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Clearing Up Rollo May's Views of Transpersonal Psychology and Acknowledging May as an Early Supporter of Ecopsychology

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with comments by Angela Voss and Brad Adams

This paper explores Rollo May's 1992 reassessment of transpersonal psychology, in which he reverses his 1986 and 1989 arguments against transpersonal psychology. Equally relevant, this paper shows that May was actually interested in supporting what is now called ecopsychology. Schroll (following Alan Drengson and Arne Naess) now refers to ecopsychology as transpersonal ecosophy. This paper offers a thorough examination of several key concerns that May had regarding his reservations toward accepting transpersonal psychology's legitimacy, and includes May's vigorous discussion with Ken Wilber. Wilber's discussion with Kirk Schneider's 1987 and 1989 critique of transpersonal psychology is also examined. Likewise Albert Ellis' 1986 and 1989 rejection and misunderstanding of transpersonal psychology is discussed.

Keywords: *ecopsychology, transpersonal ecosophy, Ken Wilber, humanistic psychology.*

Many have been confused as to why Rollo May rejected transpersonal psychology, a question that is addressed and answered in this paper. In early March 2010, Oliver Robinson initiated a conversation asking (1) "what is spirituality" on the Facebook group "Cosmos and Consciousness." It was agreed that spirituality does represent a more general and less ideologically focused inquiry into religious concerns. It was for this reason John Rowan said that references to spirituality are often so general as to be confusing as to what is actually meant by it. (2) This led Rowan to suggest that references to transpersonal psychology are more precise. Agreeing with Rowan, I added some additional background information on transpersonal psychology and related fields of inquiry. (3) This inquiry led Rowan to bring up May's misunderstanding and rejection of transpersonal psychology, adding that toward the end of his life, May had reversed his position on transpersonal psychology to one of acceptance. This in itself is very encouraging. (4) Amidst this inquiry, Albert Ellis' rejection and misunderstanding of transpersonal psychology is also discussed. (5) Finally, equally encouraging and relevant to this issue's Special Topics theme, this paper will show that May was a supporter of what is here called transpersonal ecosophy.

What is Spirituality?

In a recent article by Aryeh Lazar (2009), he asked "what is spirituality?" He concluded that "there is little agreement in the literature as to what spirituality actually is. However, almost all researchers appear to agree that spirituality is a multi-dimensional construct" (p. 4).

Mark A. Schroll: Before we begin our inquiry into the question, what is spirituality, let me hark back to the Editor's Introduction to this section, in which I expressed support for the work of:

Kaisa Puhakka's antidote to the postmodern malaise of experiential deconstruction (Puhakka, 2008, p. 12), and Jorge N. Ferrer's participatory turn toward "coevolutionary perspectives" that embody "pluralistic approaches to spirituality" (Ferrer, 2009, p. 142) to help assist in recognizing the "web of life as primary" (Puhakka, 2008, p. 16). Puhakka and Ferrer's papers do not explore the concept of *ecosophies of communication* and *ecology of mind* based on the legacy of Arne Naess and Gregory Bateson (Bateson, 2010; Drengson, Devall & Schroll, 2011); Bateson and Naess were both addressing these concerns. *Ecosophies* (the wisdom of place and the person's unique relationship to it) and *ecology of mind* (modes

of knowing the co-evolutionary experience of Being). (Schroll & Hartelius, 2011, p. 85 [this volume]).

Transpersonal theory owes a great debt to Ferrer's clarification of the limitations inherent within a diverse "family of interpretive models" associated with the perennial philosophy (models that agree a single universal truth exists "at the heart of the mystical teachings of the world[']s religious traditions" for all cultures and all religions). Ferrer juxtaposed this view and the postmodern critique of contextualism, which leads to his conclusion that both are flawed, "whereas perennialism leans back to Cartesianism, contextualism subscribes to Neo-Kantian epistemological assumptions about the nature of knowledge and reality" (Ferrer, 2000, p. 23). Following Tarnas, Ferrer agreed their mutual flaw is dualism, and echoed the assessment: "Thus the cosmological estrangement of modern consciousness initiated by Copernicus and the ontological estrangement initiated by Descartes were completed by the epistemological estrangement initiated by Kant: a threefold mutually enforced prison of modern alienation" (Tarnas, 1991, p. 419, as quoted in Ferrer, 2000, p. 24).

Ferrer's (2000, 2009) search to move beyond both of these viewpoints led to his participatory turn and his embrace of co-evolutionary perspectives. Others support this participatory turn, such as Jeremy D. Yunt (2001), who has argued that "conscious participation in relations with others and the world predominates over detachment and calculation—primarily characteristics of technical reasoning. By stressing the inextricable and potentially empathetic link between psyche and nature, ecopsychology makes development of this participatory reason its primary goal" (p. 109). I, too, have supported this coevolutionary participatory turn (Schroll, 1997), and the need to apply this perspective to methodological inquiry (Schroll, 2010a). I will say more about this methodological inquiry in a moment.

Oliver Robinson: A common conversation in the Scientific and Medical Network is, What do we actually mean by the term "spirituality"? It is certainly a slippery concept. Here is a short passage from a chapter of mine that gives one angle on the issue:

The secular worldview is being challenged by a renewed engagement with the notion of spirituality, beyond the traditional confines of religion and theology. This new spirituality is evidenced in the diverse literature and organizations that consider

ways of reintroducing spiritual practice into life in a manner that complements rational endeavor rather than compromising it, and that is not confined to a particular religion or book. The mystical impulse has survived through modernity in many guises, but it has been inevitably squeezed towards the periphery as rationality has attempted to clear the world of unquantifiable or subjective concerns, while giving the object ontological dominance. Modern science posits observable objects and their quantifiable properties as ultimately real, and the world is viewed through the prism of science as a collection of objects governed by laws. However, despite the best efforts of scientists to remove the subject from the world, even going so far as to make the word "I" taboo in scientific articles, it just will not go away. "I" and the "you" remain central to our vocabulary and our interactions despite the best attempts of materialist philosophers to reduce the world to a collection of "it"s. The "I" cannot be observed, for it is always the observer—it is therefore outside of the province of science, which deals only with observable phenomena.

This simple fact has been highlighted by many thinkers including Kant (who referred to the I as the transcendental ego), William James (1890/1950; who referred to the I as the self-as-subject) and contemporary thinkers such as Peter Russell (2005) and Ken Wilber (2006). Here we find ourselves in the territory of spirituality, for the subject can be explored through contemplative or reflective practice. The subject is spirit. In the process of acknowledging one's nature as irreducible subject, a person moves beyond a purely material conception of themselves and the world, not through faith, myth, or superstition, but through a realization of their inherent nature. From the exploration of the subject, questions emerge such as: Are subject and object necessarily inseparably and permanently linked? Could the universe itself be both subject and object? Am I just my body? Could I have a "relationship" with the universe, or with nature, in the way I have a relationship with human subjects? Such a "bottom up" approach to spirituality, starting with an exploration of self and other, is not an alternative to grand theological or cosmological conceptions of Spirit, but is a complementary process that is available to all and highly congruent with the inquiring modern mindset (Robinson, 2010).

Schroll: I found the way you wrestled with EuroAmerican science's efforts to reconcile subjectivity, objectivity, and how this concern relates to the larger issue of spirituality, cosmos, and consciousness has much in common with my own inquiry. You mentioned several people that have addressed these concerns, one of which was Peter Russell. I lectured with Russell in 2004 at the International Transpersonal Association conference; my discussion with Russell on the issue of science and spirituality is included in my paper "Toward a New Kind of Science and its Methods of Inquiry" (Schroll, 2010a). In response to my views on methodology, Peter N. Jones compared it to the jazz style of Miles Davis:

Schroll argues that our present methods fail to provide the means to fully comprehend aspects of consciousness, simply because we are always trapped within our own metanarrative. His suggestion is that we find ethnographic methods that include within their approaches an understanding of methods and techniques that allow us to experientially encounter them. Our becoming transformed and then recollecting our ethnobiographical experiences is the means, he argues, toward a new kind of anthropology. In this sense, Schroll is arguing for the same thing that Miles Davis played so well—we must not only study the physical characteristics of space but also the nonphysical characteristics. We must not only play the notes, or experientially encounter aspects of space, but we must also play the space around the notes, allowing ourselves to become transformed by the physical and nonphysical characteristics of space (Jones, 2010, pp. 43-44).

Hillary S. Webb (Managing Editor of *Anthropology of Consciousness*) has included additional commentary on this paper and subtitled these comments, The Future of a Discipline: Considering the Ontological/Methodological Future of the Anthropology of Consciousness, Part 1. I specifically discuss my views on science and religion on pp. 4-7. This paper, and my paper "The Physics of Psi: An Interview with Stanley Krippner" (Schroll, 2010b), provide a platform with which to finally go forward with my most extensive research area from my dissertation: the legacy of David Bohm and its relationship to transpersonal psychology. My continuing goal is to offer a theory of psi, cosmos, and consciousness that is consistent with Bohm's transpersonal physics, which may take a few more years to complete.

John Rowan: Perhaps the most productive way to look at spirituality is to divide it into levels. At one level spirituality is superstitious, observing rituals to keep away evil spirits. At another level spirituality is something to be regulated by experts and officials, not to be approached individually, but possibly inspiring and useful. At another level spirituality is what is central to me: I am skeptical of official definitions and feel rather alone with my real self. At another level I am a spiritual being, I am a soul, I can be inspired by deities, angels, nature spirits, I can see the divine everywhere. At another level I have seen through all illusions and question the value of names like spirituality. None of these levels is THE TRUTH.

Schroll: Finding "a truth" or final stage of "enlightenment" is one of the points that you sought to clarify in your paper "Maslow Amended" (Rowan, 1998). Too often, as you suggest (and as I have come to agree), Maslow's hierarchy of needs views personality development leading toward transcendence as having an end point—hence your suggestion to do away with the triangle (let us save the discussion of Wilber and his "all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, and all types" AQAL model for a future discussion). In your paper "Maslow Amended," you suggested substituting a ladder for the triangle. It was 1998 when you wrote this so maybe you have improved on this idea, and I would like to hear what your latest thoughts are. Regarding the "ladder" alternative, in his book *From Science to an Adequate Mythology* (Sharpe, 1984), (the late) Kevin J. Sharpe proposed a ladder model of cosmos and consciousness in chapter five (Sharpe was one of my former professors). I rejected this ladder model in my early correspondence and conversations with Sharpe. I ended up leaving these conversations out of my dissertation because I never finished working out a complete ontology and epistemology of the transpersonal. I am continuing to work out these ideas.

One alternative I have considered is to view personality/cosmos and consciousness as having no absolute end-point, represented visually as a double helix, Mobius band, light cone, infinity symbol, two inverted triangles, etc. But the map is not the territory as you know, which is why Rowan divides spirituality into two levels. To some extent Rowan's division reminded me of what Maslow (1971) spoke of in *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* as *organized religion* on the one hand and the *mystical/individual experience* on the other hand (see pp. 343-344). Like Rowan, I see organized religion as

“ritualistic symbolism without somatic understanding” that operates at the physical or behavioral level of belief systems, which often excludes an experiential aspect where the person can ground theory in somatic transcendental awareness.

Still (as Rowan’s comments elude) there continues to be the question does the mystical experience allow us to cut through illusion (maya) and bear witness to the Tao or truth in itself? No; or to clarify, I do not view mystical experience as a singular experience of visionary insight. This is not because I fail to believe in transcendence or transpersonal domains of awareness. Instead personality development, cosmos, and consciousness are evolving infinitely, and at the personal level we all need each other to continue on our path. By this I mean a collective process of shared visionary experience whereby multiple stories are woven together in order to tell the story of the universe (Schroll & Greenwood, 2011). Transcendence then is not a final state or location or quantitative neurochemical analog, it is the personal and collective journey that all of us are on. Thank you for helping me remember this John.

Rowan: I still think the ladder is a useful model, and there is a nice version of it in Figure 2.4 and 2.5 in Wilber’s *Integral Spirituality* (Wilber 2006). I also go along with Wilber in saying that the Nondual is not an item on this model, but rather can be represented by the paper on which it is printed.¹

Schroll: The ladder is a useful model, and does (as you have pointed out in “Maslow Amended”) move us away from viewing transcendence as an end point. I will take a look at Wilber’s *Integral Spirituality* figure’s 2.4 and 2.5 again, and get back to you on this. Regarding “nondual” as not an item on the model but the paper on which it is printed seems in a way to be suggesting, as I have also said, “transcendence/nondual” is not a place or location; it is life itself or our journey through life (Schroll, 2009a). Rowan and I agree on this. (I offer a general discussion of this elsewhere, in Schroll, 2010a, which is primarily a philosophical view of methodology. More could be added to this view of methodology; for example, I did not specifically discuss Clark Moustakes’ heuristic inquiry or other specific qualitative or phenomenological approaches. I did briefly touch on personality development, cultural development, cosmos, and consciousness.)

Robinson: For me, to justify using a term and a concept like “spirituality,” one has to make sure that it is not:

- (1) Redundant by being so diffuse as to be essentially meaningless, and
- (2) Redundant by having no unique domain of reference.

Countering the first problem requires finding a common denominator or core that runs through all the manifestations of the idea, or to reject some manifestations and find a common denominator in those that are considered valid. If there is a core to the concept, then we can be sure it is not a “disjunctive category” (i.e., a catch-all). The second issue requires an assurance that spirituality has its own “turf” beyond empirical science, rational philosophy and religion. All claim access to Truth, after all. The search for Truth is a crowded marketplace these days!

Schroll: This is a good point you raise Oliver, that so far in this conversation we have 1) not clearly defined the domain of “spirituality/transcendence,” nor 2) have we yet given a clear operational definition of spirituality or transcendence. Rowan rightly suggested that in talking about spirituality we need to define levels, or stages, or states. This assists in our differentiation between mere “belief systems” that operate as a “social fact.” People can believe in things that are not real (like the Easter Bunny) which are useful in creating folk beliefs that can become part of a larger explanatory system. It may seem harmless for us to indulge ourselves in folk beliefs as part of holiday celebrations, yet this is why Maslow held (and I think this was also Rowan’s point) that organized/legalistic religion has the same tendency to create rituals that operate as social facts.

One example is baptism, which can amount to nothing more than slight immersion in water or a mere sprinkling of water on our head, which has now become a ritual that symbolically represents transcendence or transpersonal awareness, whereas holding someone underwater until they are very close to death represents a “thanto-mimetic” method potentially capable of inducing a mystical, or transpersonal state of consciousness. But the technique is difficult because the person could potentially drown (Pelletier, 1978). Here even before we have an operational definition of spirituality or transcendence is the need to clearly differentiate *organized religion* from *mystical traditions* that have specific methods or techniques for inducing transpersonal states of consciousness. The Sufi story, The Man Who Walked on Water offers one way of making this distinction (Shah, 1967).

Demarcating organized religion from the core religious experience (or transpersonal states of consciousness vs. the more general reference to spirituality) became an exercise in proving its cross-cultural or perennial philosophical significance. I sought to clarify this point in a conversation on September 29, 1999 in Lincoln, Nebraska with Anizah A. Bakar, a friend visiting from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I realized that besides my discussion of Maslow's (1971) distinction between legalistic and core religion, and my previous comments on the discussion "What is Spirituality," an additional means of getting this idea across to people was needed. Reflecting on this problem reminded me of the Sufi story:

The Man Who Walked on Water

A conventionally-minded dervish, from an austere pious school, was walking one day along a riverbank. He was absorbed in concentration upon moralistic and scholastic problems, for this was the form which Sufi teaching had taken in the community, which he belonged. He equated emotional religion with the search for ultimate truth. Suddenly his thoughts were interrupted by a loud shout: someone was repeating the dervish call. "There is no point in that," he said to himself, "because the man is mispronouncing the syllables. Instead of intoning Ya Hu, he is saying 'U Ya Hu.'"

Then he realized that he had a duty, as a more careful student, to correct this unfortunate person, who might have had no opportunity of being rightly guided, and was therefore probably only doing his best to attune himself with the idea behind the sounds. So he hired a boat and made his way to the island in midstream from which the sound appeared to come. Sitting in a reed hut he found a man, dressed in a dervish robe, moving in time to his own repetition of the initiatory phrase. "My friend," said the first dervish, "you are mispronouncing the phrase. It is incumbent upon me to tell you this, because there is merit for him who gives and him who takes advice. This is the way in which you speak it." And he told him. "Thank you," said the other dervish humbly.

The first dervish entered his boat again, full of satisfaction at having done a good deed. After all, it was said that a man who could repeat the sacred formula correctly could even walk upon the waves: something that he had never seen, but always

hoped—for some reason—to be able to achieve. Now he could hear nothing from the reed hut, but he was sure that his lesson had been well taken. Then he heard a faltering U Ya as the second dervish started to repeat the phrase in his old way.

While the first dervish was thinking about this, reflecting upon the perversity of humanity and its persistence in error, he suddenly saw a strange sight. From the island the other dervish was coming toward him, walking on the surface of the water.... Amazed, he stopped rowing. The second dervish walked up to him and said: "Brother, I am sorry to trouble you, but I have come out to ask you again the standard method of making the repetition you were telling me, because I find it difficult to remember it" (Shah, 1967, pp. 84-85).

Telling Bakar this story provided her with the means to understand the point being made in this essay regarding the core religious experience and organized religion. On the one hand, the humble dervish sitting in the reed hut represents someone whose purity of intention has allowed his consciousness to resonate with the source of religion or [David Bohm's] holoflux, giving him the ability to "walk on water." On the other hand, the conventionally minded dervish knows the proper pronunciation of the chant, yet his trappings of legalistic and/or organizational religious methodology are nothing more than "ritualistic symbolism without somatic understanding." Demonstrating and understanding this demarcation between a [soma-significant] tradition of mystical experience and ritualistic symbolism without somatic understanding is the key to understanding the transpersonal perspective—our ability to resonate with holoflux—[the fundamental unifying principle, or] the source of religion. (Schroll, 2005, p. 65)

I hope this helps us to clarify our conversation and speaks to both Ferrer's embrace of the participatory turn, avoiding dualism, while preserving a fundamental unifying principle that I (following Bohm) refer to as the holoflux. Still the question remains what is our operational definition of "spirituality" or "transcendence," and what is its corresponding domain? This is the real question when we are talking about cosmos and consciousness.

Rowan: It is because of the various meanings and uses of the term spirituality that I prefer to use the term transpersonal.

Schroll: Yes John, I too prefer using the term transpersonal instead of the term spirituality. One of the best examples I can give of how (even at its best) the word spirituality remains unclear is the 1988 paper, *Toward a Humanistic-Phenomenological Spirituality: Definition, Description, and Measurement*, by David N. Elkins, L. James Hedstrom, Lori L. Hughes, J. Andrew Leaf, and Cheryl Saunders. They defined it this way:

Spirituality, which comes from the Latin, *spiritus*, meaning “breath of life,” is a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate. (p. 10)

In this definition of spirituality the question that Robinson raised about having an operational definition is somewhat satisfied. Still, the bigger question regarding its corresponding domain is still ambiguous. Vague references to the “transcendent dimension” do not tell us much, nor does a reference to “whatever one considers to be the Ultimate.” Raising this concern prior to reading Lazar (2009), I was therefore surprised when I discovered it was the Elkins et al. definition of spirituality that contributed to Lazar’s operational definition for his investigation of spirituality and measures of psychological functioning among Israeli Jews (Lazar, 2009). I am not criticizing the findings of Lazar’s inquiry, yet based on his operational definition this was a study of belief systems (or what I might suggest could be referred to as a *cultural placebo*), and not an inquiry of transpersonal experience.

This is why I agree with Rowan’s preference for using the term transpersonal which has a variety of definitions. Transpersonal psychology recognizes that “humanity has both drives toward sex and aggression and drives toward wholeness, toward connecting with and *experiencing the divine*” (R. Hutchins, as quoted in Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992, p. 87, emphasis supplied). I like this definition of the person because it suggests that personality development has a dynamic quality, instead of placing an emphasis on the object permanence of any particular state of consciousness we might experience, demonstrate, or actualize within our self-awareness. The transpersonal is equally present in states of ecstasy, sensuality, and somatic experiences that are capable

of just shaking you to your roots and really waking you up: life encounters that make you come alive and experience the kinesthetic, the tactile, and the erotic. Each of these human drives (and their various nuances) is equally important toward the creation and maintenance of a healthy personality. Nevertheless, no definition of transpersonal psychology should be viewed as a description of some finished or final product of enlightenment. Rather, transpersonal psychology’s emphasis is on the continuous process of transcendence and transformation within the realms of the personal, the planetary, and the cosmological.

Here we are on the verge of having an operational definition of transpersonal psychology. *The question that continues to remain is what or where “ontologically” is the source of the transpersonal located?* This is a question that transpersonal psychology continues to be vague about, in spite of the work of people such as Stanislav Grof (1998, 2000). *This vagueness regarding the ontological domain of the transpersonal is, I believe, because the full meaning and understanding of the philosophical legacy of Bohm and its implications for transpersonal psychology continues to remain an unfinished conversation.*

Rowan: The main advantage of using the term transpersonal is that it places the field. It places it as following after the prepersonal and the personal in the process of psychospiritual development. Therefore it is clearly not to be confused with the prepersonal and the personal. Not so with spirituality, which roams all over the place.

Schroll: Exactly, John; hopefully our conversation thus far has helped people to see that the term spirituality does roam all over the place, and that the term transpersonal clarifies this frequently ambiguous discussion. Moreover, this distinction and discussion regarding spirituality and the term transpersonal provides a reply to the criticisms raised by Albert Ellis and Raymond J. Yeager in their 1989 book *Why Some Therapies Don’t Work: The Dangers of Transpersonal Psychology*. We will take up Ellis’ criticisms of transpersonal psychology in greater detail later in this conversation.

Tangential to these concerns, the British Psychological Society’s recognition of a transpersonal psychology section and corresponding journal *Transpersonal Psychology Review* offers a forum to advance this discussion. Still I continue to encounter many psychologists in the UK who are unfamiliar with transpersonal psychology. Awareness of transpersonal

psychology is not much better in the USA in spite of its now 40-year history. Indeed the American Psychological Association does not even recognize an independent division of transpersonal psychology, as its APA affiliation comes through its organizational connection with Division 32: Society for Humanistic Psychology of the APA. Moreover it has only been since August of 2007 that humanistic and transpersonal psychology finally officially reconciled their differences.

Likewise, with regard to psychospiritual development, the term transpersonal does place itself after the prepersonal and personal, yet Rollo May never accepted this, as you know, John. After you published the paper, “Two Humanistic Psychologies or One” (Rowan, 1989), May (1989) responded with his paper, “Answers to Ken Wilber and John Rowan,” which told us that May not only believes there are at least two humanistic psychologies (one focused on the existential and one on the transpersonal), but that May believed:

in parapsychology and William James’s studies concerning the fringes of consciousness. I am very much interested in the sacraments of the primitive sects of Brazil, for example, and have experienced them personally. When I was ill with tuberculosis I had two experiences with faith healers. All of these I choose to call religion. I am in favor of experiments on the interface between religion and psychology. My objection to transpersonal psychology is that it blurs the distinction between the two (p. 244).

We are left to wonder how May was able to hold such seemingly contradictory positions. How was May able to believe in parapsychology, which kept the APA Council of Representatives from endorsing transpersonal psychology as a separate division within the APA, while simultaneously continuing to endorse and participate in the investigation of shamanism until his death in 1994? These are unanswered questions that continue to plague the acceptance and development of transpersonal psychology. There are, of course, other concerns and interests of mine that I have raised throughout this conversation regarding the continued development of transpersonal psychology; yet as we have been doing thus far it is essential to clarify these basic issues—answering the critics—and establishing a solid foundation from which to proceed.

Rowan: There is a very interesting dialogue between Jackie Doyle and Rollo May, and a couple of other

people, where they argued with him that his rejection of transpersonal psychology was ill-advised, and May eventually agreed; but I cannot seem to lay my hands on it now. Does anyone remember that? I think it was published in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, but I am not sure.²

Angela Voss: This is a very interesting discussion. To distinguish scientific from spiritual inquiry, the neoplatonic=theological model of levels of cognition is very helpful. There are literal modes of understanding, allegorical, moral, and finally mystical. The important thing is not to apply one mode to try to understand another, such as a literal, empirical mode applied to the apprehension of the sacred, or revelation. We tend to stay with the literal and allegorical in most forms of knowing, particularly in the discussion of ‘transpersonal’ experience. This model suggests deeper, more contemplative and intuitive forms of apprehension that eventually culminate in a union of the knower with what is known.

Schroll: Thanks for your comment Angela. I can see how you might have viewed this conversation John and I have been having as a means of “distinguishing scientific from spiritual inquiry.” But it is a bit more subtle than this. Maslow actually spoke to a similar concern in his hopes to prove the relationship between science and religion. Specifically Maslow (1964) sought to establish transpersonal psychology as a discipline that would enable EuroAmerican science to: “examine religion in all its facets and all its meanings in a way that makes it part of science rather than something outside and exclusive of it” (p. 20).

Maslow later expanded on this discussion in his posthumously edited book (that Bertha Maslow commissioned Miles A. Vich to do) *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971). Vich pointed out that there is a very important difference between organized religion and transpersonal psychology: there is no catechism associated with transpersonal psychology; it: “is not a religion; it has no dogma, no list of precepts, no theology, and no church” (Vich, 1986, p. 2). As important as this distinction of “scientific” and “spiritual inquiry” is, let alone the need to clarify what it is we mean by “scientific” or “genuine science and essential science” (which Charles T. Tart has taken up in his recent book, *The End of Materialism*, 2009) versus “spiritual inquiry”: all of which I have tried to do my best in sorting out (Schroll, 2010a).

Later in our discussion (as I said before) we will need to be more clear how scholars such as Ellis have misunderstood “spirituality” in all of its diverse meanings that we have talked about here, and what is meant by transpersonal psychology. May made this same error, which we will also attempt to clear up later in this discussion. Likewise, the best way I know to clearly make a distinction between *organized religion* and *mysticism/transpersonal psychology* is the example I provide with the Sufi story, *The Man Who Walked On Water*. I hope this helps to clarify this particular point. The rest of Voss’ comments are also important, in which Voss has condensed several very difficult ontological and epistemological problems related to “stage theories of consciousness” and/or the “great chain of being.” Clearing up these concerns, however, exceeds the limits of our current conversation. Still, it is important here to point out, regarding Ken Wilber (as well as Voss’ questions about ontological and epistemological problems related to stage theories of consciousness), that some of this is cleared up in Schroll (2010b) and MacDowell (2010).

Brad Adams: I have been reading everything said and most of the conversation has been psychologically based. I have no college degrees so I will stick to what I know as I cannot quote the many minds that are represented here. So what is spirituality? First, I am not going to debate the term. I am a mystic. This is my perspective. Spirituality is the seeking of the state of being in spirit. As was said, the definition of spirit can be translated as the “breath of life.” So what is the breath of life? Who gives life? God. So spiritual pursuits are ways to be in the knowing of the presence of God. What is a spiritual pursuit? It can be said that it is a way to set aside our self, our ego, our physical constraints; to be open to the presence of God, to be open to receive the spirit, the breath of life. In so doing you find that you are at peace, you are in balance, you find that there is healing here. This state of awareness that I speak of is what the spiritual person is in pursuit of: to be in the constant state of being in spirit or the knowing presence of God. This would be what some would call enlightenment, or to transcend our physical limitations. This is something I think all humans want. Whether they realize it or would admit it is another topic. I can tell you that it is possible to reach the highest states of human awareness; but the only being who has reached true enlightenment and truly transcended this physical world is the son of God.

Schroll: Tonight while I was eating, I was watching the television program *Supernatural* that I watch for entertainment. Sometimes Hollywood and pop culture

surprises us. In tonight’s episode, the protagonists of *Supernatural* were confronted with all of the world’s “mythical” religious gods and goddesses that are major players in Armageddon. The character playing Kali, the Hindu goddess of time and change (sometimes associated with annihilation, sometimes as redeemer of the universe) said to the characters associated with the Christian myths of Armageddon: “You Westerners are so arrogant, always believing that your world myths trump all others, which you use to justify your wars and your desires for power.”

This brings us back to our discussion of “spirituality.” As Rowan has pointed out, the use of the term spirituality is imprecise and that the more operationally precise term is “transpersonal.” One of the things we have not discussed in our rejection of the word spirituality is if we were to use this term, we would have to ask ourselves, “whose spirituality?” Or what state of consciousness is this spirituality we are talking about coming from, and what tradition does it represent? This is why the word “transpersonal” is more precise, because it does not presuppose any arrogance for one spiritual tradition or another. Its formulation draws equally from all spiritual traditions and recognizes the value of their teaching stories, in addition to their value toward our understanding the human condition. But even more precisely, the word transpersonal seeks to ground the discussion in an operational definition by which we can attempt to investigate states of consciousness that have throughout the world been associated with transcendence.

Clarifying Rollo May’s Misunderstanding of Transpersonal Psychology

This brings us to the discussion of May’s views of the transpersonal and the paper, *The Role of Transpersonal Psychology in Psychology as a Whole* (May, Krippner, & Doyle, 1992), which was a conversation between Rollo May, Stanley Krippner, and Jacqueline Doyle. In summing up May’s views, Doyle stated:

Rollo said that his reading of William James (1905/19[61]) had reaffirmed his conviction about the importance of spiritual life, and that he wanted to correct the misunderstanding of his previous criticisms of transpersonal psychology. It is of the utmost importance at this time, Rollo conveyed, that transpersonal psychology be viewed in the proper perspective, within the context of the whole of psychology (p. 307).

This echo's May's views previously cited in this paper (May, 1989), whereas the book that influenced May was James' (1905/1961) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Krippner then offered another operational definition of transpersonal psychology:

For me, Transpersonal Psychology is a psychological perspective or framework which assigns primary importance to experiential reports of concern or contact with entities, beliefs or realms greater than oneself using them as a basis for conducting and interpreting psychological theories, intervention and research. When I say theory I mean development[al] theory, motivational theory, personality theory. When I say interventions I mean psychotherapy, counseling, and education (May, Krippner, & Doyle, 1992, p. 308).

Rowan: I have a very simple account of the transpersonal, which takes less than five minutes to explain. It follows Wilber's (1980) useful map, given in the early book *The Atman Project*. 1. We start our psychospiritual journey in the prepersonal realm—that is, the whole area of child development, extending up into adolescence. 2. We then move on into the personal realm, where we learn about control, and logic, and role-playing, and the self-image, getting social rewards at each stage. We end up with a mature ego. At this point society stops rewarding us, and we are on our own. If we proceed, it is often as a result of a crisis. 3. Then comes the realm of the transpersonal, first of all consolidating our achievement of an authentic self, an existential self, secure in a sense of bodymind unity. If we then proceed further, we enter the realm of the Subtle, where we encounter a rich and colorful realm of concrete representations of the divine: gods and goddesses, archetypes, symbols and images, visions, the whole imaginal realm. We may get very interested in mythology, dreams, and spiritual experiences of one kind and another. If we then proceed further, we move into the Causal realm, where there are no landmarks, no handrails, no definitions—the deep ocean of mysticism. We may then start to be seriously interested in the Nondual.

Schroll: This is a very succinct and accurate summary of Wilber's developmental model from the prepersonal to the transpersonal, and Nondual domains of consciousness, John. I, too, read *The Atman Project* (Wilber, 1980), and its companion volume, *Up From Eden* (Wilber, 1981). But it is no longer clear to me where Wilber includes

his concept of “involution” that he spoke of in *Up From Eden* (pp. 299-309). Bohm's “implicate” and “super implicate” orders bore (for me) a resemblance with Wilber's discussion of involution, whereas Bohm's “explicate order” corresponded to Wilber's discussion (as Rowan has summarized it) of his developmental model. I make a brief reference to this in my review of *Integral Ecology* (Schroll, 2010c). Still this topic deserves much greater attention than we can give it in this paper.

Returning to our discussion of May's rejection of transpersonal psychology and domains of consciousness associated with the Nondual, May's (1986) criticism was:

The problem with the term “transpersonal” in practice is its implication that we can “leap across” the negative aspects of human behavior, the expressions of the “ego” as they are often called. We would then “leap across,” for example, the cruelty shown in Zimbardo's “nice” Stanford students in his famous prison experiment. Or the “Eichmann” studies in which Stanley Milgram demonstrated that average people, when ordered to do so by scientific authority, would turn up the electricity high enough to kill the “suffering” person on the other side of the glass. These experiments show that such cruelty and obedience to an authoritarian command are nascent in all of us, German, Russian, Nicaraguan, or American, though covered over with a veneer of civilization. (p. 2)

This statement is greatly puzzling to many of us that are now (and were then) familiar with the history and development of transpersonal psychology. In fact, Doyle's summary of this criticism by May was not cleared up in the 1992 dialogue between May, Krippner, and Doyle. Specifically, Doyle said that May's 1986 APA Monitor comments were:

attacking the use, which sometimes occurs, of transpersonal themes and transpersonal psychology as a way to avoid tangling with the real issues of psychology and our day, problems of value such as peace and war and so forth. He said at times these themes are being thrown aside in what becomes an escape into the higher realms. He has always objected to the use of psychology, not just transpersonal psychology as in this case, as a method of avoiding the problems of being human and of living in the world (May, Krippner, & Doyle, 1992, pp. 308-309).

This point was never fully explored in the 1992 dialogue because this point was raised before May showed up, and then the conversation shifted. What needs to be said in reply to May's critique is that, on the one hand, this is a legitimate concern and a tendency of some affluent supporters of transpersonal psychology to have this kind of disconnect. Theodore Roszak noticed this and mentioned it to me in 1993 when he presented at the annual Association for Transpersonal Psychology conference (which was while Wilber was working on his (1995) book *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution* (Schroll, 2010c). Nevertheless, aside from the misunderstanding of some affluent ATP members in the 1990s, what theory or practice of transpersonal psychology is May referring to that encourages "leaping across" the pathologies of the ego? I can only hope historians can one day tell us that Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed, and Lao Tzu were all ordinary men, people like you and me capable of making mistakes and finding ways of correcting them, people whose earthy existential encounters provided them with life-altering experiences that opened their eyes up to the miraculous, experiences (if we can somehow become open to them) that are our birthright as we muddle through life's developmental stages.

But where do these developmental stages of personality end? We have touched on this before in this conversation, and it is another issue that needs to be cleared up. May (1969; if I understand him correctly) believed the psychological growth of the person ends in becoming self-actualized or achieving one's individuality:

In my judgment, the existential approach is the achieving of individuality (including subjective individuality) not by by-passing or avoiding conflictual realities of the world in which we immediately find ourselves—for us, in the Western world—but by confronting these conflicts directly and, through the meeting of them, achieving one's individuality (pp. 47-48).

Honing this argument even more sharply in his 1986 letter to the APA (May, 1986), May argued that Maslow's evolving vision of personality development was nothing more than contagious enthusiasm when he pointed beyond humanistic psychology to:

a still "higher" Fourth Psychology, transpersonal, transhuman, centered in the cosmos rather than

in human needs and interests, going beyond humanness, identity, self-actualization and the like (Maslow, 1968, pp. iii-iv).

Now, on the issue of "higher" or Nondual consciousness, plus May's support of shamanism and psi phenomenon, I do think this was cleared up in the 1992 May, Krippner, and Doyle dialogue (which is a point I will return to in a moment). First, however, it is important to point out that right up to the very end of this dialogue between Krippner, May, and Doyle, Doyle continued to focus on the problem of leaping "over the present complexity and jump[ing] to spirituality because development includes and proceeds hand in hand with the all the experiences clients wrestle with in real life" (p. 316). Kirk Schneider (1987, 1989), now editor of *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and former student of May, repeated this same criticism in an exchange with Wilber.

Summary Intermission

Schroll: To recap, this discussion thread started out with the question "what is spirituality?" This led Rowan and Schroll to conclude that references to "spirituality" are imprecise, and that it is preferred when having these discussions to use the term "transpersonal." Second, there has been the lingering question as to why May rejected transpersonal psychology (which will be the focus of our next section). Third, I will offer a reply to May's 1986 criticism that Kirk Schneider (1987, 1989) and Doyle (May, Krippner, & Doyle, 1992) have repeated. Clearing this up will leave us with two questions: 1) Where in Wilber's latest models does he include "involution" (that relates to the work of Bohm, and big questions about physics, mysticism, consciousness, etc.)? 2) How today is transpersonal psychology addressing the existential ego consciousness concerns of May, and how are these concerns informed by transcendent or Nondual awareness?

Kirt Schneider's Existentially-Oriented Critique of Transpersonal Psychology

Schroll: The paradigm clash with existential psychology has been lead by Schneider (1987, 1989). To be fair, these ideas were expressed by Schneider over 20 years ago, so his views may have considerably evolved. I would welcome his feedback and those who know his work that can assist in offering amendments to the views expressed here. The essence of Schneider's critique is first that he doubts that anyone is capable of attaining true transpersonal awareness, that is: "divine

consciousness—a totally unrestricted, transcendent oneness with all time and space” (Schneider, 1987, p. 197). Much to the contrary, Schneider contended that humanistic psychology and self-actualization—or, using Wilber’s [1980, 1981] terminology, the centaur mode of consciousness lying halfway between the personal and transpersonal bands—is the farthest level of personality development possible. Schneider has admitted he is unfamiliar with the disciplines and practices necessary to achieve ultimate transpersonal consciousness. But then Schneider tried to cover up this lack of experience, saying that he doubts anyone who possesses first-hand experience of transpersonal awareness would also be unable to verify the authentic attainment of this state of consciousness in themselves or others.

Second, Schneider argued that even if groups of people could somehow develop past the centaur mode of consciousness, such personality development would be irrelevant and unnecessary. Finally, his third criticism is that a society of transpersonally enlightened individuals would be boring. Moreover, he contends that his argument is supported by recent developments in the philosophy of science; yet, Schneider failed to provide any documented evidence that supports this criticism.

**Ken Wilber’s Response
to Kurt Schneider’s Critique
of Transpersonal Psychology**

Schroll: In reply, Wilber (1989a, 1989b) chose to respond to Schneider’s criticisms point by point. Wilber began his rebuttal by first questioning if Schneider has truly understood his definition of ultimate transpersonal consciousness, pointing out that most humanistic psychologists, including Schneider, have failed to understand that transpersonal psychology stresses both a negation or a going beyond former levels of personality development, but also preserving and including “all the basic concerns and needs and joys and pains of the lower levels” (Wilber, 1989a, p. 460). Thus Wilber contended that humanistic psychologists such as May and Schneider have missed the essence of this important point, because they have mistakenly focused their attention on the “negation” or “leaping beyond” previous levels. John Welwood (1984) has also warned about this danger, urging the need for transpersonal psychologists to establish a well grounded personality before embarking upon a path “to help liberate us from an imprisoning self structure” (p. 65), lest the would-be mystic become the victim of spiritual bypassing. In defining what he means

by spiritual bypassing, Welwood went on to suggest that within contemporary society it may:

be particularly tempting for individuals who are having difficulty making their way through life’s basic developmental stages, especially at a time when what were once ordinary developmental landmarks—earning a livelihood through dignified work, raising a family, keeping a marriage together—have become increasingly difficult and elusive for large segments of the population. While struggling with becoming autonomous individuals, many people are introduced to spiritual teachings and practices which come from cultures that assume a person having already passed through the basic developmental stages. The result is that many people wind up trying to use spiritual practice to meet their personal needs or establish their identity, and this just doesn’t work. (pp. 64-65)

In addition, Welwood pointed out that:

Many of the so-called “perils of the path”—such as spiritual materialism, narcissism, inflation, group think—result from trying to use spirituality to make up for the developmental deficiencies in an urban-technological culture (p. 65).

Seymour Boorstein agreed with both May and Welwood:

Transpersonal psychology embraces the traditional psychological systems for the understanding and treatment of emotional problems, and within a spiritual context (for the therapist, and the patient, when possible), seeks simultaneously to honor humanity’s highest potentials. Thirty years ago I had hoped that the actual experiences of the spiritual dimension would “undo” traditional emotional problems. Sadly, this has not turned out to be. The spiritual path usually cannot undo problems in the “basement” of our minds, and, in fact, we need to be cautious that the spiritual path not enhance “basement” narcissism. (Caplan, Hartelius, & Rardin, 2003, p. 145).

Schneider, and other critics of transpersonal psychology, would greatly benefit from reading Welwood’s article. Moreover, is it just a linguistic similarity, or is May really saying the same thing as Welwood on the issue of spiritual by-passing? Welwood certainly seems to be clear enough about the need to first confront life’s basic developmental

landmarks, and work through them, before attempting to move beyond these needs into the transpersonal. This, however, is May's position also. Why then is May so critical of transpersonal psychology? It can only be as Vich (1986) has pointed out:

May seems to be confused about what transpersonal psychology is, and at the same time he is concerned that transpersonal psychology confuses religion and psychology. (p. 2)

This leads me to conclude that if someone like May is confused about transpersonal psychology, one can begin to appreciate the enormous difficulty in clearing up this confusion within the entire field of mainstream psychology.

Meanwhile, within the broader scheme of things, modernity continues to routinely neglect its nourishment of the human psyche's developmental needs. It was this issue of neglect that was the focus of a workshop presented by Daniel Goleman, Huston Smith, and Ram Dass at the New York Open Center on September 21, 1985. Speaking to this concern, Ram Dass reminded the listeners that the goal of the spiritual path (at least from his own personal perspective):

is to work on myself, to become an environment in which other people can see their clearest truth. I don't feel I have to teach them in the sense of push them to find the truth, I merely have to create an environment where they can feel safe enough and open enough to explore that truth. I treat other people's attitudes as the work....I don't focus on their predicament, I focus on my reactions to their attitudes. (Goleman, Smith, & Ram Dass, 1985, p. 209)

Second, addressing the charge that ultimate transpersonal consciousness is irrelevant and unnecessary, Wilber replied that Schneider is again mistaken about his understanding of what ultimate transpersonal consciousness refers to. Wilber (1989a) explained that even though transpersonally enlightened individuals have transcended previous levels of personality development, they still contain all those previous levels within themselves as persons. "Therefore, they are often predominantly moved...by a profound compassion for literally all of the world and all of its suffering, precisely because they *have been through it all*" (p. 464, emphasis supplied). This too seems to be what May

(1969) referred to in his emphasis on confronting the existential conflicts of life, "and, through the meeting of them, achieving one's individuality" (pp. 47-48).

Wilber's (1989a) third rebuttal addressed Schneider's charge that a society of enlightened beings would be boring. Wilber countered this accusation first by pointing out that Schneider only thinks ultimate transpersonal experience would be dull, because Schneider has admitted that he has never experienced it. Additionally, Wilber demonstrated Schneider's ill-conceived "outside looking in" view of transpersonal experience, pointing out that mystics do not spend their entire day in blissed out euphoria. Rather, because transpersonal consciousness is a composite, albeit transcendent, aspect of all previous levels of human personality structure, they are capable of more, not less motivation. Consequently Wilber went on to point out that Schneider has overlooked even the most basic definition of transpersonal consciousness (stemming from the Zen tradition), which is: "How wonderful, how mystical this! I chop wood, I carry water" (p. 466).

Thus, I hope with this summary the motivation to create a transpersonal psychology was not, as May, Schneider, and Doyle have argued, inspired by "leaping across" the concerns of the existential journey to understand the self. Its creation was instead prompted by humanistic psychology's limited view of personality development, beginning with Maslow's study of peak and plateau experiences. It is this investigation of the farther reaches of human nature by Maslow and others (such as Wilber) who have followed similar lines of research beyond the boundaries of their "skin encapsulated egos" that has expanded their field of awareness beyond the immediate concerns of humanistic psychology. Humanistic psychology has continued to evolve its perspective.

Albert Ellis' Warning About the Dangers of Transpersonal Psychology

Schroll: Next to May, (the late) Albert Ellis was the most well-known psychologist to directly challenge the views of transpersonal psychology. Indeed, with his powers of persuasion, if the only book I ever read on transpersonal psychology was *Why Some Therapies Don't Work: The Dangers of Transpersonal Psychology*, written by Ellis and Raymond J. Yeager (1989), my view would be that it is dangerous; it is for this reason that I felt motivated to briefly respond to Ellis' criticisms. Overall, I agree with the concerns Ellis raises throughout his book; where

I disagree is the dangers that Ellis warns about do not represent the views of transpersonal psychology as I understand it. I would have welcomed Ellis' reply (and I invite others to comment who share his views) so that I might better understand how and/or why our views are in disagreement. Similar to May, Ellis' primary criticism is with Wilber's polemical style of communication. Wilber's work has the ability to speak to many people, but not to everyone. Nor does Wilber's work speak for everyone in transpersonal psychology.

Ellis' initial misunderstanding of transpersonal psychology began in his paper "Fanaticism That May Lead to a Nuclear Holocaust: The Contributions of Scientific Counseling and Psychotherapy" (1986). In response, instead of helping Ellis to understand that he misrepresented transpersonal psychology as a euphemism for cult phenomenon, guru worship, the new age movement, and the paranormal borderlands of science in this paper, the critics merely attacked Ellis.³ Among the critics of Ellis' paper was Roger Walsh, who summed it up by saying:

Ellis' article is flawed fourfold: (1) It does not deal with the central, practical issues facing therapists working to prevent nuclear war; (2) it makes grossly inaccurate criticisms of diverse non-RET psychotherapies; (3) the author makes logically and philosophically impossible knowledge claims; and (4) the author falls into the very trap of fanaticism that he warns against. (Walsh, 1989, p. 338)

Ellis did not, as far as I know, reply to Walsh. Granted, Walsh made valid criticisms of Ellis' 1989 paper, yet what was lacking was a positive portrayal of transpersonal psychology in a language that Ellis could identify. Then the conversation went horribly wrong when Wilber (1989c) used satire to bolster Walsh's arguments and his disapproval of Ellis' 1986 paper, a tactic that evoked Ellis' ire and served as a catalyst to launch Ellis' crusade to liberate the world from *The Dangers of Transpersonal Psychology* (Ellis & Yeager, 1989).

The question I wish to raise is this: is there another approach to this discussion that would have resonated with Ellis, and have shifted his thoughts to reconsider if there might actually be some value in transpersonal psychology? This is because I too share Ellis' concern about the potential danger of a nuclear holocaust. It is for this reason that I find it curious that Ellis would state so boldly:

I am not particularly worried about our leaders or the Russian leaders, nor about the great mass of our people or the Russian people. Virtually all these leaders and citizens are sensible and sane enough about the possibility of atomic reprisal to strongly oppose starting almost any kind of nuclear conflagration. (Ellis, 1986, p. 146)

This comment suggests that Ellis did not share President Reagan's views of Russia as an untrustworthy political adversary. And yet, Ellis (who wrote this paper during the Reagan administration) believed in Reagan's leadership abilities enough to state unequivocally that Reagan's political views on nuclear war did not worry him. Thus it would have been helpful from the very beginning to point out to Ellis that his views were also at odds with humanistic psychologists like Carl R. Rogers. In particular, the question critics should have asked Ellis is: how could he be so confident in his total trust of President Reagan's nuclear policy? Because during the time Ellis expressed these sentiments, Reagan was considering "the possibility of a nuclear war limited to Europe, and Secretary Haig's plan to fire off a nuclear weapon in Europe simply to demonstrate our capability to the Russians" (Rogers, 1989, p. 446). How it is rational for Ellis to ignore George Bush, Sr.'s maniacal belief that a winner could actually be possible in a nuclear war (Rogers, 1980, pp. 341-342)? Are these not the belief of fanatics? Ellis and Yeager even cited Rogers' 1980 publication yet failed to discuss Robert Scheer's interview with Bush, Sr. More conversation on all of these concerns is needed to sort all of this out. This would be a timely endeavor considering the world's current state of social and political upheaval, and a welcome opportunity toward clearing up these many misunderstandings.

Conclusion:

May's Support for Environmentalism or Transpersonal Ecosophy

Schroll: Returning to this paper's central question, "what is spirituality," Rowan and I have pointed out throughout this paper that "spirituality" is a less precise reference to transpersonal psychology. The question then arose as to May's misunderstanding about the relationship between humanistic and transpersonal psychology. Reading the paper, *The Role of Transpersonal Psychology in Psychology as a Whole* (May, Krippner, & Doyle, 1992), I discovered that May's attack on transpersonal psychology was

more precisely an attack on the work of Wilber. May also pointed out that it was his meeting with Wilber prior to writing his comments in the *APA Monitor* in 1986 that sparked his thoughts regarding transpersonal psychology. Thus it has been appropriate to discuss the work of Wilber throughout this paper.

In taking issue with Wilber, May pointed out:

Ken Wilber (1981) says we are all growing toward Eden. We will be happier and happier. We will be freed from our problems. This is impossible and undesirable. We would cease to be human. This is what I fight against... The idea was that we were growing towards increasing perfection. So all a person had to do was sit tight, and these good things will automatically come about. Well I don't believe it at all! (May, Krippner, & Doyle, 1992, p. 310).

These misunderstandings with both Wilber's work in particular and transpersonal psychology in general have been discussed throughout this paper. Thus it is my understanding that May and his students have been confused about the respective focus of both humanistic and transpersonal psychology. May went on to say that:

It [consciousness expansion] would happen by virtue of our devotion or hard work, ... [You] see what I am against is the belief that this comes automatically. Higher states are not achieved automatically. And the way that America is effecting the world seems to me to be tremendously significant. For instance, in ten, twenty years, the Amazon will have been gutted. Now I see that as a threat to all of us. The taking of this view, that psychological evolution is going to occur if we simply sit tight, concerns me. The Amazon's being destroyed very quickly. Progress is not automatic; we do not become better every day without effort. (1992, p. 311)

Here again, perhaps affluent members of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology (especially those in California) in the beginning of this movement, had their heads only in the clouds, without having their feet on the ground. But within the literature as I have pointed out in this paper, Welwood warned about "spiritual bypassing;" Wilber and Ram Dass also clarified their own views that higher consciousness is not merely automatic. Moreover, today May's concerns with the destruction of the Amazon, and so on, is what many are referring

to as "ecopsychology," which I have pointed out has its roots in humanistic and transpersonal psychology (Schroll, 2008/2009; Schroll, Krippner, Vich, Fadiman, & Mojeiko, 2009). Furthermore, I have clarified that I want a more precise term than ecopsychology, and have instead suggested referring to it as "transpersonal ecosophy" (Schroll, 2009b, 2011). I hope this paper was helpful in clearing up these concerns.

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Notes

1. **Schroll:** Since this conversation took place, Rowan (2010) has compared Wilber's stage theory of consciousness to levels of psychological maturity and/or our process of transpersonal growth, whose various stages are reflected in answers to koans.
2. **Schroll:** This sounds like an excellent paper and it is very hopeful to hear that Rollo May reversed his views on transpersonal psychology. I will see if I can track this down and will let you know when I find it. **Rowan:** I have tracked down the Rollo May conversation to 1992, but still no source! It was Rollo May, Jacqueline Larcombe Doyle and Stanley Krippner. Following this information exchange, I wrote to Stanley Krippner and found out that the reference we were seeking was May, R., Krippner, S., & Doyle, J.L. (1992). "The role of transpersonal psychology in psychology as a whole: A discussion." **Schroll:** I heard back again from Stanley Krippner. Due the kindness and generosity of Stanley, and his brilliant research assistant Steve Hart, they are going

- to mail a copy to me. **Rowan:** Good progress Mark!
- Ellis and Yeager (1989) do provide a more extensive discussion of these various euphemism's of transpersonal psychology. Still, the distinctive vision of transpersonal psychology remains misunderstood.

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About the Journal

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