Sofia University
Global MTP Program
Introduction to Transpersonal Studies
MTP 7403
(4.0 Units)

Creative Explorations: Introduction and Purpose
Dorit Netzer, Ph.D.

Transpersonal psychology emphasizes that intellectual grasp of theory provides an incomplete, and even distorted view of its full meaning. Theory must be integrated experientially, emotionally, relationally, and in embodied ways to be truly meaningful and potentially transformative. Practice is manifested as everyday actions in the world. We hope you will explore the dynamics between the seen and unseen—known and unknown—embodied and mystical in everyday life.

These creative explorations aim to facilitate experiential knowing of the "Transpersonal" (Braud, 1998)* as:

- *A Movement Across*, as in a journey or pilgrimage connecting two shores. Your experience might feel like traveling from one place of awareness to another. You might travel in your imagination, on the page—with a brush or a pen, out in nature, in a conversation . . .

- *A Movement Through* the personal (emphasizing the value of personal, subjective experience, as the shaper of reality. Remember that there isn't a right or wrong way to go through an experience. Your unique experience is meaningful to you and inspiring to others in its authenticity.

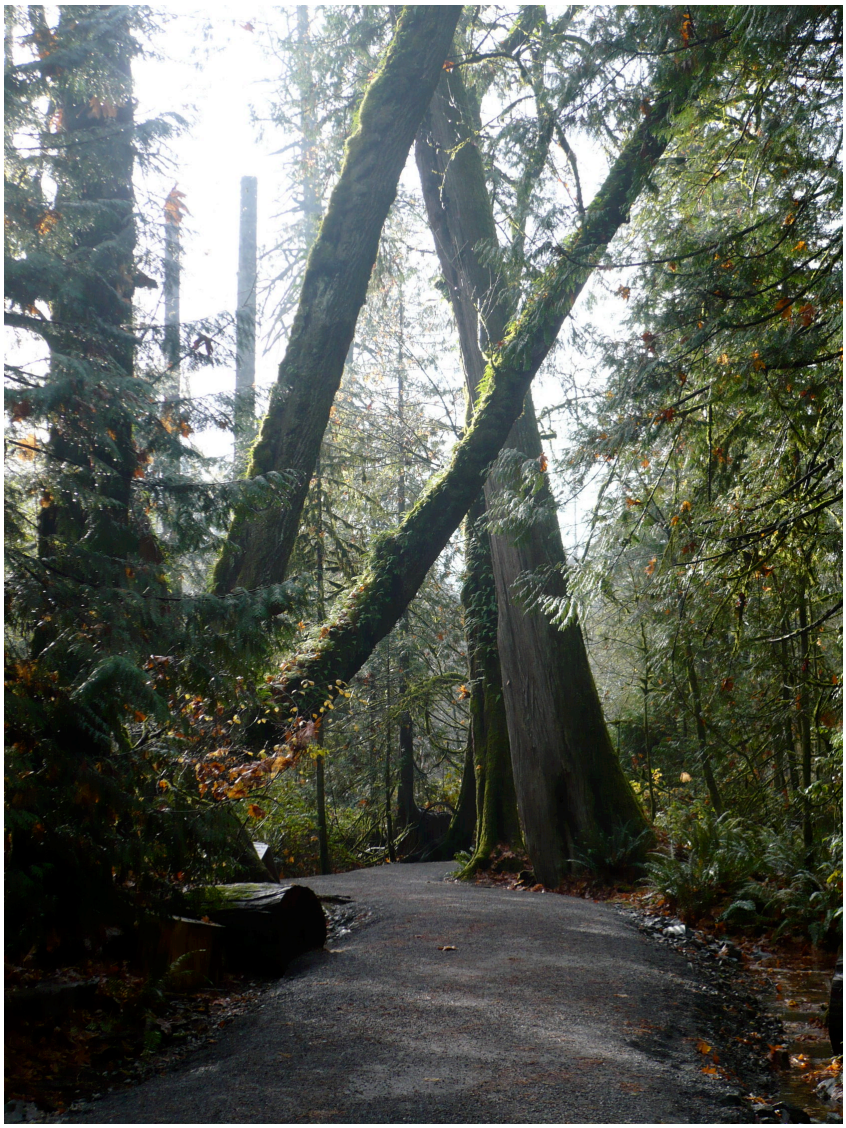
- *A Movement of Change, or Transformation* of matter into spirit and spirit into matter. Change is inevitable when one is engaged in a practice. Transformation is a profound and persistent change, but one may be so deeply moved shortly after an experience, that the experience feels transformative.

- *A Transcendent Movement*, a movement beyond the personal, expansion and inclusion of community and the universe at large. Transpersonal experiences, especially when shared with others, take on a larger meaning, which often radiates as a feeling of interconnectedness with others and the world at large. When you reflect upon your transpersonal practice, pay attention to the qualities, which feel both expansive and integrative.

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* Braud, William. (1998b). Can research be transpersonal? [Electronic version]. *Transpersonal Psychology Review, 2*(3), 9-17.

Each exercise aims to integrate multiple ways of knowing, including contemplation, embodied knowing, and creative expression. Feel free to elaborate on the exercise and depart from it if you wish to take the suggested exploration further, deeper, or in another direction. You will have the opportunity to share your process with your cohort.



A Contemplative Walk: Opening to the Creativity of the Natural World
By S. Kofler

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The purpose of these self-exploratory exercises is to facilitate experiential understanding of transpersonal qualities, such as personal awareness, interconnection with the world, creative expression, and relationship with the natural environment. Intellectual understating of transpersonal theory is not sufficient; it must be integrated experientially, emotionally, relationally, and in embodied ways. Thus theory transforms into practice and is manifested as everyday actions in the world.

A number of times throughout this course, you will be tasked with a creative expression/exploration activity. Creative expression assignments will take a two-week format in this course. The first week will introduce the exercise and provide time to explore it contemplatively and creatively. During the next week, you will post your self-reflection, integrating your experience with the other modes of learning you had been exposed to in the course.

1. Creative Exploration #1, Weeks 2-3*:* Students examine the role of wisdom traditions in the early years of transpersonal psychology. Students become acquainted with contemporary viewpoints of transpersonal psychology.

Relating by Analogy: World as Mirror World as Symbol

The purpose of this week's exploration is to observe how my inner state is reflected in outer events and phenomena, and how in turn the world mirrors back to me my inner state. The world provides ample opportunities to gain understanding of internal process, by noting the analogy between the inner and outer worlds.

We will engage in observation without commentary for one week. During the week, pay attention to symbols in your everyday life that mirror back to you how you feel within. Take notes of these events and occurrences, and engage in creative activities, such as creative writing and art making, as outlets to process your observation without applying value judgment of good/bad. The premise of this exercise is the assumption that nothing happens by chance and that the Self and the world are interconnected. How does your inner state change when you approach your daily life in this way? What happens when you depict your experience through creative means?

In Week 2 simply engage in this activity. During Week 3 you will provide a brief written reflection in your Personal Folder, and will attach a copy of your creative expression.

2. Creative Exploration #2, Weeks 3-4: Students explore the varieties of transpersonal experiences and learn about theories of transpersonal development, as they continue to engage in their own transpersonal practice.

See, Sense, and Feel

This week's creative exploration aims to facilitate heightened awareness through tuning into your senses—experiencing your world through your senses.

The activity of this week encourages you to step out into the world and engage your whole body, all your senses and feelings, with your daily environment as if you encounter it for the first time. See if you can not-privilege one sensorial mode over another. It is understood that our sense of vision tends to dominate unless we close our eyes, and that when we encounter our environment habitually, we naturally revert to stored knowledge and existing understanding of our relationship to it. Can you be aware of this ever so fully?

Experience your presence in mundane situations with a renewed sensitivity to your surroundings, to the sounds, colors, felt energy, and your direct connection to it. See if you can be present and fully engaged as well as observant of yourself and others.

When you feel you have gathered enough direct experience to work with introspectively, engage with your favorite mode of creative expression, in writing, with art media, through authentic movement, etc. and let this newly acquired knowledge about the world, which you have gathered intuitively and with your whole being, to guide your creative expression process.

In Week 3 simply engage in this activity. During Week 4 you will provide a brief written reflection in your Personal Folder, and will attach a copy of your creative expression.

3. Creative Exploration #3, Weeks 7-8: Students focus on multicultural perspectives, and on the experience of connecting with others and with the natural world. In closure, students engage in the integration of their course learning.

Creative Exploration: The Teachings in Your Natural Environment

This week's creative exploration will guide you to find time in which you can consciously and attentively take a walk in nature or in your city streets. Whether you observe a tree in the woods or on a sidewalk, sunlight filtered through branches or shadowed by buildings, observe the teachings they behold, which have value for your transpersonal development. Consider this as a creative experiment, the outcome of which you cannot predict. This brief journey will hopefully help to facilitate inner shifts on multiple levels (emotional, mental, physical, imaginal).

When you feel you have gathered enough direct experience to work with introspectively, consider experimenting with a mode of creative expression, which you are *less familiar with*, in writing, with art media, through authentic movement, etc. and let your creative

expression become your teacher as well. What aspects from your experience in your natural environment are you bringing into your page or your movement space?

In Week 7 simply engage in this activity. During Week 8 you will provide a brief written reflection in your Personal Folder, and will attach a copy of your creative expression.

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Make Your Own Path
Dorit Netzer, Winter 2011