennialist perspective and Grof, Tarnas and Washburn's more post-Jungian dialectical-depth perspectives specifically with respect to the perinatal threshold and the conscious/unconscious re-connection at trans-egoic (i.e. trans-centauric) levels. A certain procrustean 'Chinese box' quality of Wilber's model -- its hierarchical perennialist infrastructure -- inclines some, especially in the face of such evidence as Grof's, toward a more contextualist, non-hierarchical, and non-perennialist perspective. But we do not have to reject and flatten the ontological hierarchy in order to map the perinatal precisely where Grof places it -- we only need to reconceive the vertical infrastructure in bi-polar dialectical terms.

Certain *constitutive principles or foundational metaphors* have been suggested as logically adequate to generate the deep self/world and individual/collective structures at all levels of evolutionary unfolding. Such a universalist or perennialist/dialectical model is based on the principle of a dynamic bi-polarity, resonant to the Taoist metaphysical concept of the yin and yang; a dialectical interplay of archetypal bi-polar principles -- self and not-self, psyche and world, agency and communion, individual and collective, male and female, conscious and unconscious -- informing the successive stages and structures of the development and evolution of consciousness. Thus we maintain an evolutionary and universalist conception of a movement from an original 'participation mystique' through a dualistic egoic structure, then on to increasingly profound experiences of 're-uniting' with the greater whole from the bottom up, a process of 're-uniting' conceived so as to not be in violation of the pre-trans distinction.

Based on extensive experiential evidence, Grof's account of the perinatal dimension helps break the impasse between these models through its revelation of the holographic and non-linear nature of things, and through its central engaging of the life/death boundary and of the interpenetrative dynamic of conscious and collective unconscious structures.

Notes:

1. Actually, in his later work, Wilber presents a model based on an extensive analysis of the nature of the 'holon' -- the part/whole, individual/collective and inner/outer nature of things including the polarity of agency and communion. But the dialectical implications of these polarities are not adequately drawn out by Wilber so that his model remains overly linear and structuralist. Elsewhere, I have suggested a revisioning of his own articulation of holonic bi-polar logic so as to open up the logical room in his model for incorporating rather than truncating Grof's empirical evidence and theoretical insights.

2. It is interesting in terms of explaining why the either/or logic of these poles goes the one way (male dominance) but not the other is that the generic division between agency and communion within the essential polarity of men and women has a different characteristic because agency dominates over communion and not vice versa. Agency forcefully rejects and represses communion whereas from the communion pole, agency simply remains relatively undifferentiated or, through male oppression, actually forbidden for females to develop. But in all cases, agency and communion exist in 'either/or' relation. When agency and communion come into a both/and balance, where both poles can be held within the same consciousness, we are already moving beyond ordinary egoic consciousness. Where a person actually succeeds in bringing his or her agency and communion into a true balance, then one is already moving beyond ordinary egoic consciousness into the Return arc.

3. For accounts of the other primary pole of knowing historically exemplified by the marginalized feminine moral and epistemological perspective, see also Belenky et al (1986) and Gilligan (1982).

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