

Heuristic Inquiry and Transpersonal Research

Dave Hiles

(Psychology Department, De Montfort University, Leicester. LE1 9BH, UK.)

(Email: dhiles@dmu.ac.uk)

1. INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin with a quote from William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson that I think will clearly go to the heart of what my focus will be this evening.

"Many of the most significant and exciting life events and extraordinary experiences - moments of clarity, illumination, and healing - have been systematically excluded from conventional research."

Braud & Anderson (1998, p.3)

Usually, when I introduce the course that I teach on qualitative inquiry, I begin by defining research as *an addition to knowledge*, and I also point out that *we undertake research because we care and want to make a difference*. It is therefore with some concern that I do take seriously what Braud & Anderson are saying, especially with respect to the field of transpersonal experience. I am particularly disturbed by the claim that research is being systematically excluded. It would seem that we are being actively prevented by other scientists from adding to our knowledge of some of the most significant and exciting aspects of human experience. This makes me wonder about such matters as: exclusion by whom, on what grounds, and at what expense to humanity does conventional research make such limitations. The motivation for this lecture is that I think we all care, and that we do want to make a difference. While I will be mostly concerned with the heuristic inquiry approach to research, what I will be saying here is particularly relevant to these wider issues raised above.

What seems to lie behind Braud & Anderson's comment is that some areas of human action and experience are thought by some scientists to be too difficult to study, or even to be unsuitable topics of empirical study. However, it is my view that these topics are too important to be ignored. Problems of measurement, and lack of appropriate methods of inquiry, have often been the stock excuses offered for the exclusion of these areas of study. I want to argue that such excuses are no longer valid, and we should begin to take notice of an expanding range of methods of inquiry now being made available, and that we must take seriously the research findings that are beginning to emerge in these areas.

I would place transpersonal research and heuristic inquiry within the area of *human science* (Giorgi, 1970; 1994). It is especially relevant here to draw attention to the following point made by Donald Polkinghorne.

"Human science seeks to know the reality which is particularly our own, the reality of our experience, actions, and expressions. This realm is closest to us, yet it is most resistant to our attempt to grasp it with understanding. Because of the success we have had knowing the world around us, the human realm has expanded its power to such an extent that we can act to create wellbeing and physical security and comfort and to inflict untold suffering and destruction. Serious and rigorous re-searching of the human realm is required."

Polkinghorne (1983, p. 280-1)

Polkinghorne's plea for a serious and rigorous *"re-searching of the human realm"* is exactly the point I wish to make. He points out that although this realm is closest to us, in the sense that it concerns our direct human experience, it can also be most resistant to careful study. He warns that the imbalance between our efforts in the natural science approach, at the expense of human science, may be a contributory factor in the untold suffering and destruction that seems to be ever present in the modern psyche. I remember that Carl Jung expressed very much the same idea when he observed that *"the future of humankind is held by a single thread, the human psyche."* There is no more urgent topic to research than the human realm of experience, action and expression, especially the significant and exciting life events and the extraordinary experiences these can entail. I want to examine the role that heuristic inquiry can play in this and its relationship to transpersonal research.

2. Heuristic inquiry

Heuristic inquiry is an extremely demanding process, involving disciplined self-commitment, rigorous self-searching and self-reflection, and ultimately a surrender to the process. It does not suit a fixed time-frame for research, and should not be attempted lightly. In essence, it is a research process designed for the exploration and interpretation of experience, which uses the self of the researcher. It is a research process that reflects Clark Moustakas' basic philosophy that *"in every learner, in every person, there are creative sources of energy and meaning that are often tacit, hidden, or denied"* (Moustakas, 2001). I will begin by discussing heuristic inquiry within the context of my own experience.

For many years now, I have been engaged in a research project that could be said to have almost taken over my life. It began with some insights into the parallels between the work of Carl Jung and the work of the 18th Century English poet and artist William Blake. These insights particularly related to understanding the processes of transformation that can be involved in the experience of human suffering. I especially wanted to apply these insights in my practice as a counsellor and therapist, and also engage in research that would bring some form to these insights that could then be shared with others in the field.

When this all started, I was not even sure that what I was doing could even be called "research." In fact, it was only several years later that I discovered that what I had done was really *heuristic inquiry*. Coming across the work of Clark Moustakas (1990), I immediately recognised the phases of engagement, immersion, incubation and illumination in my own work. I have reported some of the methodological issues involved in this work before (Hies, 1999, 2001), and I only will briefly summarise here the essentials of Moustakas' method, together with some of the insights that I have gained about the nature of heuristic inquiry from my own direct experience in using it.

Heuristic inquiry was developed by Clark Moustakas (1990; see also Douglass & Moustakas, 1985), and bares some striking resemblance to the idea of *lived inquiry* developed by John Heron (1998), and *mindful inquiry* developed by Bentz & Shapiro (1998). The heuristic inquiry paradigm is an adaptation of phenomenological inquiry but explicitly acknowledges the involvement of the *researcher*, to the extent that the lived experience of the researcher becomes the main focus of the research. The researcher really needs to feel passionate about the research question (West, 1998a; 1998b). Indeed, what is explicitly the focus of the approach is the transformative effect of the inquiry on the researcher's own experience. This is often achieved by a process that I think can usefully be called *discernment*.

Table 1: Summary of Moustakas' core processes of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15-27)

□ Identify with the focus of the inquiry

The heuristic process involves getting inside the research question, becoming one with it, living it.

□ Self dialogue

Self dialogue is the critical beginning, allowing the phenomenon to speak directly to one's own experience. Knowledge grows out of direct human experience and discovery involves self-inquiry, an openness to one's own experience.

□ Tacit knowing

In addition to knowledge that we can make explicit, there is knowledge that is implicit to our actions and experiences. This tacit dimension is ineffable and unspecifiable, it underlies and precedes intuition and can guide the researcher into untapped directions and sources of meaning.

□ Intuition

Intuition provides the bridge between explicit and tacit knowledge. Intuition makes possible the seeing of things as wholes. Every act of achieving integration, unity or wholeness requires intuition.

□ Indwelling

This refers to the conscious and deliberate process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of a quality or theme of human experience. Indwelling involves a willingness to gaze with unwavering attention and concentration into some aspect of human experience.

□ Focussing

Focussing is inner attention, a staying with, a sustained process of systematically contacting the central meanings of an experience. It enables one to see something as it is and to make whatever shifts are necessary to make contact with necessary awareness and insight.

□ Internal frame of reference

The outcome of the heuristic process in terms of knowledge and experience must be placed in the context of the experienter's own internal frame of reference, and not some external frame.

Moustakas has identified a number of core processes (I have summarized these in Table 1). Moustakas also outlines six basic phases involved in this approach, although he clearly indicates a seventh phase as well (I have summarized these *seven* phases in Table 2).

Table 2: Summary of Moustakas' phases of heuristic inquiry (p. 27-37)

□ Initial engagement

The task of the first phase is to discover an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications. The research question that emerges lingers with the researcher, awaiting the disciplined commitment that will reveal its underlying meanings.

□ Immersion

The research question is lived in waking, sleeping and even dream states. This requires alertness, concentration and self-searching. Virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion.

□ Incubation

This involves a retreat from the intense, concentrated focus, allowing the expansion of knowledge to take place at a more subtle level, enabling the inner tacit dimension and intuition to clarify and extend understanding.

□ Illumination

This involves a breakthrough, a process of awakening that occurs naturally when the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition. It involves opening a door to new awareness, a modification of an old understanding, a synthesis of fragmented knowledge, or new discovery.

□ Explication

This involves a full examination of what has been awakened in consciousness. What is required is organization and a comprehensive depiction of the core themes.

□ Creative synthesis

Thoroughly familiar with the data, and following a preparatory phase of solitude and meditation, the researcher puts the components and core themes usually into the form of creative syntheses expressed as a narrative account, a report, a thesis, a poem, story, drawing, painting, etc.

□ Validation of the heuristic inquiry

The question of validity is one of meaning. Does the synthesis present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience? Returning again and again to the data to check whether they embrace the necessary and sufficient meanings. Finally, feedback is obtained through participant validation, and receiving responses from others.

I need to emphasize that, although heuristic inquiry can certainly involve the exploration of the experiences of co-researchers, it is an approach to research that very much focuses on the experience and transformation of the researcher. Here is how Moustakas (1990) describes this unique approach to research. He proposes that heuristic inquiry involves:

*"... a process of **internal search** through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The **self of the researcher** is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge"* (p. 9).

"... The heuristic process is a way of being informed, a way of knowing" (p. 10).

*"... From the beginning, and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves **self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery**; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration. When I consider an issue, problem, or question, I enter into it fully... I may challenge, confront, or even doubt my understanding of a human concern or issue; but when I persist in a **disciplined** and devoted way I ultimately deepen my knowledge of the phenomenon... I am **personally involved**... I may be entranced by visions, images, and dreams that connect me to my quest. I may come into touch with new regions of myself, and discover revealing connections with others"* (p. 11).

*"... Essentially in the heuristic process, I am **creating a story** that portrays the qualities, meanings, and essences of universally unique experiences"* (p. 13).

*"... In heuristic research the investigator must have had a direct, **personal encounter** with the phenomenon being investigated. There must have been actual autobiographical connections"* (p. 14).

*"... Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is **autobiographic**, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social - and perhaps universal - significance"* (p. 15).

3. Some observations concerning heuristic inquiry

There is clearly more involved in heuristic inquiry than the researcher simply analyzing their own experience, which could easily be seen as a variation of phenomenological inquiry. What Moustakas seems to offer is the much wider context within which the researcher engages with the research question, examines their own experience amongst a number of other explorations, and follows this through with an awareness of the transformative processes at work in the research enterprise. Drawing on my own use of this method of inquiry, I would like to make the following observations.

- i. Heuristic inquiry is a research process that is difficult to set any clear boundaries to, with respect to duration and scope. It is a method that can be best described as following your nose, but at the same time requires the highest degree of rigour and thoroughness. It is a method of inquiry that should not be undertaken lightly.
- ii. In heuristic inquiry, the research question chooses you, and invariably the research question is deeply personal in origin. Indeed, it is my own experience that the research question has been a preoccupation of mine for at least thirty years, and probably much longer than that.
- iii. There is a very striking similarity between the methods of heuristic inquiry and the practice of counselling and psychotherapy, particularly with respect to the use of the "self." It is therefore a method of research that particularly resonates with inquiry into counselling and therapy related issues.
- iv. Heuristic inquiry highlights the importance of working with the heuristic process of others, especially with the historical recordings of previous inquiry (especially spiritual texts). Indeed, it turns out that the works of writers, poets, artists, spiritual leaders and scientists can all be usefully treated as the creative products of heuristic inquiry.
- v. In the light of this last observation, it would seem that heuristic inquiry was probably the first research method adopted for psychological inquiry many, many centuries ago. It should really be regarded as the most ancient of methods, with a proven track record well before the advent of modern science and psychology. It is a method of inquiry that is desperately in need of being re-invented!

The form that my own heuristic research has taken, in addition to my own self-exploration and lived inquiry, involved the designing and carrying out of several phenomenological/co-operative inquiries. I have interviewed people who have claimed to have had a near-death experience, people who have been victims of serious crimes, and people who have been attracted to voluntary, or paid work, which entails being in a helping role with others (i.e. counsellors, carers, nurses, social workers, advocates, etc.). Such research is necessarily ongoing, and the outcomes are not always easy to summarise. However, two fairly specific claims have emerged, (i) a clearer and more general view of the human response to loss, and in particular the human grieving process, and (ii) the crucial importance of the heuristic framework for researching human experience.

4. Transpersonal inquiry

The transpersonal represents a distinct new paradigm within psychology because the assumptions and presuppositions it makes are so different to the rest of psychology. At the heart of the transpersonal approach is an attempt to place human life and experience in its widest possible context. Of course, such an approach has a very long history indeed, although it has largely been

expressed in spiritual terms. Personally, I cannot see that it matters in the least whether different cultures and groups of people, at different times in human history, have come up with very different visions of reality, of our place in it, and the associated practices that help give meaning to human existence. However, what does matter is the recognition of the crucial role that transpersonal beliefs and practices play in peoples' lives, and the important place these can have in explaining and understanding an individual's experience, actions, growth and development.

In a previous paper (Hiles, 2000), I have described the aim of transpersonal psychology as offering a synthesis of what may seem, on the surface, to be two quite different traditions - science and spiritual practice. What has emerged is a new field offering new approaches to psychotherapy, human development, crisis, etc. Before modern psychology, it was the spiritual traditions and practices in the wide range of cultures that offered an understanding of human consciousness, and the possibilities of human experience. Transpersonal psychology can be seen as an attempt to bring the world's great spiritual traditions together with the basic ideas of (Western) modern psychology. This has, to a large extent, already been achieved in Eastern psychology, we are just coming rather late to this in the West!!

The vitality and enormous scope of this field is demonstrated, amongst many other examples, in the pioneering vision of Ken Wilber (1977, 1980, 1983, 1998, 2000), in research on spiritual emergence/emergency and the model of the holotropic mind developed by Stanislav Grof (1985, 1988, 1998; and with Christina Grof 1989, 1990), and in John Heron's (1998) proposal for a person-based, person-centred spirituality.

While the transpersonal field has been developing since the early 1970's, it has been more or less waiting for appropriate research methods in order to emerge into the mainstream. The very nature of the transpersonal paradigm, where the basic assumptions of the field are so different from other areas of scientific inquiry, requires paradigms of inquiry that are necessarily quite different. However, transpersonal inquiry is no less empirical than any other area of inquiry, but the empirical focus is on human intuition and creative expression, and possible altered states of awareness. The empirical data can take the form of subjective experience, discernment and direct knowing which may emerge from dreamwork, imagery exercises, storytelling and meditation practices, etc. It is notable that recently very considerable progress has been made in the development of research methods more appropriate to the paradigm of transpersonal inquiry. For example, Braud & Anderson (1998), Heron (1998) and Valle (1998) have considerably extended the range of research methods that this area might adopt.

Braud & Anderson's work in particular reflects the need for a systematic approach to the development of new inquiry paradigms. They do draw up a general scheme which usefully tries to bring some order to the confusing diversity of methods of data collection and analysis, which I have summarized in Table 3. They propose five new methods for transpersonal research. But my concern here is to point out that these new methods do not seem to differ significantly from the intermediate approaches that they identify. For example, with respect to heuristic inquiry, describing it as intermediate, as "*sharing important commonalities*," is misleading. In most cases, the five methods outlined by Braud & Anderson are each variants of the heuristic inquiry process. They seem to overlook the fact that heuristic inquiry and phenomenological inquiry are both foundational to this whole area of research. Although heuristic inquiry is not of necessity transpersonal, it has a central role to play in the research into transpersonal and spiritual issues.

Table 3: Braud & Anderson's three categories of research methods (p.256-283)

Conventional Methods	Intermediate methods	Transpersonal methods
Experimental designs	Phenomenological approach	Integral inquiry
Quasi-experimental designs	Heuristic approach	Intuitive inquiry
Single-subject designs	Feminist approach	Organic research
Action research	Experiential research method	Transpersonal-Phenomenological inquiry
Correlational approaches	Cooperative inquiry	Inquiry informed by exceptional human experiences
Causal-comparative studies	Participatory inquiry	
Naturalistic and field studies		
Theoretical approach		
Grounded theory		
Historical and archival approaches		
Content analysis, textual analysis and hermeneutics		
Narrative and discourse analysis		
Case studies and life stories		
Interviews, questionnaires and surveys		
Meta-analysis		
Parapsychological assessments and design issues		
Physiological and biomedical assessments and design issues		

5. A note on mindful inquiry

Earlier I mentioned an approach to inquiry that is similar to heuristic inquiry, and is certainly worth spelling out a little further. This is the refreshingly different approach to research called *mindful inquiry* (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Mindful inquiry is described as a synthesis of four intellectual traditions: *phenomenology*, *hermeneutics*, *critical social theory*, and *Buddhism*. Scientific research is recognized as one of our many ways of knowing, and needs to be connected with the other ways. The emphasis in this approach is in placing the inquirer at the centre, and research from this perspective is seen as intimately linked with the awareness and the experienced world of the researcher. Research can be seen to contribute explicitly to the transformation of the researcher's sense of self or identity. The idea of bringing *mindfulness* into disciplined inquiry is exciting, as it stresses focus, intention and awareness of whatever is present in a situation or experience.

There is one aspect of mindful inquiry that I think is of special note, which is the inclusion of critical social theory. I do not have time to develop this point here, but one of the features of critical theory that I think is most important is the recognition that theories, explanations and understanding can be *empowering*. One of the goals of psychological inquiry and therapeutic practice must be empowerment, i.e. the use of psychological knowledge and techniques to empower people to make informed choices, express themselves freely, and challenge discrimination, oppression and unnecessary suffering. While empowerment is possibly universally held by counsellors and therapists to be an outcome of their practices, it is hardly ever acknowledged that this also needs to be a recognized outcome of research inquiry. Mindful inquiry clearly does this, as does heuristic inquiry.

6. Developing the heuristic approach

Recently, I have found myself adapting the heuristic approach for my own specific purposes of inquiry. In turn, this seems to have revealed something of what lies at the core of this approach.

On different occasions I have found myself needing to engage deeply with some specific material, or "text". I have come to call this deep study of a single text, *heuristic engagement* (and I am very aware that this is almost precisely how I view working with a client in therapeutic practice). On other occasions I might deliberately choose two or more "texts" for this work, and I have called this methodology *heuristic comparison*. Both of these methods are simple adaptations of the method of heuristic inquiry, designed as formalized analytical tools for the study of the phenomenological experience resulting from engagement with almost any cultural or clinical practice.

In the case of heuristic comparison, the methodology involves these basic phases:

- i. choosing two texts/practices for comparison - this is not limited to only two and is not crucial - but the selection needs to be very limited, leaving other comparisons for further study, and the choice needs to be made from a range of texts/practices with some underlying feature in common
- ii. a phenomenological engagement with the texts/practices, examining and re-examining them, drawing out similarities and differences, exploring the demands placed on the researcher
- iii. a period of discernment and exploration, but avoiding superficial similarities and differences - with the likely need to follow "leads" to materials outside those chosen, but always returning to the comparison that is the main focus of the study
- iv. a phase of sifting through and gathering together the materials and experiences, allowing a range of insights, meanings and themes to emerge
- v. reflection on the inter-relations of the texts/practices, working towards formulating a range of insights, perhaps working back through phases (ii) to (iv) again and again and again
- vi. a formulation, or synthesis of the inquiry involving self-validation
- vii. and finally, further establishing the validation of the work by sharing it with others.

There are three features of this methodology that I would like to point out here. Firstly, it should be fairly clear that the methodology is the outcome of trying to do justice to the required depth of the engagement with the material, while also being able to set appropriate boundaries to the work that is involved. It is my view that a heuristic comparison is almost always simply a part of a wider heuristic inquiry. Secondly, I would like to claim that there is possibly something universal about these seven phases. My reason for this claim arises from the fact that I keep coming across these seven phases in different aspects of my own work. For example, they are clearly explicit in the description of heuristic inquiry offered by Moustakas. But they also emerge from my close examination of some of the work of William Blake, and I have found them to be the key to formulating a deeper understanding of the grieving process in the human response to suffering (Hiles, 1999). And, thirdly, I must emphasize the importance of the seventh phase, (vii) *validating the work by sharing with others*, which is the key to understanding good qualitative research practices. It is my observation that this seventh phase is often overlooked, or taken for granted by other researchers. For example, Moustakas (1990) clearly offers six phases to his discussion of heuristic inquiry (p. 27), but then clearly includes a seventh phase (p. 32-37). It is my proposal that validation of the research is two-fold, involving a process of self-validation (and possibly participant verification) that is integral to the sixth phase of the creative synthesis, and in the seventh phase a process of "external validation," a sharing with others, which is the basic requirement of any research paradigm.

I pointed out earlier that heuristic inquiry is really the most ancient of inquiry practices, and you can possibly see that what I am calling for is that it should be given the proper recognition that it obviously deserves.

7. Researching human experience

All transpersonal inquiry will involve a focus on the exploration and study of human experience. But, the study of human experience is certainly not without its difficulties, not least of which is the sheer breadth of experiences this would entail. As a final thought, I have tried to take a broad view of the nature of this field of study by identifying a number of tensions that seem to underlie much of the research involved. Six of these tensions are presented in Table 4.

What lies behind my thinking is that there seems to be a fundamental tension between experience that is *grounded* in human knowledge systems of our everyday occurrences, and experience that is more *subtle* which involves perhaps deeper or altered states of consciousness.

Table 4: Tensions in the phenomenological study of experience

<GROUNDED>

<SUBTLE>

Principled experience leading to knowledge derived from an imposed order	-	leading to knowledge of a "found" order
Discovered experience derived from everyday happenings, events	-	Practiced induced experiences through rituals, shared practices
Vulgar common, ordinary normal experiences	-	Extraordinary uncommon, unusual, unique experiences
Intentional focus on the content of thought (whether real or imagined)	-	Transcendent the experience of knowing itself, witnessing the act of knowing
Assimilated expected, predicted, absorbed into our current perspective	-	Transformative generating insight and permanent change
Lived experience centred in the self	-	Transpersonal experience beyond self, "what am I a part of?"

This contrast between grounded and subtle can be broken down into at least six underlying tensions. Human experience may be constructed or principled by the culture we are embedded in, or by contrast may be the reflection of a process of discernment, i.e. a more directly experienced "found" order in things. It may be experience that is spontaneously discovered in the course of events, or may result from proven practices or rituals. It may be common and ordinary, or quite exceptional in nature. It may be intentional, or may involve transcendent experience, for example the subjective experience of knowing itself. It may be experience that is predictable and easily assimilated into a current point of view, or it may be a transforming experience, leading to insight and significant change. Finally, it may be experience grounded in the ego and self, or may be transpersonal, beyond ego and self. My purpose here is simply to do justice to the full range of experience, setting out a curriculum for study in this field.

The possibilities of researching human experience from a transpersonal perspective are of course exciting, but also challenging. Not the least of the challenges involved will be in convincing the wider scientific community of the seriousness of this undertaking. I find it extremely encouraging that Ken Wilber, in his discussion of direct spiritual experience, asserts that such experience is "*repeatable, reproducible and confirmable*" (Wilber, 1999, p. 43). These are of course the basic requirements of any scientific approach. Wilber (1998, p. 155-6) proposes three essential aspects of any scientific inquiry: (i) *instrumental injunction* - "if you want to know this, do this," (ii) *direct apprehension* - the direct experience or apprehension of the data, and (iii) *communal confirmation or rejection* - checking the data with others. These three essential aspects of scientific inquiry ensure that the basic requirements of repeatability, reproducibility and confirmability are being met. Furthermore, it is quite clear from Wilber's position that in these respects research into human experience is no different from any other area of scientific research. It also seems to follow that in many ways spiritual experience, that so often is the product of an injunction to practice a certain form of meditation practice or ritual, may be relatively much easier to study scientifically than other types of experience which are more exceptional or spontaneous. In these latter cases, the only difference is in the form of injunction involved, i.e. "wait for this to happen, or, find instances of this happening", and then apprehend the data, and confirm the observation with others.

Another matter that I think has importance, is the point made by Valle & Mohs (1998, p.100). They propose that transpersonal awareness:

"seems somehow prior to [any] reflective-prereflective realm, presenting itself as more of a space or ground from which our more common experience and felt-sense emerge."

Moreover, it is an awareness that makes itself known to the experiencer, but:

"is not of the phenomenal realm of perceiver and perceived [but] rather it is a noumenal, unitive space within or from which both intentional consciousness and phenomenal experience manifest."

The important point here is the claim that transpersonal awareness is always *prior* to our phenomenal awareness. Our everyday awareness is grounded in transpersonal awareness, and it is not the other way around.

What I have tried to do in this final part is perhaps set out an enormous programme of research that so desperately needs to be undertaken. I am left wondering, *do we care?* And, if we do not care, who will? *Do we want to make a difference?*

8. Summary

I hope that I have achieved my modest aims. I have tried to provide a brief outline of the heuristic inquiry approach to research, originally pioneered in the work of Clark Moustakas. I have argued

that it occupies a key place in personal inquiry. I have discussed some of the insights that I gained from using it myself, and have used its basic principles in developing some more specific inquiry paradigms of my own.

What defines transpersonal inquiry is not its methods of research but the particular perspective it takes on human actions and experiences. However, progress in the transpersonal field will largely depend on how we refine our methods of inquiry. The promise of heuristic inquiry is that it offers a systematic way of incorporating the self into our inquiry methods, and, therefore, some of the most significant, exciting and urgent life events and extraordinary human experiences can be researched more closely.

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