

TRANSPERSONAL SUPERVISION

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ABSTRACT: The question of supervision is important for everyone working in the field of transpersonal psychotherapy or counselling, but there is very little information available about it. This paper attempts to compare and contrast transpersonal supervision with two other kinds—the instrumental and the authentic. Then within the transpersonal itself, it attempts to distinguish between supervision and therapy at the Subtle level and at the Causal level, because both are important and different. It closes with a discussion of how all this applies particularly to cross-cultural work.

INTRODUCTION

Supervision is the practice of therapists having regular meetings with senior colleagues for the purpose of discussing their work in detail. Humanistic therapists believe this practice is necessary all through their careers, not just in training, because they recognise that therapy is quite a solitary pursuit, and that there is always a danger of narcissism building up over time. Therapists who believe that they have gone beyond the necessity for regular supervision may be deceiving themselves. In the early days supervision may be mainly about technique, but in the later years it may be about the deepening of self-awareness. For the transpersonal therapist this deepening of awareness may be particularly important, and supervision may sometimes become a spiritual discipline in itself, although it is not the same as spiritual direction, which is a different discipline with a different history.

There is now a sizeable literature on supervision, some of it very good. There are courses in supervision, qualifications in supervision, accreditation in supervision. Instead of being something one “got landed with” at a senior stage in one’s development as a therapist, it has become a speciality within the whole field of psychotherapy and counselling. (I shall use the word therapy to encompass both.)

The point has been made many times (Rowan 1998, 2005b; Wilber, Engler, & Brown, 1986) that if we take seriously the idea that there is such a thing as psychospiritual development, then therapy can be adapted to various stages within that. If we take as our guide the Wilber (2000) categories of Mental Ego, Centaur and Psychic/Subtle (or Subtle for short), then forms or schools of therapy turn out to be particularly suited to one or other of these levels. For example, cognitive/behavioural approaches are particularly suited to the Mental Ego level, because they both assume the same notion of the self: a role-playing self which seeks esteem from other people. Similarly, person-centred therapy, gestalt therapy, existential analysis and psychodrama are particularly suited to the Centaur level, because they all assume the same notion of the self: an

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NOTE: British spelling has been retained throughout the article. For example, “practice” is a noun, but “practise,” a verb.

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autonomous self which is deeply concerned with authenticity, spontaneity, creativity and bodymind unity. And similarly again, transpersonal psychotherapy, psychosynthesis and some of the Jungian and post-Jungian approaches are particularly suited to the Subtle level, because they all assume the same notion of the self: a self open to contact by symbols of the divine, and also open to the souls of other people. Ken Wilber (1981) was the first to be clear about these matters, but the intervening years have added a great deal of elaboration to this basic insight (see for example Wilber, Engler, & Brown, 1986). In recent years there has been more appreciation of the fact that therapy can also be pursued at the Causal and the Nondual levels (Almaas, 1988; Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003; Rowan, 2005b).

But this way of thinking has never, to the best of my knowledge, been applied to supervision. The present paper is my attempt to fill this gap. I want to look at each of the levels mentioned in detail, devoting most of my attention to the Subtle, the Causal, and the Nondual levels, because those are the least charted in the existing literature. At the end I want to make some points about the integration of all this.

MENTAL EGO

The general description of the Mental Ego level may be found in the work of Ken Wilber, and I have summarised the relevant parts of the model in my book on the transpersonal (Rowan, 2005b). Table 1 summarises the position sufficiently for this paper.

The supervisee at this level is seen as a learner technician, who has to be helped to improve the technique. Michael Carroll tells us that the supervisor is seen as an educator more than as a counsellor or facilitator (Carroll, 1996, p. 27). As Douglas Forsyth and Allen Ivey explain, the supervisor may sometimes teach skills in a well-defined way, quite concretely (Forsyth & Ivey, 1980, p. 246). Model application and even model building will be a focus. Alan Lidmila (1997) suggests that the supervisor at this level may behave like a detective, an inquisitor or a librarian.

The supervisor evaluates the supervisee, as Elizabeth Holloway makes clear, and corrects any tendencies to deviate from good practice (Holloway, 1995, p. 3). Similarly, the supervisor is regarded as someone who has to be carefully watched and kept in line. Monitoring is felt to be a major concern. A single model of the therapeutic process is generally favoured.

In psychodynamic supervision at this level, according to the classic work of Ekstein & Wallerstein (1972), it is understood that the supervisory experience is often inhibited by intrapsychic conflicts and resistances of the student and occasionally the supervisor (p. 16).¹ It is believed that the primary commitment of the supervisor should be directed toward the patient, in keeping with the principle espoused by Robert Langs that once a physicianly responsibility is established on any level, it takes precedence over all else (Langs, 1980, p. 105). Within this level, a great deal of importance is given to the unconscious, but the view of this paper is that the depth to which the unconscious is plumbed makes no difference to the level on which the work is practised. What I mean to say by this is that the instrumental is still the instrumental even if the psychodynamic unconscious is fully acknowledged.

There is an emphasis on the insight of the supervisee, and occasionally the supervisor may use his or her own insights to supplement those of the supervisee. There are great dangers of narcissism, infallibility and inflation for the supervisor who does this. The main focus is often on the client, and on the supervisee's relationship with the client.

In cognitive-behavioural work at this level, as Richard Wessler and Albert Ellis have argued, supervisors try to remain especially alert to times when supervisees agree with their clients' irrational beliefs; thereby becoming co-sufferers; and when they help their clients avoid rather than work on their disturbances (Wessler & Ellis, 1980, p. 188). Clarity about aims is a major value.

The basic goals of therapy supervision, as Marsha Linehan has told us, regardless of therapeutic orientation, are to assist the therapist both to do effective therapy in the present and to achieve the capability to carry out effective therapy independent of the supervisor (Linehan, 1980, p. 149). There may be a good deal of challenging of the supervisee.

There is thus an emphasis on competence and doing what is correct, and making sure that both supervisor and supervisee do not stray too far from good practice. When the supervisee gets it right, there may be praise and confirmation. There is a good deal of attention to being helpful and getting good results. There may even be some interest in the question of right-brain thinking as opposed to left-brain thinking, but this does not mean that we are leaving this level by so doing, as Phil Mollon (1997) makes clear.

There is little interest in the social or political aspects of the work, and what there is tends to be restricted to established political parties or single issue campaigns.

REAL SELF OR CENTAUR

The general description of this level of work is to be found in my book on the subject, *The Reality Game* (Rowan, 1998). See the summary in column two of Table 1. It is usually described as the humanistic type of work, although recently Leslie Greenberg and others have sometimes used the term 'experiential' (See Greenberg, Watson, & Lietaer, 1998).

Here the goal is seen, certainly by Ernst Beier and David Young, as helping the supervisee in the work of encouraging the client to question and vary his routines and accept the uncertainty which is a by-product of interpersonal exploration (Beier & Young, 1980, p. 196). Freedom to explore is regarded as important. Questioning rather than acceptance is what is asked of the supervisee. Confrontation may become very important if the supervisee becomes too passive or uncreative.

Creativity, or the ability to make effective personal changes, is regarded as very important, and can be seen as starting with this freedom to explore. Spontaneity is regarded as important both in the supervision and in the therapeutic work itself, and this is strongly encouraged. The vision of the supervisee is regarded as very important.

Table 1
A Comparison of Four Positions in Psychospiritual Development

WILBER LEVEL	1. MENTAL EGO	2. CENTAUR	3. SUBTLE	4. CAUSAL
ROWAN POSITION	Instrumental Self	Authentic Self	Transpersonal Self 1 (Soul)	Transpersonal Self 2 (Spirit)
WADE LEVEL	Egocentric Conformist Achievement Affiliative	Authentic	Transcendent	Unity
Definition	I am defined by others	I define who I am	I am defined by the Other(s)	I am not defined
Motivation	Need	Choice	Allowing	Surrender
Personal Goal	Adjustment	Self-Actualization	Contacting	Union
Social Goal	Socialization	Liberation	Extending	Salvation
Process	Healing: Ego-Building	Development: Ego-Extending	Opening: Ego-Reduction	Enlightenment
Buddhism	Nirmanakaya	Nirmanakaya	Sambhogakaya	Dharmakaya
Great Exemplar	Albert Ellis	James Bugental	Roberto Assagioli	Shankara
Ego	Dominant	Transformed	Light	Open
Story Example	Erickson	May or Wheelis	Naropa	George Fox
Traditional role of Helper	Physician	Growth Facilitator	Advanced Guide	Priest(ess)
Representative approaches	Analyst			Sage
	Hospital treatment	Primal Integration	Psychosynthesis	Mystical Buddhism
	Chemotherapy	Gestalt therapy	Some Jungians	Raja Yoga
	Some psychoanalysis	Some psychoanalysis	Some pagans	Taoism
	Directive	Psychodrama	Transpersonal	Monasticism
	Behaviour mod	Open encounter	Voice Dialogue	Da Avabhasa
	CBT	Bodywork	Some Wicca	Christian mystics
	Mindfields	Narrative	Meditative	Hesychasm
	Some TA	Some TA	Kabbalah	Sufi
	Crisis work	Person-centred	Some astrology	Goddess mystics
	REBT	Co-counselling	Some Tantra	Some Judaism
	Brief therapy	Regression	Shamanism	Advaita
	Solution based	Experiential	Core process	Impersonal
	Cognitive	Existential	Holonomic	Buddha

Table 1 (continued).

Focus	Individual and Group	Group and Individual	Supportive Community	Ideal Community
Representative names	Freud Ellis LeBon Beck Eysenck Skinner Lazarus Watzlawick Marinoff Haley Erickson Linehan Ivey Egan NLP Dryden Rangell Chancy Subject to fatigue Qualitative Quantitative What is the best method?	Maslow Rogers Mahrer Perls Searles Liang Moreno Winnicott Lomas Bugental Hycner Bohart Satir Bozarth Spinelli van Deurzen May Reliable Reliable Collaborative Action research What is the best relationship?	Jung Hillman Starhawk Assagioli Gordon-Brown Mary Watkins Jean Houston Bolen Grof Boonstein Whitmore Field Fukuyama Maguire Milner Eigen Corbin Constant Juicy Transformative Mindful How far can we go together? Dare you face the loss of your boundaries?	Eckhart Shankara Dante Mark Epstein Rosenbaum Ram Dass A H Almaas Lao Tzu George Fox David Brazier Sheng-Yen Amy Mindell al-Ghazali Maharshi Suzuki Tauler Horne Not needed Constant Steady None Dare you face the loss of all your words? Dare you face the loss of all your symbols? Devotion Commitment
Intuition				
Compassion				
Research methods				
Questions	Dare you face the challenge of unconscious? Acceptability Respect	Dare you face the challenge of freedom? Autonomy Authenticity	Dare you face the loss of your boundaries? Openness Vision	Dare you face the loss of all your symbols? Devotion Commitment

There is a continual questioning of narrowness. The body is included; the social system is included; the family of origin is included; traumatic experience is included; different kinds of relationship are included. It is regarded as important not to leave things out. There is an experiential and holistic approach all the time.

Above all, it is said by Peter Hawkins and Robin Shohet, supervision is a place where both parties are constantly learning and to stay a good supervisor is to return to question, not only the work of the supervisee, but also what you yourself do as supervisor and how you do it (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000, Chap. 4). Gaie Houston asks the question: Is the supervisor taking the supervisee forward at the right pace toward self-confidence based on reality, and toward abundance motivation? (See Houston, 1995, p. 95.)

Supervision is often seen as a containing and enabling process, rather than an educational or therapeutic process. According to Steve Page and Val Wosket, supervision, to be effective, must be exploratory (Page & Wosket, 1994, p. 39). This is because it is believed, as Laura Rice tells us, that for both supervisor and supervisee there is the basic growth motivation, a push toward differentiation, authenticity and new experience (Rice, 1980, p. 138). The growth and development of the supervisee is most important.

What is regarded as central is not education or correction or monitoring but, as Margaret Rioch and her colleagues used to insist, increased self-awareness both for supervisor and supervisee (Rioch, Coulter, & Wienberger, 1976, p. 3). There is little emphasis on correct technique, or the precision of one theory. It is more important for supervisor and supervisee both to be fully present in the supervision session, which will help to enable the therapist to be fully present with the client in the therapy session. There is often an emphasis on integration and/or eclecticism. Often the question of aims is deliberately disregarded or deemphasised; in any case aims tend to be long-term rather than short-term.

Simplicity is encouraged. The main focus is on the supervisee rather than on the client. A peer relationship is aimed at, as the ultimate goal. Jill Freedman and Gene Combs visited the Milan School, and found that supervision of family therapy, using a one-way mirror, involved a group of supervisees behind the screen engaging in real discussions of what could be done. "Although the goal of these discussions was to arrive at a single intervention or message, the oft-repeated slogan, 'Flirt with your hypotheses, but don't marry them' suggested that this goal was not in any way held to be the singular or final truth" (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 7).

There is often a real concern for the social and political implications of the work, and both the therapist and the client may be encouraged to take action in the direction of liberation, particularly in the case of oppressive regimes. The supervisor may draw attention to the need for more heed to be paid to the social/political/economic context.

SUBTLE SELF OR TRANSPERSONAL 1

The general description of this level of work is to be found in my own book on the subject (Rowan 2005b), and William West has also written well about it. Also

included is what is sometimes referred to as psychospiritual therapy (West, 2000), though I prefer the term transpersonal. This clarifies the basic distinctions which outline the field. Wilber (1981) is also useful. See column 3 of Table 1 for a summary.

So far as supervision is concerned, there is a lot of emphasis on the further development of the supervisee, and on the enlargement of the supervisee. There is an encouragement of the subtle perception and intuition of the supervisee. Joe Henderson says the supervisee may need further education in the whole field of mythology and of archetypes, as part of the work of developing the ability to use the superconscious in therapy. The term 'soul' may be used (Henderson, 1995, p. 156).

It could also be said at this level, as Valerie James suggests, that the supervisory situation is a *temenos*, a sacred space within which transformation may take place. The supervisor is responsible for the integrity of the container within which the therapist may be transformed (James, 1996). The supervisor, like the therapist, is a wounded healer.

The whole interaction may be seen in archetypal terms. At any one moment of time, as Petruska Clarkson has suggested, any supervisor may need to be a Cerberus guarding the territories and boundaries, or a Psyche-sorter of the wheat and barley of primary and secondary realities, or a Zeus-like referee between warring internal or external factions, or a Chironic mentor teaching and modelling the skills of healing, or even a Hestian flame of spiritual direction (Clarkson, 1998, p. 143). John Beebe feels that the trickster archetype may certainly become involved in the double existence of the therapist being healer and healed at the same time (Beebe, 1995, p. 103).

Crittenden Brookes has pointed out that the supervisor may need to encourage the therapist to educate the client in confronting the numinous and archetypal layers of their own experience (Brookes, 1995, p. 122). Lionel Corbett suggests that numinosity, like transference, may not be noticed until it is drawn to the therapist's attention (Corbett, 1995, p. 75). Also it may be noted, as Noel Cobb has critically suggested, that many schools of therapy teach therapists how to run sessions with clients in such a way that they actually prevent any incursion of the sublime (Cobb, 1997, p. 275).

From this point of view, instead of a focus exclusively on the personalistic aspects of the transference, the supervisor would also be interested in its archetypal aspects. As Lionel Corbett says, there is a deep interest in how the Self manifests itself in the therapeutic field (Corbett, 1995, p. 70).

Or supervision may be seen in shamanic terms. Some supervisors, such as David Henderson, believe that the Shaman is the original expression of the archetypal intent in human society, but that over time some aspects of the Shaman's identity have split off and developed a character and autonomy of their own (Henderson 1998, p. 65).

From this kind of imaginal perspective, the significance of fantasy is discovered not so much through analyzing or unmasking it, as through elaboration and following its lead. In other words, as David Maclagan has suggested, fantasy is

treated less as an object of suspicion, and more as a resource to be tapped. And this is true whether we are talking about individual or group therapy (Maclagan, 1997, p. 63).

Analysis may be regarded as a mysticism of persons—and hence polyvalent, pluralistic, many-headed, many-bodied. As Andrew Samuels has insisted, the ‘Mundus Imaginalis’ is given due weight in the thinking of both supervisor and supervisee. This is the imaginal world so well described by the Sufi scholar Henry Corbin (Samuels 1997, pp. 158–164). In this case supervision too would partake of this character. It would involve the superconscious. At this level intuition ceases to be a chancy thing, and starts to become the basic way in which one thinks. It would involve a regular opening up to contact with the divine, the sacred. As Joe Henderson has told us, this may then be experienced as an initiation (Henderson, 1995, pp. 157–8).

There may well be an interest in the social and political context, as Samuels (1993) has suggested, and here the concern tends to be towards the long-term good, rather than towards briefer campaigns.

You could say that when the therapist comes for supervision, he or she is going on retreat. They come to stop and listen, to open their awareness. Diana Whitmore has told us that the supervisor is providing the space for retreat, the holding for retreat and the transpersonal context for retreat (Whitmore, 1999, p. 3).

It is sometimes felt, certainly by Diana Whitmore, that supervision from a transpersonal context requires an act of will on the part of the supervisor, to affirm that all supervision begins with the supervisor’s internal state of consciousness and a commitment to work from the ‘inside out’ before even meeting the supervisee. This is a contrary attitude to ‘outside in’, where the supervisor is regarded as the expert and as doing something to the supervisee (Whitmore, 1999, p. 1). This would emphasise the transpersonal frame of the work as important.

Sometimes it is found, say Bonnie Rabin and Robert Walker of the Naropa Institute, that it is helpful for both supervisor and supervisee to have a personal mindfulness-awareness meditation practice, although this is not absolutely necessary (Rabin & Walker, n.d.).

An interesting new development is that people from the person-centred school have started to talk about subtle energies, and Rose Cameron in particular has had some very useful things to say about transpersonal supervision. “The counsellor’s energetic state has an enormous impact on the therapeutic relationship. It is therefore important to develop energetic self-awareness: supervision is an excellent forum in which to do this” (Cameron, 2004, p. 180).

Intuition, which is very important in therapy at this level, is also important in supervision, and Rachel Charles has acknowledged this in her important book on intuition. “Supervisors are indeed sometimes presented with a ‘hunch’ or a ‘gut feeling’ about a client, a strong sense of something, but without the supervisee being able to clarify it, or pinpoint the origin of the impression” (Charles 2004, p. 189). Here is subtle level material being properly acknowledged.

In a similar way, James Bugental, who bridges in a unique way the gap between the existential and the humanistic, as witness the tributes to him published in the Special Section of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (vol. 36 No. 4) in the Autumn of 1996, has introduced some research by Molly Sterling in which the supervisee role-plays the client and the supervisor role-plays the supervisee. Sometimes a curious thing happened:

Unexpectedly and suddenly, I lose the ability to maintain the immersion I have been experiencing. The distinctions between 'me' and 'the role-played client' dissolve. It is as though there is a collapse of the separated consciousnesses into one melded experience . . . I can't tell which of us is the source of the content I am expressing! (Sterling & Bugental, 1993, p. 42)

Bugental speculates that if our deepest nature is manifested by the meld, we may arrive at a rather different picture of our own nature. He goes on into some transpersonal thoughts. So in supervision the phenomenon which is generally called 'linking' (Rowan 2005b, Chap. 6) can indeed emerge, and I would argue that linking is always a subtle phenomenon.

THE CAUSAL SELF OR TRANSPERSONAL 2

It is also possible to do supervision at the causal level, although this is much less common and hardly written about anywhere. But if it is possible to work in therapy at the causal stage (Rowan, 2005a) then it must be possible to do supervision at that level also. What is the difference between the subtle and the causal? Briefly, the Subtle level is the realms of symbols and images, while at the Causal level there are no symbols or images. Brant Cortright (1997) has called these the soul path and the spirit path. Masters and Houston (1966) call them the Symbolic and the Integral. Robert May (1991) calls them the archetypal realm and the spiritual self. In Buddhism (Kapleau, 1967) we speak of the distinction between the Sambhogakaya and the Dharmakaya. At the Subtle level, to put it another way, we still have thousands and thousands of assumptions, even though vast numbers have been given up, while at the Causal level there are no assumptions.

Therapy can often be thought of as a process of giving up our assumptions. So in therapy the best, final, ultimate approach is to encourage and enable the client to question all his or her assumptions without exception. As David Levin says in his essay on Freud, Jung, and Tibetan Buddhism:

All conceptual constructions of the experiential process are defence mechanisms, to the extent that they solidify into patterns of response that obscure a clear perception of one's situation and block an appropriate, effective and spontaneous involvement. (Levin, 1981, p. 248)

The ideal therapist is someone who can approach the client in a mood expressed by the phrase 'emptily perfect and perfectly empty'. There is then no distortion of the client's experience, no twisting of it to suit some theory. This enables the client to move in the same direction: that is, towards more openness, less restrictiveness.

It is interesting to see, however, how difficult it is in practice to work in this way. David Brazier (1995) writes with real authority about causal states, but when he does therapy it often sounds like psychodrama. Amy Mindell (1995) writes with real familiarity about causal states, but when she does therapy it often sounds like Gestalt. A. H. Almaas (1988) writes very well about causal and even nondual states, but when he does therapy it often sounds like object relations, or sometimes like bodywork. Mark Epstein (1996) has some very wise things to say about the causal, but when he does therapy it often sounds like psychoanalysis. Robert Rosenbaum (1998) is clearly familiar with causal states, but when he does therapy it often sounds like existential phenomenology. Similar remarks could be made about several of the contributors to the book purporting to be about nondual therapy (Prendergast, Fenner, & Krystal, 2003). Perhaps it would be oversimplifying to say that the work they do is mostly in terms of their original training or experience, but there is certainly something like that going on.

Similarly, in supervision, the supervisor can (if suitably trained and developed) adopt such a stance, enabling the supervisee to drop false assumptions and be fully open. But if there are no assumptions, how can there be any supervision? Surely, we initially object, supervision is all about making assumptions, critiquing assumptions, revising assumptions, and so forth, together with the identifications that hold the assumptions in place. If there is one emptiness facing another emptiness, how can anything happen?

There is a nice quote in Almaas which helps to explain it. It comes from a Japanese therapist, who says:

The person, the “I am this body, this mind, this chain of memories, this bundle of desires and fears” disappears, but something you may call identity, remains. It enables me to become a person when required. Love creates its own necessities, even of becoming a person. (Maharaj 1981, p. 488, cited in Almaas, 1988, pp. 449–450)

This idea, that therapy is based on love, and that love is an important aspect of the causal, is a powerful one. It helps us understand that although the juicy compassion of the subtle is very different from the steady compassion of the causal, they do have love in common. And it is this love which makes the bridge between the causal and the subtle, so that therapists who are in contact with the causal can move into the subtle as necessary.

So in supervision the supervisor can move to whatever level will be most useful for the supervisee. This is in fact the great advantage of the causal: once the supervisor has attained that stage, any previous stage which would be useful can be accessed without hindrance. So far from being impotent, the causal supervisor is the most able to go to where the therapist is and work at that level in the most advantageous way possible. At this level “A profound experiential understanding of the nature of emptiness—empty of self, empty of separateness as an embodied experience is fundamental to the work for both supervisee and supervisor.” (Sills, 2002, p. 6)

What we have here, therefore, is an awareness of the spiritual context within which all supervision takes place. The notion of the Self as opposed to the self is often

stressed. It has often been suggested that a brief period of meditation before the therapy session is desirable for the client, and also for the therapist. What I think we ought to now say too, in the light of some of the crosscultural material, is that prayer before the session may be indicated for some people—again both client and therapist. The supervisor might on occasion want to suggest this. And of course the same applies to the supervisor and supervisee.

Although the Nondual level is very important, it has been little studied from the point of view of supervision, and so nothing will be said about it here, except to point out that such a ‘higher’ or ‘deeper’ viewpoint may prove to be very important in the future.

CROSSCULTURAL WORK

It has been pointed out that there is a particular role for the transpersonal therapist in the field of crosscultural work, because of the increased respect for all religious experiences which comes with transpersonal development. The research paper by Cinnirella and Loewenthal (1999) for example, shows that members of communities such as White Christian, Pakistani Muslim, Indian Hindu, Orthodox Jewish and Afro-Caribbean Christian have many different attitudes to counselling and psychotherapy. Some of these make them particularly suspicious of Western types of therapy. It is the transpersonal approach (not mentioned in that paper) which would be the most likely bridge for such people to use, in order to get the benefit of adequate therapy. The supervisor’s role in this can be to encourage the transpersonal therapist to look for such experience and to make his or her presence known to the relevant people. Not quite in the same category, but offering the same kind of disconcerting experiences, is the multicultural work involving discarnate entities of one kind and another, ranging from gods and goddesses to demons and devils, and from loas, orishas and zar to ghosts and witches. A great deal of fear may be aroused by such material for the client, and may be picked up by a therapist who is not well versed in this area. The excellent book of Fukuyama and Sevig (1999) can be very helpful in such cases. The transpersonal therapist is of course much better able to handle this material than other therapists, because their experience of the Psychic and the Subtle realms, and the transformations of consciousness, will stand them in good stead (See Wilber et al., 1986). Also the whole idea of the pre/trans fallacy may be important, in placing the phenomenon into the right place. Again the work of the supervisor may be much needed here. Indeed, the supervisor may get out of their depth too, and have to refer to a specialist. But the simple fact of having been opened up to that level of spiritual reality may well be enough to deal with most problems.

As always with this kind of model, it seems worthwhile to utter the caveat that we cannot jump levels at will. We cannot will ourselves into the second column unless and until we have done the work on ourselves which can take us there. We cannot become transpersonal supervisors without doing the transpersonal work on ourselves. It is, however, possible to access all of these states temporarily, for a visit, so to speak. The rubric here is: “States are free, stages have to be earned.” There are some huge challenges here, as well as some amazing opportunities, as William West (2000) has pointed out.

CONCLUSION

It does seem, then, that we can say a good deal about supervision at the level of the transpersonal, and it is quite strange that no one has opened up this area to any extent before. At least we have now made a start.

But the question now remains—what are we to do with this information? The main point I would like to make about this is that it is best, it seems to me, to think in line with the Ken Wilber (1997) model. This means that the different levels we have distinguished (the columns in Table 1) are to be understood as co-existing, in the manner of Russian dolls, rather than as completely superseding one another. In other words, every transpersonal supervisor (column three or four in Table 1) has also available to them the earlier formations and abilities. Every humanistic supervisor (column two in Table 1) has also available to them the techniques of the Mental Ego in column 1. And there is no reason why these should not be used in an aware way. If a trainee simply does not know a certain technique, and the supervisor considers that it would fit very well with a certain problem, there is no reason why a supervisor at any level should not mention and deal with that. If the trainee has made an obvious mistake, and is blind to that, a supervisor at any level has to make a decision as to what to do about it. The manner might be different; the language might be different; but the problem might still need to be tackled.

END NOTE

¹ In lieu of the convention of offering page numbers for direct quotes only, the author is also affording page numbers for paraphrased material in instances when the paraphrase is sufficiently close to the original.

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It is called transpersonal coaching, and is an off-shoot of transpersonal psychology that has had a high profile in the UK since the early 1970s. As a coaching approach it is difficult to define, but it is one that its champions, an increasing band of executive coaches and business psychologists, see as relevant. They believe it can address the stress and malaise that sour modern society and the corporate world, and is a well-rounded approach to developing focused and energetic leaders. Finding meaning. Coaching Supervision is a training guide to help new coaches observe the practices of leading coaches. It is a 1hr 1 to 1 coaching session followed by analysis between the session coach and Jonathan Passmore, covering five elements: The Seven-Eyed Supervision Model; How can Supervision help Coaching Practice, Developing your Coaching Skills and Personal Reflection. Transpersonal Coaching by Association for Coaching with Hetty Einzig and Sir John Whitmore.