

*Selections from the Greens' next article, Biofeedback and Transformation, which appeared in **The American Theosophist**, comment upon how ideas from biofeedback and transpersonal psychology inter-relate and combine in useful ways. The depth of theory and understanding of the multileveled human being is exemplified by this and other articles and presentations using the "lotus diagram" as a focal point. This diagram appears in this section on page 140. A major focus that recurs in their work is a search for the nexus, the convergence, of biofeedback, transpersonal awareness, and transformation. [Eds.]*

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BIOFEEDBACK AND TRANSFORMATION¹

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See the lotus diagram [Figure 3.1] on Page 140. The "Lotus diagram" caption for the present article is stated as:

Symbolic interpretation of human substance and perceptual structure. Each line of the vertical cylindrical figure, which represents a human being, stands for at least three things: a boundary between different organizations of substance (different kinds of matter), a boundary between different kinds of possible perception and a boundary between different kinds of possible action.

. . . At any level transformation may be usefully defined as a self-induced (autogenic) movement toward greater health—physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual—and in focussing on the transformational effects of biofeedback training. It is useful here to examine [the lotus diagram]. The first three levels up from the bottom of the diagram are shown as parts of the personal (cosmic) domain of consciousness, and the spiritual level is shown as the transpersonal (universal) domain of consciousness.^{2,3}

In working with patients we seldom make use of this diagram, or discuss the implications of transpersonal-transformation, but on occasion it is useful to do so in order to break through an undesirable existential "plateau" which does not provide the happiness, satisfaction, or joy to which the client aspires. As will be seen in the examples below, however, on occasion a patient gets in touch with the deeper (higher) levels of being by contacting in themselves what seems to be the True Self (to use the Zen expression), and then they talk of spiritual feelings and insights.

Our purpose in including this diagram is to provide a context in which to talk of biofeedback and its relation to various levels of transformation. The diagram represents the Patanjali system of yoga in which everything in the cosmos consists of mind and its modifications.⁴ This is the genesis of the idea of a “planetary field of mind,” within which all bodies (organic and inorganic), and emotions, and thoughts, are forms of interrelated real substance. This diagram also represents (with appropriate translations of terminology) Aurobindo’s concepts of mind, substance and states of consciousness.^{5,6} It includes the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy of substances and consciousness,⁷⁻⁹ Blavatsky’s theosophical postulates,¹⁰ concepts from Barker’s *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*,¹¹ Bailey’s detailed review of states of consciousness,¹² Hall’s outlines of metaphysical thought down the ages,¹³ and Assagioli’s and Wilber’s modern syntheses.¹⁴⁻¹⁷ Parallels can also be found in Sufi teachings of Islam, in the Kaballah of Judaism, in the American Indian Medicine tradition and in many shamanistic traditions and symbols from around the world.

The idea of specific energies of body/emotions/mind/spirit, symbolized in the diagram, is obviously not new. But what is new is the fact that the above-referenced existentially-based concepts of substance, mind, spirit and their manifestations in nature are beginning to be found scientifically tenable (worthy of postulate, hypothesis and testing) by modern biologists, physicists, electrical and electronic engineers and members of other “hard science” disciplines.¹⁸⁻²⁴

If the question is now raised, what does this have to do with biofeedback, the answer is: If the above hypotheses of body/emotion/mind/spirit are correct, and the various energies and substances are in reality a continuum, then biofeedback-aided psychophysiological training can “open” the normally-closed body/emotions door in the brain which leads to awareness of normally-unconscious processes in the spectrum of being. . .

Aurobindo referred to the idea of a continuum neatly when he suggested that if we are embarrassed by the word spirit, then the thing to do is not use it. Instead think of spirit as the subtlest form of matter. On the other hand, he said, if we are not embarrassed by that word, then we can refer to “matter” as the densest form of spirit.

Many people having psychosomatic disorders are seemingly stuck in a self-perpetuating emotions/body feedback loop, and cannot find their mental conceptual way to a higher level of control. Their “left cortex” is experientially deprived. In yogic theory, however, there is a useful idea which has a bearing on this problem. According to Patanjali, all the body is in the mind, though not all the mind is in the body. In this theory, every cell of the body is a cell of the mind, and from that point of view it is conceivable, for instance, that white blood cells will take orders when properly instructed (as in cancer control through visualization). Using this idea as a heuristic hypothesis, some patients are able to break a limiting mental/emotional existential barrier and move toward genuine psychophysiological self regulation. . . .

. . . A few of our patients . . . sometimes got vivid hypnagogic imagery during biofeedback sessions in which they clearly see how the personal is related to the transpersonal and what they must do to integrate the seemingly separate aspects of their being.²⁵

It was recognition of this need for personal and transpersonal integration in modern life that led Aurobindo to say that the day of nirvana was gone. What is needed in this modern world is transformation, he said, not escape. The change must be invoked by the mind and orchestrated by each person’s Lotus self and eventually reflected in mind, emotions, and body.⁶ He put the three aspects of personality in that order because he said that all intentional transformation starts with the idea of change. To that idea we add our emotion, and finally, the “vital energy” (the “prana,” of India and Tibet) is reflexively activated. it begins to modify and regenerate the cellular structure of the body.

It is not easy (and often not necessary) to discuss this with patients, however, and we do not try to abruptly change their idea that they have simply a body problem (especially in those cases where there is an obvious body problem). Instead, we explain the mind-body rationale as clearly as possible, wire them up and begin psychophysiological training. As they go along it soon becomes clear that their emotions rule the body, and finally they realize (through visualization training) that the mind can rule the emotions and thus can also rule the body. As they come to this realization experientially, they often begin to think of their Self, and their need to become conscious of its integrative power and to let that force change their orientation toward life.

To some extent, we see movement in the transpersonal direction in all of our successful clients, even if their only goal is to get rid of a stomach ulcer, or to conquer hypertension and rid themselves of the oft poisonous side effects of medications. But whether we say much about transpersonal meanings and values depends on whether or not they get, from within themselves, transpersonal information which they wish to discuss. Like Ira Progoff, the Jungian therapist and creator of Dialogue House,^{26,27} we do not attempt to interpret the meaning of a patient's imagery, even when the meaning seems obvious. If patients ask our opinion, we try to turn the questions back for them to answer. It is generally assumed by therapists in our Biofeedback and Psychophysiology Center that the best analyst for each person is his or her own True Self.

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