

*Bridging Psychological  
Science and  
Transpersonal Spirit*  
**A Primer of  
Transpersonal  
Psychology**

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**CONTENT**

<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	4
<b>PREFACE</b> .....	5
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	13

<b>UNIT 1</b>			<b>WHAT IS TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY?</b> .....	15
			• Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology.....	16
			• The Varieties of Transpersonal Experience and Behavior.....	24
			• The Parapsychology of Spirituality.....	28
			• The Creative Nature of Transpersonal Experiences and Behaviors.....	34
			○ <i>Various Meanings of Transcendence</i> .....	34
			○ <i>Transcendence and the Nature of Creativity</i> .....	38
			• A New Approach to Religious Issues.....	40
			○ <i>A Transpersonal Interpretation of a Religious Event</i> .....	50
			• Criticisms of Transpersonal Psychology.....	53
			○ <i>“The Dangers of Transpersonal Psychology”</i> .....	54
			• The Transpersonal Vision.....	56
			• Section Summary.....	58

Fig. 1-1	Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology (1967-2003).....	16
Fig. 1-2	Varieties of Transpersonal Phenomena.....	25
Fig. 1-3	Exceptional Human Experiences.....	26
Fig. 1-4	Various Meanings of Transcendence.....	35
Fig. 1-5	Transpersonal Psychology as an Approach to Religious Issues.....	41
Fig. 1-6	Miracle at Medjugorje: A Transpersonal Interpretation.....	51

<b>UNIT 2</b>			<b>WHAT ARE THE ORIGINS OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY?</b> .....	59
			• The Probable Histories of Transpersonal Psychology.....	60
			• The Personalistic Approach to the History of Transpersonal Psychology.....	61
			○ <i>Gustav T. Fechner</i> .....	62
			○ <i>William James</i> .....	63
			○ <i>F. W. H. Myers</i> .....	67
			○ <i>Sigmund Freud</i> .....	70
			○ <i>Alfred Adler</i> .....	74
			○ <i>Carl G. Jung</i> .....	75
			○ <i>Roberto Assagioli</i> .....	85
			• The Naturalistic Approach to the History of Transpersonal Psychology.....	97
			○ <i>America’s Visionary “Folk Psychology” Tradition</i> .....	97
			○ <i>Hidden Tradition of Psychic Research in Modern Psychology</i> .....	98
			○ <i>Spiritualism</i> .....	99
			○ <i>The Americanization of Eastern and Asian Systems of Thought</i> .....	103
			○ <i>The Counterculture Movement (1960-1980)</i> .....	104
			○ <i>Humanistic Psychology</i> .....	107
			○ <i>The Birth of Modern Transpersonal Psychology</i> .....	108
			○ <i>Transpersonal Psychology – After the Founding</i> .....	112
			• Transpersonal Psychology Around the World.....	115
			• Section Summary.....	116

Fig. 2-1	“Unofficial “ Intellectual History of Modern Transpersonal Psychology.....	117
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<b>UNIT 3</b>			<b>CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY</b> ....	123
			• Contemporary Approaches in Transpersonal Psychology.....	124
			○ <i>The Biological Perspective</i> .....	126
			○ <i>The Environmental Perspective</i> .....	127
			○ <i>The Cognitive Perspective</i> .....	129
			○ <i>The Psychodynamic Perspective</i> .....	131
			○ <i>The Phenomenological Perspective</i> .....	133
			○ <i>The Integral Perspective</i> .....	135

- Concerning Contemporary Perspectives in Transpersonal Psychology..... 138
  - *Does not exclude the personal ego*..... 138
  - *Does not limit the type of expansion of identity possible*..... 139
  - *Is not limited to any particular philosophy or worldview*..... 143
  - *Does not limit research to a particular method*..... 155
  - *Does not limit inquiry to a particular domain*..... 156
- Section Summary..... 156

Fig. 3-1	Varieties of Expansion of Identity Observed in Psychedelic Sessions.....	140
Fig. 3-2	Key Assumptions of an Transpersonal Approach to Psychotherapy.....	148
Fig. 3-3	Some Assumptions of Orthodox, Western Psychology.....	152

**UNIT 4 HOW IS TRANSPERSONAL RESEARCH CONDUCTED?..... 157**

- Transpersonal Research Methods..... 158
  - *Historical and Archival Approaches*..... 162
    - Spontaneous Remissions..... 162
  - *Descriptive Approaches*..... 163
    - Deep Structural Analysis..... 163
  - *Case Studies and Life Stories*..... 164
    - Miraculous Cures at Lourdes..... 164
    - Birthmarks Suggestive of Reincarnation..... 168
    - Sri Sathya Sai Baba..... 170
    - Transcendental Meditation and Continuous Consciousness..... 172
  - *Interviews, Questionnaires, and Surveys*..... 173
  - *Behavioral and Physiological Measurements*..... 174
    - Meditation..... 174
    - Imagery Effects on White Blood Cells..... 174
  - *Experimental Designs*..... 175
    - Direct Mental Interactions with Living Systems..... 175
  - *Parapsychological Assessment and Design Issues*..... 177
    - Remote Viewing Telepathy Studies of the 1970’s and 1980’s..... 180
    - Ganzfeld Telepathy Experiments from 1974 to 1997..... 184
    - Schmidt’s REG – ESP and PK Experiments..... 186
    - Statistical Issue of Replicability..... 187
  - *Theory-Building Approaches: Meta-Analysis*..... 188
    - Meta-analysis of ESP Evidence – Precognition..... 189
    - Meta-analysis of PK Evidence – Dice-Throwing..... 190
  - *Parapsychology as an Active Research Area in Psychology*..... 191
- Concerning Transpersonal Research Methods..... 195
  - *Importance of Non-Experimental Evidence*..... 200
- Is Transpersonal Psychology A Science? ..... 203
  - *Original Intent of the Founders of Transpersonal Psychology*..... 203
  - *Tart’s State-Specific Sciences*..... 207
  - *Wilber’s Three “Eyes” of Knowledge*..... 209
  - *Mystical Consciousness as a Creative Act*..... 212
- Do Transpersonal Research Methods Reveal Actual Transpersonal Realities?..... 214
  - *Limitations of a Purely Intrapersonal “Experiential” Approach*..... 217
- Section Summary..... 219

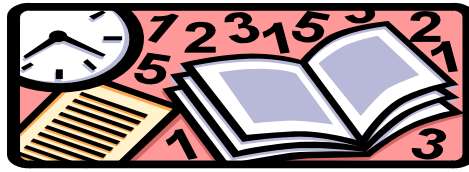
Fig. 4-1	Varieties of Transpersonal Research Methods.....	159
Fig. 4-2	Miracle Cures and Their Medical and Ecclesiastical Assessment.....	166
Fig. 4-3	Case Studies of Healing at Lourdes.....	167
Fig. 4-4	“Best” Evidence for Psi Functioning.....	179
Fig. 4-5	How Psi Works: Some Interesting Findings.....	183
Fig. 4-6	Transpersonal Psychology Research Review.....	196
Fig. 4-7	Differences between Transpersonal and Traditional Approaches to Research.....	202

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION..... 220**

**REFERENCES..... 221**

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE..... 240**

## Foreword



The monograph that you hold in your hands is the product of a need for an introductory textbook in the field of transpersonal psychology. While transpersonal psychology has developed into a full-fledged scientific, professional, and academic discipline since its founding by Abraham Maslow more than 35 years ago, it remains on the margins of conventional mainstream scientific psychology.

Whether or not transpersonal psychology will soon find its niche within the behavioral and social sciences is an open question. But when a discipline has inaugurated a number of peer-reviewed journals devoted to the subject matter of the field, founded several national and international professional societies that facilitate scholarly exchange among individuals involved in transpersonal therapy and research, and instituted numerous academic courses and degree programs in university settings around the world, then that discipline deserves a place within the framework of official psychology and ought to have adequate representation within mainstream college and university curricula. This monograph is a portion of a much larger project that is intended to deal with the first issue by addressing the second.

If transpersonal psychology wishes to find itself incorporated within the framework of official psychology, then serious thought needs to be given to what might be taught in a generalized course in transpersonal psychology. This monograph will hopefully be of service in that regard. It represents the first chapter of a projected 12-chapter textbook in transpersonal psychology for 2-year and 4-year colleges that covers topics ordinarily addressed in the typical introductory psychology course, but from a *transpersonal* point of view – introduction, biological foundations, sensation and perception, states of consciousness, learning and memory, language and thought, motivation and emotion, development, personality theory and measurement, psychological disorders, psychotherapy, and social behavior. Use of such an organizational framework will encourage a more complete coverage of transpersonal topics within traditional content domains, promote greater integration of transpersonal concepts and theories with the methods and findings with contemporary psychology, and more easily present transpersonal psychology within the framework of the contemporary mainstream educational process.

While more and more college courses are being offered on the subject of transpersonal psychology (a partial listing of schools and programs in transpersonal psychology can be found at <http://www.atpweb.org/public>), there are no standard texts or curricula offering the fundamentals of transpersonal psychology to help structure most courses. In approaching transpersonal psychology from an educational point of view, one would be amazed at the lack of a recognized, agreed upon general curriculum, and how various courses intended to provide an introduction to transpersonal psychology vary considerably in course content and structure. Few transpersonal psychologists use the same general textbooks.

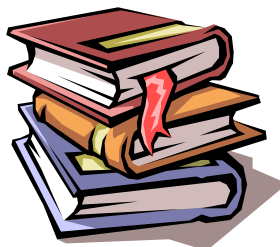
The lack of a standardized curriculum is not surprising in a field where transpersonal psychologists themselves disagree on the importance and validity of certain areas of investigation (e.g., parapsychology), where fundamental tenets of the field have not been resolved (e.g., how foundational is the perennial philosophy?), where wide divergence of opinion exists on basic issues of methodology and goals of research (e.g., is transpersonal psychology a science?), and where most psychologists who espouse a transpersonal orientation are self-taught in the field and may be uncomfortable teaching areas of inquiry with which they are unfamiliar (e.g., the clinician who overlooks the experimental research or the experimentalist who ignores the clinical data). This monograph is offered both as a preliminary attempt to address this growing need for a generalized model of curricula for undergraduate courses in transpersonal psychology and as an encouragement to teachers of psychology to introduce this exciting area of investigation to their students.



### A Sacred Story

My personal introduction to the exciting realm of *transpersonal psychology* began during the spring semester of my junior year at Our Lady of Providence Seminary in Warwick, Rhode Island. I was 20 years old at the time and studying to become a Roman Catholic diocesan priest. I was deep in my study of Darwinian anthropology, Freudian psychology, Biblical religions, existential philosophy, and natural science. Ever since I can remember I have had a burning desire to understand the true nature of human personality and humanity's proper relationship to spiritual reality and to the rest of creation. I thought I had discovered those Truths (capital T) in my academic courses that year of 1970.

**What I Learned.** I learned in my *anthropology* course about Charles Darwin who spent over half his life proving the validity of his theory of evolution. Generations of scientists since have viewed the natural world through its light, taking Darwinian theories for granted as being a literal interpretation of the origins of species, and attempting to make human nature conform to the picture of evolution as Darwin conceived it. Certainly Darwin's considerable achievement in classifying the different species and in describing their struggle for survival is an entirely true and objective representation of the natural world. I learned in my *psychology* course about Sigmund Freud who invented such a comprehensive system of psychology that it seemed to explain everything about human experience and behavior. Such an all-inclusive and internally consistent theory must be true, I thought, because it possessed such sweeping explanatory power. I learned in my *religion* course about the Old Testament God Jehovah and about Jesus Christ, the Son of the only God, who declared that His was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Holy Scriptures and the theological doctrines and dogmas of His Church must certainly be divinely true if His Holy Spirit inspired them. I learned in my *philosophy* course about existential thinkers such as John Paul Sartre and Albert Camus who were committed to engaging the painful realities of aloneness and death exactly as they are and refused to gloss over suffering or arbitrarily pretend that life is inherently meaningful. Such a demand for authenticity, freedom, and autonomy must certainly be true and the correct defense against delusion and self-deception. I learned in my *natural science* course that science, too, seemed committed to engaging reality exactly as it is. Objective, empirical science must certainly be the final arbiter of what is true and real. When I attempted to integrate these diverse beliefs and ways of thinking into a single coherent framework, however, I became filled with feelings of tension and conflict, stress and strain, for *how could they all be true?* As I examined in more detail the assumptions and implications of the course material that I was learning, I gradually began to lose a sense of my own worth and purpose.



**What I Came to Believe.** My course in *Darwinian theory* revealed our species to be a creature pitted against itself (as ego is pitted against id) and whose nature is amoral (there are no standards of right or wrong as anything goes for survival sake). In the Darwinian world, nature cares little for the individual, only for the species. The attainment of adulthood has little purpose except to insure the further existence of the species through procreation. The species itself appears to have no reason except a mindless determination to exist. Tainted with brutish and destructive impulses, I was the member of a greedy and predatory species, a murderer at heart and nature's despoiler, a blight upon the planet, and the victim of an indifferent Nature that brought meaningless death. I became separate from nature and in competition with all other creatures in an endless struggle for survival. There is no possibility of spiritual survival as far as evolutionary theory is concerned, because evolutionary Darwinian man and woman are not created with a soul. All psychological activity is scaled down in between life and death. Death becomes an affront to life and comes to imply a certain kind of weakness, for is it not said that only the strong survive?



My course in *Freudian psychology* taught me to believe that my unconscious self was certainly devious, capable of the most insidious subconscious fraud, and filled with savage rage and infantile impulses that I could not trust, no matter what I told myself. The unconscious was understood to be a garbage heap of undesirable impulses, long ago discarded by civilization. Slips of the tongue and dreams betrayed the self's hidden nefarious true desires. The spontaneous self, the impulsive portion of my nature, became most suspect, since in my spontaneous acts I could unwittingly reveal not my basic goodness, but the hidden shoddiness of my motives. Programmed and conditioned from childhood to fail or succeed, the heights and depths of each person's experience were seen to be the result of infantile behavior patterns that rigidly controlled us for a lifetime.



Darwinian and Freudian concepts were also reflected in my *Bible studies*. Given the earth as living grounds by a capricious and vengeful God, who would one day destroy the world, I came to believe that our species was bound for ultimate tragedy and extinction. Born blighted by original sin, created imperfect by a perfect God who then punished me for my imperfections, and who would send me to hell if I did not adore Him, I came to see myself as an innately flawed and sinful self, a creature bound to do wrong regardless of any strong good intent. Being the member of a species of sinners, contaminated by original sin even before birth, innately driven by evil, and sometimes demonic, forces that must be kept in check by good work, prayer, and penance, I came to distrust my inner self and to fear my own spontaneity. How could I be "good" when my self was "bad"? The conditions of life and illness were seen as punishment sent by God upon his erring creatures, or as a trial sent by God, to be borne stoically. Life was indeed a valley of sorrows.



My course in *existential philosophy* was simply a variation upon the theme. It convinced me that life was an unpleasant and inherently meaningless condition of existence from which release was welcomingly sought and that the end justifies the means, especially if that end is Man. Life was replete with guilt, pain, suffering, and death, and in the words of Woody Allen, “was over much too quickly.” One is born alone and dies alone. There is no escape from this condition of isolation for the self who perceives the universe and everyone else as “not-self” and “other” (“Hell is other people”). Jean Paul Sartre’s novels, *Nausea* and *No Exit*, persuaded me that I was born without reason (because “existence precedes essence” and no *a priori* meaning or purpose could be assigned to my being since nothing is pre-given but must be created), that I prolong myself out of weakness (because I do not have the courage to commit suicide), and that I will die by chance in an ultimately meaningless universe. Belief in God, in the existence of spiritual realities, and in an afterlife may serve as a consolation to the ego faced with the threat of nonexistence, but I must not deceive myself. The separate self is eventually overcome by death. The skull always grins at the banquet of life. Everyone must die; everything gained must eventually be relinquished. Nothing lasts; everything changes. Eventually I must confront the threat of my own extinction and refuse to pretend that things can get better. Try as I may to create meaning through my individual actions, even the most heroic actions cannot overcome feelings of existential dread and ontological anxiety. Like a character in one of Pirandello’s novels, I was a personality in search of an author. Like an actor in one of Beckett’s plays, I was waiting for a Godot who would never arrive. Even love itself seemed only a romantic illusion.



My *natural science* course had the most impact of all. Science led me to suppose that my exquisite self-consciousness and all of life itself was nothing more than an accidental by-product of inert atoms and molecules and the chance conglomeration of lifeless chemical elements, mindlessly coming together into an existence that was bound to end in a godless, uncaring, and mechanical universe that was itself accidentally created. The emotions of love and joy, the virtues of kindness and generosity, all thoughts and wisdom, religious sentiments and consciousness itself were merely epiphenomena of the erratic activity of neural firings, hormones, and neurotransmitters. Consciousness was the result of a brain that was itself nothing but a highly complicated mechanism that only *happened* to come into existence, and had no reality outside of that structure. The self was simply the accidental personification of the body’s biological mechanisms. Feelings of conscious choice were only reflections of brain state activity at any given time. The great creative, individual thrust of life within each person became assigned to a common source in past conditioning or to the accidental nature of genes or reduced to a generalized mass of electrochemical impulses and neurological processes.



Projecting these ideas upon nature at large, the *natural world* appeared equally explainable, dangerous, and threatening, especially the *non-human animal world*. Given to humans to do with as we wished by our specieistic God, animals were in a “natural” subordinate position in the Great Chain of Being. Lifted up above the beasts at the pinnacle end of a great evolutionary scale, only humans possessed consciousness and self-consciousness, intellect and imagination, emotion and free will, and the dignity of a spiritual life. Only humans were to be granted souls or a rich psychological life. Animals were mere electrochemical machines that operated solely by the mechanism of instinct. Being creatures literally without a center of meaning, animals were to be regarded simply as physical objects, like rocks and stars, blind alike to pain or desire and without intrinsic worth or value.

An individual animal's existence could have no higher meaning or purpose than to be a resource for human use or consumed as mere foodstuff in a daily tooth-and-claw struggle for survival that was everywhere beset by the threat of illness, disaster, and death. The sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of animals in experiments that would be unethical if performed on human beings became justified in the pursuit of knowledge if it was a means toward the goal of protecting the sacredness of human life and the survival of the human species, regardless of the consequences.



**Becoming the Self I Thought I Was.** Unknown to me at the time, my academic course work was indoctrinating me into what transpersonal psychologist Charles Tart (1992a, Chapter 2) calls the “Western Creed” – a set of *implicit* assumptions about the nature of the psyche and the nature of reality that have come to characterize much of the modern secular world, that have practical consequences on the human spirit, and that block progress in understanding the spiritual side of ourselves. Operating for the most part outside of my conscious awareness, these psychologically invisible beliefs programmed my experience to such an extent that they took on the appearance of fact. Interpreting the private events of my life in light of these assumptions about the nature of physical reality and human personality, I unconsciously put together my perceptions so that they seemed to bear out those beliefs. My beliefs selectively structured my experience so that experience came to fit the beliefs I had about it. Perceptions and beliefs became mutually and selectively reinforcing. What I believed to be true became true in my experience. Imagination and emotion, following the contours of my beliefs, not only colored and intangibly structured my subjective experience, but also conditioned me to act in certain ways in accordance with those beliefs. Believed in fervently enough, they came to act like powerful hypnotic suggestions that triggered specific actions strongly implied by the beliefs. The end result was a set of unexamined structured beliefs that were automatically acted upon. I created events that more or less conformed to those beliefs, and thus became the self that I thought I was.



**“Science Loves Skepticism Except When Skepticism is Applied to Science.”** There always remained lingering doubts, however, about what I had come to believe. I found it ironic that the basis of the scientific empirical method and the framework behind all of our organized structures of science, rested upon a subjective reality that was not considered valid by the very scientific institutions that were formed through its auspices. How could such a vital consciousness as my own even suppose itself to be the end product of the chance meeting of inert elements that were themselves lifeless, but somehow managed to combine in such a way that our species attained culture, technology, philosophy, science, medicine, literature, and space travel? Science almost made me believe in magic! What a cosmic joke that the atomic and chemical composition of my own brain was somehow intelligent enough to understand the irony of its own meaninglessness. Certainly a brain that could conceive of purpose, meaning, and creativity somehow had to emerge from a greater purpose, meaning, and creativity. Certainly it was not *purposelessness* that gave us the design of nature, the well-ordered genetic activity, or the elegant sequences of molecular structures that support the creation of amino acids and proteins that sustain physical life. Certainly it was not *meaninglessness* that gave rise to the creative drama of our dreams. Certainly it was not *genetic chance* that is responsible for the precision with which we grow spontaneously, without knowing how, from a fetus to an adult. Certainly it was not *environmental necessity* that caused the existence of heroic themes and ideals that pervade human life. Surely all of these give evidence of a greater meaning, purpose, and context in which we have our being.



How could atheistic science, I wondered further, stress the species' accidental presence in the universe and the belief that we owe our physical existence to the chance conglomeration of atoms and molecules and still expect our species to be the most moral of creatures or to feel that one's life has meaning or purpose? How can we trust ourselves and look at ourselves with self-respect and dignity and live lives of honor, or expect goodness and merit from others, if we believe we are members of a species in which only the fittest survive through a struggle of tooth-and-claw, as implied by the theories of evolution? One question led to another. Yet while referring to the Big Bang *theory* or to the *theory* of evolution, my teachers seemed to accept them as facts about existence. It appeared almost heretical to express any skepticism that threatened the given wisdom of those theories that served to provide our culture's "official" version of events.

When the full weight of these unanswered questions and unquestioned beliefs finally fell upon me, a sick and sinking feeling began to well up in the pit of my stomach. Amid such a conglomeration of negative beliefs, the idea of a good and innocent inner self seemed almost scandalous. To encourage expression of that self appeared foolhardy, for it seemed only too clear that if the lid of awareness were opened, so to speak, all kinds of inner demons and enraged impulses would rush forth. This webwork of beliefs had deprived my mind and body of the zest and purpose needed to enjoy pursuits or activities and made any endeavor appear futile. I began to feel adrift, without a higher goal or vision. I felt suspicious, frightened, angry, aloof, and alone. In this confusion of thoughts and fears, I felt my life to be meaningless and hungered for something more sustaining. I was experiencing what William James (1936) called "soul sickness."



**The Kite as My Symbol of Transformation** As I lay exhausted upon my bed one spring afternoon in 1970, I slipped into a trance-like state and had a waking dream. My confused and disordered mind suddenly symbolized itself as a kite connected to a long string held by mental hands. The kite was fluttering in fits and starts, buffeted about by turbulent gusts of inner wind that threatened to tear it to pieces. "How can I stop this violent commotion of my mind?" I thought aloud. "Cut the string," an inner voice replied. "But if I do that, then I'll lose my mind," I answered back, fearing that if I cut that string I would release my mind to fly off into some dark, unfathomable and limitless recess of the psyche, forever swallowed up by my own subjectivity. "What else can I do?" I implored. "Pull the kite in," an answer came. Slowly I began to tug on that mental string, but the more I pulled, the more wildly did that kite toss and turn. Thrown about by the tumultuous energy of some wild psychic wind, my mental kite threatened to tumble and shatter onto that inner landscape. I was at a loss at what to do to end this turmoil of body, mind, and spirit. I feared that I was losing my mind.

At this point, my mind suddenly opened up and leaped beyond itself. Some indescribable element, some spiritual intangible, touched me and said: "If you want to save yourself, you must first lose yourself. If you want to hold onto yourself, then you must let yourself go." All at once I knew what I had to do. In a moment of faith, instilled by an unaccustomed sense of trust and safety, I slowly let the string out so that the kite ascended higher and higher until it found its way up through the turbulence and turmoil into the calm and peaceful sky above. My mental kite now floated easily and gently with a newfound sense of ease and freedom. I was suddenly filled with an additional energy, a new buoyancy and joy. Sitting up in bed and opening my eyes, I sat transfixed. Another world seemed to shimmer within and around whatever I looked at. Everything seemed to be what it was, yet somehow more. A change had occurred in me. I felt my personality click into a new focus and become lined up with an invisible part of my own reality that I had barely sensed before. The entire feeling-tone of my personality was changed. In that brief moment of intense, expanded consciousness, I felt and experienced directly a Presence so creative, understanding, and lovingly permissive that its good nature and loving intent could indeed create and maintain worlds. In a way quite difficult to describe, I felt myself to be a part of nature's framework and one with nature's source.

My earlier psychological reality became meaningless to me. It was superseded by a biologically and spiritually rooted faith that my existence was meaningful precisely because of my connection with nature and with that greater indefinable framework of existence from which all life springs, even though that meaning was not intellectually understood at the time. I felt deeply within myself that the quality of identity and the nature of existence were far more mysterious than I could presently understand.



**Epiphany.** Looking inward and remaining open to my intuitions, I felt deeply within myself indivisible connections not only with the earth itself, but with deeper realities. While in the throes of what seemed to me to be inspiration of almost unbearable intensity, I got the idea that the universe was formed out of what God is, that it was the natural extension of divine creativity, lovingly formed *from the inside out*, so to speak. I felt that in certain basic and vital ways, my own consciousness and being was a portion of that divine gestalt. As philosopher-theologian John Hick (1999) in his book, *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Dimension*, put it:

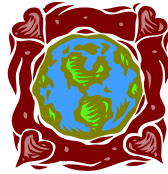
There is an aspect of us that is ‘in tune’ with the Transcendent. This aspect is referred to as the image of God within us; or as the divine spark spoken of by Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Eckhart, Ruusbroec, Suso, Tauler and many other Christian mystics; or as ‘that of God in every man’; or as the *atman* which in our deepest nature we all are; or as our ‘true self’, the ‘selfless self’, or as the universal Buddha nature within us. It is this aspect of our being that is affected by the ultimately Real to the extent that we are open to that reality. (p. 41)

I became aware that God (or whatever term you wish to use for Nature’s source) is so much a part of His (or Her or Its) creations that it is almost impossible to separate the Creator from the creations, that each hypothetical point in the universe is in direct contact with God in the most basic terms, and that this indissoluble connection can never be severed. I got the picture that there is a portion of God that is directed and focused and residing within each of us that is more intimate than our breath. It is the force that forms our flesh and our identities in that it is responsible for the energy that gives vitality and validity to our unique personalities. I perceived all Being to be continually upheld, supported, and maintained by this ever-expanding, ever-creative energy that forms everything and of which each human being is a part. As physicist-theologian John Polkinghorne (1998) in his book *Belief in God in an Age of Science* put it:

Our moral intuitions are intimations of the perfect will, our aesthetic pleasures a sharing in the Creator’s joy, our religious intuitions whispers of God’s presence. The understanding of the value-laden character of our world is that there is a supreme Source of Value whose nature is reflected in all that is held in being. (pp. 19-20)

I also felt the inconceivable vitality of a God that is truly multidimensional -- a God that is a part of creation and yet is also more than what creation is, in the same way that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. His nature transcends all dimensions of activity, consciousness, or reality, while still being a part of each. Yet this is no impersonal God. Since its energy gives rise to you and me and all human personalities, how could this be? This portion of God that is both aware of itself as you, that is focused within your existence, and that is also aware of itself as something more than you, is a loving and creative, redemptive God that is both transcendent and personal. This portion of God cherishes and protects you and looks out for your interests and may be called upon for help when necessary in a personal manner through prayer that always contains its own answer if you believe and desire to receive it (Mark 11:24).

It is very difficult to try to assign anything like human motivation to God. I can only say that that initial experience revealed the existence of an entity who was possessed by “the need” to lovingly create from His own being – to lovingly transform His own reality – in such a way that even the most slightest thought that emerged within His infinitely massive, omnipotent, superlative, and creative imagination attained dimensions of actuality impossible to describe. This was no static, impassible God that I perceived. It was a vision and version of a God who, seeking to know Himself, constantly and lovingly creates new versions of Himself out of Himself (or Herself). This “seeking Himself” is a creative activity, the core of all action; God acting through *creatio continua* (Peacocke, 1979). Each creation carries indelibly within itself this characteristic of its Source. Just as one’s awareness and experience of God constantly changes and grows, all portions of God are constantly changing, enfolding and unfolding as the universe does (see, for example, Bohm, 1980).



The loving support, the loving encouragement, the need to see that any and all possible realities become probable and have the chance to emerge, perceive, and love – that is the intent of the divine subjectivity and creativity that I perceived in that state of expanded consciousness. I felt deeply that our closest approximation of the purpose of the universe could be found in those loving emotions that we might have toward the development of our own children, in our intent to have them develop their fullest capabilities. And God loves all that He has created down to the least. He is aware of every sparrow that falls because He is every sparrow. Everything that was or is or will be is kept in immediate attention, poised in a divine context that is characterized by such a brilliant concentration that the grandest and the lowest, the largest and the smallest, are equally held in a loving constant focus. His awareness and attention is indeed directed with a prime creator’s love to each consciousness. God IS Love (1 John, 4:8, 16).

**Aftermath.** The highly charged energy generated by this experience was enough to change my life in a matter of moments. The insights that I received strongly clashed with previously held ideas and beliefs, giving the experience its initial explosive, volatile, and intrusive quality. I had been led by my experience beyond the framework of beliefs that had given it birth. My task was now to correlate the new intuitive knowledge with the beliefs of the Western Creed that I had so willingly accepted before, and to reform my knowledge frameworks to make them strong enough to support the new insights. Accepted frameworks and answers now made little sense to me. I could no longer accept answers given by others, but now insisted upon finding my own. I could no longer continue to think about God in the old ways, for the experience had brought me far beyond such a point. I had now to free myself and be true to my own vision. Shortly thereafter I left the Seminary to see the world firsthand, driven by a fine impatience, a divine discontent that drives me on even today. I felt immeasurably strengthened and supported by an inner certainty that instilled in me a sense of safety, optimism, and trust in my own nature and in that unknown source in which we all have our being and from which our vitality springs daily. I knew somehow that my existence has a meaning and purpose even if that meaning and purpose is not intellectually understood.



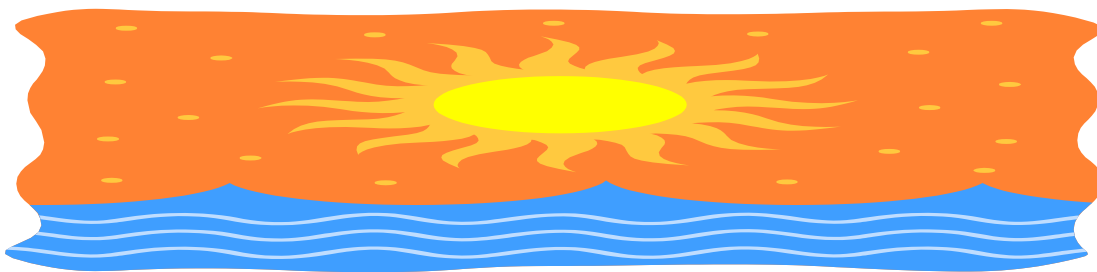
**Expanding the circle of compassion.** The insights that I received during that state of expanded consciousness required me to become more responsive and responsible in my behavior. It also brought with it a sympathy with life that had earlier been lacking, especially for animals – a sensitivity that remains strong, challenging, and intense to this day. I understood for the first time that my humanness did not emerge by refusing my animal heritage, but upon an extension of what that heritage is. It was not a matter of rising above my animal nature to truly appreciate my spirituality, but of evolving from a fuller understanding of that nature. I am not separated from animals and the rest of existence by virtue of possessing an eternal inner consciousness; rather, such a consciousness is within all life, whatever its form. The consciousness that exists within animals is as valid and eternal as my own, for each individual being is

A vital, conscious portion of the universe [that] simply by *being*, fits into the universe and into universal purposes in a way that no one else can... an *individualized segment* of the universe; a beloved individual, formed with infinite care and love, uniquely gifted with a life like no other. (Butts, 1997a, pp. 147-148)



I also came to understand the symbolism of my kite experience: *There is a portion of universal creative energy that becomes individualized to form my being and that sustains and nourishes my existence, and when I become too intent in maintaining my own reality I lose it, because I am denying the creativity upon which it rests.*

**The farther reaches of transpersonal psychology.** When my formal training as a psychologist began, I was constantly on the outlook for some kind of framework that would help me translate that spectacular inner vision into terms that made psychological sense. Transpersonal psychology and the writings of gifted writer and mystic Seth-Jane Roberts (Butts, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Roberts, 1966, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977a, 1977b, 1978, 1979a, 1979b, 1981a, 1981b, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c) has helped me to make that translation in a way that was psychologically sound and faithful to the underlying complexity of the original experience. The works of Jane Roberts, collectively referred to as *The Seth Material*, strongly informs the content of the present monograph. Arguably transpersonal in origin, “the basic firm groundwork of the [Seth] material and its primary contribution lies in the concept that consciousness itself indeed creates matter, that consciousness is not imprisoned by matter but forms it, and that consciousness is not limited or bound by time or space” (Butts, 1997c, p. 312). The writings of Jane Roberts hint at the multidimensional nature of the human psyche and identify potentials of exceptional human experiences and transformative capacities that are a part of our species’ heritage. In my view, systematic study of *The Seth Material* has the potential of offering the field of transpersonal psychology an opportunity of initiating its own further development, truly making it the “higher’ Fourth Psychology, transpersonal, transhuman, centered in the cosmos rather than in human needs and interest, going beyond humanness, identity, self-actualization, and the like” (Maslow, 1968, pp. iii-iv) that Abraham Maslow envisioned it to be.



## INTRODUCTION



**Seeking spirituality in contemporary life.** There has been a striking increase of interest in things "spiritual" over the past 30 years. One need only visit a local bookstore to find shelves of books and audiotapes on topics such as altered states of consciousness and contacting one's inner guide, extrasensory perception and lucid dreaming, meditation and mysticism, near-death experiences and out-of-body experiences, reincarnation and shamanism, spiritualism and trance channeling. Culturally and socially, there is a growing desire for books, seminars, audiotapes, magazines, and academic courses that deal with exceptional human experiences and human transformative capacities. People are "desperately seeking spirituality" (Taylor, 1994).

**Not a passing fad.** The cultural and social interest in spirituality is not a passing fad, nor has its absorption into mainstream contemporary life diminished its vitality or strength over time. The modern trend away from traditional collectivist forms of exoteric religion, on the one hand, and the postmodern movement toward innovative personal forms of esoteric spirituality, on the other, coupled with the rediscovery of ancient and cross-cultural forms of spiritual practices, have given today's social and cultural interest in spiritual experiences and human transformative capacities a strong grounding in contemporary life.

**Interest in religion extends to modern psychology.** Interest in spirituality is not confined to the general public, but extends to modern psychology. Psychology's interest in spirituality and religion goes back at least to the work of Sir Francis Galton whose paper titled "Statistical Inquiries in the Efficacy of Prayer" (Galton, 1872) examined the correlations between certain religious practices and physical health (and found none). William James's 1902 classic account of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is a landmark in the history of modern American psychology (James, 1936).

**Clinical value of religious beliefs recognized.** In the area of counseling psychology, research connecting religion, spirituality, and health has been a vibrant research area (Engels, 2001; Fretz, 1989). The American Psychological Association (APA) has acknowledged the clinical value of using client's religious beliefs in therapy, publishing such books as *Religion and the Clinical Practice of Psychology* (Shafranske, 1996) and *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Richards & Bergin, 1997). An individual's religious orientation is now viewed as a useful adjunct to traditional forms of therapy in bringing about desired therapeutic outcomes.

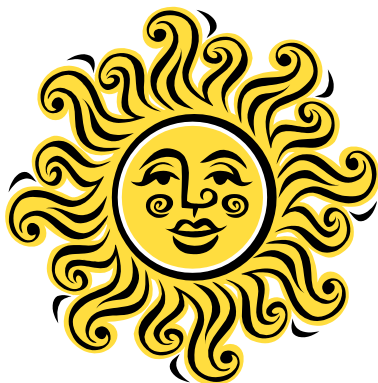
**Orthodox psychology's view of religion and spirituality has not always been a positive one.** Humanity is by nature a spiritual creature. It is one of our strongest attributes as a species and yet it is the part of our psychology most often overlooked by conventional psychology. As principle investigators of the NIH Working Group on Research on Spirituality, Religion, and Health observed: "For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, [research on spirituality and religion] were isolated from mainstream scientific discourse and journals of the field" (Miller & Thoresen, 2004, p. 55). Lack of attention to humanity's spiritual nature is reflected in the fact that the term "religion" or "spirituality" is not mentioned in most introductory psychology textbook. Orthodox psychology has traditionally had little regard for what Gordon Allport (1969) called the "religious sentiment" and its function of "relating the individual meaningfully to being" (p. 98) because it had long been believed that

Devoteness reflects irrationality and superstition. A religious orientation serves as a crutch for people who can't handle life. Religious beliefs indicate emotional instability. Comments like these illustrate psychology's traditional view of religion. Although William James and other early psychologists were interested in the topic, psychologists since Freud have generally seen religious belief and practice as signs of weakness or even pathology. (Clay, 1996, p. 1)

**Psychology again exploring topics relevant to science and religion.** Yet psychology's potential contribution to the task of understanding humanity's "religious sentiment" and clarifying the relationship between science and religion in the modern world cannot be denied. "Next to the deep mystery of the divine nature, the mystery of the human person is of central significance for the whole discussion, since scientific and religious concerns intersect most clearly in our embodied nature" (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 80). Psychology is now exploring the following areas that are relevant to this topic:

- States of consciousness (Hunt, 1995)
- Meditation (Murphy & Donovan, 1997)
- Lucid dreaming (Gackenback & Bosveld, 1989)
- Psychedelics (Grof, 1988)
- Near-death experiences (Ring, 1982)
- Trance channeling (Hastings, 1991)
- Cross-cultural contemplative development (Walsh & Shapiro, 1983)
- The relation of psychosis to mysticism (J. Nelson, 1994)
- The relation of brain states to mind states (Austin, 1998)

**Scientific study of consciousness leads to "birth" of transpersonal psychology.** These studies have thrown light on how spiritual practices work, confirmed some of their benefits, and led to the birth of "transpersonal psychology," a field of psychology that emerged in the late 1960's out of humanistic psychology, and that is dedicated to integrating the wisdom of the world's premodern religions, modern psychological sciences, and constructive postmodern philosophies (Wulff, 1991, Chapter 12).



**What are transpersonal experiences?** Transpersonal psychology has as one of its tasks the scientific investigation of transpersonal experiences. What are "transpersonal experiences"?

*Transpersonal experiences* may be defined as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (*trans*) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, *psyche*, and cosmos.... [Their] correlates include the nature, varieties, causes, and effects of transpersonal experiences and development, as well as the psychologies, philosophies, disciplines, arts, cultures, lifestyles, reactions, and religions inspired by them, or that seek to induce, express, apply, or understand them. (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a, pp. 3, 269)

**An introduction to transpersonal psychology.** This monograph presents an introduction to transpersonal psychology – its scope, historical origins, contemporary perspectives, and research methods. Various definitions of transpersonal psychology are distinguished, phenomena studied by transpersonal psychologists are identified, transpersonal psychology's relationship to religion is described, and the importance of the transpersonal vision is explained. The premodern roots, modern emergence, and postmodern developments of transpersonal psychology are outlined. How transpersonal research is conducted is described.

**The transpersonal vision.** What transpersonal psychology has discovered, and what ancient mystical traditions have disclosed is that there are "unexplored creative capacities, depths of psyche, states of consciousness, and stages of development undreamed of by most people" (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a, p. 1). Transpersonal psychology has opened up new areas of comprehension and creativity for contemporary psychology by calling attention to the existence of aspects of personality action that transcend standardized, orthodox ideas about the nature of the human psyche and, by implication, the nature of the known and "unknown" realities in which we dwell.



# What is Transpersonal Psychology?



## WHAT IS TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY?

Transpersonal psychology, if known to mainstream psychologists at all, is most often associated with New Age crystal gazers, astrologers, believers in witchcraft, drug users, meditators, occultists, spiritual healers, martial artists, and other purveyors of pop psychology, in short; everything that a truly legitimate scientific and academic psychology is *not*. The stereotype is, of course, inaccurate. For, like the fabled philosopher's stone, its seemingly weird exterior masks a more important philosophical challenge, the full articulation and subsequent flowering of which may yet prove to be the undoing of the reductionist mainstream. (Taylor, 1992, p. 285)

### Definition of Transpersonal Psychology

**Definitions of transpersonal psychology over the past 35 years.** One way to gain an understanding of transpersonal psychology is to examine definitions of transpersonal psychology. **Figure 1-1** presents a representative sample of definitions of transpersonal psychology published between 1967-2003.

### Figure 1-1. Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology

**Thematic analysis of definitions from 1968-1991.** Based on an analysis of over 200 previously-published definitions of transpersonal psychology cited in the literature over a 23 year period, Lajoie & Shapiro (1992) identified the following most frequently cited themes:

- States of consciousness
- Highest or ultimate potential
- Beyond ego or self
- Transcendence
- Spiritual

Based on these five most frequently found major themes, Lajoie & Shapiro (1992) synthesized the following definition: "*Transpersonal psychology is concerned with the study of humanity's highest potential, and with the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness*" (p. 91).

### Thematic analysis of definitions from 1991-2001.

S.I. Shapiro and Phillippe L. Gross, co-editors of *The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, and transpersonal psychologist Grace W. Lee in 2002 conducted a thematic analysis of 80 English-language passages in the transpersonal literature published in a variety of sources including books, journal articles, websites, brochures, newsletters, dictionaries, encyclopedias, school catalogues, and convention papers between 1991 through 2001 that addressed the "essence" transpersonal psychology.

A thematic analysis of these passages revealed that the two most frequent categories, occurring 53 (66.2%) and 49 (61.2%) times, respectively were: (a) Going beyond or transcending the individual, ego, self, the personal, personality, or personal identity; existence of a deeper, true, or authentic Self; and (b) Spirituality, psychospiritual, psychospiritual development, the spiritual, spirit. Other, less frequent, themes included: special states of consciousness; interconnectivity/unity; going beyond other schools of psychology; emphasis on a scientific approach; mysticism; full range of consciousness; greater potential; inclusion of non-Western psychologies; meditation; and existence of a wider reality. (Shapiro, Lee, and Gross, 2002, p. 19)

*Transpersonal psychology defined. Transpersonal psychology, as defined in this monograph, is concerned with the recognition, acknowledgement, and study of creative human experiences and behaviors and human transformative capacities associated with a broad range of normal and nonordinary states, structures, functions, and developments of consciousness in which personality action extends beyond the usual boundaries of ego-directed awareness and personal identity and even transcends conventional limitations of space and time; hence the term, "transpersonal."*



### Figure 1-1. Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology (1967-1975)

- **1967.** In the first public announcement of transpersonal psychology given in a lecture at the First Unitarian Church in San Francisco in 1967, Abraham H. Maslow provides a preliminary and informal description of “transhumanistic” psychology (later called transpersonal psychology).

“ ‘Transhumanistic psychology’ [deals] with transcendent experiences and with transcendent values. The fully developed (and very fortunate) human being, working under the best conditions tends to be motivated by values, which transcend...the geographical limitations of the self. Thus one begins to talk about transhumanistic psychology.” (Maslow, 1969a, pp. 3-4)

- **1969.** Transpersonal psychotherapist Anthony Sutich (founder and first editor of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*) provides one of the first formal definitions of transpersonal psychology in 1969 in the inaugural issue of *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1969).

“The emerging Transpersonal Psychology (‘fourth force’) is concerned specifically with the *empirical*, scientific study of, and responsible implementation of the findings relevant to, becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, B-values, ecstasy, mystical experience, awe, being, self-actualization, essence, bliss, wonder, ultimate meaning, transcendence of self, spirit, oneness, cosmic awareness, individual and species-wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, sacralization of everyday life, transcendental phenomena, cosmic self-humor and playfulness; maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression; and related concepts, experiences and activities.” (Sutich, 1969, pp. 15-16)

- **1971.** Elmer Green and Alyce Green (pioneer researchers of biofeedback and the voluntary control of internal states) define transpersonal psychology within the context of ultimate values and meaning.

“Transpersonal psychology might be defined...as the psychology of ultimate or highest meanings and values, and psychologists who explore in this area must be prepared to examine all institutions and activities from the point of view of such meanings and values.” (Green & Green, 1971, pp. 42)

- **1974.** Edgar Mitchell, Apollo 14 astronaut and founder of the *Institute of Noetic Sciences* - an organization that chronicles news, data, and opinions from the interdisciplinary field of consciousness research – publishes *Psychic Exploration: A Challenge for Science* that offers a definition of transpersonal psychology within the context of parapsychology.

“Transpersonal psychology [is] a new major psychological approach to the study of the person that emphasizes humanity’s ultimate development or transcendent potential as individuals and a species....A blend of the best in science and religion, it provides a perspective in which the findings of psychic research are given significance *sub specie aeternitatis*. And in turn, transpersonal psychology takes its place within noetics, the general study of consciousness.” (Mitchell & White, 1974, pp. 696, 569)

- **1975.** Charles T. Tart’s 1975 book *Transpersonal Psychologies*, the first major work to systematically examine the world’s major religions and spiritual traditions from a transpersonal perspective, identifies humanity’s spiritual traditions (i.e., Zen Buddhism, Yoga, Christianity, Sufism) as “traditional transpersonal psychologies.”

“Traditional transpersonal psychologies, which I shall call spiritual psychologies.... deal... with human experience in the realm we call spiritual, that vast realm of human potential dealing with ultimate purposes, with higher entities, with God, with love, with compassion, with purpose.” (Tart, 1992a, p. 4)

### Figure 1-1. Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology (1980-1984)

- **1980.** Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughn publish one of the first collections of writings from contemporary contributors to the transpersonal literature in their book *Beyond Ego: Transpersonal Dimensions in Psychology* that offered the following definition of transpersonal psychology.

“*Transpersonal psychology* is concerned with expanding the field of psychological inquiry to include the study of optimal psychological health and well-being. It recognizes the potential for experiencing a broad range of states of consciousness, in some of which identity may extend beyond the usual limits of the ego and personality.” (Walsh and Vaughn, 1980, p. 16)

- **1982.** Physicist Fritjof Capra, author of international best sellers *The Tao of Physics* and *The Turning Point* (a book that was subsequently turned into a nationally-acclaimed film called *Mind Walk*) provides a definition of the “new” transpersonal psychology that conceives it to be a vital part of the ongoing scientific, social, and cultural shift from a reductionistic and materialistic worldview toward a more holistic paradigm of science and spirit.

“Transpersonal psychology is concerned, directly or indirectly, with the recognition, understanding, and realization of nonordinary, mystical, or ‘transpersonal’ states of consciousness, and with the psychological conditions that represent barriers to such transpersonal realizations.... [This] new psychology...is consistent with the systems view of life and in harmony with the views of spiritual traditions,... [that] sees the human organism as an integrated whole involving interdependent physical and psychological patterns, ... [and recognizes] that the psychological situation of an individual cannot be separated from the emotional, social, and cultural environment.” (Capra, 1982, pp. 367-369)

- **1982.** Psychologists Leonard Zusne and Warren Jones publish the book *Anomalistic Psychology: A Study of Extraordinary Phenomena of Behavior and Experience* that clarifies the relationship between transpersonal psychology and traditional concepts of the occult.

“Transpersonal psychology is concerned with meaningful and spiritual aspects of life, such as peak experiences, transcendence of self, self-actualization, and cosmic consciousness. As such, it only partially subsumes traditional occult concepts.” (Zusne & Jones, 1982, pp. 462-463).

- **1984.** Richard Mann, editor of the State University of New York (SUNY) Series in Transpersonal and Humanistic Psychology, defines the transpersonal approach and delineates the potential of this “new form of psychology” called *transpersonal psychology*.

“Transpersonal psychology... is a psychology that honors all the world’s great spiritual traditions and their mythic portrayal and appreciation of the divinity of each human being – the inner Self. Thus, transpersonal psychology extends our sense of the full course of human development to include intuitions of our essential nature and of ways in which that nature might be more fully revealed, realized, and enjoyed... In addition, the term “transpersonal” calls our attention to a state of consciousness that enables some human beings to experience reality in ways that transcend our ordinary “personal” perspectives. Therefore, a transpersonal psychology would also be one that acknowledges the possibility of going beyond the limited outlook of everyday awareness.” (Mann, 1984, pp. viii-ix)

### Figure 1-1. Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology (1988-1989)

- **1988.** Philosopher Michael Washburn - one of the first scholars to ground the transpersonal notion of ego transcendence in the psychoanalytic theory of ego development - defines transpersonal psychology in his book, *The Ego and the Dynamic Ground: A Transpersonal Theory of Human Development*.

“Transpersonal psychology is the study of human nature and development that proceeds on the assumption that humans possess potentialities that surpass the limits of the normally developed ego. It is an inquiry that presupposes that the ego, as ordinarily constituted, can be transcended and that a higher, transegoic plane or stage of life is possible. ...Transpersonal psychology is less a subdiscipline of psychology than it is a multidisciplinary inquiry aimed at a holistic understanding of human nature. It is a synthesis of several disciplines, including most importantly not only the larger discipline of psychology, but also the disciplines of religion and philosophy. Transpersonal psychology is concerned not only with psychological notions such as ego, unconscious, and integration but also with religious notions such as fallenness, transcendence, and spiritual realization and with philosophical notions such as selfhood, existential project, and life-world...A chief objective of transpersonal theory is to integrate spiritual experience within a larger understanding of the human psyche. Transpersonal theory thus is committed to the possibility of unifying spiritual and psychological perspectives.” (Washburn, 1988, pp. v, 1)

- **1989.** Robert Frager (founder and first president of the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology) identifies three domains of study that transpersonal psychology focuses upon.

“Transpersonal psychology focuses on three domains – the psychology of personal development, the psychology of consciousness, and spiritual psychology. These three main areas overlap to form the field of transpersonal psychology. The *psychology of personal development* includes those models of human nature found in: (a) psychoanalysis and neo-Freudian personality systems, (b) the body-oriented models of therapy and growth developed by Wilhelm Reich and others, and (c) the positive, growth-oriented models of Maslow and humanistic psychology. The *psychology of consciousness* is devoted to mapping and exploring different states of human functioning, such as dreaming, meditation, drug states, and parapsychology. *Spiritual psychology* consists of the study of the models of human nature found in the world’s religious traditions and the development of psychological theory that is consistent with religious and spiritual experiences. ...The transpersonal approach to each of these areas is based on an inherent interest in studying human capacities and potentials and a fundamental premise that these capacities are far greater than our current understanding.” (Frager, 1989, p. 289)

- **1989.** Transpersonal psychologist Ronald Valle was one of the first scholars in the emerging new field of consciousness studies to identify Aldous Huxley’s (1970) “perennial philosophy” as central to the perspective of transpersonal psychology.

“The following premises can be thought of as comprising an identifiable structure or essence that characterizes any particular psychology or philosophy as transpersonal: (1) That a transcendent, transconceptual reality or Unity binds together (i.e., is immanent in) all apparently separate phenomena, whether these phenomena be physical, cognitive, emotional, intuitive, or spiritual. (2) That the ego- or individualized self is not the ground of human awareness but, rather, only one relative reflection-manifestation of a greater trans-personal (as “beyond the personal”) Self or One (i.e., pure consciousness without subject or object). (3) That each individual can directly experience this transpersonal reality that is related to the spiritual dimensions of human life. (4) That this experience represents a qualitative shift in one’s mode of experiencing and involves the expansion of one’s self-identity beyond ordinary conceptual thinking and ego-self awareness (i.e., mind is not consciousness). (5) This experience is self-validating.” (Valle, 1989, p. 261)

### Figure 1-1. Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology (1992-1997)

- **1992.** Edward Bruce Bynum, Director of the Behavioral Medicine Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Health Services, defines transpersonal psychology in a special 1992 edition of *The Humanistic Psychologist* that celebrates the contributions of humanistic and transpersonal psychology to American psychology during the 100th anniversary of the American Psychological Association.

“Transpersonal psychology can be understood to be the study of non-ordinary states of consciousness not traditionally covered by the discipline of ego psychology. This includes states of consciousness such as meditation, religious ecstasy, trance and ‘unitive conscious experiences’ often described in the esoteric and spiritual literature of humankind. This would also incorporate the study of the psychophysiological techniques and introspective disciplines associated with these states of consciousness. Finally the field includes both metaphysical and philosophical paradigms often encountered in the contemporary fields of theoretical physics, neuroscience, and cognitive psychology.” (Bynum, 1992, pp. 301-302)

- **1993.** Transpersonal psychiatrist Roger Walsh and psychotherapist France Walsh publish *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision* - an updated version of their 1980 landmark book, *Beyond Ego* - that presents a thoroughly revised review of major transpersonal areas that reflects the dramatic growth of transpersonal psychology into a multidisciplinary transpersonal movement.

“*Transpersonal psychology* is the psychological study of transpersonal experiences and their correlates. These correlates include the nature, varieties, causes, and effects of transpersonal experiences and development, as well as the psychologies, philosophies, disciplines, arts, cultures, life-styles, reactions, and religions that are inspired by them, or that seek to induce, express, apply, or understand them.” (Walsh and Vaughn, 1993a, pp. 3-4)

- **1994.** Ken Wilber, a leading contributor to transpersonal theory, defines transpersonal psychology within the context of the “perennial philosophy” and what the ancient spiritual traditions of Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism, Christianity, and Confucianism call the “Great Chain of Being” (i.e., the two-fold belief that reality is composed of stratified and ordered stages or levels of being reaching from lowly insentient and nonconscious matter through body, mind, and soul, up to the highest level of all-pervading Spirit, and that human beings can evolve all the way up the hierarchy to Spirit itself).

“The aim of transpersonal psychology...is to give a psychological presentation of the perennial philosophy and the Great Chain of Being, fully updated and grounded in modern research and scientific developments. It fully acknowledges and *incorporates* the findings of modern psychiatry, behaviorism, and developmental psychology, and then adds, when necessary, the further insights and experiences of the existential and spiritual dimensions of the human being.” (Wilber, 1994, p. x)

- **1997.** Charles T. Tart, one of the founders of transpersonal psychology, has been a leading proponent of including the study of psi functioning as a legitimate topic for study within the domain of transpersonal psychology. Professor Tart’s publications can be viewed at his website – <http://www.paradigm-sys.com/ctart/>.

“Transpersonal psychology is a fundamental area of research, scholarship, and application based on people’s experiences of temporarily transcending our usual identification with our limited biological, historical, cultural and personal self... and as a result, experiencing a much greater ‘something’ that is our deeper origin and destination.” (Tart, 1997, available [http://www.paradigm-sys.com/display/ctt\\_articles2.cfm?ID=25](http://www.paradigm-sys.com/display/ctt_articles2.cfm?ID=25))

**Figure 1-1. Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology (1997-2000)**

- **1997.** Brant Cortright, Director of the Integral Counseling Psychology Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies, publishes *Psychotherapy and Spirit: Theory and Practice in Transpersonal Psychotherapy* that defines transpersonal psychology as the integration of spiritual and psychological aspects of the human psyche.

“Transpersonal psychology can be understood as the melding of the wisdom of the world’s spiritual traditions with the learning of modern psychology...a synthesis of these two profound approaches to human consciousness, the spiritual and the psychological.... Transpersonal psychology is concerned with developing a self while also honoring the urge to go beyond the self.... The definition of transpersonal as “beyond the personal” [includes] such things as mystical experience, altered states of consciousness, kundalini experiences, various psi phenomena (such as ESP, clairvoyance, channeling, telepathy, etc.), shamanic journeying, unitive states, near-death experiences, and so on.... [Moving] toward a more complete view that seeks to find the sacred in the daily, ordinary life and consciousness in which most people live. The definition of *trans* as “across” also applies, since transpersonal psychology moves across the personal realm, acknowledging and continuing to explore all aspects of the self and the unconscious that traditional psychology has discovered while also placing this personal psychology in a larger framework.... Transpersonal psychology studies how the spiritual is expressed in and through the personal, as well as the transcendence of the self. Transpersonal psychology in this sense affords a wider perspective for all the learning of conventional psychology. It includes and exceeds traditional psychology.” (Cortright, 1997, pp. 8-10)

- **1998.** William Braud, Research Director of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (Palo Alto, California) and Rosemarie Anderson, Associate Professor at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, publish *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences* to assist transpersonal psychologists explore the “transformative or spiritual dimension of human experience” within the context of scientific research.

“As a field of research, scholarship, and application, transpersonal psychology seeks to honor human experience in its fullest and most transformative expressions... Transpersonal psychology seeks to delve into the most profound aspects of human experience, such as mystical and unitive experiences, personal transformation, meditative awareness, experiences of wonder and ecstasy, and alternative and expansive states of consciousness. In these experiences, we appear to go beyond our usual identification with our limited biological and psychological selves.... Transpersonal psychology...concerns itself with issues of consciousness, alternative states of consciousness, exceptional experiences, trans-egoic development, and humanity’s highest potential and possible transformation... It seeks to learn how people can become more whole through integrating the somatic, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, creative-expressive, and relationship and community aspects of their lives.” (Braud & Anderson, 1998, pp. xxi, 4, 37)

- **2000.** Stanislav Grof, co-founder of transpersonal psychology with Abraham Maslow, defines transpersonal psychology in his book *Psychology of the Future: Lessons from Modern Consciousness Research* within the context of modern consciousness research.

“Transpersonal psychology seriously studies and respects the entire spectrum of human experience, including holotropic [i.e., moving toward the whole] states, and all the domains of the psyche – biographical, perinatal and transpersonal. As a result, it is more culturally sensitive and offers a way of understanding the psyche that is universal and applicable to any human group and any historical period. It also honors the spiritual dimensions of existence and acknowledges the deep human need for transcendental experiences.” (Grof, 2000, p. 217)

### Figure 1-1. Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology (2001-2002)

- **2001.** The National Association for Transpersonal Psychology [<http://natponline.com/>], in affiliation with Life's Foundation of Health & Education, defines transpersonal psychology within a comprehensive systems perspective of human nature, which includes mind and body, nature and spirit, intellect and emotions to promote a "whole person" concept of wellness.

"[Transpersonal psychology] embraces the combined fields of clinical psychology, spiritual and pastoral counseling as well as any philosophies which recognize the close connection between the body and the spirit. Transpersonal Psychology works on the basic assumption that physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual growths are interrelated. Transpersonal Psychology focuses attention on the human capacity for self-transcendence as well as self-realization and is concerned with the optimum development of consciousness." [Retrieved December 15, 2001, from <http://www.starlighter.com/natp/>]

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- **2002.** Transpersonal psychologists James Fadiman and Robert Frager, who published one of the first college-level personality theory textbook that included chapters on Far and Middle Eastern personality theories - another was Hall & Lindsey's (1978) classic text, *Theories of Personality* (3<sup>rd</sup>. ed.). that included an overview of the Buddhist personality theory, *Anhidhamma* - incorporate a chapter titled "Abraham Maslow and Transpersonal Psychology" into the 5th edition in their text, *Personality and Personal Growth*, that provides a contemporary description of transpersonal psychology.

"Transpersonal psychology contributes to the more traditional concerns of the discipline an acknowledgement of the spiritual aspect of human experience. This level of experience has been described primarily in religious literature, in unscientific and often theologically biased language. A major task of transpersonal psychology is to provide a scientific language and a scientific framework for this material.... One basic tenet of transpersonal psychology is that there is in each individual a deeper or true self that is experienced in transcendent states of consciousness. Distinct from the personality and the personal ego, it is the source of inner wisdom, health, and harmony. *Webster's Tenth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines *transpersonal* as 'extending or going beyond the personal or individual.' The term refers to an extension of identity beyond both individuality and personality. One of the premises of transpersonal psychology is that we do not know the full range of human potential. The sense of a vast potential for growth within the individual provides a context for transpersonal psychology." (Fadiman and Frager, 2002, p. 452)

- **2002.** Jorge Ferrer, Assistant Professor of East-West Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies, publishes *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* that is one of the first constructive postmodern critiques of conventional transpersonal theory which discloses a more multidimensional, participatory vision of transpersonal realities and human spirituality than had previously been acknowledged, recognized, or accepted by most transpersonal theorists.

"Transpersonal theory is concerned with the study of the transpersonal and spiritual dimensions of human nature and existence. Etymologically, the term *transpersonal* means beyond or through (trans-) the personal, and is generally used in the transpersonal literature to reflect concerns, motivations, experiences, developmental stages (cognitive, moral, emotional, interpersonal, etc.), modes of being, and other phenomena that include but transcend the sphere of the individual personality, self, or ego." (Ferrer, 2002, p. 5)

### Figure 1-1. Definitions of Transpersonal Psychology (2002-2003)

- **2002.** Richard Tarnas, former director of programs and education at Esalen Institute and currently professor of philosophy and psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies, emphasizes in his definition of transpersonal psychology the paradigm shift that was initiated by the emergence of the field in the late 1960's.

“Transpersonal psychology’s inclusion and validation of the spiritual dimension of human experience opened the modern psychological vision to a radically expanded universe of realities – Eastern and Western, ancient and contemporary, esoteric and mystical, shamanic and therapeutic, ordinary and non-ordinary, human and cosmic. Spirituality was now recognized as not only an important focus of psychological theory and research but also an essential foundation of psychological health and healing. Developing ideas and directions pioneered by William James and C.G. Jung, transpersonal psychology and theory began to address the great schism between religion and science that so deeply divided the modern sensibility.” (Tarnas, 2002, p. viii)

- **2003.** The Department of Transpersonal Psychology, one of four academic departments within the Graduate School for Holistic Studies at John F. Kennedy University in Orinda, California, offers a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology with a Transpersonal Specialization that promotes a vision of transpersonal psychology within a holistic context.

“The transpersonal perspective includes the wisdom and methods of...[traditional] orientations and expands on them to include the spiritual aspects of human experience. Transpersonal psychologists are concerned with the development of a healthy individuality and its extension to include aspects of the Higher Self. This viewpoint acknowledges that behind the masks, roles and melodramas of one’s conditioned personality lies a deeper state of being that transcends individual identity. Transpersonal psychologists believe that any model of the human psyche must include this full range of human experience, for it is the upper range that sets the context for understanding the whole human being. As the transpersonal perspective unites the spiritual with the psychological aspects of human experience, it addresses the integration of the whole person – body, mind, emotion, and spirit. In doing so, the field is grounded in Western psychological theory and draws on the world’s spiritual traditions, mythology, anthropology and the arts as well as research on consciousness.” (John F. Kennedy University, 2003)

- **2003.** John Davis, a transpersonal psychologist who teaches a course in transpersonal psychology at Metropolitan State College of Denver, provides the following definition of transpersonal psychology and a sample course syllabus on his web site.

“Transpersonal psychology stands at the interface of psychology and spiritual experience. It is the field of psychology that integrates psychological concepts, theories, and methods with the subject matter and practices of the spiritual disciplines. Its interests include spiritual experiences, mystical states of consciousness, mindfulness and meditative practices, shamanic states, ritual, the overlap of spiritual experiences and disturbed states such as psychosis and depression, and the transpersonal dimensions of relationships, service, and encounters with the natural world. The central concept in Transpersonal Psychology is self-transcendence, or a sense of identity, which is deeper, broader, and more unified with the whole. The root of the term, *transpersonal* or literally “beyond the mask,” refers to this self-transcendence. Its orientation is inclusive, valuing and integrating the following: psychology and the spiritual, the personal and the transpersonal, exceptional mental health and suffering, ordinary and non-ordinary states of consciousness, modern Western perspectives, Eastern perspectives, post-modern insights, and worldviews of indigenous traditions, and analytical intellect and contemplative ways of knowing.” [Retrieved June 2, 2003 from <http://clem.mscd.edu/~davisj/tp>]



Varieties of Transpersonal Experiences and Behaviors

Another way to gain an understanding of transpersonal psychology is to look at the exceptionally creative human experiences and behaviors investigated by transpersonal psychologists and the varieties of evidence for human transformative capacity.

**Topics that are studied in transpersonal psychology.** Transpersonal psychiatrist Roger Walsh and psychotherapist France Vaughn in their 1993 book, *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision*, identify topics of particular interest to contemporary transpersonal psychologists.

Topics of particular interest include consciousness and altered states, mythology, meditation, yoga, mysticism, lucid dreaming, psychedelics, values, ethics, relationships, exceptional capacities and psychological well-being, transconventional development, transpersonal emotions such as love and compassion, motives such as altruism and service, and transpersonal pathologies and therapies. (Walsh and Vaughn, 1993, p. 5)

**Figure 1-2** identifies six overlapping domains (and their associated phenomena) that define the scope of transpersonal psychology. These six domains identify the variety of topics that are studied by transpersonal psychologists (see, Murphy, 1992, for an extended discussion of topics dealing specifically with human transformative capacities).

**Figure 1-2. Varieties of Transpersonal Phenomena**

**Figure 1-3** lists approximately 100 *specific* exceptional human experiences and transformative behavioral capacities that are investigated by persons in the field of transpersonal psychology (Palmer & Braud, 2002; see also, Fodor, 1966; Frager, 1989; Gowan, 1980; Grof, 1988; Guiley, 1991; Lash, 1990; White, 1997)

**Figure 1-3. Exceptional Human Experiences**

**Transpersonal phenomena include so-called “anomalous” experiences and behaviors.** Transpersonal phenomena include many different so-called “anomalous” experiences and behaviors, including mystical/unitive, encounter-type, psychic/paranormal, unusual death-related, exceptional normal experiences, and other evocative demonstrations of personality action (Cardena, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000). They are considered “anomalous” by mainstream psychologists because of the artificial divisions established within psychology itself that exclude activities not of statistically frequent nature, or thought to be “paranormal” because of the standardization applied within psychology itself.

**Psi functioning, viewed as an extension of normal creative ability.** Psychic phenomena, for example, have been reported for centuries by quite normal people and are psychological facts, representing its own kind of experiential evidence about the full dimensions of human existence, regardless of the interpretations that might be made about them. For this reason, many transpersonal psychologists consider so-called “paranormal” phenomena simply as an extension or expansion of normal human creativity and not as paranormal or “anomalous” at all. As someone once said: “There is nothing abnormal in the world – there is only the lack of understanding the normal.” Psi functioning is evidence for the multidimensional nature of the human psyche and for abilities that lie within each individual, that are a part of our species’ heritage, and that more clearly define how the soul’s abilities *in life* show themselves (Tart, 1997a).





Figure 1-2. Varieties of Transpersonal Phenomena

- I. The Psychology of Consciousness (Altered States of Consciousness, Subliminal Consciousness)**
- Meditation, attention training
  - Dreams (lucid dreaming), active imagination, symbols of transformation, Jungian/Archetypal phenomena, collective unconscious, ancestral and phylogenetic experiences
  - Inner guides, inner voice phenomena, ego states and egolessness
  - Biofeedback training and the voluntary control of internal states
  - Sensory isolation and overload, sleep deprivation
  - Psychedelic experiences, state-dependent learning, synesthesia
  - Hypnosis and related trance states, automatic writing and speaking
- II. The Psychology of Religious Experience (Impulses Toward Higher States of Being / The Spiritual Quest)**
- Peak experiences, unity consciousness, cosmic consciousness, enlightenment, liberation, higher jhanas, satori or samadhi, mystical experience, Being cognition
  - Self-transcendence, state of grace
  - Cross-cultural comparisons of religious experiences, spiritual development, psychological concepts (Far Eastern, Middle Eastern, African-American, Western, Native American spirituality, Christian mysticism, creation spirituality, and contemplative practices and traditions)
  - Shamanic experiences and practices, drumming, extraordinary capacities of religious adepts
  - Glossolalia
- III. The Psychology of Psychic Phenomena (Parapsychology and Psychic Research)**
- Mediumship (channeling, possession, poltergeists, hauntings)
  - Transformations of space and time (out-of-body experience, materializations, apports, bilocation, teleportation, levitation, invisibility)
  - Endothermic and exothermic reactions (firewalking, psychic heat, spontaneous human combustion)
  - Reincarnation-type memories, drama, relationships, transpersonal memory
  - Near-death experience, death and dying
  - Psi functioning (telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, retrocognition, psychokinesis, dowsing, siddhis)
- IV. The Psychology of Spiritual Development (Exceptional Human Abilities & Transformative Capacities)**
- Models of exceptional health and well-being, self-actualization and beyond
  - Transpersonal development (infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age)
  - Spiritual direction, education for transcendence, role of myth and ritual, storytelling, fairy tales.
  - Creativity and “flow,” excellence, genius, precocity, accelerated learning
  - Altruism, empathy, service, intuition, loving-kindness, compassion, ahimsa, sacred unions, Eros
  - Transpersonal psychotherapies (yoga, ritual, dreamwork, breathing, psychosynthesis, primal therapy, rebirthing, holotropic breathwork, body work, meditation)
  - Psychospiritual crises, addictions, psychopathologies with mystical features
- V. Mind-Body Healing**
- Psychic diagnosis, distant healing, spiritual healing, laying on of hands (etheric body, prana, auras)
  - Effects of attitudes and imagery in self-healing (placebo effects)
  - Psychosomatic changes in abnormal functioning (hysterical stigmata, multiple personality)
  - Spontaneous remissions, miraculous cures, charisms of Catholic saints and mystics
  - Alternative therapies, somatic disciplines, martial arts, art and music and dance therapy
  - Kundalini, charkas, subtle energy systems, mind-body communication, spirituality of the body
- VI. Emerging Paradigms in Science and Society**
- Transpersonal disciplines, new metaphysical foundations of science, chaos theory, modern physics
  - Brain, mind, and consciousness interrelationship, role of consciousness in creation of physical reality
  - Gaia hypothesis, morphogenic fields, deep ecology, spirit of evolution, transpersonal nature of animals
  - Global peace, global mind change, Green politics, reconciliation of religion and science

**Figure 1-3. Exceptional Human Experiences**

(Palmer & Braud, 2002, pp. 60-61)

*Listing of approximately 100 exceptional human experiences (EHE), categorized according to five major classes*

**MYSTICAL/UNITIVE EXPERIENCES**

- Anesthetic-induced experience
- Conversion
- Gaia or Earth experience
- Glossolalia (speaking in tongues)
- Human/animal communication
- Kundalini
- Mystical experience
- Numinous dream
- Peak experience
- Revelation
- Species consciousness
- Stigmata
- Transcendental odors (odor of sanctity)
- Transcendental music (of the spheres; celestial music)
- Transformative experience
- Unitive experience
- Wilderness experience (desert, forest)

**ENCOUNTER-TYPE EXPERIENCES**

- Ancestors encounter
- Angel encounter
- Apparition (of the living)
- Apparition (of the dead)
- Demonic encounter
- Divine encounter
- Folk entity encounter
- ET encounter
- Ghost encounter
- Guardian angel encounter
- Helper encounter
- Haunt encounter
- Imaginary playmate encounter
- Incubus/succubus encounter
- Interspecies encounter
- Mediumistic materialization encounter
- Multiple personality encounter
- Night terrors encounter
- Poltergeist encounter
- Possession encounter
- Sense of presence encounter
- UFO encounter
- UFO abduction encounter

**PSYCHIC/PARANORMAL EXPERIENCE**

- Apports
- Automatism (e.g., automatic writing)
- Bilocation
- Clairaudience
- Clairsentience
- Clairvoyance
- Elusivity/Invisibility
- Extrasensory perception (ESP)
- Intuition
- Levitation (of object)
- Levitation (of person, of self)
- Mediumship/channeling
- Out-of-body experience
- Paranormal diagnosis
- Paranormal touch
- Precognition
- Prenatal experience
- Psychic imprint
- Psychokinesis (PK)
- Psychometry (object reading)
- Retrocognition
- Scrying (crystal gazing)
- Sense of presence
- Shared EHE
- Synchronicity
- Telepathy
- Unorthodox healing (laying on of hands; faith healing; spirit healing; divine healing; psychic surgery)
- Xenoglossy (speaking an actual foreign language you don't know)

**UNUSUAL DEATH-RELATED EXPERIENCES**

- Apparition (at moment of death)
- Apparition (after death)
- Deathbed experience
- Death-related PK (at moment of death)
- Death-related PK (after death)
- Incorruptibility
- Life between life (interim experience)
- Life review
- Mediumistic communications
- Near-death-experience
- Past-life recall
- Phantom phone calls (at time of or after death)
- Post-death experience
- Sense of immortality

Figure 1-3. Exceptional Human Experiences (continued)  
(Palmer & Braud, 2002, pp. 60-61)

**EXCEPTIONAL NORMAL EXPERIENCES**

Aesthetic experience  
Aha experience  
Altered spatial perception  
Altered time perception  
Being at the right place at the right time to receive something wonderful and needed  
Coma experience  
Creativity  
Déjà vu  
Mutual déjà vu  
Dream  
Effortlessness  
Empathy  
Encountering or receiving something you need just when you need it  
Exceptional performance  
Experience of the new  
Flow experience  
Hypnagogic/hypnopompic experiences  
Hypnoidal state  
Immunity/invulnerability  
Inner movement  
Inspiration  
Limerance (falling in love)  
Literary experience  
Lucid dream  
Microscopic vision  
Nostalgia  
Orgasm  
Orientation  
Peak performance  
Performing/witnessing noble acts  
Special dreams  
Synesthesia  
Tears of “wonder joy”  
Thrills/goose-flesh/tingling



## PARAPSYCHOLOGY OF SPIRITUALITY

### Why Psi Phenomena is a Transpersonal Concern

**The world beyond the five senses.** Transpersonal psychology studies those experiences and behaviors in which personality functioning extends beyond (or “trans”) ordinary ego-directed consciousness to bring into awareness aspects of reality that exist beyond yet within the world of the five senses. As such parapsychological phenomena, collectively referred to as *psi*, are examples of transpersonal experiences and behaviors that reveal the existence of what may be called “inner senses” which allow for perception without sensation and permit actions at a distance. Near death experiences is only one example of a *psi* phenomenon “that suggests that humans can ‘see’ and ‘hear’ things happening around them even when there is no active brain to process sensory information (impossible under the materialist philosophical model of reality” (Schmicker, 2002, p. 196).

**Psi phenomena.** Transpersonal psychology is interested in understanding and helping to facilitate experiences, behaviors, and bodily functioning that are *trans* – beyond our ordinary egotistical and bodily self. Parapsychology investigates those characteristics of mind and body in which mind seems to operate and at least partially exist independently of the body and has access to nonphysical sources of information beyond the five senses. Parapsychological phenomena or *psi* can be classified into three categories (Griffin, 1997, p. 11; Radin, 1997, pp. 14-15).

- ESP (telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition)
- PK (psychokinesis, materialization, dematerialization, psychic photography, psychic healing)
- Psi-related phenomena suggestive of survival of bodily death (out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, reincarnation, channeling, apparitions, poltergeists, and hauntings).

**Psi and the reality of our spiritual nature.** According to transpersonal psychologist Charles T. Tart (1997) in his book, *Body, Mind, Spirit: Exploring the Parapsychology of Spirituality*,

[The] strong scientific evidence in parapsychology... gives general support to some kind of reality to a spiritual world and a spiritual life... The primary implication is that, *using the best kind of scientific methodology, the human mind has occasional abilities to transcend space and time that are totally inexplicable in terms of the material world.* (Tart, 1997, pp. 25, 46)

**Parapsychology and spirituality.** Psychologist and parapsychologist William Braud, after reviewing his extensive laboratory research of psi influences on mental and physical experience writes:

Parapsychological findings can be useful to those on spiritual paths as they can provide a certain degree of confidence and trust that at least some of the processes and concepts encountered are ‘real’ in a more traditional sense and are not delusions, projections, or misinterpretations. They can also serve to remind us that we are not alone in having exceptional experiences; such experiences are normal, natural, and remarkably widespread. (Braud, 1997, p. 150)

**The parapsychology of religion.** Transpersonal psychology actively investigates religious experiences, especially mystical experiences and higher states of consciousness, and those methods or set of practices that takes us beyond the normal states of awareness to achieve a special relationship those inner forces that give rise to psychological and physical life. Religion and parapsychology, in certain terms, shares these same goals. According to parapsychologist K. Ramakrishna Rao (1997):

Parapsychological phenomena provide essential grounds for believing in and validating religious experience and in so doing we find in parapsychology the necessary interface between science and religion. (Rao, 1997, p. 70)

Parapsychology has substantial implications for religion, constituting a new area of study, the parapsychology of religion... If, as William James states, “the mother sea and fountain-head of all religions lie in the mystical experiences of the individual,” and if mystical experiences may be had by following certain procedures such as meditation, it should be possible by a systematic study of these procedures and practices as well as other psychic development strategies to develop instructional aids for those aspiring to have religious experience. (Rao, 1997, pp. 79, 81)



**Belief is grounded in experience, not faith or hope.**

Skeptic’s claim that people who believe in the existence of psi phenomena do so because of wishful thinking, self-deception, and denial, or because to do so offers believers a consoling, immediate, simple, and satisfying sources of morality and meaning. The empirical evidence does not support that claim. For many people, “belief” in the existence of psi functioning is grounded in *experience*.

**Many people have had one or more psi experiences.**

National polls (e.g., Gallup, Roper, Yankelovich) consistently report that anywhere between 50 to 75 percent of Americans believe in paranormal phenomena not because of wishful thinking, self-deception, delusion, gullibility, or some kind of cognitive deficit in their critical thinking faculties, but on the basis of their personal experience (Gallup & Newport, 1991; Irwin, 1993; see also poll results cited in the *American Society for Psychological Research Newsletter*, Spring 1990, XVI, 2, p. 21). In one survey (Palmer, 1979), “51% of Charlottesville, VA residents and 55% of University of Virginia students reported to have experienced some form of ESP” (Rao, 2001, p. 4).

**Belief in psi high among scientists.** A poll conducted in the 1970’s by the *New Scientist*, a popular British science magazine reported the following: (Evans, 1973)

The first conclusion, *New Scientist* reported, is that ‘parapsychology is clearly counted as being exceedingly interesting and relevant by a very large number of today’s working scientists.’ A full 25% of the respondents held ESP to be an established fact, with another 42% declaring it to be a likely possibility. This positive attitude was based, in about 40% of the sample, on reading reports in scientific books and journals. More surprising, however, was the answer of the majority, whose conviction arose as a result of some definite personal experience: “This could be either in the form of a convincing experiment they had conducted,” the article stated, “or, more commonly, as a the result of a striking telepathic experience.” (quoted in Mitchell & White, 1974, p. 48)

**Belief in psi among highest educated.** According to the May 2001 Gallup Poll (Newport & Strausberg, 2001), Americans with the highest level of education are more likely to believe in ESP, mental telepathy, and mental and spiritual healing. George Gallup, in his 1982 book, *Adventures in Immortality*, reports in his “Survey of Beliefs of Leading Scientists About Life After Death” that one in six (16%) of top scientists in the United States believe in life after death; one in three (32%) leading scientists in the field of medicine who are listed in *Who’s Who in America* believe in an afterlife; one in ten (9%) believe in reincarnation (Gallup, 1982, pp. 207-210).

**Parapsychology and the persistence of religious belief.** Such professional survey results leads transpersonal psychologist and parapsychologist Michael Grosso to believe that

There is an empirical core of truth to at least some of the fundamental claims of spiritual life. ...Psychical research and parapsychology provide data and concepts for a new interpretation of religious and spiritual phenomena, and can account for the persistence of beliefs and experiences that bear on supernatural entities, worlds, and dimensions. (Grosso, 1997, pp. 102-103)



**Who's Who in psychic science.** Phenomena that appear to violate known scientific "laws" of nature continue to occur and been reported for centuries by quite normal people. The list of individuals who have spent time studying the evidence for psi for themselves, and who have given testimony to the genuineness of paranormal events include some of the most respected, intelligent, and well-known people of our culture – many Nobel-prize winning scientists, authors, inventors, philosophers, military leaders, psychologists, astronauts, and business people (Griffin, 1997, p. 13), including:

- Philosophers, such as Henri Bergson (1927 Nobel prize for literature), C.D. Broad, Curt Ducasse, Gabriel Marcel, H.H. Price, F.S.C. Schiller, Michael Scriven, Henry Sidgwick.
- Inventors, such as Chester Carlson (inventor of Xerox process endowed a chair at the University of Virginia to study reincarnation); James S. McDonnell (aircraft industry pioneer and founder of McDonnell Douglas); Lawrence S. Rockefeller (wealthy businessman and philanthropist helps fund PK research at Princeton University's PEAR laboratory); Sir William Crooks (inventor of the cathode ray tube); Thomas Edison (light bulb, phonograph), Arthur M. Young (inventor of the Bell helicopter), Hans Bender (inventor of the EEG machine)
- Psychologists, such as Jule Eisenbud, Gustav Fechner (founder of experimental psychology), Theodore Flournoy, Sigmund Freud, William James, Pierre Janet, Carl Jung, William McDougall, Gardner Murphy.
- Astronomers, such as Camille Flammarion, Sir Arthur Eddington (evolution of stars).
- Biologists, such as Alexis Carrel (1912 Nobel prize winner), Hans Driesch, Charles Richet (1913 Nobel prize winner), A.R. Wallace (evolutionary theorist).
- Literary figures, such as William Blake, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Arthur Conan Doyle (author of Sherlock Holmes), Aldous Huxley (author of *Brave New World*), Maurice Maeterlinck (1911 Nobel prize winner), Thomas Mann, Upton Sinclair, Mark Twain, W.B. Yeats (1923 Nobel prize winner), Arthur Koestler (endowed a parapsychology lab at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland), Michael Crichton.
- American Presidents, including Abraham Lincoln and Warren Harding (who participated in séances), Franklin Roosevelt, and Dwight Eisenhower (who reportedly saw Lincoln's ghost), and Teddy Roosevelt (a founding member of ASPR).
- The Presidents and Vice-Presidents of both the SPR and the ASPR have included Nobel laureates, fellows of the Royal Society, prime ministers, notable scientists including astronomers and physicists and academic scholars, including William James.
- Physicists, such as Sir William Barrett (pioneered the study of radio waves), David Bohm (co-worker of Einstein at Princeton), Brian Josephson (1973 Nobel prize winner for discovery of superconducting electric current), Sir Oliver Lodge (1894 developer of wireless telegraphy), Helmut Schmidt (inventor of the RNG), Sir J.J. Thomson (1906 Nobel prize winner for discovery of the electron).

This is hardly a catalog of uncritical, untrustworthy, gullible, mentally-unbalanced, third-rate minds or delusional and incompetent "kooks and crackpots," who should know better than believe in "results that contradict either previous data or established theory" (Stanovich, 2001, p. 28). This is hardly a list of "smart people [who] believe weird things because they are skilled at defending beliefs they arrived at for non-smart reasons" (Shermer, 2002, pp. 297, 302).

Risking ridicule, career advancement, and professional reputation, a significant group of scientific pioneers have been willing to investigate with an open mind all evidence available for, as anthropologist Margaret Mead put it, "phenomena that the establishment did not believe were there."

**Is a priori rejection of psi a reasonable choice?**

Philosopher David Ray Griffin in his 1997 book *Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern Exploration* notes the importance of this list of scholars and scientists in relation to skeptics' allegations of trickery and fraud that are often given as reasons for their a priori rejection of reports of paranormal events.

A large number of uncritical individuals could surely be fooled repeatedly. And any given individual, no matter how critical normally, might be duped now and then. But the charge that *all* reports of paranormal occurrences result from tricks perpetrated on the investigators [as well as the charge of fraud on the part of the investigators themselves] becomes increasingly implausible when the number of credible investigators is increased....Is it really 'more rational' to believe that all these people, plus many more trustworthy souls, have been guilty of either engaging in, or being repeatedly taken in by, deception, than to assume that paranormal relations really occur? (Griffin, 1997, pp. 24, 44)



According to parapsychologist K. Ramakrishna Rao (2001) in his book, *Basic Research in Parapsychology*:

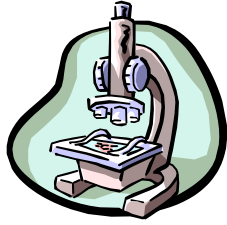
Whereas many scientists outside of parapsychology remain skeptical of paranormal claims, the consensus among the scientists who are actually involved in psi research is that there is compelling evidence in support of ESP [extrasensory perception] and PK [psychokinesis]... A large body of experimental data has accumulated which is strongly supportive of the reality of psi; and with this support ... the attention that was once directed toward proving the existence of psi in its various forms is now turned towards understanding its nature.

Engineer, psychologist, and parapsychologist Dean Radin (1997) in his book *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena* states:

Psi has been shown to exist in thousands of experiments. There are disagreements over how to interpret the evidence, but the fact is that virtually all scientists who have studied the evidence, *including the hard-nosed skeptics*, now agree that something interesting is going on that merits serious scientific attention....Today, with more than a hundred years of research on this topic an *immense* amount of scientific evidence has been accumulated. Contrary to the assertion of some skeptics, the question is not *whether* there is any scientific evidence, but 'What does a proper evaluation of the evidence reveal?' and 'Has positive evidence been independently replicated?'" (Radin, 1997, pp. 2, 6).

**Mainstream psychology's lack of familiarity with the evidence for psi functioning.** Coverage of psi research in introductory psychology and critical thinking textbooks generally reflect the discipline's lack of familiarity with the field of parapsychology. There is an unacceptable reliance on secondary sources and the opinions of magicians. The texts do not even recognize that since the 1970's parapsychologists have used the term "psi" as a neutral label for psychic phenomena, not ESP. The text may mention the ESP card test conducted by J.B. Rhine and his colleagues from the 1930's to the 1960's but incorrectly claims that ESP card tests are still representative of contemporary research, whereas anyone even casually familiar with recent journal articles and books knows that such tests have hardly been used for decades. They do not mention the Random Number Generator experiments or the Maimonides dream-telepathy studies. The textbooks' coverage of the topic presents an outdated and grossly misleading view of parapsychology. "This is unfortunate but not surprising. College textbooks reflect the status quo, and the status quo has not yet caught up with the latest developments in psi research" (Radin, 1997, p. 224).





**Prejudicial philosophy of materialism.** The fact of the matter is that what most psychologists *think they know* about psychic phenomena is not an accurate representation of the evidence. Because paranormal phenomena do not easily fit the dominant philosophy of reality – materialism – that underlies much of modern psychology, many psychologists refuse to even examine the evidence first-hand. They more often refer to the opinions of others, such as the opinions of magicians, and simply repeat them. Many skeptical psychologists “know” in advance that telepathy cannot possibly exist and is the kind of thing that they would not believe even if it did exist. Psychologists have difficulty dealing with anomalies that exist outside the current scientific paradigm (Kuhn, 1970).

The scientific controversy has had little to do with the evidence itself, and very much to do with the psychology, sociology, and history of science...These phenomena present profound challenges to many aspects of science, philosophy, and religion...[and will require] scientists to reconsider basic assumptions about space, time, mind, and matter....philosophers [to] rekindle the perennial debates over the role of consciousness in the physical world, [and]...theologians to reconsider the concept of divine intervention. (Radin, 1997, pp. 7-8)

**The difference between an informed vs. uninformed skeptic.** An *informed* skeptic raises doubts and begins with uncertainty or non-belief rather than disbelief. Honest, genuine intellectual scrutiny and skepticism restricts its analysis and criticism to the evidence and in so doing perform a valuable service in challenging sloppy research, fuzzy reasoning, and wishful thinking, asking “where’s the evidence?” Although analysis and criticisms from the informed skeptics may have been initially unwelcomed, they have resulted in substantial improved methodology in psi experiments. But closed-minded, uninformed skeptics share many traits of religious fanatics, offering answers rather than questions, asking only “where’s the trick?”

There is just as much wishful thinking, prejudice, emotion, snap judgment, naiveté and intellectual dishonesty on the side of orthodoxy, or skepticism, and of conservatism, as on the side of hunger for and of belief in the marvelous. (Braude, 1997, p. 29)

The emotional motivation for irresponsible disbelief is probably even stronger – especially in scientifically educated persons whose pride of knowledge is at stake and who have made public pronouncements declaring “a reproducible ESP phenomena has never been discovered” – than the motivation for irresponsible belief is in ordinary people (see Radin, 1997, chap. 13, “A Field Guide to Skepticism”).

**What skeptics used to claim.** In an important 1993 article titled “Rhetoric over substance: The impoverished state of skepticism,” parapsychologist Charles Honorton of the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, describes how the standard arguments that have been used by skeptics to explain away psi research of the past have been resolved through the use of new experimental designs (automated recording, third-party observers, double-blind protocols, etc.) to produce effects that are, in the words of skeptical psychologist Ray Hyman, “astronomically significant” (quoted in Honorton, 1993).

**Why skepticism continues in psychology.** *Informed* skeptics can no longer claim that psi results are due to fraud, inappropriate use of statistics, poor research designs, or lack of replication. Former president of the Parapsychological Association Dean Radin (1997) points out that “skeptics who continue to repeat the same old assertions that parapsychology is a pseudoscience, or that there are no repeatable experiments, are uninformed not only about the state of parapsychology *but also about the current state of skepticism!*” (Radin, 1997, p. 209).

Because of the insular nature of scientific disciplines and the general uneasiness about parapsychology, the vast majority of psi experiments are unknown to most scientists. In the past a few skeptics conducted superficial reviews of this literature and alleged that they found flaws in one or two experiments, but no one bothered to examine the entire body of evidence. (Radin, 1997, p. 129)



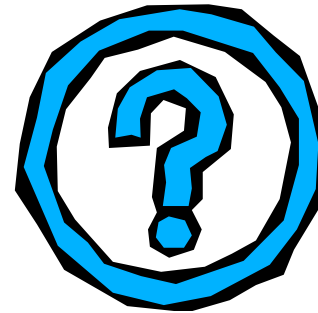
University of California statistician Jessica Utts (2001) states:

It is too often the case that people on both sides of the question debate the existence of psychic functioning on the basis of their personal belief systems rather than on an examination of the scientific data. .... The reason many people think the reality of psychic functioning is a matter of belief rather than science [is because] they are more familiar with the provocative anecdotes than with the laboratory evidence. (Utts, 2001, pp. 111, 118)

Irwin Child in his 1985 *American Psychologist* article discovered one flawed description after another when he compared descriptions of the dream-telepathy experiments conducted at Maimonides Medical Center with the descriptions of those same experiments in books written by psychologists purporting to offer critical reviews of the research. *Similar distortions exist in general psychology and critical thinking textbooks today about parapsychology that give an entirely erroneous impression of psi research* (Roig, Icochea, & Cuzzucoli, 1991). Insofar as psychology students and their professors are guided by these flawed descriptions of parapsychology, they are prevented from gaining an accurate understanding of the scientific truth of psychic functioning and the parapsychology of spirituality. Irwin Child concluded his review of the distorted presentations of psi research in apparently scholarly books critical of psi experiments with the following recommendation: "Interested readers might well consult the original sources and form their own judgments" (Child, 1985, p. 1229).

**Question authority!** The important point here is that students and teachers of psychology should not simply accept the word of alleged authorities that have an ax to grind (fallacy of appeal to authority) or accept an argument on the basis of relevant but insufficient information or evidence (fallacy of hasty conclusion) presented in general psychology or critical thinking textbooks, but ought to explore the matter for themselves. Misrepresenting an opponent's position to make it easier to attack them or attacking a weaker study while ignoring a stronger one (straw man fallacy), failing to bring relevant evidence to bear on an argument (suppressed or overlooked evidence fallacy) are common in much of the fallacious reasoning that is used in arguments against the existence of psi functioning.

Wishful thinking – believing what we want to believe no matter what the evidence – and self-deception – consciously disbelieving what, at a deeper level, one fears to acknowledge because it would force a change in one's worldview – hampers the thinking of many academics when it comes to psi functioning. Skeptics love skepticism unless skepticism is applied to skeptics' claims, but this is precisely what must be done when one encounters such universal, dogmatic proclamations as "No evidence exists or has ever existed for ESP."



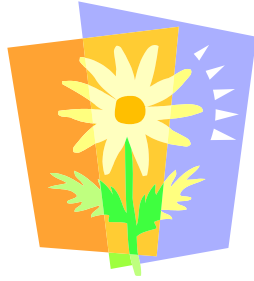
Considering the available evidence, what would be a reasonable conclusion regarding the reality of psi functioning?

According to statistician Jessica Utts at the University of California (Davis):

It is clear that anomalous cognition is possible and has been demonstrated... The phenomenon [of remote viewing] has been replicated in a number of forms across laboratories and cultures... It would be wasteful of valuable resources to continue to look for proof... Resources should be directed to the pertinent questions about how this ability works. (Utts, 2001, pp. 132-133)

Engineer, psychologist, and parapsychologist Dean Radin in his 1997 book *The Conscious Universe* states:

The evidence for these basic phenomena is so well established that most psi researchers today no longer conduct "proof-oriented" experiments. Instead, they focus largely on "process-oriented" questions like "What influences psi performance?" and "How does it work?" (Radin, 1997, pp. 2, 6, 56)



**The Creative Nature of Transpersonal Experiences and Behaviors**

**Transpersonal experiences and values are an intrinsic part of human nature.** Arthur Hastings, former President of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology, in his 1991 book, *With the Tongues of Men and Angels: A Study of Channeling*, describes the importance and significance that transpersonal experiences and values have for our understanding of the nature of human beings, and indeed of the universe itself.

Transpersonal experiences and values appear to be an intrinsic part of human nature. It is becoming evident that they can be studied objectively as a psychology of consciousness and human development. Transpersonal experiences are often interpreted as religious and can occur spontaneously or through meditation, prayer, experiencing natural beauty, sexuality, and other experiences. They include inspirational or peak experiences in which the universe is perceived as harmonious and unified. Opposites are transcended, and qualities of goodness, beauty, and meaning are experienced directly. They may give direct contact with what is described as the consciousness of God or the divine. (Hastings, 1991, p. 182)

**Epistemic content of transpersonal experiences is important.** Jorge N. Ferrer in his 2002 book, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*, points out that “What makes transpersonal phenomena distinctly ‘transpersonal’ (as well as interesting, provocative, and transforming) is not their nonordinary or occasional ecstatic character, but the character of the knowledge they provide during an expansion of individual consciousness” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 9). Arthur Hastings makes a similar point when he states:

Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1964) found that from such experiences, and with growth toward self-actualization, the person becomes motivated by higher values, which he called metavalues. Examples of these are wholeness, truth, beauty, aliveness, goodness, order, harmony, uniqueness, justice, and playfulness. Also, at these transpersonal levels of the self, one can experience primary energy qualities such as compassion, power, sexuality, intelligence, love, wisdom, and creation. Like the archetypes, these transpersonal principles and experiences are [experienced as] part of a larger reality of which the individual is a part. (Hastings, 1991, p. 182)

**Various Meanings of Transcendence**

**Transpersonal experiences involve a transcendence of body, self, world, time, and others.** Abraham H. Maslow, co-founder of modern transpersonal psychology, identified 35 overlapping meanings of the word “transcendence” when talking about the “Psychology of Being,” or what later came to be called “Transpersonal Psychology” (Maslow, 1969b, pp. 56-66; Maslow, 1971, chapter 21). These meanings are presented in **Figure 1-4**.

**Figure 1-4. Various Meanings of Transcendence**

“Transcendence,” in these terms, includes both an *expansion* or *opening up* and a *exceeding* or *going beyond* what is ordinarily given or presented in one’s usual experience of body, self, time, world, and others. Each of Maslow’s definitions of transcendence reflects a particular personality characteristic of “transcending self-actualizers” who provided the empirical basis for his “Theory Z” and who suggested to him the possibility of a psychology “beyond self-actualization” (Maslow, 1971, chap. 22). Maslow (1971) summarized his list of 32 overlapping definitions with a “condensed” definition of transcendence:

Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than as means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature, and to the cosmos. (Maslow, 1971, p. 279)

**Figure 1-4. Various Meanings of Transcendence**  
(Maslow, 1969b, pp. 56-66; Maslow, 1971, chapter 21)

Transcendence in the sense of...

1. Self-forgetfulness that occurs during moments of complete focused concentration upon a task or activity in which one is totally involved and “in the flow.”
2. Transcending strict identification with one’s body and self as a skin-encapsulated ego and moving toward an more expansive identification of self with the values of Being (truth, goodness, beauty, wholeness, aliveness, perfection, uniqueness, and so forth)
3. Transcendence of time (e.g., “eternity grasped in a grain of sand” and objects become symbols of themselves).
4. Transcendence of culture as in identification with the species, resistance to enculturation, dis-identification and detachment from one’s culture in a discriminating way.
5. Transcendence of one’s past means full acceptance and forgiveness of one’s past guilt, sufferings, sadness, mistakes, and errors as a result of understanding that we each are good and deserving creatures and a valuable part of the universe in which we exist “despite” our imperfections.
6. Transcendence of aggressive gratification of self-centered, narrow, and distorted egotistical needs and movement toward an attitude in which one is receptive to the needs of others and lives in harmony with all that is in the natural world, recognizing that all of life’s elements and parts are of good intent.
7. Transcendence as in mystical experiences in which one feels eternally couched and supported by the universe of which one is a part.
8. Transcendence of so-called “bad” aspects of life (including frustrations, inhibitions, blocks, denials, refusals) in the sense of seeing them as necessary and meaningful aspects of physical existence that has a part to play in Being.
9. Transcendence of the natural world so as to recognize, accept, and perceive the natural world “objectively” as it is in itself without the imposing human-centered uses or values upon it.
10. Transcendence of the Us-Them/ Me-You dichotomy (e.g., nationalism, ethnocentrism) to the level of interpersonal cooperation and harmony and collective synergy of social institutions and cultures where one’s existence is perceived to enrich all other portions of life, even as one’s own being is enhanced by the rest of society and creation.

**Figure 1.4. Various Meanings of Transcendence (continued)**  
(Maslow, 1969, pp. 56-66; Maslow, 1971, chapter 21)

Transcendence in the sense of...

11. Transcendence of the basic needs (physiological, safety, belongingness, self-esteem) to become primarily motivated by and identified with the B-Values (self-sufficiency, playfulness, effortlessness, richness, simplicity, order, justice, completion, necessity, perfection, uniqueness, aliveness, dichotomy-transcendence, wholeness, beauty, goodness, truth).
12. Unselfish loving awareness, attention, and identification with of creation from the grandest to the lowest, the largest and the smallest in our intent to have them develop their fullest capabilities without reservation or limitation.
13. Merging oneself in what is not-self (i.e., the other, the world) in which one's sense of willful action, freedom, self-control, and autonomy is relinquished in unselfish service to the world and to others.
14. Being "above it all," untouched, unaffected, objectively detached and dis-identified from the events that occur around oneself, viewing them as if from a great distance or height.
15. Transcending the beliefs and expectations of others, the roles and pressures of society and culture, and conditions of worth imposed by parents, teachers, and significant others, and "to thy own self be true."
16. Transcending the perfectionist demands of the Freudian superego (conscience and ego-ideal) with its "artificial guilt" and come to the level of authentic conscience and "natural guilt."
17. Transcendence of one's weaknesses, dependencies, irresponsibilities, and regressive tendencies to become also strong, self-sufficient, responsible, and emotionally mature; patient without complaining, controlling of one's temper, behaving fair with others and sensitive to their needs.
18. Transcending the present, concrete, immediate situation and move to an awareness of and perception of the possible and probable realities that exist inherent and potential within the present moment.
19. Transcendence of opposites (light/darkness, life/death, good/evil, self/not-self, knower/known, masculine/feminine, rich/poor, teacher/student, parent/child), to recognize the unity that binds opposite forces together, acknowledge the superordinate unity-identity-whole grasped in data, and holistically perceiving the ultimate unity of all that is.
20. Transcendence of basic deficiency needs to move to states of fullness, enjoyment, and satisfaction in Being values.
21. Transcendence of one's assertive, self-determining, willfulness or the need to force one's will upon others and to move to a level of freely giving up the need "to be in control" and "in charge" and to "let go, and let God," and "go with the flow".
22. Expanding normal capacity in the sense of excelling or improving upon existing capabilities (high jumping better) or surpassing normal capacity in the sense of exceeding or going beyond existing capabilities (high jumping in some new way not done before as in the "Fosbry flop").

**Figure 1.4. Various Meanings of Transcendence (continued)**  
 (Maslow, 1969, pp. 56-66; Maslow, 1971, chapter 21)

Transcendence in the sense of...

23. Becoming aware and identifying with that portion of the ever-expanding, ever-creative, ever-loving divine, godlike force that supports and upholds all of creation that is directed and focused within our being, that forms our flesh and identity and that gives vitality and validity to our unique personalities.
24. Live and feel, think and speak the values of Being, as when occasional peak experiences become transformed into plateau experiences, transcendental states become transformational traits, where enlightenment remains and becomes a trait of behavior and a regular state of consciousness.
25. Adopting a detached, disinterested, dispassionate, objective third-person point of view regarding the events of one's life.
26. Transcending the division between the real and the ideal, facts and values, to realize that what is is the way things ought to be, that things need not be perfect, but only be perfectly themselves.
27. An acceptance of the so-called "negative" aspects of life (pain, suffering, death, destruction, illness) and realizing that all of the "evils" of the world are redeemed in the greater scheme of the universe in which they have their being.
28. Transcendence of spatial location as when projecting one's consciousness to other times and other places.
29. Transcendence of effortful striving, wishing, desiring, and moving to a state of enjoyment, gratitude, fulfillment, and acceptance with what one has, realizing that being is its own justification, feeling in a state of grace, feeling joy and exuberance at being alive.
30. Transcendence of fear, panic, and dread transformed to a state of courage, daring, and adventuresomeness in which the fear is gone and one feels immeasurably strengthened and supported by an inner certainty that instills a sense of safety, optimism, and trust.
31. Transcendence in the sense of an awareness of the cosmos and of the life and orderly design of the cosmos and all of creation with a corresponding realization that one is eternally a part of the universe and that one exists whether or not that existence is physically expressed.
32. Introjecting and assimilating completely with Being values such that they guide and direct one's life primarily.
33. Transcendence of individual differences in the sense of accepting, and enjoying one's individuality while at the same time acknowledging the unity, commonality, and at-one-ness of which that separateness and individuality is a part.
34. Transcendence of ordinary and everyday human limits, imperfections, and shortcomings in favor of seeing one's imperfections and all of the imperfections of other creatures in the greater scheme of the universe and in that moment loving, accepting, forgiving, and being reconciled to all that is.
35. Transcendence of one's egocentric, ethnocentric, and homocentric system of values and preferences to embrace a framework of beliefs that is larger, more inclusive, integrative, and holistic.

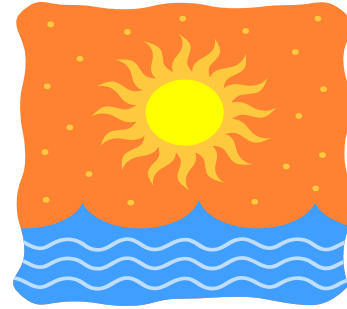
**Two meanings of transcendence can be distinguished.** A thematic analysis of Maslow's 35 definitions of the word "transcendence" reveals two overarching meanings of the term that can be distinguished:

1. To expand (in the sense of enhancement or improving upon existing capabilities)
2. To surpass (in the sense of exceeding or going beyond existing capabilities)

**Exotic abilities vs. cosmogenic abilities.** John Curtis Gowan (1980, pp. 52-53, 77), educational psychologist and long-time researcher of gifted children, draws a similar distinction between "exotic abilities" that involve an *opening up* of existing capabilities and "cosmogenic abilities" that involve a *going beyond* current capabilities.

- "Exotic" abilities include strikingly unusual talents, mental gifts, or endowments that are not generally considered miraculous by those who possess them, and represent the matter-of-fact enhancement of more ordinary abilities.
- "Cosmogenic" abilities and powers "which appear miraculous, i.e., neither understood nor completely accepted by science, generally involve some kind of altered state of consciousness, and...involve more a *transcendence* than enhancement [of normal capacity]" (Gowan, 1980, p. 77).

**Transcendence deals with very nature of creativity itself.** While "transcendence," "exotic abilities," "cosmogenic powers," "exceptional human experiences," and "human transformative capacities" may all sound quite esoteric, they are highly practical experiences and behaviors, and in certain terms we are dealing with the very nature of creativity itself, as Maslow correctly understood (see Maslow, 1968, Chap. 10; 1971, Part II).



### **Transcendence and the Nature of Creativity**

**Transcendence represents an extension of normal creativity.** The exceptional human experiences and behaviors investigated by transpersonal psychologists can be considered to be *extensions of normal creativity* and natural kinds of phenomena that, just like other natural events, can be studied by scientific (quantitative and qualitative) research methods (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Valle & Halling, 1989). As St. Augustine once said: "Miracles do not happen in contradiction to nature, but only in contradiction to that which is known to us of nature." Two types of extensions of normal creative capacity can be distinguished: *expansion* of normal capacity and *surpassing* normal capacity.

**Transcendence as expansion of normal capacity.** In simple *expansion* of normal creative capacity, the primary creative impulse is *constrained* and *limited* by past learning and memory, the individual's value judgments, the external criteria of the problem, and the requirements of practical common sense that are imposed by the creator during the process of creation. Transcendence in the sense of an expansion or opening up of normal capacity means that

- The new knowledge is always tied to already existing knowledge.
- Creative transformations are tied to past history or environment of the creative problem solver, which become the sole possible sources of knowledge and information.
- Creativity becomes limited to the "relational" sort of creativity in which the individual may create the relationships connecting remote semantic domains or elements but does not create the elements themselves which already exist in the form of past experience, learning and knowledge (Mednick. 1962).

- In the common parlance of contemporary cognitive psychology, creative solutions must be not only novel, but also be useful (Sternberg, 1999).
- Ordinary creative solutions are expected to involve a preservation of the information that the individual or the species has accumulated which has proved safe, dependable, and worthwhile.
- Questions of adequacy, safety, dependability, and workability constrain the expansions of capacity that are acceptable.
- Creativity is viewed as some rational-semantic factor of the intellect examined within a problem-solving context and thus becomes tied to practical concerns (Guilford, 1967).



#### **Transcendence as surpassing of normal capacity.**

Transcendence in the sense of *exceeding, rising above, or going beyond* normal capacity means that

- Transcendence implies truly “alternate” frames of reference and experience different than the framework of perception and personality action ordinarily operative during ego-directed awareness and waking work-a-day concerns. In this context, dreams and other altered focuses of consciousness are viewed as one of the species’ creative abilities that are an important source of truly inspired transcendent thinking.
- There is always some extra-rational dimension involved in a “transcendental insight” that carries an ordinary idea or stream of associative thinking outside reason’s limiting assumptions, and beyond the boundaries of established fact.

- Transcendence is always connected to life’s meaning. Suddenly seeming coincidences become important and significant and tied to a framework where actions and events are not simply accidental but are meaningful in the greater scheme of the universe in which we have our being.

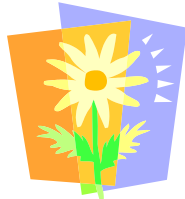
**Distinguishing the two forms of transcendence: A bird’s-eye view.** To employ the metaphor of airplane flying, it is as if, rather than remaining earth-bound and extending normal capacity from the baseline of normal waking consciousness and usual ability functioning where perceptual objects, cognitive beliefs, and the ground-level perspective of the world remain as they are, instead you were to move up and above by airplane over the earth. Everything remains as it is, yet changes in some crucial way, when seen from the altered focus and direction of a bird’s-eye point of view. An entirely new frame of reference with its own “perspective” is involved, organizing the perceptual field in a different manner so that *everything* is different. The same world gives rise to a whole different body of data, with its own hypotheses and evidences depending on your worldview. Like trying to understand that the world is round while maintaining a deep-seated conviction that the world is flat, the challenge for transpersonal psychology is trying to figure out how to correlate point-for-point the transcended worldview and the immanent worldview.

**When creative behavior and experience is transcendent in practical terms.** The species’ innate primary creative impulse toward originality that underlies transcendence (in the sense of surpassing) of normal capacities is given practical expression whenever we

- ❖ Perform in some new way not done before.
- ❖ Bring into physical existence something that did not exist before.
- ❖ Search for something never before found.
- ❖ Try some new venture never before attempted.
- ❖ Perceive reality in a completely new way.
- ❖ Go beyond previous learning and accomplishment.
- ❖ Look outside established frameworks.
- ❖ Give birth to the new and untried.
- ❖ Open up avenues of choice previously denied.
- ❖ Open up channels of awareness previously overlooked or ignored.

- ❖ Perform a feat considered impossible.
- ❖ Ask the further question not yet asked.
- ❖ Act with valor, heroism and daring to better the existing situation.
- ❖ Breaking of boundaries and going beyond limitations.
- ❖ Open up new areas of expression not before noticed or believed possible for the individual.
- ❖ Display possibilities of awareness and achievement that might have otherwise gone unknown.

As J. R. R. Tolkien (1977) said in *The Silmarillion*: “In every age there come forth things that are new and have no foretelling, for they do not proceed from the past” (p. 18).



**People frightened of themselves.** Unfortunately, most individuals are unaware of their normal creative capacity to expand or surpass their usual biopsychosocial functioning because they focus so narrowly and rigidly upon waking work-a-day concerns and three-dimensional time-space events. Intrusions of a creative nature, such as unusual sensations, ideas, memories, mental images, bodily feelings, or impulses that originate from other layers of actuality may be frightening, considered to be alien or “not-self” and dangerous, perhaps even signs of mental disturbances and thus are automatically shut out by the familiar ego-directed portions of the personality. Such communications from the more marginal, subliminal realms of consciousness are permitted only during sleep, in dreams or in instances in creative inspiration.

Creativity as it is generally known represents but a small portion of far more extensive capacities....the individual being aware of only that ability that the mind can understand...Most individuals therefore do not contend with larger portions of their own reality. (Butts, 2003b, p. 240)

Transpersonal psychology serves to give notice about those transformative creative abilities and capacities that lie latent but active within each person, and that connect the known and “unknown” realities in which we dwell.



**Transpersonal Psychology:  
A New Approach to Religious Issues**

**Transpersonal psychology’s relationship to religion.** The question of transpersonal psychology’s relation to religion is an important one. Fundamental Christians have criticized transpersonal psychology because it has been affiliated with the New Age movement and as offering an alternative faith system to vulnerable youths who turn their backs on organized religion (Adeney, 1988; Lewis & Melton, 1992). Are all transpersonal experiences religious experiences? Are all religious experiences transpersonal? How does transpersonal psychology approach experiences of the sacred? Does transpersonal psychology require particular religious convictions or can transpersonal experiences be interpreted nonreligiously? What distinguishes transpersonal psychology from the psychology of religion?

**Figure 1-5** lists ten ways in which transpersonal psychology represents a new approach to the understanding of religious issues.

**Figure 1-5. Transpersonal Psychology as an Approach to Religious Issues**

1. **Esoteric Spirituality vs. Exoteric Religion.** Unlike the focus of inquiry that characterizes traditional research approaches in the psychology of religion, transpersonal psychology is less concerned with the “surface structure” of religion (i.e., its “exoteric,” formal, dogmatic aspects), and more concerned with its “deep structure” (i.e., its “esoteric,” mystical, experiential aspects). The deep structure of religions may be viewed as the more immediate source of formal religious faith and practice and the origin of that natural spiritual feeling that gives the organism the optimism, the joy, and the ever-abundant energy to grow (Wilber, 1983).



**Figure 1-5. Transpersonal Psychology as an Approach to Religious Issues**

1. Distinguishes Esoteric Spirituality versus Exoteric Religion
2. Focus on Experiential and Cognitive Dimensions of Spirituality
3. Recognizes Legitimacy of Religious Interpretations
4. Proposes Hypothesis of a Transpersonal Self
5. Contacting Transpersonal Self Helpful to Personal Growth
6. Acknowledges a Transcendent-Immanent Ground of the Transpersonal Self
7. Some Aspects of Spirituality Show Developmental Qualities
8. Religion Viewed as Spiritual “Psychologies”
9. Mystical Experiences As Altered State of Consciousness
10. Questions of Discernment (Value, Authenticity)

**Religion, without religion's source, would not last a moment.** It is the deep structure of organized religion and its even deeper source that encourages curiosity and creativity and places the individual in a spiritual world and a natural one at once. From religion's source comes the individual's ability to find peace and happiness in an imperfect world, to feel that although one's own personality may be imperfect it is acceptable.

**Spiritual experiences vs. religious experiences.** Transpersonal psychologists prefer to call transpersonal experiences "spiritual experiences" instead of "religious experiences" in order to emphasize the clear distinction between transpersonal psychology and religion. As transpersonal psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (2000) states in his book, *Psychology of the Future*:

It is critical to make a clear distinction between spirituality and religion. Spirituality is based on direct experiences of nonordinary aspects and dimensions of reality. It does not require a special place or an officially appointed person mediating contact with the divine.... Spirituality involves a special kind of relationship between the individual and the cosmos and is, in essence, a personal and private affair. By comparison, organized religion is institutionalized group activity that takes place in a designated location, a temple or a church, and involves a system of appointed officials who might or might not have had personal experiences of spiritual realities. Organized religions tend to create hierarchical systems focusing on the pursuit of power, control, politics, money, possessions, and other secular concerns.... When this is the case, genuine spiritual life continues only in the mystical branches, monastic orders, and ecstatic sects of the religions involved. (Grof, 2000, pp. 210-211).



**2. Focus on experiential and cognitive dimensions of spirituality** What distinguishes transpersonal psychology from humanistic psychology and most other scientific approaches to the psychology of religion?

The focus on the experiential and cognitive dimensions of spirituality is one of the main factors that distinguish transpersonal theory from most other scientific and humanistic disciplines.... Ever since its inception, transpersonal theory has given spirituality a central place in our understanding of human nature and the cosmos... Transpersonal psychologists have typically regarded Spirit not only as the essence of human nature, but also the ground, pull, and goal of cosmic evolution. A comprehensive understanding of human beings and the cosmos requires the inclusion of spiritual phenomena. (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 7-8)

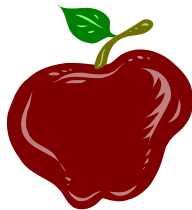


**3. Legitimacy of Religious Interpretations of the Sacred.** It is transpersonal psychology's public recognition and acknowledgement of the intrinsic validity and significance of spiritual experiences and behaviors that most clearly distinguishes it from the traditional approach taken by the social sciences to the study of religion. When sociologists, anthropologists, historians, or traditional psychologists study religion in its external and institutional aspects, it makes no difference whether or not a higher or ultimate spiritual reality actually exists. It is simply sufficient that the people and faith communities being studied believe so.

**Objective approaches to the study of religion tell us little about the religious experience of the sacred.**

While this objective, non-religious approach to the study of religion is an entirely valuable and legitimate enterprise, this particular vision and version of religion is a relatively narrow one, brings about a certain artificial shrinking of religious reality, and actually tells us little about the nature of religion as participated in by religious people. Just as diagramming sentences tells us little about the spoken language, or dissecting animal bodies tells us little about what makes animals live, so does social science's determination to be "objective" in its study of religion tells us little about the *religious* interpretation of religious experiences and behavior.

**The greater "withinness" of spiritual events is missed in usual objective approaches.** It is as if a person was to happen upon a "first apple" one day and examined its exterior aspects only, refusing to feel it, taste it, smell it, or otherwise become personally involved with it for fear of losing scientific objectivity. In this sense, such a person would learn little about the apple, although he might be able to analyze its structure, isolate its component parts, predict where others like it might be found, and theorize about its function and environment, but the greater "withinness" of the apple would not be found any place "inside" its exterior skin.



**Religious interpretations are no less legitimate than non-religious interpretations.** Even when social scientists deal with the "inside" of exterior religious reality, they are still dealing with another level of outsideness, learning little about the greater "withinness" out of which all religions spring. Without extending themselves to the knowledge that can only come from subjectively tasting the rich, vital dimension of the inside psychological depth of religious experiences and behaviors, social and behavioral scientists must give up its claim of investigating the true reality of our spiritual and religious nature. Transpersonal psychology affirms that *religious* interpretation is no less legitimate than the non-religious interpretation that is presupposed by the methodological objectivism of traditional social science.



**4. Hypothesis of a Transpersonal Self.** Drawing upon laboratory and non-experimental studies of multiple and diverse phenomena that have their origin in psychological processes beyond the threshold of normal waking consciousness (e.g., sleep and dreams, hypnotism and trance states, hysterical neuroses and multiple personality, automatisms of writing and speaking, conversion experiences and mystical ecstasy, genius and psi functioning), transpersonal psychology starts with the literally and objectively true psychological fact of the subconscious continuation of our conscious self with wider, deeper unconscious processes beyond the margins of normal waking awareness.

**Consciousness beyond the margin.** This region beyond the fringe of waking consciousness has been variously called the "transmarginal field" by William James (1936), "subliminal consciousness" by F. W. H. Myers (1961, 1976), the "superconscious" by Roberto Assagioli (1991), and the "cognitive unconscious" by John Kihlstrom (1987, 1999) (see also, Beahrs, 1982; Braude, 1995; Ellenberger, 1970; Grof, 1988; Hilgard, 1986; Jung, 1960; Murphy, 1992; Taylor, 1982; Washburn, 1995). In the words of William James:

Each of us is in reality an abiding psychical entity far more extensive than [he or she] knows – an individuality which can never express itself completely through any corporeal manifestation. The Self manifests through the organism; but there is always some part of the Self unmanifest; and always, as it seems, some power of organic expression in abeyance or reserve. (James, 1936, p. 502)

**Psychology's nearest corollary to the soul.** Drawing upon scientific work with the psychological unconscious and accounts of human transformative capacities, transpersonal psychology begins with the hypothesis that we possess an inner, transpersonal self of extraordinary creativity, organization, and meaning – psychology's nearest corollary to the soul (Assagioli, 1993; Firman & Gila, 2002; Hardy, 1987; Myers, 1961; Roberts, 1972, 1974; Vaughn, 1986).

**The nature of the transpersonal self.** Distinct, though not separate, from the outer ego of the personality, the transpersonal self orders the intricate involuntary systems of the body, makes available superior inner knowledge in dreams and states of creative inspiration, and responds to interior patterns of development and heroic ideals that act as blueprints for the probable fulfillment of the individual's finest abilities. It is the creative, inner self that searches for our species' finest fulfillments, not through survival of the fittest but through cooperative development of individual abilities. The transpersonal self is our most intimate powerful inner identity. It is the deeper, higher, "unknown" multidimensional self that whispers even now within the hidden recesses of each person's daily experience. Its direction can be misread because its language is symbolic; but it is benign and of good intent. Ego-directed awareness of this inner self, our greater identity, is an important goal or purpose of an individual's life.

**Concepts of the transpersonal self vary.** Concepts of the transpersonal self may stress the interdependence of individual minds (as in Jung's collective unconscious), humanity's interconnection with Nature and all other species (Kowalski, 1991), or the availability of extrasensory information (Tart, 1997a). Transpersonal psychotherapist Thomas Yeomans in a 1992 monograph titled, *Spiritual Psychology: An Introduction*, articulates one vision and version of the inner self or "soul":

The soul has no particular qualities, or attributes, but rather is the context for all of our attributes and characteristics. It holds and integrates the different dimensions of our experience, and can be seen as that capacity to hold simultaneously any polarity, or contradiction, in our experience.... The soul is the source of Life within us, much like the sun is to the earth, and its energies pervade all dimensions and aspects of our lives. In this respect, paradoxically, there is no place the soul is not. Its being is the context that holds the particulars of a life, and informs the dynamics of these particulars moment to moment and over time and space. (Yeomans, 1992, p. 13)



**Transpersonal self a useful hypothetical construct.** Although Buddhist-oriented transpersonal psychologists may argue against the existence of a transpersonal self, other transpersonal psychologists find it a useful hypothetical construct to explain clinical observations and experimental data (Assagioli, 1991, 1992; Hardy, 1987; Hillman, 1975; Myers, 1976; Vaughn, 1986, chapter 3; Wilber, 1979, Chapter 9). A 21st re-reading of older frameworks of theory and experience such as Frederick W. H. Myers's (1976) theories of the subliminal self may go far toward expanding our concepts of personhood, bridging the split between science and religion.



##### 5. **Contacting transpersonal self is helpful to personal growth.**

The hypothesis of a multidimensional, inner self is not meant to be an esoteric theory with little practical meaning in our daily lives. Transpersonal psychology proposes to clarify the nature of this inner self by identifying how its psychological characteristics and abilities would *in life* show themselves (Ferrucci, 1982; Leonard & Murphy, 1995; Walsh, 1999).

The substantial work done in the nineteenth century by respected physician-scientists such as Jean-Martin Charcot, John Elliotson, James Esdaille, Theodore Flournoy, Pierre Janet, Ambroise Liebeault, and Charles Richet reveals two important facts about this realm of transmarginal, subliminal consciousness that are often ignored, overlooked, or denied by mainstream orthodox Western psychology (Ellenberger, 1970; Grof, 1988; Murphy, 1992; Myers, 1976).

- 1) The existence of a power within each individual, latent but appreciable, to better one's condition, heal one's body, and accelerate learning and insight, and

- 2) The susceptibility of this power to suggestion, belief and expectation and whose energies can be awakened and harnessed through a variety of nonordinary states of consciousness.

Transpersonal psychology seeks to investigate those psychological processes that arouse the deepest levels of the psyche in a manner that encourages the unfolding of these profoundly creative aspects of our own being.



#### 6. **The Dynamic Ground of the transpersonal self.**

The Self, without the Self's Source, would not last a moment (Roberts, 1979b). Drawing upon modern consciousness research and the wisdom literature of premodern spiritual traditions, transpersonal psychologists also examine those exceptional human experiences and behaviors that appear to represent our unconscious knowledge of some greater Source or supreme reality out of which our existence constantly springs and in which we are always couched, connected and rooted.

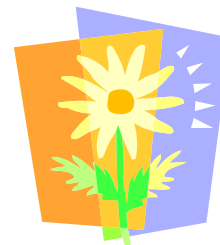
As the physical life of any individual rises from hidden dimensions beyond those easily accessible in physical terms, and as it draws its energy and power to act from unconscious sources, so does the present physical universe, as you know it rise from other dimensions. So does it have its source, and derive its energy from deeper realities. Reality is far more diverse, far richer and unutterable than you can *presently* suppose or comprehend. (Roberts, 1972, pp. 237-238)

**The power of the Ground.** This is no impersonal Source since its energy gives rise to you and me. In certain terms, it is the force that forms our flesh and our identities in that it is responsible for the energy that gives vitality to our unique personalities (Washburn, 1995). All of being is perceived to be continually upheld, supported, and maintained by this ever-expanding, ever-creative multidimensional energy that forms everything and of which the transpersonal self – *your* transpersonal self – is a part.

**The ontological status of the Ground.** Transcending all dimensions of actuality, consciousness, and reality, while still being a part of each – a part of creation yet also more than what creation is in the same way that the whole is more than the sum of its parts – this inconceivable Source is reported both in the writings of the great yogis, saints, sages, and contemplatives (Hixon, 1989; Huxley, 1970; Otto, 1950; Schuon, 1985; H. Smith, 1991; Underhill, 1961; Wilber, 1977) and in the data from the research of nonordinary states of consciousness (Grof, 2000) to be the supreme Ground of Being that provides the creative ingredients from which we form the most intimate portions of our private reality. According to William James (1936, p. 507)

The unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for it produces effects in this world. When we commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality... But that which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself, so I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal... God is real since he produces real effects. (James, 1936, pp. 506-507)

**The farther reaches of human nature.** To find out more about the farther reaches of human nature at the levels of soul and spirit that exist as ever-present actualities and probable potentials that we have available to us right now, we must explore the hidden contours of our *own* consciousness. By an act of Being-cognition (Maslow, 1968, 1971) and vision-logic (Wilber, 2000a), and drawing upon the lessons of modern consciousness research (Grof, 2000), the transpersonal self can be experienced and understood to be a vital, conscious, individualized portion of that supreme multidimensional spirit, universal force, Dynamic Ground (or whatever term you use to describe nature's source) that is directed and focused and residing within each individual and is more intimate than our breath.





**A psychology with a psyche.** The past 35 years of research and theory in transpersonal psychology serves to show that the idea of an autonomous spirit whose existence is taken for granted has not died out everywhere in psychology or become a mere fossil left over from premodern religion. As C. G. Jung (1960) put it in his essay, "Basic Postulate of Analytical Psychology,"

If we keep this in mind, we can perhaps summon up the courage to consider the possibility of a 'psychology *with* a psyche' – that is, a theory of the psyche ultimately based on the postulate of an autonomous, spiritual principle. We need not be alarmed at the unpopularity of such an undertaking, for to postulate 'spirit' is no more fantastic than to postulate 'matter.' Since we have literally no idea how the psychic can arise of the physical, and yet cannot deny the reality of psychic events, we are free to frame our assumptions the other way around for once, and to suppose that the psyche rises from a spiritual principle, which is as inaccessible to our understanding as matter. It will certainly not be a modern psychology, for to be modern is to deny such a possibility. (Jung, 1960, p. 344)

**A psychology with a soul.** Such a psychology will have to be a "post-postmodern" psychology, or in even bolder terms, a "transmodern" psychology (Jones, 1994; O'Donohue, 1989). Transpersonal psychology comes closest to being a psychology with a soul. Beauty, love, joy, power and will, the moral sense, the desire to know and the capacity for knowledge are "spiritual elements in our personality" (Assagioli's phrase). It includes the belief in meaning or order in the universe and that the force behind creation is a loving, intelligent energy from which the self and world emerge (Tart, 1992).



**7. Spirituality shows developmental qualities.** Many transpersonal psychologists see spirituality not simply as one aspect of human development among others but rather involving the whole person, and as having even biological significance (Helminiak, 1987; Maslow, 1971, chapter 23). Other transpersonal theorists argue that spirituality can be defined as a separate line of development (Wilber, 2000b, chapter 10). Psychological development does not have to be completed before spiritual development can begin.

**"Does spirituality unfold in stages?"** The answer depends on how we define "spirituality." "Not everything that we can legitimately call 'spirituality' shows stage-like development [e.g., the state of peak experiences]. Nonetheless, many aspects of spirituality...involve one or more aspects that are developmental [e.g., cognitive, moral, affective, social, and so forth]" (Wilber, 2000b, p. 134). Cognitive, moral, and self-development may be necessary, but not sufficient for spiritual development. What is clear is that authentic spirituality as a "trait" rather than a "state" usually involves some form of sincere, disciplined, prolonged spiritual *practice* for transforming one's consciousness that address transpersonal stages of growth and development.



**8. Religions viewed as "spiritual psychologies."** Transpersonal psychologists tend to approach the world's religions as "spiritual psychologies," each with their own historically conditioned assumptions about the nature of physical reality and human personality (Tart, 1992a). As such, transpersonal psychology recognizes that each religion will have quite different visions and versions of that greater multidimensional framework of existence as legitimate reflections of its limited understanding as it interprets that Reality through its own unique set of culturally- and temporally-conditioned doctrines, myths, symbols, and rituals.

**Transpersonal psychology is theologically neutral.**

For Christians “God” is the natural appellation for the supreme reality or Dynamic Ground, whereas for others it may be seen simply as a source of healing. The terms “soul” and “spirit” and “God” as the terms are used in transpersonal psychology refer to strictly human psychic realities and have no necessary theistic connotations or inherent reference to “religious” faith or practice. Transpersonal psychology does not make the transpersonal self into God or God into the transpersonal self. It seeks psychological truths, not theological ones. Transpersonal psychology is theologically neutral and neither builds up nor tears down any particular formal religion or practice. Transpersonal psychology tries to let each spiritual psychology “speak for itself” without explaining it away in conventional psychoanalytic, behavioral, cognitive, or neurological terms alone (see, for example, Tart, 1992a). The term “spiritual” is used in its widest sense to include:

Not only specifically religious experiences, but all states of consciousness, and all those functions and activities which have to do with values above the norm: ethical, aesthetic, heroic, humanitarian and altruistic values. (Assagioli, 1991, p. 16)

**A participatory vision of spirituality.** If we regard religions as spiritual psychologies, then the images, concepts, and symbols of what William James (1936) called “the higher part of the universe” (p. 507) are to be regarded as constructs and interpretations of experience of the sacred, and cannot be understood to be simply objective representations of an already out there now real “God” totally separate and isolated from Its/His/Her creations.

**The “critical realist principle.”** When approaching religions as “spiritual psychologies,” transpersonal psychologists keep in mind what philosopher-theologian John Hick (1999) calls the “critical realist principle.”

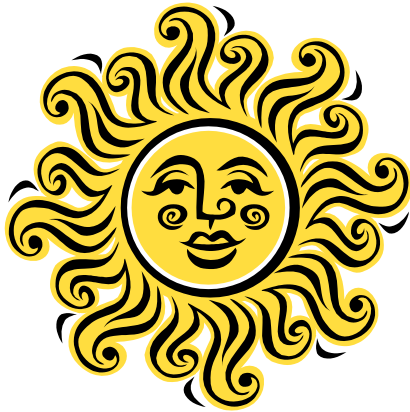
The critical realism principle – that there are realities external to us, but that we are never aware of them as they are in themselves, but always as they appear to us with our particular cognitive machinery and conceptual resources – is...a vital clue to understanding what is happening in the different forms of religious experience. (Hick, 1999, p. 41)

**Critical realism and external realities.** Critical realism acknowledges the existence of external realities but only as they appear to us within the context of the conditioned human perceptual-conceptual system of the experiencer (or in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas “Cognita sunt in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis” – “Things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower” *Summa Theologiae*, II/III, 1, 2; p. 1057).

**Non-realism, naïve realism, and critical realism compared.** Using as an example Julian of Norwich’s visions of Christ, philosopher-theologian John Hick (1999) in his book *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm* clarifies the difference between a non-realist, naïve realist, and critical realist interpretation of the visions.

If we take as an example...Julian of Norwich’s visions of Christ and her hearing him speak of the limitless divine love, the *non-realist* interpretation is that the entire experience was a self-induced hallucination – not in any sense a revelation, not an expression of the ‘impact’ of the Transcendent upon her. The *naïve realist* interpretation -- which was probably her own understanding of her experiences – is that the living Christ was personally present to her, producing the visions that she saw, and uttering in Middle English the words that she heard. But the *critical realist* interpretation, which I believe to be correct, is that she has become so open to the transcendent, within her and beyond her, that it flooded into her consciousness in the particular form provided by her Christian faith. ...Her experience was thus a genuine contact with the Transcendent, but clothed in her case in a Christian rather than a Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic or other form. In these and many other ways, the impact of the transcendent reality upon us receives different “faces” and voices as it is processed by our different religious mentalities. Religious experiences, then, occurs in many different forms, and the critical realist interpretation enables us to see how they may nevertheless be different authentic responses to the Real. (p. 42)

Conventional psychology would likely take a non-realist approach to Julian’s visions. Transpersonal psychology would favor the critical realist interpretation when approaching religions as spiritual psychologies.



**God concepts as transmitters for impulses of development.** Transpersonal psychology assumes that our species' constructed images of God not only reflect the state of our consciousness as it "is" but also point toward its desired future state, operating as a spiritual blueprint just like an architect's plan, only at a different level. The various ideas of God that our species create are thought to be intuitive projections intended to give conscious direction to the species and to act as stimulators of development and evolution (Assagioli, 1991; Roberts, 1977a, 1979b, 1981b). There is an important dynamism and vitality to our God concepts that goes beyond being simple intellectual containers for "religious sentiments" (Allport's phrase). They act as transpersonal symbols of intuitive insight and transmitters for impulses toward "higher" stages of development that arise from the deeper dimensions of our species' nature (Jung, 1964). Seemingly outside of the self, our God images, symbols, and concepts are meant to lead the species into its greatest areas of fulfillment.

**Religions have played a role in species evolution.** Transpersonal psychologists who examine world religions as spiritual psychologies recognize that all wisdom traditions – Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism – have played an important role in the collective psychological evolution of our species (contributing to and drawing from what Jung termed the "collective unconscious"). Christianity, in particular, set forth the initial precepts upon which Western Civilization was built. From the perspective of transpersonal psychology, the historical progression of religion, philosophy, and science gives us a perfect picture of the development of human consciousness.

**Changing concepts of God as a reflection of the evolution of human consciousness.** Transpersonal writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1977a, 1979b) provides a provocative transpersonal account of how concepts of God have provided psychic blueprints for the evolution of human consciousness generally, and the ego in particular. On this view, the emergent ego, needing to feel its dominance and control, imagined a dominant, powerful, male God apart from nature. Whenever a tribe, group, or nation decided to embark upon a war, it always used the concept of its god to lead it on. The god concept, then, was an aid, and an important one to humanity's emerging ego. God images changed as consciousness did. Changing concepts of God – from the Old Testament concept of Jehovah the Righteous to the New Testament concept of God the loving Father – have gone hand-in-hand with the development of our consciousness as a species. Study of the psychology of God as it appears in our histories, myths, and Scripture can help us discover much about our own psychology (perhaps more than we are ready to know). Religions in general, and Christianity in particular, have followed the development of human consciousness. Evolutionarily speaking, our constructions of God, sometimes in distorted form, reflect those greater inner realities of our being.



**9. Mystical Experiences as Altered States of Consciousness.** Transpersonal psychologists tend to view experiences of "mystical union," "enlightenment," "nirvana", and related experiences as natural and beneficial nonordinary states of consciousness that may be subject to state-dependent learning effects. The idea that experiences of the sacred may be interpreted as altered states of consciousness arose from the two-fold observation that (a) psychedelic drugs have been used across centuries and cultures to induce religious experiences and (b) reports of some drug experiences are phenomenologically (descriptively or experientially) indistinguishable from accounts of natural mystical experiences (Doblin, 1991; Grinspoon & Bakalar, 1997; Smith, 1964, 2000; Walsh, 2003).



**Observation from LSD research.** Stanislav Grof (1975a, 1975b, 1980a, 1985) has reported that many of the transpersonal experiences observed to occur during psychedelic and psycholytic LSD sessions were phenomenologically indistinguishable from those spiritual experiences described in the literature of various ancient and indigenous African, Far East, Middle East, Asian, Western, and Native American religious and mystical systems of thought (i.e., temple mysteries, mystery religions, and so forth).

From the phenomenological point of view, it does not seem possible to distinguish the experiences in psychedelic sessions from similar experiences occurring under different circumstances, such as instances of so-called spontaneous mysticism, experiences induced by various spiritual practices, and phenomena induced by new laboratory techniques. (Grof, 1975a, p. 316)

**Two types of spiritual experiences noted.** Grof (2000) has noted that direct “spiritual” experiences that occur during psychedelic sessions tend to take two different forms: the immanent divine and the transcendent divine.

The first of these, the experience of *the immanent divine* involves subtly, but profoundly transformed perception of the everyday reality. A person having this form of spiritual experience sees people, animals, and inanimate objects in the environment as radiant manifestations of a unified field of cosmic creative energy and realizes that the boundaries between them are illusory and unreal. This is a direct experience of nature as god, Spinoza’s *deus sive natura*...The second form of spiritual experiences, that of *the transcendent divine*, involves manifestation of archetypal beings in the realms of reality that are ordinarily transphenomenal, unavailable to perception in the everyday state of consciousness. In this type of spiritual experience, entirely new elements seem to “unfold” or “explicate,” to borrow terms from David Bohm (1980), from another level or order of reality. (Grof, 2000, pp. 210-211)



**Religious experiences and transpersonal experiences are not identical.** Although there is considerable overlap between so-called religious experiences and so-called transpersonal experiences, they are not identical. The relationship between transpersonal psychology and religion is similar to the relationship between transpersonal experiences and altered states of consciousness. As Grof (1975a) noted:

The term “altered states of consciousness” encompass transpersonal experiences; there are, however, certain types of experiences labeled altered states of consciousness, but do not meet the criteria for being transpersonal [i.e., involving an expansion or extension of consciousness beyond usual ego boundaries and the limitations of time and space]. For example, a vivid and complex reliving of a childhood memory occurs in an altered state of consciousness [e.g, in hypnosis or in psychedelic sessions], but do not meet the criteria for being transpersonal. (Grof, 1975a, p. 315)

The same relationship can be applied between transpersonal and religious experiences.

Some, but not all, transpersonal experiences are experiences of the sacred, but not all religious experiences are transpersonal.... Transpersonal disciplines are interested in transpersonal experiences that are not religious, and in research, interpretations, psychologies, and philosophies devoid of religious overtones.... espouse no particular religious convictions, ...and usually assume that transpersonal experiences can be interpreted either religiously or nonreligiously according to individual preference. (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a, p. 6)

**Are drugs capable of inducing genuine religious experiences?** Transpersonal psychologist Roger Walsh (2003) suggests: “Yes, psychedelics can induce genuine mystical experiences, but only sometimes, in some people, under some circumstances” (p. 2). According to Huston Smith (1964) in his article, “Do Drugs Have Religious Import?” the answer is that “There are...innumerable drug experiences that have no religious features...This proves that not all drug experiences are religious; it does not prove that no drug experiences are religious” (pp. 520, 523). Given the right mental set and physical setting, individuals report drug experiences that are indistinguishable from those reported by mystics across centuries and cultures (Doblin, 1991; Huxley, 1963; Watts, 1962). It seems that “subjectively identical experiences can be produced by multiple causes” (Walsh, 2003, p. 2), technically called “the principle of causal indifference” (Stace, 1988, p. 29).

**A religious experience does not necessarily produce a religious life.** Can a transient and time-limited drug-induced experience of the sacred produce an enduring and permanent religious or spiritual life? Not necessarily. “A single experience, no matter how powerful, may be insufficient to permanently overcome mental and neural habits conditioned for decades to mundane modes of functioning” (Walsh, 2003, p. 4). Major enduring life changes may occasionally occur (see, for example, the case studies of “quantum change” reported by Miller & C’de Baca, 2001), but long-term personality changes usually will require the long-term practice of some spiritual discipline, such as vipassana (mindfulness) meditation. As transpersonal psychologist Roger Walsh (2003) remarked:

The universal challenge is to transform peak experiences into plateau experiences, epiphanies into personality, states into stages, and altered states into altered traits, or, as I believe Huston Smith once eloquently put it, “to transform flashes of illumination into abiding light.” (Walsh, 1003, p. 4)

**10. Questions of Discernment** Transpersonal psychology also allows for questions of discernment concerning the value, authenticity, and truth-claims of spiritual development to enter into discussion of religious issues. Questions of discernment include: How is one to differentiate the more valid, genuinely beneficial, and even enlightening “religious movements” from the less valid or even harmful, and what sort of believable criteria can be devised to tell the difference (Anthony, Ecker, & Wilber, 1987)? How can one distinguish a mystical experience with psychotic features from a psychotic experience with mystical features (C. Grof and S. Grof, 1990; Liester, 1996; Lukoff, 1985)?

**Transpersonal Interpretation of a Religious Event: Medjugorje**

The apparition of the Virgin Mary at Medjugorje, Yugoslavia would certainly be considered both a spiritual experience and a religious event. Would it also be considered a transpersonal experience? In certain terms, the apparition of the Virgin Mary may be considered a transpersonal experience “in which the sense of identity or self [of the six young people at Medjugorje] extends beyond the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, *psyche*, and cosmos” (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a, p.3), but is this all that is happening?

How does the universe participate in the creation of experiences of the sacred? What role does Being play in the manifestation of transpersonal events? **Figure 1-6** provides one provocative interpretation of the Medjugorje phenomenon from the unique transpersonal perspective of writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1981a, 1981b).

**Figure 1-6. Miracle at Medjugorie: A Transpersonal Interpretation**



**Figure 1-6. Miracle at Medjugorje: A Transpersonal Interpretation**  
(Roberts 1981a, 1981b)

In June, 1981, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus the Christ, began appearing to a group of young people in a remote mountain village in Yugoslavia. How would such an event be interpreted from a transpersonal perspective?

First of all, it is important to acknowledge that conventional religious concepts and rational true-or-false approaches can make interpretations of such highly creative and important phenomena as happened at Medjugorje extremely difficult. Living as we do in the modern scientific age, we search for certainties and are taught from childhood to consider physical facts as the only criteria of reality. We seem to think that if we can name and label exceptional events such as occur at Medjugorje a “miracle” or a “supernatural religious event,” on the one hand, or as a “schizophrenic delusion” or “serotonin hallucination,” on the other, then they will be more acceptable and real. The ordinary ego-directed mind wants its truths labeled, and clothed in the clear-cut contrasts of good or bad, true or false, black or white. Often this presents us with an irreconcilable dilemma because we are then put into the position where we must prove that the outside source of the “miracle at Medjugorje” – the Virgin Mary, Christ, or God the Father – really exists as it is physically experienced, interpreted, and perceived, or lose faith in the phenomenon, and face the fact that our perception and understanding is not infallible. The revelatory nature of the knowledge emerging from these six youths’ experience seems so supernormal because they (and we) try to view it from the perspective of normal waking consciousness and our usual work-a-day world concepts and schema. We naturally interpret its manifestation and any symbolic meaning it may have in the light of our beliefs of good and evil, the possible and the impossible.

We cannot understand what the Medjugorje phenomenon is unless we understand the nature of personality and the characteristics of consciousness.

From a transpersonal perspective, calling exceptional events such as occur at Medjugorje either a “miracle,” and “supernatural religious event,” or as “schizophrenic delusion” or “serotonin hallucination,” remain rather conventional interpretations of greater truths about ourselves. The visions of these six youths may represent messages from multidimensional aspects of ourselves (being as we are a portion of All That Is) to selves who are in space and time. The Virgin Mary personality may represent a deep part of the structure of the psyche of the six youths *as well as* a definite personification of a multi-reality consciousness (or Virgin Mary entity). The messages they receive would represent the encounter of their personalities with the vast power of their own psyche in dramatized form with the source of their being (or “God” if you prefer), *personified* according to the ideas of these six young people. Note that such an interpretation of this important event, does not deny the validity or significance of the phenomenon, nor claims that the six young people are making it all up, nor that it proceeds *from* them alone.

When people pray or have authentic mystical experiences, it is important to recognize that, psychologically speaking, they are working through areas of the psyche. At some indescribable point, the psyche *may* open up into levels of being, reality, experience, or understanding usually unavailable to ego-directed awareness, and personify itself to get its message across, dramatizing itself through the creativity of the percipient’s beliefs and personality. The symbolization and personification is important psychologically. Quite legitimate and valid psychological experiences of basically independent, alternate realities become clothed in the garb of very limited, conventional images and ideas.

The six youths at Medjugorje have personified their experience in conventional religious terms, while instinctively sensing its multidimensional nature. The valid and significant creative material, the psychic content, becomes changed by the beliefs, symbols, ideas, and intents of the conscious mind of these six visionaries who must interpret the information they receive.

**Figure 1-6. Miracle at Medjugorje (continued)**  
(Roberts 1981a, 1981b)

Cognitive psychology reveals how schemata can limit our understanding of events, situations, and other people, and how we, in turn, often limit our own experience to fit the schemata what we have. This applies to self-schemata as well. Most people do not understand their own inner reality and many individuals have been taught to mistrust themselves. After all, the unconscious self, from the Freudian perspective, is acknowledged to be devious, capable of the most insidious subconscious fraud, and filled with infantile impulses that cannot be trusted. Revelatory material then must erupt *as if* it came from an outside source if it is to be accepted or even perceived at all.

On an inner level, the six youths of Medjugorje are perceiving something different and of significant importance to them, for beyond the boundaries of the known self, intuitive and revelatory knowledge springs into their existence to expand their conscious knowledge and experience. Yet mixing with *their* type of life space, imprinted by *their* psychological field, and sifted through the personalities of the percipients, the phenomenon - the appearance of the Blessed Mary - appears in line with the six youth's ideas of Christianity and personality, *even though the phenomenon's own reality might exist in different terms entirely.*

It may be that personifications of such entities as manifested in the "Virgin Mary" personality usually come through only as caricatures of their real natures because of our beliefs about the nature of *personhood*. The individual psyches of the six Medjugorje youths likely deflects and distorts the "Virgin Mary" personality to some degree and *reflects it through their own nature* as it expresses itself through them. The religious concepts of these six youths, in other words, form a grid or net or webwork of beliefs through which their deepest perceptions flow.

It is through the rather *conventional* Catholic image of the Virgin Mary that they have interpreted whatever manifestations their own psyche may have presented themselves with. The problem that is forever upon us is in making the symbolic personifications literal (for has not science taught us that only the literal fact is true?). The problem is never looking behind the symbolism of the communication, beyond the personification of the inner morality play that is the "Miracle at Medjugorje" for Catholics world-wide, for the greater meanings beneath.

As Jung clearly understood, the "Virgin Mary" personality is a symbol (or archetype) for other dimensions of our own personality. Its language is not literal truth in limited positivistic true or false terms. The symbols of the Medjugorje vision are *a reality in an inner order of events that can only be stated symbolically in our own three-dimensional physical world* of space and time. There is an inner and outer order of events.

The vision of the six youths of Medjugorje presents some very private information from that inner order. But like a round peg trying to fit a square hole, the resulting translation gives us events squeezed out of shape to some degree, as the six youths superimpose one kind of reality over another, interpreting one kind of information from the inner order *in terms of* the outer one, with all of its quite conventional beliefs, symbols, ideas, and images, altering it to some extent. The experience of these six youths become tinged with the entire bag of concepts and beliefs they hold, influenced by the religious and cultural beliefs of our time.



**Criticisms of Transpersonal Psychology**

Transpersonal psychology has not been without its critics (Adeney, 1988; Ellis & Yeager, 1989; May, 1986; Schneider, 1987; E. Taylor, 1992).

Fundamental Christians have criticized transpersonal psychology as being nothing more than a mishmash of “New Age” ideas that offer an alternative faith system to vulnerable youths who turn their backs on organized religion (Adeney, 1988).

Philosophers have criticized transpersonal psychology because its metaphysics is naive and epistemology is undeveloped. Multiplicity of definitions and lack of operationalization of many of its concepts has led to a conceptual confusion about the nature of transpersonal psychology itself (i.e., the concept is used differently by different theorists and means different things to different people).

Biologists have criticized transpersonal psychology for its lack of attention to biological foundations of behavior and experience. Physicists have criticized transpersonal psychology for inappropriately accommodating physics concepts as explanations of consciousness.

Transpersonal psychiatrist Allan Chinen (1996, pp. 12-13), author of numerous works on the transpersonal dimensions of midlife and aging, identifies other criticisms that have been leveled against transpersonal psychology

- “Unscientific” and opposition to empirical science. TP claims to validate the existence of what cannot be empirically verified. Methodological difficulty dealing with its scientific status makes the field appear to be largely founded on theory, experience, and belief with few objective tests of its theories.

- Trying to “leap across” the dark side of human nature, going directly to transcendental states, ignoring the tragic, more sinister aspect of life, including envy, suffering, guilt, and jealousy
- Narcissistic preoccupation with the self and overemphasis on the individual at the expense of society and culture.
- Reprehensible behavior of many “gurus” and spiritual leaders which casts doubt on the value of “spiritual enlightenment”
- Uncertain relation between psychotic and transcendent states.
- Fostering irrational belief in divine beings
- Elevating animals and nature to equal importance with human beings
- Questionable practical importance of transpersonal psychology for human problems
- Inexperienced clinicians failure to recognize risks and dangers of transpersonal techniques
- Tendency toward dogmatism, absolutism, and fanaticism.
- Theory-laden definitions of transpersonal psychology can bias cognitive assumptions and presuppositions about the nature of reality, the self, the world, others, time, consciousness, highest potentials, development, health, and so forth, limiting its openness to alternative interpretations

Let us examine one of these criticisms in more detail – the criticisms of Albert Ellis (Ellis & Yeager, 1989), the founder of rational-emotive therapy (RET).





“The Dangers of Transpersonal Psychology”

The book titled *Why Some Therapies Don't Work: The Dangers of Transpersonal Psychology* co-authored by Albert Ellis (Ellis & Yeager, 1989), the founder of rational-emotive therapy (RET), is entirely devoted to “the dangers of transpersonal psychology.” Ellis asserts that transpersonal psychology is

- Antihumanistic (chapter 4)
- Sabotages scientific thinking (chapter 5)
- Blocks profound philosophic therapeutic change (chapter 6)
- Interferes with unconditional self-acceptance (chapter 7)
- Increases hostility, damnation, and terrorism (Chapter 8)
- Discourages the acceptance of uncertainty and probability (chapter 9)
- Discourages personal choice and will (chapter 10)
- Blocks insight and awareness (chapter 11)
- Aids short-range hedonism and low frustration tolerance (chapter 12)
- Aids authoritarianism and blocks human freedom (chapter 13)
- Refuses to accept the inevitable (chapter 14)
- Favors ineffective psychotherapy techniques (chapter 15).

Ellis equates transpersonal psychology with the study of occult (“hidden”) phenomena including, ESP, UFO’s faith-healing, ghosts, reincarnation, Wicca, neopaganism, astrology, space aliens, tarot-card reading, devils and demons, Atlantis, and even Adam and Eve and Noah’s Ark.

Most transpersonalists honestly believe in the psychic phenomena they supposedly experience – including astral projection, extrasensory perception, encounters with people from outer space, and past-life experiences. Many of these devout believers are psychotic, but most probably neurotically deluded. Wishing very strongly to have supernatural experiences, they creatively manage to have them. (Ellis & Yeager, 1989, p. 44)

Arguments could be made and evidence brought forward both in support of and against each of the claims that Ellis makes against transpersonal psychology. The intermixing of true and false claims about the field made on the part of Albert Ellis likely derives from the conceptual confusion about what exactly constitutes transpersonal thought that results from the multiplicity of definitions and diversity of subject matter of transpersonal psychology. He even includes Ayatollah Khomeini in the ranks of the transpersonalists against whom he rails and then uses this inclusion as evidence that transpersonal psychology is in favor of violence to promote its views! It is clear that Albert Ellis does not view transpersonal psychology in the same way that transpersonal psychologists do, which may be simply another reflection of the field’s need to clearly define what “transpersonal psychology” is and what it is not (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993b).

Ellis’s cognitive commitments to his own belief system and world view with its theoretical presuppositions and assumptions about the nature of the reality, the self, the world, time, and others that proceed from his theory-laden RET has clearly biased his readings of the transpersonal literature.

In contradiction to the claims of Ellis and Yeager (1989), transpersonal psychology neither “fosters absolutist and dogmatic thinking,” nor “encourages devote allegiance to, or worship of, leaders and gurus” (p. 149). Transpersonal psychology does not “promise its followers absolute success, perfect performance, universal love, and unalloyed bliss,” nor does it “discourage...disturbed people from receiving more beneficial forms of treatment (pp. 149-150). It does not “promise certainty...[or] promise miracles” (p. 150). Transpersonal psychology does not “encourage...lying, trickery, and cheating,” nor does it “promote authoritarian cults...Satanism, devil worship, and sadistic rituals” (p. 151). It does not “discourage people from accepting themselves fully and unconditionally,” nor “overemphasize social conformity,” nor “refuse to face or accept grim reality” (p. 151).



It is true that transpersonal concepts and theories run counter to much “official” knowledge and contemporary thought as far as the mainstream of orthodox psychology is concerned. The phenomena that transpersonal psychologists study and the concepts and literature they draw upon to construct theories about the nature of these phenomena, although new to psychology, are quite ancient, having been expressed by many cultures and religions, esoteric groups and cults, from the past and continuing into the present. The problem is that the strength, vitality, and worth of transpersonal phenomena and our understanding of them have been greatly undermined by distortions, negative ideas, superstition, fanaticism, and some sheer nonsense that Ellis correctly and justifiably criticizes.

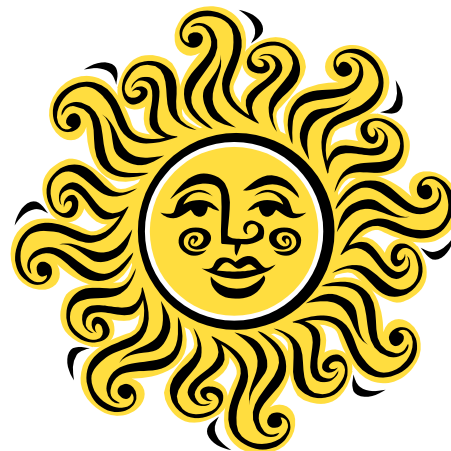
Transpersonal experiences and behaviors and phenomena are, nevertheless, psychological facts, regardless of the interpretations that might be made about them. So-called transpersonal events have been reported and recorded for centuries by quite normal persons. This data represents its own kind of evidence – evidence that Ellis and the form of psychological science (he calls “critical realism”) for which he is a self-proclaimed spokesperson, has no right to ignore, deny, or overlook.

The burden of proof must fall on Ellis to prove that the transcendental or spiritual experiences and behaviors of countless numbers of the world’s population from past to present are, in fact, not valid, but were all the results of delusions and hallucinatory behavior. Ellis and the version of psychological science that he represents does have the right to set its own rules of repeatability and falsifiability, but not set itself up as the final arbiter of reality, nor deny the validity, significance, and importance of transcendental or spiritual experiences that have been a part of humanity’s existence for as long as history has been recorded. Ellis’s current theoretical framework is simply too small to contain such realities.

Paranormal phenomena, including transcendent and spiritual experiences, cannot all be explained away as the result of illogical or wishful thinking, psychotic or neurotic behavior, biochemical imbalances, or environmental conditioning. They are at the very least indications that the quality of life, mind, identity and consciousness are more mysterious than we *presently* comprehend.



In the open-minded and open-hearted spirit of inquiry of William James, who is considered by many transpersonalists to be an intellectual godfather of the transpersonal movement, and who had the audacity to explore the topics of mystical experiences, parapsychological phenomena, and even the possible immortality of the soul, it is correct to say that all such phenomena of the human psyche (in both its individual and collective expression) can be considered legitimate topics for psychological study. Even Jung, another intellectual godfather of the movement did not shy away from trying to understand the psychic importance and significance of UFO sightings (Jung, 1978). Contemporary transpersonal psychologists can do no less. Transpersonal psychology calls for the inclusion of the full spectrum of psychological events into our science.





### The Transpersonal Vision

**Transpersonal psychology is still in the process of emerging.** Transpersonal psychology is such a vibrantly fruitful area of psychological inquiry into humankind's interior spiritual experiences and their transformative exterior biological, behavioral, and social manifestations that no final or complete definition of the field is possible at this time. The definitions of transpersonal psychology have evolved over the past 35 years and will likely continue to do so for some time to come (Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Lajoie, Shapiro, & Roberts, 1991; Shapiro, Lee, & Gross, 2002; Vich, 1992). As new research topics are explored, the "truths" of transpersonal psychology evolve into a still more comprehensive and integral vision of human possibilities. At the center of the various definitions of transpersonal psychology, however, is the core belief that the full extent of human potential is not yet known and that much remains to be discovered about the nature of reality and the nature of the psyche.

**Transpersonal phenomena hint at the multi-dimensional nature of the human psyche.** Because transpersonal psychology considers human personality action in a greater context, with greater motives, purposes and meanings than traditionally assigned to it, transpersonal theory and research has the potential to produce a more complete understanding of those great forces within yet beyond nature that gave birth to human life, mind, and consciousness.

**Transpersonal psychology is not merely another academic discipline, but a point of view.** Transpersonal psychology is not defined only by the topics that it studies. Transpersonal psychology "is also a point of view, a perspective that can be applied to a wide variety of areas, not only in psychology but also in anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines involving human behavior" (Frager, 1989, p. 289).

Transpersonal theory...is not merely another academic discipline. The transpersonal vision is a way of thinking *and* living self, other, and world that can be *diversely* manifested not only in transpersonal states, but also in relationships, community, society, ethics, education, politics, philosophy, religion, cosmology, and almost any other area of human thinking, feeling, and action. ...The final intention of any genuine transpersonal vision is not the elaboration of theoretical models to understand transpersonal phenomena, but to midwife an intersubjectively shared reality, a transpersonal reality. The ultimate aim of the transpersonal vision is to bring forth a transpersonal world. (Ferrer, 2002, p. 7)

**Goals of transpersonal psychology.** By encouraging us to explore the hidden contours of our own consciousness and the role that consciousness may place in the creation of reality, transpersonal psychology seeks to:

- Expand each individual's understanding of the "unknown" elements of the self and its greater world.
- Broaden "official" concepts about the self to reveal the multidimensional nature of the human psyche.
- Enlarge the vision of modern psychology to include a new, wider view of the co-participatory nature of personal and physical reality.
- Develop a greater understanding of human potential and abilities.
- Propose an alternate view of human nature in order that the individual and the species may achieve its greatest fulfillment.



According to transpersonal psychiatrist, Roger Walsh (1984):

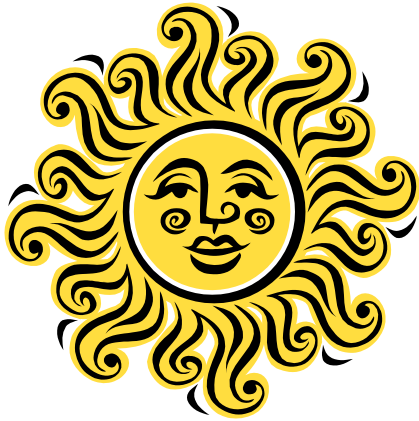
Our task, then, is to realize the transpersonal vision for ourselves through practicing a transpersonal discipline; to test and refine this vision through study, reflection and critical thinking; to embody and express it in our lives; to share and communicate it where we can; to use it to help the healing of our world; and to let it use us as willing servants for the awakening and welfare of all. (Walsh, 1993, p. 136)

**Unanswered questions and unquestioned answers.**

The answers are not all it; all the questions have not yet been asked – questions that can lead us to seek a greater framework than conventional, standardized psychology currently operates from. The only certainty is that transpersonal and spiritual phenomena are enormously complex. That is why we must remain open to various approaches to the “truth” about ordinary and nonordinary experiences and behaviors and be willing to wait for more facts before reaching conclusions. It is through following these facts and remaining open to all avenues of fruitful speculation and intuitive possibilities that our greatest understanding of who and what we are will be achieved in the coming century. As William James (1936) put the matter, when he concluded his ground-breaking account of the varieties of religious experiences:

The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and that although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in (p. 509)... No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. How to regard them is the question – for they are so discontinuous with ordinary consciousness... At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts of reality. (p. 379)





### Section Summary

#### 1. What is transpersonal psychology?

Transpersonal psychology is concerned with the study of exceptional human experiences and behaviors, transformative capacities, and acts of creativity that surpass commonly accepted ideas of basic human limitations to reveal possibilities of personality action not easily accounted for by traditional psychoanalytic, behaviorist, and humanistic schools of thought.

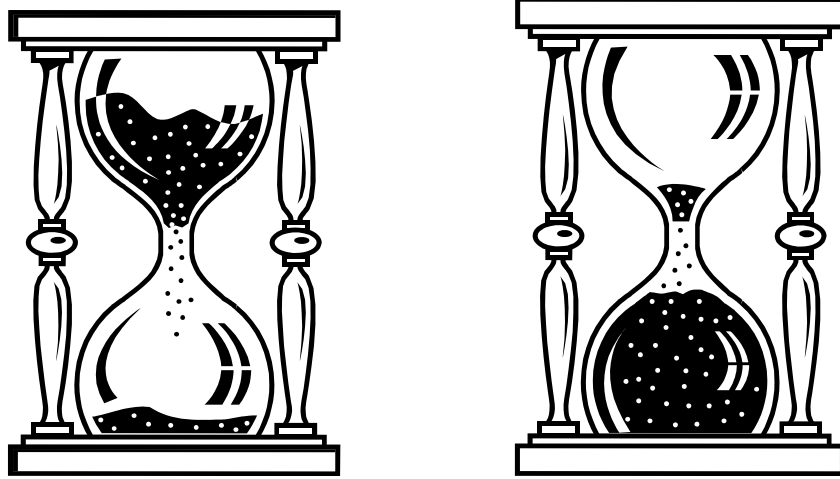
#### 2. What does transpersonal psychology study?

Transpersonal phenomena covers a multitude of extraordinary experiences and behaviors produced by spontaneous or induced altered states of consciousness, impulses toward higher states of being, and spiritual practices. Transpersonal phenomena include (but are not limited to) meditative experiences, dreaming, drug-induced psychedelia, peak experiences, cosmic consciousness, enlightenment, mysticism, out-of-body experiences, trance channeling, near-death experiences, reincarnational memories, extrasensory awareness, archetypal phenomena, accelerated learning, exceptional states of health and well-being, mind-body healing, and miraculous cures. Parapsychological phenomena have important implications for bridging science and spirit.

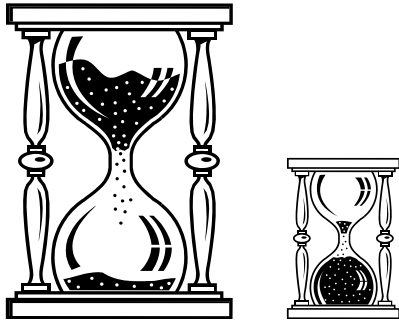
3. **What is transpersonal psychology's relation to religion?** Transpersonal psychology represents a new approach to religious issues that have been closed to psychologists this far. Transpersonal psychology affirms the legitimacy and significance of spiritual experiences as bona fide psychological phenomena in the spirit of post-1890 Jamesian psychology. It proposes the existence of multidimensional realities proportionate to that transpersonal knowing. It recognizes the correlative existence of an innate, dynamic impulse toward those transcendental realities as contributing to the evolution of the individual and the species.

4. **What is the transpersonal vision?** The expansive, alternative framework of the transpersonal vision opens up new possibilities of experience, understanding, and judgment that not only enhance evolution of the individual but also of the species.





# What Are the Origins of Transpersonal Psychology?



### THE ORIGINS OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

#### The Probable Histories of Transpersonal Psychology.

Transpersonal psychology has many probable histories. The particular history that is written will depend upon what aspects are emphasized and considered to be important in its identity in the present.

- **Lived experience.** If the role of *lived experience* is emphasized in its modern identity, then the roots of transpersonal psychology can be traced back to Brentano's Act Psychology of consciousness, through the philosophy of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, Heidegger's inquires into Being, and James's doctrine of radical empiricism and studies of mysticism.
- **Eastern influences.** If *Eastern influences* are emphasized in transpersonal psychology's current identity, then its modern roots can be traced to D. T. Suzuki and Alan Watts who popularized Zen philosophy, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Hindu influence, Chogyam Trungpa's founding of the Buddhist Naropa Institute, and extension of the Theravada vipassana movement by Asian-trained American teachers, such as Kornfield and Goldstein, and beyond.
- **Idealism and panpsychism.** If its *idealism* (i.e., idea as reality) and ontology of *mind in matter* is emphasized, then transpersonal psychology's panpsychic lineage may be traced back to Thales, Pythagoras, through Plato's metaphysics and contemplative ideals down through Plotinus and Hegel's dialectic of Spirit to the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (Cobb & Griffin, 1977).

- **Unconscious and superconscious.** If the role of the dynamic *unconscious and superconscious* in transpersonal experience is emphasized, then transpersonal psychology's evolution may be traced from first accounts of primitive healing to hypnotism to dissociation to Freud's formulation of the unconscious to Jung's notion of the collective unconscious, archetypes, and the individuation process, and finally to Assagioli's Psychosynthesis.

**One probable history of a psychology with a soul.** If transpersonal psychology's hypothesis of the existence of *an inner, transpersonal self or the soul* is emphasized, then the roots of transpersonal psychology might be traced back to the wide-ranging literature of Western and Eastern spiritual traditions of Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Christian mysticism, Jewish Kabbalah, and Muslim Sufism. The origins of the notion of an inner, spiritual self might be traced to the ideas of ancient Greece and the philosophical writings of Plato and Plotinus. Bynum (1992) would trace the history of the idea of an inner, spiritual self or *soul* even further back in time *before* the Greeks to the valley systems of Kemetic Egypt and Nubia. The idea of a "soul" can also be found inspiring the art of so-called primitive civilizations, the rituals of shamanism, the music of preliterate African societies, and the writings of Western and Eastern literature and folklore.

**Linguistic roots of the word "soul."** Or the *linguistic roots* of the English word *soul* might be explored - its relationship to the German word *seele* which means both "psyche" as well as "soul," and its relationship to the Greek word *psyche* which means mind or soul (as well as "butterfly") and refers to the animating force or spirit in the body (Jung, 1960). Transpersonal psychology, in these terms, would be the study of the human soul or spirit, and the hypothesis that

that soul has substance, is of divine nature and therefore immortal; that there is a power inherent within it that builds up the body, sustains its life, heals its ills and enables the soul to live independently of the body; that there are incorporeal spirits with which the soul associates; and that beyond our empirical present there is a spiritual world from which the soul receives knowledge of spiritual things whose origins cannot be discovered in this visible world. (Jung, 1960, p.341)

General conceptions of a spiritual life are discovered over and over again throughout history whenever individuals turn inward to seek the wisdom that shows them the inside of so-called “facts” and the realities from which facts emerge.



### Two Conceptions of Transpersonal History

The history of transpersonal psychology can be viewed either from a “personalistic,” person-makes-the-times approach (i.e., the ideas and actions of specific individuals create the impetus for change and progress in psychology) or a “naturalistic,” times-makes-the-person approach (i.e., the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the times creates opportunities for the ideas and actions of individuals to influence change and progress in psychology) (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, pp.18-20).

**Personalistic vs. naturalistic view of the history of transpersonal psychology.** First, let us look at the historical development of transpersonal psychology from the *personalistic* viewpoint, and briefly examine the theories and therapeutic practices of seven of the early pioneers of transpersonal psychology: Gustav Fechner, William James, F.W.H. Myers, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, and Roberto Assagioli. Later we will approach the historical development of transpersonal psychology from the *naturalistic* viewpoint and see how transpersonal psychology is a uniquely American psychology that can be traced back to “alternative realities tradition” of America’s visionary “folk psychology” and given flower in the *Zeitgeist* of the 1960’s counterculture movement.

### The Personalistic Approach to the History of Transpersonal Psychology

**The spiritual roots of modern psychology.** Modern psychology (for the most part) has ignored or denied altogether the existence of higher, deeper transpersonal, spiritual realms of human consciousness. Yet, an argument can be made that the roots of modern psychology also lie in a spiritual tradition that is thoroughly transpersonal in character. This hidden, overlooked, and ignored history within psychology is represented in the theories and psychotherapeutic practices of early pioneers in the history of modern psychology whose work has influenced modern transpersonal psychology, including

- ❖ **Gustav Fechner** (1801-1887), the founder of experimental psychology, referred to the deeper aspects of the human psyche as the ground of our being which lies “below the threshold” of consciousness whose function was to awaken the species into a state of higher consciousness.
- ❖ **William James** (1842-1910), co-founder of American functionalism, referred to the profounder aspects of human personality as residing in the “transmarginal field” beyond the fringe of waking awareness, exerting their influence to varying degrees in instances of psychopathology and transcendence.
- ❖ **F. W. H. Myers** (1843-1901), co-founder of the Society for Psychical Research, referred to the “unknown” reality of human personality as a part of the subconscious or “subliminal” realms composed of innumerable discrete regions and streams of consciousness constituting an ultimate plurality of selves.
- ❖ **Sigmund Freud** (1856-1939), founder of Psychoanalysis, referred to the “oceanic feelings” that accompany mystical experiences as reminiscent of early experiences of profound union of infant and mother that arise from obscure unconscious sources beyond ego and id.
- ❖ **Alfred Adler** (1870-1937), founder of Individual Psychology, referred to the higher aspects of the human psyche as the “creative self” – the active, unifying principle of human life that provides the basic components of one’s personality.

- ❖ **Carl Jung** (1875-1961), founder of Analytical Psychology, called the deeper aspects of the human psyche the “collective unconscious.”
- ❖ **Roberto Assagioli** (1888-1974), founder of Psychosynthesis, referred to the higher aspects of the human psyche as the “superconscious.”

#### Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801-1887)



Figure 37  
Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801-1887).  
Courtesy of the Archives of the History  
of American Psychology.

**Gustav Theodor Fechner.** G. T. Fechner (1801-1887), the acknowledged founder of the branch of experimental psychology known as *psychophysics*, “developed his psychophysical science for the purpose of providing a scientific foundation for his belief in the survival of the human spirit or soul” (S. Rosenzweig, 1987, p. 788) and authored a book, *The Little Book of Life After Death* in 1835, that gave an explicit defense of the idea of life after death (Fechner, 1992).

While Gustav Theodore Fechner (1801-1887) is often, and rightly so, lauded as the founder of modern experimental psychology, it is not generally recognized (and has even been kept as a kind of secret, if not held as a scandal) that his extensive ‘scientific’ output [of 183 articles and 81 books] was paralleled by an equally imposing body of work concerned with the immortal human soul, the soul of the world, and the nature of God as the soul of the cosmos. The secret, one might say, is that modern psychology was, in its inception, thoroughly transpersonal in character. (Kelly, 2002, p. 77)

#### Fechner’s espousal of the cause of panpsychism.

Fechner, whose 1860 book *Elements of Psychophysics* arguably marks the beginning of experimental psychology, “believed that consciousness cannot be separated from physical things... that is, all things that are physical are also conscious” (Hergenhahn, 2001, p. 221), a philosophic position called *panpsychism*. Fechner maintained, “that the whole world is spiritual in character, the phenomenal world of physics being merely the external manifestation of this spiritual reality.... Consciousness is an essential feature of all that exists” (Zweig, 1967, quoted in Wilber, 2000, p. x).

**Fechner’s defense of life after death.** It was in his 1851 book, *Zend-Avesta, or Concerning Matters of Heaven and the Hereafter* (Fechner, 1851; Lowrie, 1946) that Fechner first described his insights concerning the possibility of measuring mental events and systematically relating them to physical one – a thesis that would eventually be published in his famous *Elements of Psychophysics* in 1860 which would launch the new science of experimental psychology (Fechner, 1966). From the viewpoint of the history of psychology, Fechner’s defense of life after death is not “to be regarded merely as an historical accident,” but rather “as something more intrinsic and of a more general interest in connection with the nature of the science of psychology” (Bakan, 1992, p. 32).

[*The Little Book of Life After Death*] is not a work that came early in his life, when he might have been immature. Nor is it a work at the end of his life when he might have been senile, or grown afraid at the approach of the inevitable. He was born in 1801 and died in 1887. He published a major contribution to the study of electricity in 1831. He was appointed as a professor of physics at the University of Leipzig in 1834. He completed *The Little Book of Life After Death* in 1835. He continued along the lines of [that book] and, in 1851, published *Zend-Avesta: On the Things of Heaven and the Hereafter*. And it was only after that that he published the work, which has had so great an influence on the subsequent development of psychology, *Elements of Psychophysics* in 1860, as the fruition of the thought developed earlier. (Bakan, 1992, p. 35)



**Psychophysics was Fechner's attempt to clarify the relationship between body, mind, and spirit.** The whole point of Fechner's psychophysical methods (method of limits, method of constant stimuli, method of adjustment) was to explore the nature of the mind-body relationship, and provide inductive support for what he called the "daylight view" – the idea that the whole physical universe is inwardly alive and conscious – as opposed to the "night view" that regarded matter as dead and inert, lacking in any intrinsic purpose or meaning in itself. He wished to use his psychophysical methods, not to reduce immaterial spirit or soul to material brain or to deny spirit and soul altogether, as contemporary experimental psychologists tend to do, but to clarify the relationship of body, mind, and spirit.

Whether as Dr. Mises or not [Dr. Mises was a pseudonym Fechner used to publish views that were incompatible with the science of the time], Fechner was always interested in spiritual phenomena. He was also interested in parapsychology and even attended several séances in which he experienced the anomalous movements of a bed, a table, and even himself... Fechner always used Dr. Mises to express the "daytime view," the view that the universe is alive and conscious. Always behind Fechner's satire and humor was the message that the "dayview" must be taken seriously. (Hergenhahn, 2001, p. 222)

Clinical psychologist David Bakan points out the irony of Fechner's role in the history of experimental psychology. "It is precisely that Fechner who advanced the idea of life after death who is also the founder of experimental psychology; and the denial of life and consciousness is most strongly maintained among the experimentalists" (Bakan, 1992, p. 33).

### Williams James (1842-1910)



**William James.** Williams James (1842-1910) is regarded by many transpersonalists to be a forerunner of modern transpersonal psychology (James, 1936, 1956; Taylor, 1982, 1996a, 1996b). "The American philosopher-psychologist William James is arguably the father of modern transpersonal psychology and psychiatry" (Taylor, 1996a, p. 21). Historian of Jamesian psychology, Eugene Taylor, lists the numerous "firsts" that William James accomplished as a progenitor of modern transpersonal psychology (Taylor, 1996a, p. 21)

- He was the first to use the term *transpersonal* in an English-language context.
- He was the first to articulate a scientific study of consciousness within the framework of evolutionary biology.
- He experimented with psychoactive substances (i.e., nitrous oxide) to observe their effects on his own consciousness.
- He was a pioneer in founding the field that is now called parapsychology.
- He helped to cultivate modern interest in dissociated states, multiple personality, and theories of the subconscious.
- He explored the field of comparative religion.
- He was probably the first American psychologist to establish relationships with or to influence a number of Asian meditation teachers.
- He pioneered in writing about the psychology of mystical experience.

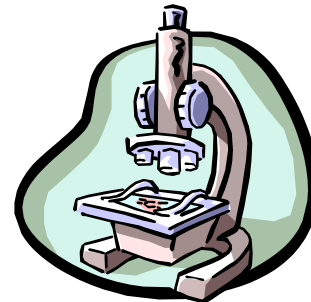


**The transpersonal journey of post-1890 William James.** William James, whose ideas were to grow into the school of *functionalism* and the philosophy of *pragmatism*, brought prominence to United States psychology through the publication in 1890 of his two-volume, 1,393 page textbook on psychology, *The Principles of Psychology* (James, 1950). After 1890, James's work shifted away from positivist explanations of human behavior and experience to focus on creating a person-centered (as opposed to laboratory-centered) psychology that included a broadened notion of the scope of psychology and its methods of inquiry (Taylor, 1996b). Post-1890 Jamesian psychology focused on personality phenomena related to "the rise and fall of the threshold of conscious" (Taylor's phrase) and the development of his metaphysics of "radical empiricism" – the notion that all consistently reported aspects of human experience were worthy of investigation. It was during the period from 1890-1910 that James championed the cause of religion, mysticism, faith healing, and psychic phenomena. One of the best accounts of the transpersonal journey of post-1890 William James can be found in Eugene Taylor's 1996 book, *William James on Consciousness Beyond the Margin* (Taylor, 1996b).

**Humans live by values that science ignores.** After 1890, William James came to recognize that psychology's materialistic, deterministic, reductionist, and mechanistic account of the lived world was inadequate because of its failure (or inability) to accommodate the value-laden character of psychological reality. Human beings live by values that science ignores. When psychological science states that it is neutral in the world of values, or that it is value-free, or that certain values are outside its frame of reference, psychological science implies that those values are without basis, whether it intends to or not.

**The disaster of positivist psychology.** The more that William James explored so-called "exceptional" human mental states such as hysteria, multiple personality, possession states, and various psychological disorders, the more he realized that materialistic, deterministic, reductionist, and mechanistic science, by what it said and by what it neglected to say, had helped create insanities that otherwise would not have plagued our world. By denying our species the practical use of those very elements that are needed to remain healthy in body and mind – the feeling that we are at life's center, that we can act safely in our environment, that we can trust ourselves, that our being and our actions have meaning – positivist science had played an important negative role in contributing to the troubles of society and undermining personal integrity (James, 1936; Taylor, 1982, 1996b).

**The artificial scaling down of psychological reality.** William James knew that psychology's determination to be sensory-empiricist like the physical sciences had brought about a particular brand of science that was a relatively narrow one, which had resulted in a certain artificial shrinking and "scaling down" of what constitutes psychological reality to those aspects that could be studied in an exterior fashion. The scientific psychology of James's time had come to accept only certain specific areas of inquiry and investigation as appropriate for study (e.g., laboratory demonstrations). Experience became limited to events that laboratory science could explain. Areas outside its boundaries became off-limits and taboo subjects. What could not be proven in the laboratory was presumed not to exist. Anyone who experienced "something that cannot exist" was regarded as crazy, delusional, or otherwise mentally ill. As a result, Western psychology had only a surface understanding of what the self was or of the mind's associative processes. James recognized that if everything we knew about human psychology were limited to what we could demonstrate in the laboratory, then we would not have much of a psychology at all.







**A radical empiricism includes all experience.** James did not deny that all genuine knowledge must be grounded in experience (empiricism). What he did deny was that experience had to be confined to sensory experience alone. William James developed the idea of “radical empiricism” that considered sensory experience to be only one of several different but equally legitimate types of empiricism. “Empiricism,” in other words, in its generalized essential features meant “experiential,” and included not only data of sense but also data of consciousness (i.e., direct, immediate psychological experience).

He [therefore] expanded research techniques in psychology by not only accepting introspection but also encouraging any technique that promised to yield useful information about people. By studying all aspects of existence – including behavior, cognition, emotions, volition, and even religious experience – James also extended the subject matter of psychology... He encouraged the use of any method that would shed light on the complexities of human existence; he believed that nothing should be omitted. (Hergenhahn, 2001, pp. 305-306)

**Subjective aspects of experience honored.** It was James’s broadminded approach to the investigation of the subjective aspects of human experience (as grounded in his metaphysics of *radical empiricism*) and his insistence that the criterion of ultimate truth of an idea can be ascertained by its consequences and usefulness (as grounded in his epistemology of *pragmatism*) that informed his empirical approach to the study of religious experiences and psychical phenomena and that placed the person and his or her immediate experience, and inner beliefs, values, and attitudes as central to psychology’s scientific concerns.

**Profoundly mistaken distrust of subjectivity.** James understood that scientists’ non-feeling objectivity that had come to mirror the standard for ideas and behaviors in scientific psychology was the result of their scientific training to stand apart from experience. The paradox of modern psychology’s profound distrust of subjectivity did not escape James. The very basis of our most intimate experience, the framework behind organized psychology itself, rested upon a reality that was not considered valid by the very discipline that was formed through its auspices. The very subjectivity that gave birth to the concept of “objectivity” and infused it with meaning was suspect and to be viewed with an ironical eye as far as scientific (i.e., laboratory) psychology was concerned.

**Religious experiences as reflecting humanity’s dual nature.** William James thought otherwise. All subjective religious experience, in James’s view, reflected humanity’s dual conscious-subconscious nature and our connection to regions below the threshold of waking consciousness which are the source of deeply felt religious emotions. “Personal religious experience has its root and center in mystical states of consciousness” (James, 1936, p. 370). James saw mystical states of consciousness essentially as bridge-experiences that connected consciously “known” and subconsciously “unknown” psychic realities with what James referred to as “the higher part of the universe” (James, 1936, p. 507). In his classic 1902 book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*

James’s main thesis centers around the subconscious and its exploration as a doorway to the awakening of mystical religious experience. Religion he defined at the outset as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to the absolute” ...If there were indeed higher spiritual agencies that can directly touch us, “the psychological condition of their doing so might be our possession of a subconscious region which alone should yield access to them.” (Taylor, 1996b, pp. 85-87)

**Qualities of religious experience.** James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* "continues to be the most widely used textbook in psychology of religion courses taught throughout the United States" (Taylor, 1996b, p. 84). James's review of anecdotes, textual studies, and typical examples of mystical experiences led him to identify four qualities that characterized all mystical states of consciousness: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity. In James's words,

Its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others...They are states of insight into depths of truths unplumbed by the discursive intellect...Mystical states cannot be sustained for long...The mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed as if he were grasped and held by a superior power. (James, 1936, pp. 371-372)

Each religious experience revealed a separate spiritual reality. There are as many spiritual realities as there are individuals who experience them, an epistemological position that James referred to as "noetic pluralism" (Taylor, 1996b, p. 134).



**James as co-founder of the American Society for Psychical Research.** William James also openly espoused the cause of psychical research. He was president of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in London from 1894-1895 and its vice-president from 1890-1910. The SPR was established in 1882 with the expressed purpose of investigating "without prejudice or prepossession and in a scientific spirit those faculties of man, real or supposed, which appear to be inexplicable on any generally recognized hypothesis." James was also a co-founder of the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) in 1885.

According to its mission statement, the purpose of the ASPR is

The investigation of telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, veridical hallucinations and dreams, psychometry, and other forms of paranormal cognition; of phenomena bearing on the hypothesis of survival of bodily death; of claims of paranormal physical phenomena such as psychokinesis and poltergeists; the study of automatic writing, trance speech, alterations of personality and other subconscious processes insofar as they may be related to paranormal processes; in short, all types of phenomena called parapsychological or paranormal. [www.aspr.com]

**The mediumship of Mrs. Piper.** As chair of ASPR's Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena, William James was personally responsible for the extensive investigation of Mrs. Lenore Piper who was perhaps the most thoroughly studied medium (or "channel") in the history of psychological research. For 18 months William James was totally in charge of all arrangements for Mrs. Piper's séances. Later William James wrote:

When imposture has been checked off as far as possible, when chance coincidence has been allowed for, when opportunities for normal knowledge on the part of the subject have been noted, and skill in "fishing" and following clues unwittingly furnished by the voice or face of bystanders have been counted in, those who have the fullest acquaintance with the phenomena admit that in good mediums *there is a residuum of knowledge displayed* that can only be called supernatural: the medium taps some source of information not open to ordinary people. (Quoted in McDermott, 1968, p. 793)

**James's distain for uninformed skepticism.** William James's open espousal of the cause of psychical research greatly benefited both the reputation and early experimental forms of this nascent science (Murphy & Ballou, 1960). His distain for modern experimental psychology's uninformed skepticism of psychic phenomena is evident in a letter he wrote to Carl Stumpf (1848-1936) whose work in the phenomenology of music was to influence founders of the school of Gestalt psychology.

I don't know whether you have heard of the London "Society for Psychical Research," which is seriously and laboriously investigating all sorts of "supernatural" matters, clairvoyance, apparitions, etc. I don't know what you think of such work; but I think that the present condition of opinion regarding it is scandalous, there being a mass of testimony, apparent testimony, about such things, at which the only men capable of a critical judgment – men of scientific education – will not even look.... It is a field in which sources of deception are extremely numerous. But I believe there is no source of deception in the investigation of nature, which can compare with a fixed belief that certain kinds of phenomenon are *impossible*. (McDermott, 1968, p. 787

**Modern psychology must expand its definitions of reality.** James recognized that modern psychological science must expand its definitions of life, mind, and consciousness and its limiting ideas about the nature of reality and the abilities that lie within each individual if it was not to become a caricature of itself or a handmaiden to its own laboratory technology and give up its claim of investigating the nature of human personality and its greater world.

**Frederick William Henry Myers (1843-1901)**



**Frederick William Henry Myers.** Both G. T. Fechner and William James attempted to address those elements of the soul that religion refused to examine. F.W.H. Myers (1843-1901) was another early pioneer of the transpersonal approach who developed a conception of "subliminal consciousness" as a doorway to the unknown reality of the psyche based on his studies of psychopathology, genius, sleep, hypnotism, sensory and motor automatisms, trance, possession, and ecstasy (Myers, 1961, 1976).

**Myers and James were collaborators.** Myers's conception of the subliminal consciousness became the basis for some of James's contribution to the psychology of the subconscious. According to historiographer Eugene Taylor (1996b): "Myers's formulations were, in fact, central to the development of James's psychology and philosophy in the 1890s, and they form the epistemological core of James's scientific activities in abnormal psychology and psychical research" (p. 79). Myers's work advantageously combined both religious and scientific viewpoints in a way that was rare for his times, except perhaps for the work of his colleague and friend William James who likewise gave voice to subjects avoided by others.

**Contributions of F.W.H. Myers to transpersonal psychology.** Frederick Myers's vision for psychology pointed out new directions for science to follow. Although neglected by official psychology for 100 years, Myers's work did make early inroads in certain areas of psychology and popularized the notion of a "subliminal consciousness" that flows beneath ordinary waking consciousness (Myers, 1976).

He recognizes, to use more current terms, the distinction between the preegoic and the transegoic, as well as the distinction between the pathological and the more authentic, or integrally, spiritual. In this connection, he is the first as well to propose the analogy of the *spectrum* of consciousness to describe the full range of subliminal activity. (Kelly, 2002, p. 79)

**Myers's theory of a subliminal self.** Drawing upon scientific work in experimental psychopathology, psychical research, and the "experimental psychology of the subconscious" (Taylor's phrase), Myers began with the hypothesis that we possessed an inner self of extraordinary creativity, organization, and meaning – psychology's nearest corollary to the soul (Myers, 1961, 1976). He referred to this interior personality structure as the "subliminal self." Distinct, though not separate, from the outer ego of the personality this inner, subliminal self forms our larger identity, orders the intricate involuntary systems of the body, and makes available superior inner knowledge in dreams and states of creative inspiration.

**Myers's theory of subliminal consciousness.** The subliminal regions of consciousness were not only the source of visions, voices, and impulses that lead the individual to act in line with the fulfillment of his or her finest abilities, but also act as channels for obsessive thoughts and delusions, and various sorts of psychopathology. Myers (1961) collected a wealth of supporting material for his theories, numerous and relevant facts concerning powers, abilities, energies within the human personality that could suddenly awaken, transforming the individual's life. Myers's theories concerning the subliminal self, after making early inroads, however, vanished from the mainstream of academic and philosophic life.



**In age that gave us both Myers and Freud, psychology followed Freud.** At the beginning of the twentieth century, psychology was at a crossroads. It could have followed one of two paths that were actually mutually contradictory theories of the nature of human personality. One was the path of F.W.H. Myers, a founder of the Society for Psychical Research in London in 1882, and author of the 1903 classic *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (Myers, 1961). William James regarded the two-volume, 1,360 page *magnum opus* as containing some of the strongest evidence obtained to date for “transmarginal consciousness” and the existence of a “growth-oriented dimension within the normal personality to which one could make appeal and through which ideas could have an effect” (Taylor, 1996b, p. 143). The other path was the one of Sigmund Freud who wrote in 1900 his *Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1996), a book that he considered to be his most important work. In an age that gave us both Freud and Myers, psychology followed Freud.

**“Soul” and “spirit” viewed as threatening to scientific status of positivist psychology.** Psychology followed Freud for several reasons. Part of the reason for psychology's choice in favor of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and against Myers can be found in Deborah Coon's (1992) article “Testing the Limits of Sense and Science: American Experimental Psychologists Combat Spiritualism, 1880-1920.” American psychologists were struggling to give the new discipline of psychology scientific roots like those established in the natural sciences of Newtonian physics, chemistry and biology and sought to erect barriers between psychology and spiritualism and psychic research. They found the concepts of “soul” and “spirit” distasteful and a threat to the scientific legitimacy of the nascent discipline of psychology.

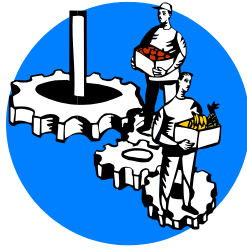
**Parapsychology gave voice to elements of the soul that religion denied.** Precognition and telepathy – those unofficial elements of the mind that appeared to contradict known laws of science – were also to be denied by official psychology because they were believed to contain the relics of religious superstitions and primitive animistic thinking, logical inconsistencies and passions that would, if not opposed and repudiated, destroy the objective structure of psychology itself.



**Psychology ignored Einsteinian physics and favored Newtonian mechanics.** While scientific physical theory has been forced to acknowledge Einsteinian principles, the philosophical movement of modern psychology in this area was and remains to this day very limited.

Myers's “subliminal self” fits in quite well with Einsteinian physics, and the existence of precognition could also ride rather nicely along with Einstein's relative time. Psychology, however, ignored these very scientific theories that might have given a theoretical basis for the exploration of the soul, and settled instead upon the quite prosaic and deadening duty of fitting a Freudian ego with a Darwinian subconscious into an industrial society... The soul was not officially recognized, and the religions themselves, while giving the soul lip service, steadfastly refused to investigate its reality and labeled as heretics or demented anyone determined to do so. (Roberts, 1978, p. 98)

**Modern psychology acts as if Einsteinian concepts do not apply to mind or body.** Modern psychology, despite its outward appearing scientific face, still acts as if Einsteinian concepts have no application to understanding the actions of the brain or the physical nature of the physical body and still prefers to build models of human experience and behavior along the lines of Newtonian mechanics.



**Evolutionary theory found a friend in Freudianism.**

Transpersonal author and mystic Jane Roberts identifies additional reasons why psychology followed Freud instead of Myers at the threshold of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In her provocative book, *The Afterdeath Journal of An American Philosopher*, in which she re-creates the attitudes and opinions of philosopher-psychologist William James, Roberts (1978) argues that Freud's theories were more compatible with Darwinian theory than was Myers's theories. "Evolution's dogmas became Freudianism's justification" (Roberts, 1978, p. 66).

The Freudian concept of the self lacked any good intent; that is, it was stripped of altruism in any trustworthy or purposeful form. It was the only kind of a self that could logically survive the theories of Darwin as popularly understood, the end result of an organism that survived by triumphing over other life forms in an endless battle for life. That self's one 'virtue' was that it *did* survive, and if it lost its intuitive feel for nature in the process – well, that was nature's fault. Altruism, displays of valor, philosophy itself, or creativity in terms of the arts – these were only possible because of their self-serving qualities, and beneath their gentle guise lay the infant's savage determination to exist, and the male's drive to slay his father in order to supersede him in life's battle. Such theories stripped human personality of any majesty and denied the possibility of heroic action that was not tied to the meanest inner motives. (Roberts, 1978, pp. 65-66)

**Nature was cast in a new light.** Nature too was cast in a new light by the theories of Freud and Darwin. Religion's insistence upon humanity's superior status over the animals was replaced by a belief that nature (like our nature) was something to be dominated and controlled. Evolutionary and Freudian concepts allied with business, technology, and science made nature fair game for exploitation and turned humanity away from its natural and practical relationship with plants, animals, and the earth itself.



**Myers' subliminal self is transformed into Freud's id.** Myers's *subliminal consciousness* became a kind of psychological chamber of horrors that required only the most expert of guides (the psychoanalyst) to navigate its hall of distorted mirrors, lest the unwary become swallowed up in recesses of one's own primitive and untrustworthy subjectivity. In all of this, contemplation of the soul had little place. Myers' subliminal self became replaced with Freud's id. In Freud's hands, religion's demons were likewise transformed into the instinctive impulses of the id, which were stamped upon the psyche in its infancy. Freud, unlike Myers, gave expression to those darker elements of the human personality that modern psychology and American society needed to understand, letting the soul slip away and disappear, stripped of its powers only to be recast in terms of the mechanical reactions of instinctive impulses.

Freudian psychology taught the individual to mistrust his own impulses and to turn away from the inner voice of intuition. The Freudian concepts were basically in direct opposition to Myer's subliminal self. Myers did not deny the confusions, distortions, fears, and guilts that could arise in human experience – the subjective terrors – but he did not regard these as the most basic badge of humanity. He saw them instead as regrettable instances of human ignorance that served to hide from man the existence of his subliminal power, that source of being from which each individual life springs. (Roberts, 1978, p. 102)



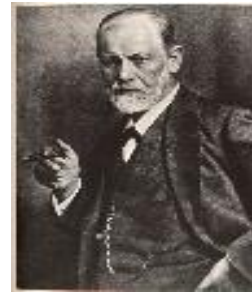
**At the mercy of the past.** Freud's unconscious came to represent the individual's past and the infantile heritage to which we were all doomed due to the neurotic conditioning in infancy produced by one's parents. Drives were forever tied to a confused mixture of primitive sexual and aggressive drives and needs whose source lie in infantile dependency. Our spontaneous impulses and deepest creative drives were now suspect. Nonstandard, unpredictable acts of creativity that set new standards, destroyed past limitations, and brought into conscious awareness new areas of action were most suspect of all and became connected with neurosis and even madness. Our highest acts and darkest motives were seen to proceed from the same mechanical, deterministic psychological processes for which we could neither take credit nor be held responsible.



**Theories of Freud and Darwin blinded psychology to true potentials of human consciousness revealed by Myers.** If the science of the times could not prove the existence of a nonphysical soul that provides inner direction and is responsible for the heroic and extra-dimensional characteristics of human creativity as Myers saw it, neither could science prove its nonexistence. Still, the theories of Freud and Darwin played their role in blinding psychology to the true capabilities of the human consciousness and limited the extent to which the human psyche itself could perceive the greater reality in which it existed. Transpersonal writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1978) summarizes:

When Freudian psychology merged with Darwinian ideology, but more importantly, when psychology allied itself with Freud rather than Myers, then the balance fell sharply away from optimism.... Darwinian man could not have a soul; his murderous instincts left no room for honest good works; and Freudian man had no effective will, only the instinctive subconscious that reached backward through Darwinian time to the animal's 'savage' nature. Most unfortunately, psychology followed that path, taking science and medicine with it. (Roberts, 1978, p. 93)

### Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)



#### Freud's Positive Contributions to Transpersonal Psychology.

Despite Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) profoundly confused and misguided characterization of the nature of the human psyche, his theories influenced the development of transpersonal psychology - even if it was only to give a stalwart position against which to protest. Transpersonal psychiatrist Mark Epstein describes Sigmund Freud as "the grandfather of the entire movement of transpersonal psychology" adding that "it is safe to say that there would be no transpersonal psychology as we know it without Freud's influence" (Epstein, 1996, p. 29). Epstein (1996, pp. 30-33) identifies three of Freud's main contributions to transpersonal personality theory that (unknown to Freud) had their roots in meditation traditions of the East.

1. The conceptualization of mysticism as regressive infantile feelings
2. The use of evenly suspended attention as a therapeutic tool
3. The hypothesis of the pleasure principle as the cause of suffering.



**1. Mysticism as regressive infantile “oceanic feelings”**

According to Epstein (1996), one of Freud’s contributions to transpersonality theory is his characterization of mystical experience in terms of “*oceanic feelings*.” These oceanic feelings originate in infancy out of early experiences of profound intimacy with the mother while feeding at her breast. When these profoundly intimate moments occur, the boundaries separating the ego-self both from the external world and from its inner subconscious depths dissolve. The momentary dissolution of these boundaries is said to evoke primitive and expansive “narcissistic cravings” of omnipotent unity with the mother (Epstein, 1996, pp. 30-33). “[Freud’s] equation of this oceanic feeling with the bliss of primary narcissism, the unambivalent union of infant and mother at the breast, has served as the gold standard for psychological explanations of meditative or mystical experiences” (Epstein, 1996, p. 30).



**2. Evenly suspended attention as a therapeutic tool**

A second contribution Freud made to transpersonality theory is his “discovery” of *evenly suspended attention* as a necessary precondition for the practice of effective psychoanalysis. During the practice of “evenly suspended attention,” the therapist’s critical thinking is “bracketed” and the ego’s preconceptions, categorical judgments, and expectations are momentarily held in abeyance. In their place, nonjudgmental awareness of the here-and-now is cultivated in order to better listen to what the patient is saying and more efficiently “tune into” the patient’s nonverbal, subconscious communications (Epstein, 1996, pp. 33-35). “Freud’s efforts were pioneering from a transpersonal perspective in that they opened up awareness as a therapeutic tool” (Epstein, 1996, p. 30).



**3. Pleasure principle as underlying cause of suffering**

A third contribution to transpersonality theory is Freud’s “elucidation of the pleasure principle, the cause, in his view, of much of our self-imposed misery” (Epstein, 1996, p. 35). The pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain that Freud saw as the basic motivating impulse guiding all behavior and as the source of much of our private emotional turmoil was the same source of suffering that the Buddha attributed as the primary reason for suffering in the world (Buddhism’s second Noble Truth of Tanka (Craving)). Only by renouncing exclusive reliance on the pleasure principle and transmuting or sublimating our persistent cravings, attachments, identifications and desires could psychological health and spiritual experiences, such as liberation and enlightenment, be achieved.

Three additional Freudian contributions to transpersonal psychology include: (4) popularizing the notion of the personal subconscious in American culture, (5) championing the importance of the concept of the ego, and (6) the idea that the psyche has structure consisting of many different areas beneath conscious awareness.



**4. The popularization of notion of the personal subconscious in American culture**

The terms “unconscious” and “subconscious” are important hypothetical constructs in many theories of the transpersonal self. Freud did not discover the unconscious (Ellenberger, 1970; Whyte, 1960), but he was familiar with Eduard von Hartmann’s 1869 classic *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*, which served as source material for some of his formulations about the nature of unconscious motivation (Hartmann, 1869). What is notable for transpersonal psychology is Freud’s popularization of the notion of the personal subconscious in American culture.



**Boundary separating conscious from subconscious is permeable and variable.** The boundary separating the conscious from the subconscious (literally, “beneath awareness”) is, of course, arbitrary since that boundary is permeable and always changing – content that is conscious (in awareness) at one moment can become subconscious (out of awareness) the next, and what once was subconscious can again become conscious, depending on the direction in which one turns the focus of one’s awareness.

**Unconscious and subconscious distinguished.** There will always be certain portions of each individual’s psyche that will never be consciously known by the intellect alone. These areas are truly “unconscious” in so far as the conscious mind is concerned, and with which the comprehending ego will never become familiar in any conscious way, even though it may know intellectually that these portions of the self exist. “Subconscious” portions of the psyche, on the other hand, are areas of each person’s reality, which are potentially consciously available, even though the individual is not aware of them at the present moment. The important question is: What portions of the psyche are consciously unknowable (truly unconscious) and what portions with which we are not at all familiar in any conscious way are capable of becoming consciously knowable (truly subconscious)? From a transpersonal perspective this is an important question because “You may not know all of yourself, but that is a process of self-discovery, of becoming.... The more you discover of yourself, the more you are” (Butts, 1995, p. 68).

**Revisoning subconscious portions of the self.** As Freud pointed out, the subconscious portion of the self is not simply a cardboard figure that can be bullied or pushed around. Nor is it accurate to conceive it as an impersonal machine that can be manipulated to carry out the orders of the outer, conscious ego. Although Freud tended to see the subconscious portions of the personality as “nonconscious,” some transpersonal theorists have moved beyond such a formulation, while retaining Freud’s important concept of the personal subconscious. The subconscious portion of each individual’s reality is far more conscious than Freud supposed.

**The unconscious is hardly nonconscious.** As Myers and later Jung discovered, the subconscious, subliminal stream of consciousness is complicated, richly creative, infinitely varied, purposeful, and highly discriminating. “The unconscious perceives, has purposes and intuitions, feels and thinks as does the conscious mind. We find sufficient evidence for this in the field of psychopathology and the investigation of dream processes” (Jung, 1964b, p. 56). It is hardly nonconscious. The waking ego is simply not aware of it because memory of it is blocked.

The conscious ego rises indeed out of “the unconscious,” but the unconscious being the creator of the ego, is necessarily far more conscious than its offspring. The ego is simply not conscious enough to be able to contain the vast knowledge that belongs to the inner conscious self from which it springs. (Butts, 2002, p. 435)

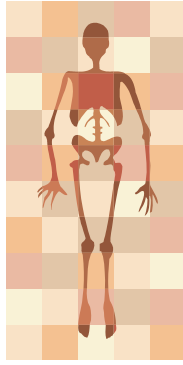
**The inner subconscious mind.** In these terms, the subconscious portions of the self are conscious. Just as our usual, waking conscious mind is directed by an outer ego, so is the inner subconscious mind directed by what may be termed an *inner ego* that organizes so-called subconscious and unconscious material. There is an inner ego or inner self that is the organizer of “unconscious” experience (Roberts, 1974). F. W. H. Myers called this inner ego the “subliminal self;” Jung simply called it the Self (Jung, 1960; Myers, 1976).



## 5. The importance of the psychological ego

The tripartite structure of the psyche – id, ego, and superego – that characterizes Freud’s account of personality provides a handy framework for explaining the many facets of the personality and has proven to be a useful construct system for relating transpersonal aspects of the self (e.g., the transpersonal self, superconscious, collective unconscious) to ordinary personality functioning (the ego). As Allport noted: “Freud played a leading if unintentional role, in preserving the concept of ego from total obliteration throughout two generations of strenuous positivism” (Allport, 1969, p. 37).





**Conscious beliefs influence unconscious processes that create personal reality.** Although Freud tended to see the (repressed) unconscious portions of the self as the point of origin for most psychological disturbances and physical disorders, transpersonal psychologists have moved beyond such a formulation while retaining Freud's important concept of ego. As later ego psychologists and cognitive psychologists have observed, conscious beliefs play an important role influencing subconscious processes that create personal experience of health and illness. The body and the subconscious mind exist with the ego's beliefs to contend with.

**The body and the subconscious mind rely upon the ego's interpretation of events.** Our conscious mind directs our attention toward sensations that occur in three-dimensional space and time, interprets those sensations into perceptions, organizing those perceptions into concepts, categories, and schemas that provide interpretations that give meaning to those perceptions. The subconscious mind and body depends upon those interpretations. The subconscious mind and the cells that compose our bodies do not try to make sense of the philosophical and religious beliefs that pervade the social, cultural, political human world. They rely upon the interpretation of the ego and its conscious mind. These interpretations, in turn, produce the inner environment of thoughts and concepts to which our subconscious mind and body responds. It is not the unconscious portions of the self, in other words, that are the cause of psychological or biological disorders, but the personality's consciously available, though currently subconscious, beliefs about the nature of the self, body, time, world, and others that are responsible for "setting the stage" so to speak, for the occurrence of symptoms. The quality of our mental and physical health is then formed through the subjective realities and energies of our cognitive constructs and the emotions that those constructs generate.



## 6. The "lands of the psyche"

**Lands of the psyche.** Freud was arguably the first developmental psychologist. He described the structure of the human psyche as consisting of several layers, analogous to the levels that geologists and archeologists reveal by digging into the Earth's history, stratum by stratum. Just as the earth has a structure so does the "inner planet" of the human psyche.

**Psychic politics.** Transpersonal writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1976, 1977a, 1979b) develops this metaphor of "lands of the psyche" further. Just as exterior physical continents, islands, mountains, and seas emerge from the inner structure of the earth, so do various psychological regions take various shapes as they rise from an even greater invisible source that is within the psyche itself. As the earth is composed of many environments, so is the psyche composed of preconscious, conscious, and superconscious environments. As we physically dwell in a particular town or city, so do we presently "live" in one small psychological area called the "ego" that we identify as our home, as our "I." As different countries follow different kinds of constitutions and different geographical areas follow various local laws, in the same manner, different portions of the psyche exist within their own local "laws" and have different kinds of "government" - different "psychic politics" so to speak (Roberts, 1976). Each portion of the psyche possesses its own characteristic geography, its own customs and languages that travelers need to be aware of in their inner journeys through the lands of the psyche. This metaphor is a powerful heuristic device to help us understand the true complexity of the "unknown" reality of the human psyche (Roberts, 1977a, 1979b).

### Alfred Adler (1870-1937)



**Alfred Adler.** Alfred Adler (1870-1937) is a personality psychologist rarely cited as a contributor of transpersonal psychology, although his notion of the “creative self” presages contemporary understandings of the nature of the transpersonal portions of our identity. Personality theorists Hall and Lindsey (1978) calls Adler’s concept of the creative self “the active principle of human life, and it is not unlike the older concept of soul” (Hall & Lindsey, 1978, p. 166).

When he discovered the creative power of the self, all his other concepts were subordinated to it; here at last was the prime mover, the philosopher’s stone, the elixir of life, the first cause of everything human for which Adler had been searching. The unitary, consistent, creative self is sovereign in the personality structure. (Hall & Lindsey, 1978, pp. 165-166)

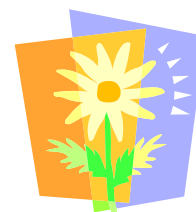
**Adler’s concept of the “creative self.”** Adler was one of the first personality theorists to suggest that there was a power within the human personality that was truly creative in nature – capable of displaying abilities that were record-breaking, that set new standards and destroyed limitations of mind and body, and that brought into conscious awareness new areas of action and expression that were nonstandard and unpredictable. The inner self was capable of high creative acts that open up new areas of being, and that expands the individual’s capacity to think and act in new ways.

**In our choices, we create ourselves.** With the concept of the creative self, Adler was declaring that individuals were ultimately free to interpret the meaning of the environmental and genetic influences that impinge upon the personality. It is the interpretations the individual makes of these influences that determine their effect, one’s attitude toward life, and one’s relationship to the world of time and others. We create our personality through the choices we make. Heredity and environment are the bricks that the self uses in its own ways to creatively build the individual’s style of life.

**The creative self creates the goals as well as the means to the goals.** From a transpersonal perspective, the creative self can be conceived of as that portion of the universe that is personally disposed in our direction because its energies *form* our own person. Its creative power always sustains and nourishes our existence. The creative self shapes an individual’s style of life and guides the method of striving toward one’s goals.

Like all first causes, the creative power of the self is hard to describe. We can see its effects, but cannot see it. It is something that intervenes between the stimuli acting upon the person and the responses the person makes to these stimuli. In essence, the doctrine of a creative self asserts that humans make their own personalities. They construct them out of the raw material of heredity and experience. The creative self is the yeast that acts upon the facts of the world and transforms these facts into a personality that is subjective, dynamic, unified, personal, and uniquely stylized. The creative self gives meaning to life; it creates the goal as well as the means to the goal. (Hall & Lindsey, 1978, p. 166)

**In seeking our individual fulfillment, we contribute to the betterment of all society.** The powers of the creative self always seek fulfillment. For Adler, this was seen most readily in individual’s striving for superiority and success. In seeking out those conditions that are best suited to his or her own happiness and fulfillment, each individual naturally contributes to the betterment and fulfillment of others, for no one’s fulfillment *can* be achieved at the expense of others. Fulfillment does not happen that way, and to suppose otherwise, is to misunderstand the nature of human fulfillment. The creative self was common to all human beings, but uncommon and unique in its individual expression, bringing out and extending the capacities of individual action and the achievement of our species. When a person acts most individualistically and least like others that person models or points out to others possibilities of achievement not perceived earlier by members of society.



**C. G. Jung (1875 – 1961)**

**Carl Gustav Jung** (1875 – 1961), Swiss psychiatrist and founder of the school of Analytical Psychology, is considered one of the godfathers of transpersonal psychology. It became clear to Jung five years after his initial contact with Freud in 1907 that basic disagreements existed between them about the nature of the human psyche, particularly in the following four areas: (a) the importance of sexuality as the primary motivation of behavior, (b) the belief that the subconscious portion of the personality was primarily a repository of infantile, primitive, destructive impulses, (c) the view of the ego as a very weak portion of the self that must defend itself against other areas of the self that are far stronger and more dangerous and that the ego's function was restrictive rather than expansive, and (d) the limitation of cognition and memory to the personal experiences of the individual. These disagreements provided the necessary impetus for Jung to broaden Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical approach to produce a more inclusive, integrative understanding of the psyche's greater existence.

#### **C.G. Jung's Contributions to Transpersonal Psychiatry and Psychology**

**Contributions of Jung to transpersonal psychiatry.** Transpersonal psychiatrist Bruce Scotton (1996, pp. 39-40) lists Jung's numerous contributions to the field of transpersonal psychiatry.

- The notion that psychological development includes growth to higher levels of consciousness and continues throughout life.
- The concept that the transcendent lies within and is available to each individual.

- The willingness to explore the wisdom traditions of other cultures for insights relevant to clinical work.
- The recognition that healing and growth often result from experiences of symbolic imagery or states of consciousness that cannot be grasped by rational deduction.
- The first to study various phenomena from a psychiatric perspective, including trance channeling, yoga, Native American spirituality, African shamanism, the *I Ching*, alchemy, Gnosticism, and unidentified flying objects (UFOs).



“Jung's work in the transpersonal realm prefigured much of what is current in the field” (Scotton, 1996, p. 39). Twelve of C.G. Jung's contributions important to the conceptual and methodological development of modern transpersonal psychology will be briefly described, including:

1. Opening the subject of the spiritual reality of the psyche to scientific inquiry.
2. Described the objective nature of the human psyche.
3. Outspoken critic of the materialistic bias of modern experimental psychology.
4. Posited the existence of a collective or transpersonal unconscious.
5. Openly espoused of the cause of parapsychological research.

6. Made clear the expansive and flexible nature of the human ego
7. Highlighted the supportive nature of subconscious portions of the psyche
8. Explained the importance of the Self in the inner spiritual life of the individual
9. Clarified the role of symbols in psychic processes
10. Elucidated the influence of shadow-like elements of the psyche
11. Described the psychology and pathology of so-called “occult” phenomena
12. Developing methods for investigating the spiritual life of the mind.

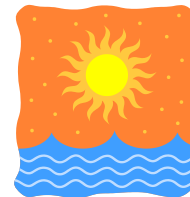


**1. Opening spiritual reality of the psyche to scientific inquiry.**

Most transpersonal theorists regard C. G. Jung to be one of the first depth psychologists to open the subject of the spiritual reality of the psyche to scientific inquiry (Jung, 1953, 1960, 1964a, 1965, 1978). Of all psychodynamically oriented psychologies, Jung’s Analytical Psychology addressed what he called “the life of the spirit” most consistently.

Whereas in its development up to the present, psychology has dealt chiefly with psychic processes in the light of physical causation, the future task of psychology will be the investigation of their spiritual determinants. We have only begun to take scientific note of our spiritual experiences. (Jung, 1964, p. 63)

For Jung, life was a sacred quest and journey whose goal was the conscious ego’s discovery of and integration with the center of our being, the core inner Self (Crowley, 1998). The Jungian core inner Self is another one of psychology’s nearest corollary to the soul. Jung used the word “soul” frequently in his writings and criticized mainstream psychology for becoming a “psychology without a soul” (Jung, 1960).

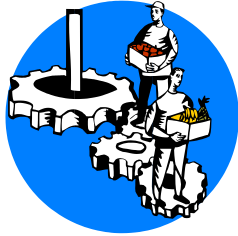


**2. The objective nature of the human psyche.**

**The objective side of the human psyche.** For Jung, the psyche is not simply something subjective, but has an objective side. Anything that acts and has real effects upon us to which we are compelled to react and respond is itself real. The objective nature of the psyche is revealed when psychological events occur that resist our conscious control. For example, when emotions overwhelm us, thoughts run on without stopping, memory of events evade us, fantasies and daydreams obsess us, and flashes of insight and inspiration emerge unbidden.

**There are many psychological activities that take place independently of our subjective consciousness.** The objective side of the human psyche is also revealed in the many psychological and biological activities that occur spontaneously without normally conscious attention and are guided by activities that are largely “unconscious” at least as far as our conscious ego is concerned, ranging from the exotic (e.g., ideomotor movements, post-hypnotic suggestions, “multiple personalities” alternating with the everyday personality) to the commonplace (e.g., thinking, speaking, writing, walking, breathing, body self-repair, sleeping and dreaming). Sensations are conscious, but the mechanisms involved in the process of sensing are not. Thoughts and emotions are conscious, but the underlying processes of thinking and feeling are not. Words are conscious, but the production processes of writing and speaking are not. Dreams are conscious, but the process of dreaming is not. “It is indeed as if some inner spontaneous part of the personality is far more knowledgeable than the conscious portion of which we are so rightfully proud” (Butts, 1997a, p. 251).

**The objective nature of the psyche justifies the notion of a soul.** For Jung, the old view of the soul as an objective, independent reality is justified since our very existence as physical creatures and all the processes that make our life possible in the first place depend to a startling degree upon the smooth, proper functioning of inner, spontaneous physical, chemical, biological, and psychological processes that are largely unconscious from the viewpoint of our conscious mind.



### 3. Critic of the materialism and scientism of modern experimental psychology.

**Scientific materialism and scientism.** Jung is important to transpersonal psychology because of his outspoken criticisms of the philosophical foundations of modern scientific psychology that had become established by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His was one of many dissenting voices to the *metaphysics of scientific materialism* (the belief that “only the physical is real; what is nonphysical does not exist, and even if it does, it cannot be verified unless it is entirely reducible to physical matter”) and the *epistemology of scientism* (the belief that “there is no reality except that revealed by laboratory science; science is the final arbiter of what is real; no truth exists except that which sensory-empirical science verifies”) that came to characterize much of orthodox, mainstream psychology of his time.

Today the psyche does not build itself a body, but on the contrary matter, by chemical action, produces the psyche.... Mind must be thought of as an epiphenomena of matter... To allow the soul or psyche a substantiality of its own is repugnant to the spirit of the age, for that would be heresy. (Jung, 1960, pp. 340-341)

C.G. Jung (1960) believed that the modern psychology’s present inclination “to account for everything on physical grounds...[was] because up to now, too much was accounted for in terms of spirit. ...Most likely we are now making exactly the same mistake on the other side” (p. 342).

**Loss of mind and spirit.** Under the influence of scientific materialism and scientism, the entire interior dimension of mind and spirit and those great spontaneous, unconscious, inner processes that make life possible were either reduced to a generalized mass of neural impulses and neurotransmitters or else dismissed entirely and denied any substantial reality at all because the physical senses or their extensions - the microscope, electroencephalograph, galvanometer - could not detect or measure them.

This view [of modern psychology] reduces psychic happenings to a kind of activity of the glands; thoughts are regarded as secretions of the brain, and thus we achieve a psychology without a psyche. From this standpoint...the psyche does not exist in its own right; it is nothing in itself, but the mere expression of processes in the physical substrate.... Consciousness...is taken as the *sine qua non* of psychic life, that is to say, as the psyche itself. And so it comes about that all modern ‘psychologies without a psyche’ are psychologies of consciousness, for which an unconscious psychic life simply does not exist. (Jung, 1960, p. 343)

**A modern psychology without a psyche.** And so it remains today that cognitive science, the branch of psychology that studies attention, memory, imagery, thinking, language, and creativity focuses strictly upon *conscious* cognitional processes and their biological, environmental, and behavioral correlates, without including in their equations or theories the existence of a subconscious mind or an unconscious psychic life from which conscious cognitional processes spring and is its source. The psyche does not exist in its own right, or of it does as a mere shadow of itself, a hypothetical construct meditating the physical processes that actually give rise to conscious, alert awareness. *What is conscious is what consciousness is.*



**Jung did not deny the validity of observable facts, physical matter, laws of mechanics, or past events.** It was not that Jung denied the validity or significance of natural phenomena or facts that are objectively observable, the existence and substantiality of matter, the laws of physics and chemistry, the influence of past events, or the value of analyzing a whole into its basic components and elements. He did not. What he did deny was that reality was: limited to natural phenomena or facts that were objectively observable (positivism), sufficiently explained in physical terms by the existence or nature of matter (materialism), mechanically determined and capable of explanation by the laws of physics and chemistry alone (mechanism), determined by past events alone (determinism), and fully explained in terms of its simplest parts (reductionism). Jung did not deny that interior, subjective, nonmaterial psychic realities had exterior, objective, material biological correlates. What he did deny was the claim that there are no interior realities, only exterior ones; that all interior psychic states were nothing but neurobiological processes; that the psyche had no existence independent of the brain, and that “the brain makes the psyche.”



#### 4. The existence of a collective or transpersonal unconscious.

Jung asserted that our personalities are shaped and influenced not only by personal experiences but also by the cumulative experiences of our species that were laid down with the genetic patterns that reflected the psychic evolutionary history of our species. Just as the physical evolution of our species is reflected in our physiological structure, so too was the psychological evolution of our species reflected in our psychological structure. Jung stressed the interdependence of individual minds and the availability of superior inner knowledge via an unconscious mind that was shared by all members of the human race, making telepathy possible between individuals located distances apart in space and time. Each of our personal experiences, however minute or seemingly insignificant, becomes part of the knowledge of the species. We all contribute to this body of species knowledge and can likewise draw upon that fund of collective wisdom.



#### 5. Espoused the cause of parapsychological research

**Jung openly espoused the cause parapsychological research.** C. G. Jung developed the paranormal theory of synchronicity as an alternative explanation to random change to account for the occurrence of meaningful coincidences. He was also strongly convinced of the reality of spatial (clairvoyance) and temporal (precognitive) telepathic phenomena.

Anyone who has the least knowledge of parapsychological material, which already exists and has been thoroughly verified will know that so-called telepathic phenomena are undeniable facts. An objective and critical survey of the available data would establish that perception occurs as if in part there were no space, in part no time... This possible transcendence of space-time, for which it seems to me there is a good deal of evidence, is of such incalculable import that it should spur the spirit of research to the greatest effort. Our present development of consciousness is, however, so backward that in general we still lack the scientific and intellectual equipment for adequately evaluating the facts of telepathy so far as they have bearing on the nature of the psyche. I have referred to this group of phenomena merely to point out that the psyche's attachment to the brain, i.e., its space-time limitation, is no longer as self-evident and incontrovertible as we have hitherto been led to believe... Out of respect for the psychological fact that 'telepathic' perceptions occur, anyone should draw the conclusion that the psyche, in its deepest reaches, participates in a form of existence beyond space and time, and thus partakes of what is inadequately and symbolically described as 'eternity.' (Jung, 1960, pp. 412-414)



## 6. The expansive and flexible nature of the human ego

**The nature of the ego.** In their discussion of Jung's Analytic Theory, Calvin Hall and Gardner Lindsey write in their classic textbook *Theories of Personality* (1978) "The ego.... is made up of conscious perceptions, memories, thoughts, and feelings. The ego is responsible for one's feeling of identity and continuity, and from the viewpoint of the individual person it is regarded as being at the center of consciousness" (Hall & Lindsey, 1978, p. 118). Transpersonal writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1974) elaborates:

*The ego is composed of various portions of the personality – it is a combination of characteristics, ever-changing, that act in a unitary fashion – the portion of the personality that deals most directly with the world... The ego, while appearing the same to itself, ever changes... The ego and the conscious mind are not the same thing... In certain terms, the ego is the eye through which the conscious mind perceives, or the focus through which it views physical reality.... The ego is only a portion of You; it is that expert part of your personality that deals directly with the contents of your conscious mind, and is concerned most directly with the material portions of your experience. The ego is a very specialized portion of your greater identity. It is a portion of you that arises to deal directly with the life that the larger You is living. (Roberts, 1974, p. 16)*

**The ego's purpose is expansive rather than restrictive.** Jung acknowledged that while one function of the ego was to act as a dam, holding back other perceptions, it is not in the nature of the ego to act in such a fashion, however. The ego hampers the self's natural inclinations because it has been trained to do so. We have been trained, conditioned, and socialized by parents and teachers, society and religion to believe that it is the ego's purpose is restrictive rather than expanding. After putting blinders upon the ego, hampering its perceptions and native flexibility, we observe its inflexibility and then conclude that this is its natural function and characteristic.

**The Ego is capable of much more.** Jung realized that the ego is capable of much more attentional capacity and open awareness than we give it credit for. Jung recognized that the ego *does* want to understand and interpret physical reality and to relate to it, that it is not an inferior portion of the self, and that it wants to help the personality survive within physical existence and does so with the aid of inner portions of the Self.



## 7. The supportive nature of subconscious portions of the psyche

Jung came to believe that the subconscious portions of our personality contain more than chaotic, infantile impulses that are not to be trusted, as Freud had claimed. For Jung, the order of nature, the creative drama of our dreams, the precision with which we unconsciously grow from a fetus to an adult without a whit of conscious thought, the existence of mythic themes and heroic quests and ideals that pervade the history of our species, all give evidence of a greater psychic reality within which we have our being. The unconscious is not to be feared but is to be sought as an aid and helper and supporter in solving life's problems. Transpersonal writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1976) clarifies this point:

Our particular kind of individual consciousness is natural and rises from the psyche as easily as leaves grow from trees. The unconscious forms conscious focus; needs it, seeks it out, and operates in the objective world under its auspices. The unconscious is the constant creator of our individuality and not its great usurper; not the dark king ever ready to do us in and set up its own kingdom instead. Without the unconscious, there'd be no conscious kingdom to begin with. Such beliefs in the threatening elements of the unconscious make us fear the source of our being and hamper the fuller facets of individuality possible. (Roberts, 1976, pp. 321-322)



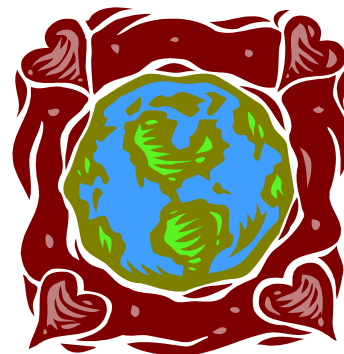
**Trust the spontaneous portions of your being.** It is the unconscious portion of our being that assures the smooth functioning of all of the spontaneous, automatic processes of your body. The central nervous system, circulatory system, digestive system respiratory system, endocrine system, immune system, and so forth, all operate without the aid of conscious thought, repairing themselves constantly with a precision and purpose and intelligence that surpass our most sophisticated medical technologies. Those spontaneous processes that knew how to grow us from a fetus to an adult provide for our physical and psychological life. It is those inner spontaneous processes that propel our thoughts and that heal our bodies. Those very same spontaneous processes “represent the life of the spirit itself” (Butts, 1997a, p. 251) and are responsible for the health of both the physical body and the nonphysical mind.



**People frightened of themselves.** When people cut ourselves off from their inner Self, because of negative beliefs about the nature of the unconscious, then a distrust, uncertainty, self-doubt, and fear is generated of one’s own inner dynamics. When people view their own thoughts, feelings, and impulses as extravagant, excessive, dangerous, untrustworthy, unreliable, or filled with negative energy, then those individuals can become frightened of themselves and of those impulses that stimulate good health, effective action, bodily movement, expression of emotions, and the discovery of unconscious knowledge. They feel alienated and separated from the source of our being, or else, compensating for these felt lacks, they may see themselves instead as all-powerful to hide inner feelings of powerlessness, fear, and aloneness.

**Why should the ego be afraid of its own source?** Jung understood that we can indeed depend upon seemingly unconscious portions of ourselves. When we do so, we can become more and more consciously aware, bringing into our conscious awareness larger and larger portions of our identity. When the center of the total personality no longer identifies solely with the ego portion of its identity, and the conscious mind becomes aware of the existence of the inner Self, then the personality can consciously draw upon the Self’s greater strength, vitality, and knowledge. Jung once remarked, “One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.” The personality is not powerless to understand itself nor must the individual compulsively react because of inner conflicts over which he or she has little control.

**We must give up ideas about the unsavory nature of the unconscious.** The “unknown” portions of the self are as much a part of you now as any cell within your physical body. The psychological unconscious simply contains great portions of our own experience that are consciously unknown and with which we are not at all familiar in any conscious way. It deals with a different kind of psychic reality than the comprehending ego is used to dealing with, but with which the ego *is* natively equipped to deal, if it is flexible enough. To explore the “unknown” reality of ourselves, we must venture inward within our own psyche. To know the nature of consciousness, we must become familiar with the nature of our own consciousness. In order to be able to do this, however, we must first give up any ideas we have about the unsavory nature of the unconscious and those spontaneous inner processes that make life possible. “Value fulfillment of each and every element in life relies upon those spontaneous processes, and at their source is the basic affirmative love and acceptance of the self, the universe, and life’s conditions” (Roberts, 1997a, p. 253).







### 8. The nature of the Self

“The concept of the Self is probably Jung’s most important psychological discovery and represents the culmination of his intensive studies of archetypes” (Hall & Lindsey, 1978, p. 125). Jung believed that the purpose of existence is for each person to achieve his or her individual integration of conscious with unconscious experience, understanding, and knowledge. Jung posited the existence of the archetype of the Self that helps the ego do this.

**What is the Self?** The Self is an archetype that represents a person’s striving for unity and balance, equilibrium and stability, cohesion, and integration of all the various portions of the personality. This inner Self possesses extraordinary creativity and organization whose goal is the integration, balance, and equilibrium of the multiple and diverse yet related systems that composed the totality of the personality or psyche.

**Actualization of the Self is life’s goal.** The actualization of the Self is life’s goal as the center of identity moves away from the ego along the ego-Self axis to become more fully situated in the Self of which the ego is but one of its expressions. The journey to Self is a process of discovery that is without end; the more you discover of yourself, the more you are creating, and the more there is to discover.

**We are motivated by values we live by.** Jung recognized that we are motivated by moral and religious values even more than by sexual or aggressive “instincts.”

Like all archetypes, [the Self] motivates human behavior and causes one to search for wholeness especially through the avenues provided by religion. True religious experiences are about as close to selfhood as most humans will ever come, and the figures of Christ and Buddha are as highly differentiated expressions of the self archetype as one will find in the modern world. (Hall & Lindsey, 1978, p. 124)

The Self is the epicenter of the total personality around which all other components of the personality revolve, like planets constellated around the sun. The main symbol of the Self is the circle or mandala, which expresses the perfect unity and oneness of the psyche.



### 9. The role of symbols in psychic life

**Symbols are the language of the psyche.** Symbols are the language of the Self; symbols are the language of the subconscious. Symbols are as natural to the mind as leaves are to trees, and as vital and alive. For Jung, symbols form the essence of our knowledge of the subconscious that point beyond themselves to something else and “stand for” something. Symbols both mean something in and of themselves and “participate” in the thing it points to.

**Symbols simultaneously transmit an image, an idea, and a feeling that powerfully motivates behavior.** Individually, symbols not only have a core image and represent meaning and an idea, but also contain an affective dimension that, taken together (image, idea, and feeling), powerfully motivate behavior (e.g., a recycling logo). Collectively, the myths of a culture are elaborated symbols – symbolic stories - not deliberately invented, but unconsciously created, like dream symbols, and herein lies their power to motivate behavior (Campbell, 1970; Jung, 1964).

**One source of our tendency to interpret symbols in literal terms.** Unfortunately, we are so use to interpreting all information in literal terms if we are to consider it true at all, that we have lost the ability to see look behind the symbolism for the greater meanings beneath. After all, science has taught us that information must be literally true if it is to be considered fact. What is imaginary or symbolic is not real, we have been taught this as children. Only literal fact is true and if what I perceive is true, then it must be true in a literal sense, otherwise it is false. This is one origin of our tendency to interpret symbols in literal terms, and thus feel deceived when they don’t match physical fact.



**The symbolism of our religions.** When we try to understand the symbolism of religious stories, for example, we often mistake the psychic symbol for the physical reality, turning what is symbolic into something literal. This causes, in the words of Freud, “the truths contained in religious doctrines [to become] distorted and systematically disguised [so that] the mass of mankind cannot recognize them as truth” (Freud, 1961, p. 78). When symbolic stories are found out not to be literally true, the individual may then feel deceived and say: “Symbols are false; they contain no truths worthy of investigation. They are mere illusions, imaginary and not real, signifying nothing.” We must learn, however, to read the symbolic language of our dreams, and our religious and mythological stories in order to see the disguised truth behind their camouflage clothing.

**The symbolism of our dreams.** The same problem occurs when we try to understand the symbolism of our dreams. We are always comparing the symbols of dream events to the literally nature of events as they occur in physical reality. We use physical reality as the standard for interpreting the meaning of our dreams. When the temporal and spatial structure and organization of dream events do not match what we would expect to occur in physical events, we inevitably find the dream events confusing, chaotic, and meaningless and declare them false. There is only one standard of truth and fact and that is to be found in the physical world and in the literal interpretation of meaning.

**The symbols are not to be mistaken for the reality they represent.** Symbols are not to be taken literally, or mistaken for the reality they represent. As representations of unconscious knowledge, they are true; as representations of physical reality, they are false, in the same way that a map is not the territory, the menu is not the meal, and the sign is not the destination.



## 10. Elucidated the influence of shadow-like elements of the psyche

**Meeting the shadow.** People encounter difficulty when they mistake the symbol for the reality during their encounter with the “dark side” of their personality or what Jung called the “Shadow.” The shadow consists of those so-called “instincts” and impulses that civilized humanity attributes to its “animal” nature, similar to the Freudian concept of the id. The Shadow is responsible for the emergence into conscious awareness of thoughts, feelings, images, and behavioral impulses considered to be socially reprehensible. Such thoughts, feelings, and actions, are usually automatically repressed by the ego back into the personal subconscious or hidden from public view behind the social mask of the “Persona” – the front we put on for other people and the role we play in response to the demands of social convention and tradition. As an archetype within the collective unconscious, the Shadow is the origin of Catholicism’s conception of original sin and the complex of images, ideas, feelings, and actions that compose individual notions of a “sinful” self (Hall & Lindsey, 1978, pp. 123-124).

**Devils and demons as symbols of the Shadow.** When the Shadow is projected outward, it becomes the devil or enemy. Devils, demons, and evil spirits are all symbols of the archetype of the Shadow. If we mistake the symbol for the reality, then we come to believe that devils and demons have an objective existence. Devils and demons have always represented portions of humanity’s own psychological reality – portions of the psyche that to some extent we as a species have not assimilated, but in a dissociative kind of expression, project instead outward from ourselves. By so doing, we separate and isolate ourselves from the responsibility of being held accountable for our acts that are considered debasing and cruel by imagining the existence of other forces – devils, demons, evil spirits – that “made me do it” or “commanded me to perform them.”

**Devils and enemies as projected unassimilated portions of the self.** Jung recognized that humanity has always projected unassimilated portions of its own psychological reality outward, personifying them, using at various times a variety of images that make up the pantheon of gods and goddesses, good spirits and bad. All these “forces” have had a very important part to play in the psychological evolution of our species, as documented in the mythologies that have been handed down to us across the ages. In all cases, however, they stood for those sensed but unknown glimpses of our own reality that we as a species were determined to explore.

**The Devil as a “superlative hallucination.”** According to transpersonal writer and mystic, Jane Roberts (1981a, 1981b), as long as individuals believe in the objective reality of a Devil, then they will create one that is real enough for them because of the psychic energy given to him by them and others who continue to create him through their belief. Created out of fear and restriction, and formed by one’s guilt and one’s belief in it, such a fake devil has no power or reality to those who do not believe in his existence or give him energy through their belief in him. Beliefs in an objectified devil actually reflects a lack of faith and trust in the power of good, viewing it instead as weak, and the fearful concentration upon what they think of as the power of evil, in which case the power resides in the person and not in the mock devil. A successful encounter with our individual and collective shadows requires that we understand this psychic fact (Zweig & Abrams, 1991).

**Because there is good, there must be evil?** This is not to say that there is no reality behind the symbols, but merely that when we mistake the symbolic appearance for the reality itself then we inevitably misunderstand its nature. Jung recognized that *we* are responsible for our actions, whether they are called good or evil. In our choices, we create our own personal reality. The evil that we experience in our lives is not a force in itself but is the result of ignorance and misunderstanding. “The Devil is made in the image of those who imagine him” (Watts, 1963, p. 37)

**The Two Hands of God.** To say that because there is “good,” then there must also be “evil” is like saying because the body has a left hand, then it must also have a right hand, without recognizing the inner unity of opposites and the fact that both are portions of the same body. Transpersonal philosopher Alan W. Watts in his fascinating exploration of what he called “the myths of polarity” in his 1963 book *The Two Hands of God: The Myths of Polarity* describes how explicit two-sided oppositions and ultimate dualisms of light/darkness, life/death, good/evil, self/not-self/ knower/known illustrated in Early Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, Iranian, and Christian stories and myths conceals the implicit unity and union of the One (Watts, 1963). We separate and classify into categories and mental pigeonholes in thought, what is united and undivided in experience and in nature.

The importance of a box for thought is that the inside is different from the outside. But in nature the walls of the box are what the inside and the outside have in common... Experiences and values, which we had believed to be contrary and distinct are, after all, aspects of the same thing. (Watts, 1963, p. 46)



## 11. The psychology and pathology of so-called “occult” phenomena

**“On the psychology and pathology of so-called occult phenomena.”** Carl Jung’s 1902 dissertation for his medical degree was titled “On the psychology and pathology of so-called occult phenomena” which emphasized the continuity between the conscious and unconscious levels of the mind – a theme that was to be reflected throughout his life’s work. In his dissertation, Jung discusses how communications between scattered portions of the self represented by various complexes and archetypes that inhabit various regions of the unconscious often appear in such situations as working with Ouija boards, in mediumistic sittings, or the hearing of voices.

**Personifications of repressed images, ideas, emotions, and impulses.** Especially when the “spirit” communications or hallucinated voices give orders to be obeyed, do they represent powerful and repressed images and ideas, feelings, and impulses strong enough to form about themselves their own personifications. Through these personifications, our inhibited and repressed fears can dramatize themselves as demons, devils, or evil visions that give orders of a destructive nature (and conversely as spirits, angels, or holy visions that give instructions of a constructive nature in those cases where our inhibited and repressed hopes and desires dramatize themselves).

**Look behind the symbolism for the greater meanings.** In all cases, Jung tells us to look behind the symbolism of the communication for the greater meanings beneath. The visions and voices are symbols for other dimensions of our psyche. Their language is not literal but symbolic. We must consider the possibility that such communications might be coming from portions of our own psychological reality that to some extent we have not assimilated but have instead projected outside of ourselves in personified form.



## 12. Developing methods for investigating the spiritual life of the mind.

**Investigating the nature of the life of the mind.** Psychological events have an objective side, therefore, a life of their own, and it is the job of transpersonal psychologists to investigate the nature of those lives. C. G. Jung developed a number of original techniques for communicating with the subconscious mind. One of the most useful as far as learning to integrate conscious and subconscious portions of the personality is concerned is the technique of *Active Imagination* (Johnson, 1986). Throughout all his personality theory, Jung acknowledged the importance of the integration of the outer and inner self for personality growth and development.

**Using *Active Imagination* for personal growth.** For Jung, the goal of personality development is the recognition of the inner Self by all levels of the personality. The inner Self must *become* the ego-self. This unity then puts the individual in a position to begin a truly fulfilling existence. This requires that the conscious ego know enough to speak *nearly* as an equal with one’s inner Self. In order to become this knowledgeable, the technique of Active Imagination is an important aid. The process of communicating with your inner Self is to become conscious, with the ego highly involved.

**Integration of ego with Self is the goal of maturity.** The intuitive portions of the personality have to have the full cooperation of the intellectual and conscious self for this development to occur, however. The conscious ego has to appreciate in quite real terms its dependence upon the intuitional wisdom of the inner Self. There has to be agreement and unity between the conscious intellectual and subconscious intuitional portions of the personality. The conscious ego is not to be left by the wayside, wondering while the intuitional abilities lead to fulfillment. The conscious intellectual faculties have to realize that those abilities operate in order that they themselves be fulfilled. The intuitions and the intellect are meant to challenge and develop each other. What we are after is the recognition of the ego-directed self of the larger inner self of which it is a part. This is always the direction of development, until finally the immediate, outer self and the inner self are one, at which point further stages of development await.



**Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974)**



Psychiatrist **Roberto Assagioli** (1888-1974) was the founder of the school of thought called “Psychosynthesis.” Psychosynthesis was the first Western theory of personality that could truly call itself “transpersonal” in that it incorporated the idea of soul explicitly into its theory of the human personality (Assagioli, 1991, 1992, 1993).

Psychosynthesis is a transpersonal, or spiritual psychotherapy, a phenomenon of the twentieth century Western world. It is a theory and practice of individual development and growth, though with a potential for wider application into social and indeed world-wide settings; and it assumes that each human being is a soul as well as a personality. (Hardy, 1987, p. 1)

**Similarity with Freud, Jung, and Adler.** Like Freud’s system of psychoanalysis, Psychosynthesis sought to promote the scientific and experimental study of the unconscious and the empirical verification of its concepts in the lives of everyone. Like Jung’s system of Analytical Psychology, the therapeutic techniques of Psychosynthesis emphasized the use of symbol, myth, and imagery. Like Adler’s system of Individual Psychology, it represented an original contribution to our understanding of the psychosocial dynamics of the psyche.



**Difference from Freud, Jung, and Adler.** Unlike Freud, Jung, and Adler, Roberto Assagioli explicitly sought to create an inclusive spiritual psychology that was not merely eclectic but truly integrative and multidimensional – coordinating and synthesizing theories and experience of diverse fields of study (e.g., psychodynamic movement, psychosomatic medicine, psychology of religion, investigation of the superconscious and “cosmic consciousness,” Eastern psychology, sociology and anthropology, organismic holism, parapsychology, hypnotism and autosuggestion and ancient religious frameworks) in a specifically empirical, natural, and non-churchly sense.

Assagioli’s work... in its assumption of the existence of the soul, harks back to a wide-ranging literature of religious and spiritual mysticism, both Western and Eastern, to neoplatonic theory, to the many mystics of the Middle Ages in Christian and Jewish thought – Dante, Eckhart, St. John of the Cross, the Kabbalah, to the schools of knowledge founded in the West before the split between science and religion, to Buddhism and Hinduism, and to classical Greek philosophy, particularly Plato. (Hardy, 1987, p. 2)

**Key contributions of Psychosynthesis to transpersonal psychology.** Piero Ferrucci (1987, p. x), former student and collaborator of Assagioli identifies several key contributions of Psychosynthesis to our understanding of the structure, states, function, and development of human consciousness:

- A multi-polar model of the human psyche, with its various ‘subpersonalities’ (as opposed to depth psychology’s bi-polar or tri-polar traditional structure)
- The central position of the self as focus of coordination and integration of the personality
- The importance of the will and its role in establishing the human personality as a conscious agency capable of choice and purpose
- The existence of the transpersonal realm: the higher unconscious as source of inspiration, ecstasy, creativity, intuition, and illumination;

- The pathology of the sublime: the occurrence of psychological disturbances of a spiritual, rather than psychological, origin and nature.
- The use of a wide range of active techniques for individuals to use to further their personal and spiritual development.
- The use of imagery for the exploration of the unconscious, for the transformation of neurotic patterns, and for the expansion of awareness
- The notion that there exists within the personality a natural, inbred tendency toward synthesis and 'syntropy' (the opposite of entropy) and the spontaneous organization of meaningful and coherent fields within the psyche.



**Assagioli pioneered the application of transpersonal concepts to psychotherapy.** According to John Battista (1996a) in his 1996 article, "Abraham Maslow and Roberto Assagioli: Pioneers of Transpersonal Psychology,"

Whereas Maslow explored fundamental issues in transpersonal psychology, Roberto Assagioli pioneered the practical application of these concepts in psychotherapy. Assagioli proposed a transpersonal view of personality and discussed psychotherapy in terms of the synthesis of personality at both the personal and spiritual levels. He dealt with the issue of spiritual crises and introduced many active therapeutic techniques for the development of a transcendent center of personality. (Battista, 1996a, p. 52)

**A psychology with a soul.** Most Western theories of personality (from behavioral to trait to biological to phenomenological) focus attention on the surface aspects of ego-directed personality action. Even those personality theories that acknowledge the existence of subliminal, subconscious dimensions to personality structure, functions, states and development (i.e., psychodynamic theories) rarely include discussion of the "soul" in its theorizing or psychotherapeutic applications. Psychosynthesis is different. "In *Psychosynthesis*, the person is a soul and has a personality" (Hardy, 1987, p. 21).

[Assagioli's] view, which is the view of most spiritual disciplines, is that the soul is basic and enduring, and that the personality, though essential for being in the world, is relatively superficial and changeable – though often, of course, only with a good deal of difficulty. The soul is the context, the home, the "unmoved move": the personality is full of content, learned responses, and is dynamic. (Hardy, 1987, p. 22)

**Psychosynthesis is neither a particular psychological doctrine nor a single therapeutic technique.** Like Fechner, James, Myers, and Jung before him, Roberto Assagioli's goal was to address the elements of the soul that religion refused to examine and that conventional psychology denied to exist. He sought to explore and demonstrate those psychological characteristics and ability that the soul would have *in life*. In accomplishing this task, Assagioli did not consider his system of Psychosynthesis to be either a particular psychological doctrine or a single therapeutic technique.

Psychosynthesis... is first and foremost a dynamic, even a dramatic conception of our psychological life, which it portrays as a constant interplay and conflict between the many different and contrasting forces and a unifying center which ever tends to control, harmonize and utilize them. Moreover, Psychosynthesis utilizes many techniques of psychological action, aiming first at the development and perfection of the personality, and then at its harmonious coordination and increasing unification with the Self. (Assagioli, 1993, p. 30).

**The Structure of the Personality**

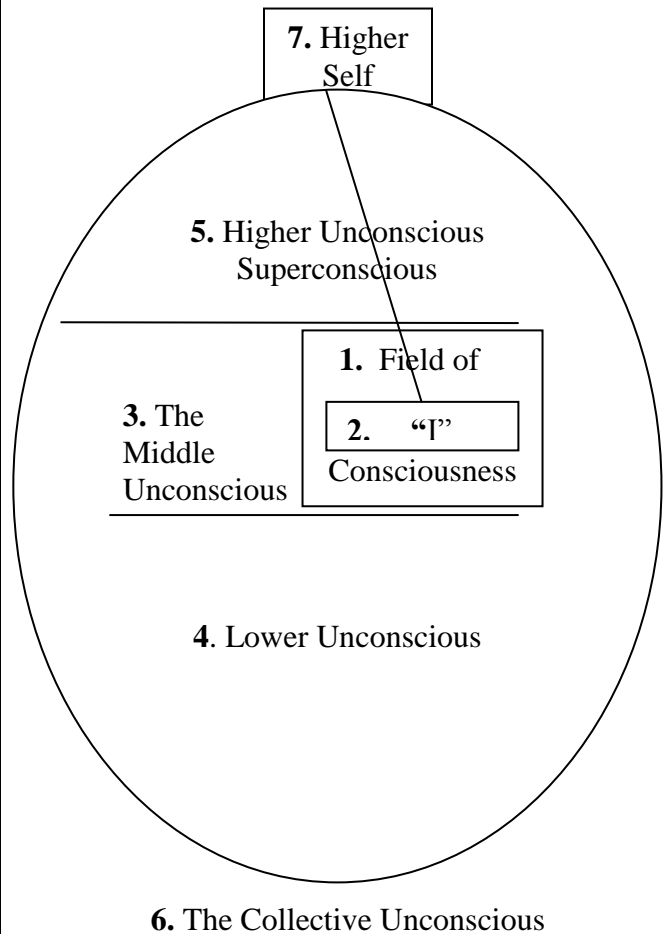
**Structure of personality: Its human expression.** Freud divided the psyche into the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. Jung divided the psyche into conscious, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious. Assagioli (1991, chap. 1) in a basic “map of the person” that he published in the 1930’s represented his conception of the constitution of the human psyche and its differentiation into the following seven regions:

- (1) Field of consciousness
- (2) Conscious self or phenomenal “I”
- (3) Middle unconscious
- (4) Lower unconscious
- (5) Higher unconscious or superconscious
- (6) Collective unconscious
- (7) Higher (transpersonal) self

**The personality is action in form.** All boundaries separating the various regions are thin and flexible, changeable and permeable, and distinguished only in thought, not in practice. In actual reality, all regions are interpenetrating, overlapping, dynamic, and more like rooms connected by corridors than separate levels or stages. “There is movement between [all aspects of the person]...they can affect one another. And of course the different proportions change within a lifetime, particularly in a person concerned with spiritual growth and awareness” (Hardy, 1987, p. 23).

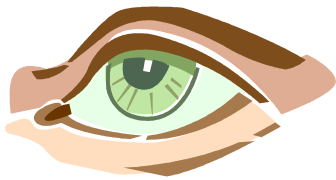
1. The Field of Consciousness

The **Field of Consciousness** is the interior mental space that comprises immediate awareness and what cognitive psychologists call the “span of apprehension.” The field of consciousness comprises the ongoing stream of waking awareness and its various contents: daydreams, fantasies, images, sensations, desires, impulses, memories, ideas and emotions that are observed and witnessed, analyzed and reflected upon, verbalized and judged. It is the changing *contents* of our consciousness - the seen, the imagined, the sensed, the desired, the remembered, the felt, and the thought. It is the zone of awareness within which we live our waking lives and the work-a-day world of everyday reality. It is the cognitional area in which the operations of working memory occur. This is the region of the conscious personality, and is that portion of the whole psyche with which mainstream conventional cognitive psychology deals.



**A personality without a psyche.** For unreflective individuals, the “field of consciousness” may be the only region of their psyche that they recognize, acknowledge, or accept, because they have not looked for its other aspects in themselves, having been taught to pay almost exclusive attention to their exterior environment and behavior, or taught that other aspects of their psyche are unreal and therefore do not really exist. Structuring their perceptions so that only the topmost surfaces of events are seen and organizing their lives according to that exterior pattern of events, much of their inner life thus escapes them. As a result of such a “prejudiced perception” (Jane Roberts’s phrase) brought on by years of cultural conditioning and socialization, individuals come to view themselves as mainly products of biological and environmental influences, and at the mercy of exterior events and outer forces that they do not understand and cannot control.

This part of the personality [the field of consciousness] could easily, without reflection, be regarded as the whole, because it is most accessible to us. But the development of depth psychology in this [twentieth] century has made it clearer and clearer that consciousness is only a small part of the whole. There has been an acknowledgement throughout human history that awareness beyond the conscious is possible for the individual human being, through dreams, religious experience and creativity of every kind; this is where the field of consciousness relates to unconscious material. (Hardy, 1987, p. 24)



## 2. Conscious Self or phenomenal “I”

The **conscious self** or phenomenal “I” is the “still point” at the center of the field of consciousness that we identify as our self. Your usual conscious “egoic” self is that specialized portion of your overall identity that is alert and precisely focused in the moment, whose physical brain and senses are bound to sensation and perception of sound and touch, odors and tastes. It is the self that lives the life of the body. It is the self that looks outward. It is the self that we call egotistically aware and who *has* the sensations, thoughts, feelings, and memories. ). It is the personal, egoic self who is alive within the scheme of the seasons, aware within the designs of time, and caught transfixed in moments of brilliant awareness in the three-dimensional world of space and time.

It is that portion of the field of consciousness that separates and differentiates itself from its own actions to form an experiencing “center” which then stands apart from its own actions and perceives them as “contents” separate from itself (Roberts, 1970). The conscious “I” is the seer, the imager, the thinker, and the witness of the changing contents flowing along within the field (or stream) of consciousness. The “I” and the contents of the field of consciousness (sensations, images, ideas, feelings, etc.) are two different things. You have thoughts; you are not your thoughts; you have emotions; you are not your emotions.

This ‘I’ is our personal center of awareness. It is that small portion of our identity that we ordinarily identify with and call our “self.” Freud called it the “ego.” It is generally submerged in the ceaseless flow of cognitional contents with which we continually identify but emerges during most meditative practices when we attempt to observe ourselves, emerging as the self who witnesses and holds in view the unceasing flow of contents in our field of awareness.

The conscious self is generally not only submerged in the ceaseless flow of psychological contents but seems to disappear altogether when we fall asleep, when we faint, when we are under the effect of an anesthetic or narcotic, or in a state of hypnosis. And when we awake the self mysteriously re-appears, we do not know how or whence – a fact which, if closely examined, is truly baffling and disturbing. This leads us to assume that the re-appearance of the conscious self or ego is due to the existence of a permanent center, of a true Self situated beyond or “above” it. (Assagioli, 1991, p. 18)

It is through and beyond the conscious, personal “I” (trans-personal) that the “Higher Self” is to be reached. The “I” is the link between the present-oriented, immediate, vivid, direct field of consciousness and the larger potential of the inner, Higher Self and the collective unconscious. The self at the ego level of the personality

is a reflection of the Higher Self or the Transpersonal Self...It reflects, however, palely, the same qualities as its source. If you look at the reflection of the sun on a mirror, or on water, you see the light and quality of the sun, infinitesimal, but still the quality of the sun. So that explains why even at the personality’s level the self is stable, sure and indestructible. (Assagioli, quoted in Hardy, 1987, p. 30)







### 3. Middle Unconscious

The **middle unconscious** is the subliminal subconscious regions that correspond to the Freudian preconscious. It includes the subliminal streams of consciousness “beyond the margins” (James’s phrase) of the field of consciousness in which various consciously available psychological, cognitional, and imaginal experiences are assimilated, elaborated, or developed beneath the surface of awareness prior to their entry into the open but narrowly focused field of consciousness.

**Represents “present” time.** The middle unconscious represents the present, the most immediate level of unconscious material, and the “anteroom” of conscious awareness. “It is in this area that memories that are easily brought to mind are stored, that our everyday lives are routinely processed” (Hardy, 1987, p. 25). “Consciousness is the spotlight which, sweeping the area, lights up just that area on which it falls. Everything outside its illumination, but within its range, is preconsciousness” (Stafford-Clark, 1965, p. 115). “The middle unconscious is where all skills and states of mind reside which can be brought at will into our *field of consciousness*, which – for you at this moment – is this book and the words you are reading” (Ferrucci, 1982, p. 43).

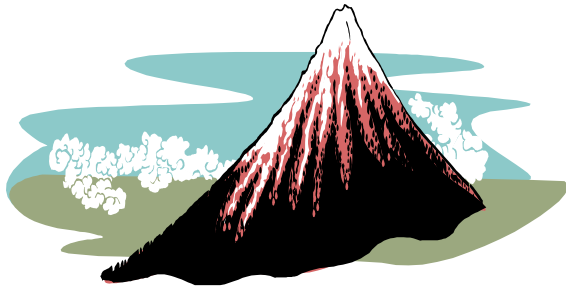


### 4. Lower Unconscious

The **lower unconscious** contains Freudian drives and primitive urges and Jungian image-idea “complexes” charged with intense emotions. This is the inner subconscious region of the Freudian unconscious and the Jungian personal unconscious. It includes elementary actions and impulses of the psyche that direct and coordinate autonomic physiological functioning as well as voluntary bodily movements.

**Where daydreams come from.** The lower subconscious includes the transmarginal realm of consciousness in which daydreams and fantasies and spontaneous parapsychological processes originate. It includes the deeper regions of consciousness from which erupt various pathological disorders including phobias, obsessions, compulsive urges and paranoid delusions. The lower unconscious represents our personal psychological past – prior learning and adaptations, strong libidinal sexual and aggressive forces of the id (the drives) and the superego (the conscience), long-forgotten childhood memories, and, repressed complexes. “The distinction between the ‘lower’ and the ‘higher’ unconscious, or superconscious, is developmental, not moralistic. The lower unconscious merely represents the most primitive part of ourselves, the beginner in us, so to speak. It is not *bad*, it is just *earlier*” (Ferrucci, 1982, p. 44)





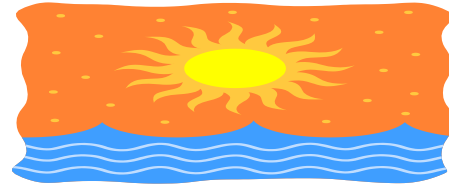
### 5. Higher Unconscious or Superconscious

The **higher unconscious or superconscious** is the inner dynamic, subconscious region from which we receive our creative intuitions, inspirations, illuminations, and insights that extend and surpass normal capacity. John Firman and Ann Gila (2002) in their book *Psychosynthesis: A Psychology of the Spirit* interpret the superconscious (or higher unconscious) as the repository of repressed and split-off human potentials and impulses toward “higher” qualities of character and states of being that we banish from consciousness

as a way...to protect our capacities for wonder, joy, creativity, and spiritual experience from an unreceptive, invalidating environment. This repression of our higher human potential...forms what is called the *higher unconscious*. (Firman & Gila, 2002, p. 31)

Assagioli simply saw the superconscious as the psychic region through which heroic, altruistic impulses and spiritual energies are transmitted, whether originally repressed or not. It is “a living reality, with an existence and powers of its own...[and] comprises the states of being, of knowing, and of feeling...of our evolutionary future” (Ferrucci, 1982, pp. 43-44).

**What we may be.** The superconscious regions of our being constitute glimpses of “what we may be” (Ferrucci’s phrase) both individually and collectively as a species. It represents our potential development that becomes actualized when and if the individual becomes aware of and is able to draw upon the energies and wisdom of the Higher (transpersonal) Self.

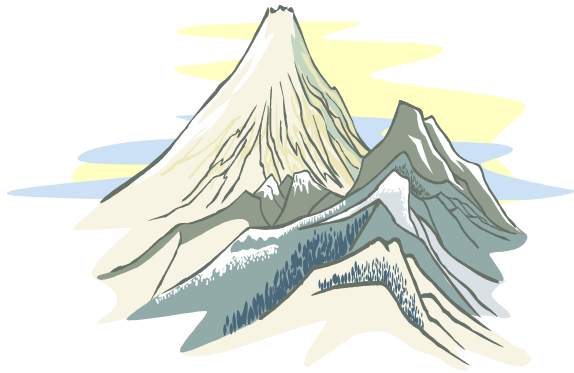


### 6. Collective Unconscious

The **collective unconscious** is the Jungian region of collective psychic reality that contains a dynamic, living knowledge bank built up as a result of eons of experience as a species. This knowledge is partially expressed in the myths, fairy tales, religious symbols, and art artifacts of our race. The idea that the past experience and knowledge of an organism, species, or race can be transmitted unconsciously from one generation to another is elaborated by Rupert Sheldrake’s recent theory of “formative causation” (Sheldrake, 1981, 1990). The hypothesis of formative causation proposes that the form, development, and behavior of individual living organisms are shaped and maintained by collective, nonphysical, psychic “morphogenetic fields” which are themselves molded by the form and behavior of past organisms through direct connections across space and time.

**The psyche is not isolated.** The collective unconscious is contained in the unconsciousness of each and every human psyche and is transmitted across time and space as a kind of “spiritual DNA” (Hardy, 1987, p. 32). Each individual psyche can draw upon as well as contribute to this collective bank of knowledge. In other words, “our psyche is not isolated. It is bathed in the sea of what Carl Jung called the collective unconscious... In Jung’s words, the collective unconscious is ‘the precondition of each individual’s psyche, just as the sea is the carrier of the individual wave’ (Ferrucci, 1982, p. 44). “The isolated individual does not exist; every person has intimate relationships with other individuals which make them all interdependent. Moreover, each and all are included in and part of the spiritual super-individual Reality” (Assagioli, 1993, p. 31).

Thus, the nature of the person in psychosynthesis, as in other depth psychologies, assumes that the conscious is contained within the unconscious, which is both personal and collective. Self-knowledge is about being in touch with the ‘I’, within the context of the Higher Self, the soul. (Hardy, 1987, p. 33)



### 7. Higher (Transpersonal) Self

The **higher (transpersonal) self** or noumenal “I” is that portion of our greater, larger identity that is directly linked to the conscious “I”. “The working hypothesis here is that the Transpersonal Self is at the core of the superconscious, just as the personal self, or ‘I,’ is at the core of the ordinary personality” (Ferrucci, 1982, p. 131). Not to be confused with the artificial construction that Freud called the “superego”, the inner transpersonal Self is that permanent center of identity that is the supporting and sustaining source of the conscious self, and that is responsible for the reappearance of the conscious “I” upon awakening. It operates within the region of the superconscious and the collective unconscious. “The Higher Self [is]... ‘the spectator of the human tragic-comedy... the still centre of the superconscious, just as the personal self or ‘I’ is the centre of the ‘elements and functions of the personality’” (Hardy, 1987, p. 31).

**The transpersonal self as an aspect of the conscious self.** The conscious self or ego is considered to be the reflection of the Higher Self, projected into the three-dimensional world of time and space. Assagioli writes:

There have been many individuals who have achieved, more or less temporarily, a conscious realization of the Self that for them has the same degree of certainty as it is experienced by an explorer who has entered a previously unknown region.... The self is above, and unaffected by, the flow of the mind-stream or by bodily conditions; and the personal conscious self should be considered merely as its reflection, its ‘projection’ in the field of the personality. (quoted in Hardy, 1987, p. 30)

**The nature of the transpersonal self.** Just as the outer, reasoning conscious personal self looks into outer reality, so does the inner, creative unconscious transpersonal Self look into inner reality, that psychological dimension of awareness from which our conscious ego emerged. Having its primary existence outside three-dimensional space and time, the transpersonal Self gave birth to the personal, egoic self that we recognize as our usual conscious self. Having put a portion of itself, a part of its own consciousness in a different parcel, so to speak, so that it formed a physically attuned personal, egoic consciousness, the transpersonal Self gave birth to an outer egoic self whose desires and intents would be oriented in a way that the inner, superconscious transpersonal Self alone could not be (Roberts, 1974). Piero Ferrucci (1982) clarifies:

The personal self is a reflection or an outpost of the Transpersonal Self – enough to give us a sense of centeredness and identity. It lives at the level of individuality, where it can learn to regulate and direct the various elements of the personality. Awareness of the personal self is a precondition for psychological health.... The Transpersonal Self, while retaining a sense of individuality, lives at the level of universality, in a realm where personal plans and concerns are overshadowed by the wider vision of the whole. The realization of the Transpersonal Self is the mark of spiritual fulfillment. Personal and Transpersonal Self are in fact the same reality experienced at different levels: our true essence beyond all masks and conditionings. (Ferrucci, 1982, p.45)

**There is one self, but within that one self there are many selves.** Assagioli affirmed the apparent existence of two selves in us – a manifest, outer-directed personal self and a latent, inner-directed transpersonal self. The ego-directed immediate conscious self is generally unaware of and may even deny the existence of the other, inner transpersonal self which does not ordinarily reveal its existence directly to the conscious I, except through the use of appropriate active methods (e.g., Raja Yoga, meditation, guided imagery) or spontaneously through a process of natural inner growth (e.g., Bucke’s *cosmic consciousness*).

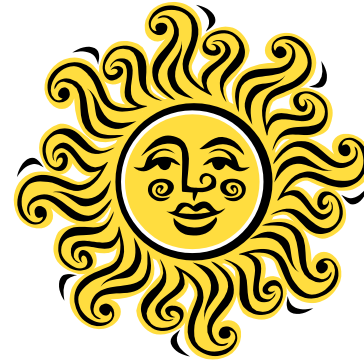
**One self with many unique, inviolate, and eternally valid aspects.** On the other hand, there are not two independent and separate selves in us, only one Self manifested in two different aspects and degrees of awareness and self-realization. The conscious Self or “I” is the three-dimensional face of the Higher transpersonal Self, the universal self in its concrete particularity. “It is, in other words, not a new and different light but a projection of its luminous source” (Assagioli, 1993, p. 20).

The fact that we have spoken of the ordinary self and the profounder Self, must not be taken to mean that there are two separate and independent I’s, two beings in us. The Self in reality is one. What we call the ordinary self is that small part of the deeper Self that the waking consciousness is able to assimilate in a given moment. It is therefore something contingent and changing, a ‘variable quality’. It is a reflection of what can become ever more clear and vivid; and it can perhaps someday succeed in uniting itself with its source. (Assagioli, quoted in Hardy, 1987, p. 31)



### Contacting the Transpersonal Self

When the individual is aware of the existence of the higher, transpersonal self, they can consciously draw upon its greater energy, understanding, and strength through the use of waking or hypnotic suggestion, creative visualization, active imagination, meditation, and dream work. It is inherently available. The individual’s belief and expectation helps awaken, harness, and direct energies from these other “unconscious” portions of their being into the field of consciousness of their daily life.



**How does our Transpersonal Self manifest itself in our experience?** Our inner, transpersonal self manifests itself in numerous ways in your life. It is that small, still voice that whispers even now within the inner recesses of one’s own consciousness. It is the origin of those moments in which

we receive our higher intuitions and inspirations – artistic, philosophic or scientific, ethical ‘imperative’ and urges to humanitarian and heroic action. It is the source of the higher feelings, such as altruistic love; of genius and of the states of contemplation, illumination, and ecstasy. (Assagioli, 1993, pp. 17-18)

**Abraham Maslow and the superconscious.** Abraham Maslow believed that a subgroup of self-actualizing individuals (called “transcending self-actualizers”) were in touch with superconscious material (Maslow, 1971, chap. 22). Superconscious experiences are similar to what Abraham Maslow called “peak experiences” that satisfy “meta-needs” (needs for truth, beauty, honesty, love, beauty, justice, order, creativity, and so forth) that were biologically pertinent. Maslow saw that “the spiritual life is part of our biological life. It is the ‘highest’ part of it, but yet part of it” (quoted in Ferrucci, 1982, p. 132).

**Superconscious experiences may take many different forms.** Piero Ferrucci in his book, *What We May Be: Techniques for Psychological and Spiritual Growth Through Psychosynthesis* (Ferrucci, 1982, pp. 130-131), identifies some of the multiple and diverse forms in which superconscious experiences may manifest themselves in ordinary egoic states of awareness, as reported by people from many cultures, times, and walks of life (see also Ferrucci, 1990):

- An insight
- The sudden solution of a difficult problem
- Seeing one's life in perspective and having a clear sense of purpose
- A transfigured vision of external reality
- The apprehension of some truth concerning the nature of the universe
- A sense of unity with all beings and of sharing everyone's destiny
- Illumination
- An extraordinary inner silence
- Waves of luminous joy
- Liberation
- Cosmic humor
- A deep feeling of gratefulness
- An exhilarating sense of dance
- Resonating with the essence of beings and things we come in contact with
- Loving all persons in one person
- Feeling oneself to be the channel for a wider, stronger force to flow through
- Ecstasy
- An intimation of profound mystery and wonder
- The delight of beauty
- Creative inspiration
- A sense of boundless compassion
- Transcendence of time and space

Superconscious material originates from the dynamic, creative force of the inner, transpersonal Higher Self that is in touch with all areas of the inner regions of the psyche.

**No permanent state of perfection exists.** Sometimes these superconscious experiences occur suddenly and rapidly; at other times they unfold more gradually and slowly over time (Miller, & C'de Baca, 2001). Whatever their form or rhythm of unfolding, these experiences like the growth and change they promote in the human personality, are not constant or permanent states of being that occur once and for all and are enjoyed permanently. While we are alive, there is no state of perfection to be reached where we are now beyond change, beyond growth, beyond further development, beyond further creativity. As Assagioli put it: "Life is movement, and the superconscious realms are in continuous renewal. In this adventure we move from revelation to revelation, from joy to joy. I hope you do not reach any 'stable state.' A 'stable state' is death" (quoted in Ferrucci, 1982, p. 130).

**Superconscious experiences represent evidence about the nature of human consciousness.** Superconscious experiences are psychological facts reported for centuries by quite normal persons that represent their own kind of evidence about the nature of human consciousness. Maurice Bucke (1969) in his 1901 book, *Cosmic Consciousness* saw superconscious experiences as representing bridges in the next step of our human evolution. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's (1964) book *The Future of Man* recognized such experiences as indications of humanity's next evolution of consciousness and "a salvation of the species" - signaling a movement toward a "critical point of speciation" and bringing "a new break-through and a re-birth, this time outside Time and Space" that parallels humanity's biological evolution (p. 302). At the individual level, this manifests as an expansion of awareness

into realms that they experience as intrinsically valuable, that have a dimension of universality, that evoke mystery and wonder, and that possess a revelatory, healing, and transforming power. Superconscious experiences are subjectively felt as a step in personal evolution, as a wonderful unfolding of what was previously existent only in a potential state. (Ferrucci, 1982, p. 132)

However they may be interpreted, superconscious, transpersonal experiences are at the very least indications that human beings possess a highly sophisticated network of inner communication between conscious and unconscious portions of the self.





### Transpersonal Development through Psychosynthesis

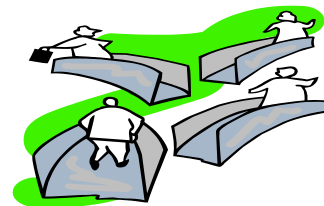
**The direction of personality development.** The direction of personality development is the harmonious inner recognition by the conscious I of the higher inner Self of which it is a part and the realization that the outer ego-self and the inner transpersonal-self are one. The task is to heal the fundamental duality between the outer and inner selves. All levels of the personality must recognize the transpersonal Higher Self. The transpersonal self must become the immediate, conscious self. This unity will put the individual in a position to begin a truly fulfilling existence. The stages for the attainment of this goal are to be consciously realized and experienced with the conscious ego-I highly involved.

The intuitive, transpersonal portion of the self has to have the full cooperation of the rational intellect of the conscious self, in other words. The intellect of the conscious "I" has to appreciate its dependence upon the intuitional wisdom of the inner self and is not to be left by the wayside. The conscious I with its reasoning intellect and the Higher Self with its intuitional wisdom are meant to challenge and develop each other through the following stages (Assagioli, 1993, p. 21-31):

- Knowledge of one's personality
- Control of its various elements.
- Realization of one's true Self – the discovery or creation of a unifying center.
- Psychosynthesis: the formation or reconstruction of the personality around the new center.

**What must we do to "know thyself"?** In order to "know thyself," we must know more than the changing contents of our waking stream of consciousness. We must undertake an inner journey within our own subconscious regions. "To explore the unknown reality you must venture within your own psyche, travel inward through invisible roads as you journey outward on physical ones" (Roberts, 1979b, p. 350). There is only one way to know one's personality – by studying and exploring your own personality. "An extensive exploration of the vast regions of our unconscious must...be undertaken" (Assagioli, 1993, p. 21). This means communicating with your subconscious mind (e.g., meditation, active imagination, guided fantasy, drawing, pendulum method, automatic writing, self-hypnosis, dream diaries, music, and so forth) to discover the contents of your personal unconscious – the beliefs that influence those unconscious processes that create our personally experienced reality, the fears and desires that motivate us, and the conflicts that paralyze our decision-making and waste our energies – and the regions of the middle and higher unconscious.

**We need to consciously investigate our lower unconscious.** In this way we will discover unknown abilities, higher potentialities, and latent psychic energies which seek to express themselves but are blocked or repressed through lack of understanding, prejudice, or fear. "If we wish to consciously encourage our growth we need to investigate our lower unconscious. Otherwise, it may be the source of trouble, storing repressed energy, controlling our actions, and robbing us of our freedom" (Ferrucci, 1982, p. 43).



### First Stage of Psychosynthesis: Personal Psychosynthesis

The first stage of Psychosynthesis is to discover the many different elements of our personality. Myers's conception of the subliminal consciousness as being composed of innumerable discrete regions containing a plurality of selves and Jung's conception of "complexes" supports Assagioli's postulation of the existence of "subpersonalities" within the subconscious portions of the self. For example,

Jung saw the psyche made up of units or “molecules” that he called complexes. These complexes were defined as the sum of ideas magnetically gathered about a particular feeling-toned event or experience...At times, complexes appear to behave like partial personalities, setting themselves up in opposition to or in control of the ego. An extreme example of this would be in séances where a medium brings forth spirits and other entities as “other personalities from the dead.” These entities would be considered to be splinter psyches or complexes in projection experiences. (Grosbeck, 1985, p. 434)

**Personality is capable of producing many ego structures.** According to transpersonal writer and mystic Jane Roberts, the personality is capable of producing numerous ego structures, depending upon the life-context of the organism.

The personality, even as you know it, is never static, always changing, and even the ego is not the same from one day to the next. The child’s ego is not the adult’s ego. As a rule you perceive the similarity, and overlook the differences of psychological patterns of this sort. The ego is not the most powerful or the most knowledgeable portion of the self. It is simply a well-specialized portion of the personality, well equipped to operate under certain circumstances...It is a great mistake to imagine that the human being has but one ego.... The ego represents merely any given pattern of characteristics, psychological characteristics that happen to be dominant at any given time. If any kind of a thorough investigation were to be carried on, it would become apparent that during one lifetime any given individual will display several, sometimes quite different, egos at various times, each one quite honestly seeing itself as the permanent I. (Butts, 1999a, pp. 21-22)

**Control of the various elements of the personality.** The various elements of the personality have to be acknowledged, recognized, and accepted, so that their power and energy can be harnessed for personality development. This can be done in a number of ways through suggestion, an alteration of consciousness, or a changing of beliefs.

The most effective method by which [we take possession of the various elements of the personality and acquire control over them] is that of dis-identification...based on the following psychological principle: *We are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate and control everything from which we dis-identify ourselves.* (Assagioli, 1993, p. 22)

This requires understanding that you are not your thoughts. The thought and the thinker are two different entities. You are the self that has thoughts. You can change your thoughts without changing yourself. By taking on the objective attitude of an observer or witness to your own psychological experiences and contents of consciousness, a detached and disinterested “psychological distance” is achieved that permits one a degree of freedom and control over potentially harmful subconscious images or complexes in order to mindfully consider their origins, their nature, and their effects, and then harmlessly released or used for constructive purposes.



### Second Stage of Psychosynthesis: Transpersonal Psychosynthesis

**Realization of one’s true Self - the discovery or creation of a unifying center.** After the various elements of the personality have been acknowledged, recognized, and accepted (a magnificent and tremendous undertaking and a long and arduous task that is neither easy nor simple), “what has to be achieved is to expand the personal consciousness into that of the Self; to unite the lower with the higher Self” (Assagioli, 1964, p. 24), and allow the inner, transpersonal self to express itself through the immediate, ego-directed self.

In Assagioli's view we may become more and more aware of the superconscious, and more attuned to the forces of love, beauty, tenderness, power and true knowledge that are always present if we can discern them. As awareness of the 'I' and the Higher Self grows, the field of consciousness can enlarge to become aware of more superconscious material... But the personality has to be strong enough to cope with the power of superconscious material... Knowledge and awareness of the soul can only be coped with by a strong and growing personality, which has come well enough to terms with the forces of the lower unconscious and is well centred in the strength of the 'I'. (Hardy, 1987, p. 28)

**Psychosynthesis: the formation or reconstruction of the personality around the new center.** "When the unifying center has been found or created, we are in a position to build around it a new personality – coherent, organized, and unified. Once an inner ideal model of the self has been formed that is both realistic and authentic in line with the natural development of the given individual and therefore capable of realization, then the actual construction of the new personality begins. This is the actual *psychosynthesis*" (Assagioli, 1993, p. 26). According to Assagioli (1993, pp. 28-29), the carrying out of this inner program of psychosynthesis involves

- (a) the utilization and transmutation of inner unconscious energies, forces, emotions, and impulses to bring about the desired changes in ourselves,
- (b) the development of those aspects of our personality that are either deficient, underdeveloped, imbalanced, or in conflict for the purpose we desire to attain, and
- (c) the coordination, subordination, integration and organization of the various psychological energies and functions of the Self into a harmonious whole.

**Models and their eccentric versions of the self.** The pursuit of any given model or "ideal picture" of ourselves that we intend to become actually changes the conscious self into a new knowing self, which inevitably calls forth a new goal or ideal model of ourselves. Each variation upon the model or ideal self is a new revelation, bringing about change and further development in the previous "known" personality.

**Endless bank of alternate models of the self.** As transpersonal writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1976) points out, the psyche is so richly creative that it constantly presents us with an endless bank of potentials and alternate models of the self. "The adage 'Know thyself' presupposes a model of the self that is stationary. For knowing the self at any given time actually changes the self into a new knowing self, which must again be known and thus changed" (Roberts, 1976, p. 95). The recognition of the ideal self by the immediate self is a creative mutation that instantly brings further ideal models into play, automatically creating new versions of excellence for the known self. Moreover, the ever-changing model is the energy behind its own variations. Through its interactions with the known self, the model is eternally replenished as the known self reconstructs itself around the new center.

**The superconscious realms are in constant renewal.** Just as there is no single stable, permanent state of "enlightenment" or "liberation," the transpersonal self is no unchanging, constant, unmoved mover who moves, "a timeless essence...perceived as unchangeable, silent, pure being" (Ferrucci, 1982, p. 131). Assagioli's comment that "the superconscious realms are in constant renewal" implies that the transpersonal self is itself a dynamic, alive, vital, growing and developing portion of our identity. It learns from the experiences of its outer conscious egoic self just as the personal egoic self changes, learns, grows, and develops from its own experiences and projections.



**Psychosynthesis is capable of being scientifically tested and verified.** Assagioli (1991, 1992, 1993) believed that his model of the person, especially in relation to transpersonal areas of the psyche, was capable of being scientifically tested and verified according to empirical method, broadly defined to include *experience*. The transpersonal, Higher self is known to exist because it is experienced, and it influences the thoughts, images, sensation, emotions, and behaviors of the conscious "I." All one has to do is to create the conditions for having the experience.



**The Naturalistic Approach to the History of Transpersonal Psychology**



**Transpersonal Psychology as a Reflection of America’s Visionary “Folk Psychology” Tradition**

**Transpersonal psychology as a uniquely American phenomenon.** Looking beyond the Continental flavor and European character that formed the background of many of transpersonal psychology’s early pioneers (e.g., Fechner, Myers, Freud, Adler, Jung, and Assagioli), modern transpersonal psychology in many ways is a uniquely American psychology borne of the *Zeitgeist* of the 1960’s. Indeed, modern transpersonal psychology can be seen as a child of the 1960’s counterculture reflecting the grand idealism, optimism, individualism, adventuresomeness, and pragmatism of the country, its fundamental belief in the higher potentialities of human nature, and its basic conviction that spirituality is an important aspect of the American character.

**The three streams of American psychology.** According to historiographer Eugene Taylor (1999, p. x) in his book, *Shadow Culture: Psychology and Spirituality in America*, three different “streams” of history have flowed together to contribute to the vitality and significance of modern American psychology. One stream is the history of American laboratory psychological science. A second stream is the history of American applied clinical psychology. The third stream is the history of America’s visionary tradition of “folk psychology.”

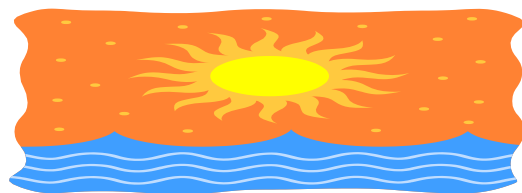
Referring to a psychospiritual tradition of character development that appears to have been endemic to the American scene ever since the founding of the American colonies and that now appears to be driving a significant revolution in American popular culture focused on an experiential interpretation of higher consciousness. (Taylor, 1999, p. x)

**The American visionary “folk psychology” tradition.** Transpersonal psychology can be viewed as an academic version of the third stream of American psychology - America’s visionary “folk psychology.”

Such a psychology is characterized by its emphasis on multiple realities, by its view that personality is shaped by dynamic forces of the unconscious, and by its aim toward an understanding of extraordinary states of consciousness and expanded human potential. It is also known by its intense attraction to the natural environment and by its hint that there is some fundamental relationship between a return to nature and the recovery of basic values. It can be identified by its millennial vision of world peace. (Taylor, 1999, pp. 15-16)

**Transpersonal psychology as the modern representative of America’s “alternative reality tradition.”** The American visionary tradition and, by implication, the transpersonal movement as a modern representative of that visionary character, has its roots in what philosopher of religion Robert Ellwood (1973) in his book, *Religious and Spiritual Groups in America*, called the “alternative reality tradition” in the West whose language is simultaneously psychological and spiritual.

It rests on the assumption that mental healing is an essential part of physical health and that there is healing in community. It promotes the paranormal as an integral part of human functioning, and it takes seriously accounts of spirit communication on the after-death plane, dream images, personal symbols of one’s destiny, and religious visions... Above all, the most important element of this psychology is its emphasis on the possibility of the transcendent – that consciousness can be molded into something higher, purer, better. (Taylor, 1999, pp. 15-16)





**The First “Great Awakening.”** The “alternative realities tradition” and American visionary tradition from which modern transpersonal psychology eventually emerged can trace its roots to the Puritans and early visionary communities (the religious revivals of the Quakers and the Shakers) that initiated what Taylor appropriately calls the “American Visionary Tradition” and the “First Great Awakening” that shaped American culture from 1720-1750.

The essence of the First Great Awakening was that it elevated emotional experience and mystical revelation to the level of public consciousness, the liberalization of religious expression and the permission to dissent, which contributed significantly to the emergence of the ideals that led to the American Revolution. (Taylor, 1999, p. 18)

**Swedenborgism and the New England transcendentalist movement.** The American visionary tradition eventually gave rise to Swedenborgianism and the transcendentalist intuitive psychology of character formation given voice in New England Transcendentalism (Frothingham, 1959). Especially important to the growth of the American visionary tradition during this time were the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Amos Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Theodore Parker, George Ripley, and environmentalist John Muir in the early nineteenth century, that re-affirmed the spiritual nature of the mind and the idea that God speaks to humanity through nature (Taylor, 1999, Chapter 4).

**The Second “Great Awakening.”** A second “Great Awakening” was occurred during the mid-nineteenth century as a new generation of utopian communities appeared in American (Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists). With the rise of these Utopian communities a link was formed between the American visionary tradition and the recognition of the importance of community, service, and social justice in evolving a rich inward spiritual life in contemporary America.

**Spiritualism, Theosophy, “New Thought,” and Christian Science movements.”** The roots of transpersonal psychology in the history of the American visionary tradition also can be traced to the spiritualism movements at the turn of the century and the birth of psychic research. Spiritualism, theosophy, “New Thought,” and Christian Science movements in the mid-to-late nineteenth century gave rise to an entire era of mental healing, and organized therapeutic and religious movements that remain an integral part of American folk culture and are topics of study for transpersonal psychologists today. Ralph Waldo Trine’s 1897 book *In Tune with the Infinite* is still in print after more than 100 years.

In just the degree that we come into a conscious realization of our oneness with the Infinite Life, and open ourselves to this divine inflow, do we actualize in ourselves the qualities and powers of the Infinite Life...[and] make it possible for the higher powers to play, to work, to manifest through us. (Trine, 1897, pp. 16-17)

The “mental healing” and “mind-cure” movements of nineteenth-century America prefigured the modern new awakening to “transpersonal medicine” - integration of mind and body and spirit, the connection between physical and mental health, and the turning to “alternative” medicines that is evident today (Achterberg, 1985; Dossey, 1982, 1999; Gerber, 2001; Lawlis, 1996; Schlitz & Amorok, 2004).



**Hidden Tradition of Psychic Research in Modern Psychology**

Psychical research, scientific psychotherapy, spiritualism and the psychology of religion were burgeoning fields of inquiry in late nineteenth century America (Taylor, 1999, Chapter 8). Psychic research is very much a part of the spiritual roots of modern psychology, even though remarkably little attention has been given to it in general survey textbooks in the history of psychology.

**Overlooked and ignored tradition.** Historiographers Chaplin and Krawiec's (1979) comprehensive and authoritative textbook, *Systems and Theories of Psychology*, for example, devote only two pages of their 606 page book to psychic research and begin their treatment of the subject with J. B. Rhine's statistical experiments with Zener cards in the 1930's and 1940's without mention of the extensive work begun in 1882 with the formation in London of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and the establishment of its American branch in 1885 co-founded by William James. The work of these two Societies into matters of telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, apparitions, hauntings, materializations and dematerializations of physical objects, mediumship, and automatism of various forms reveals how ostensibly paranormal phenomena have been subject to positive observation and objective experimentation in the history of modern psychology (Beloff, 1993; Braude, 1997, 2003; Broad, 1962; Douglas, 1977; Fodor, 1974; Gauld, 1968, 1982).

[The] first concern [of psychic science] is to establish the occurrence of the claimed facts. If they are not due to fraud, observational error, the laws of chance, i.e., if they are found to occur, the next stage of the inquiry is to establish the reason of their occurrence, whether the known natural laws are sufficient to explain them or whether there is reason to suppose the action of unknown forces. The nature of this unknown force, the mode of its manifestation, has to be experimentally investigated (p. 316)... The two main sources of evidence in psychical research, as in biological science, are observation and experiment. (Fodor, 1974, p. 132)

Historiographer Alfred Douglas (1977) divides the history of psychical research into three period:

- **Period I (1882-1900) *The Survey Period*** during which psychic research started out with a survey of the frequency of paranormal events, notably "apparitions" in everyday life. The history of psychical research officially dates with the establishment of the SPR on February 20, 1882 "to examine without prejudice or prepossession and in a scientific spirit those faculties of man, real or supposed, which appear to be inexplicable on any generally recognized hypothesis."

Prior to this time, the formations of such associations as the Ghost Society (1851), the Phantasmological Society (1872), the London Dialectical Society (1869-1871), and the British National Association of Spiritualists (1874) laid the foundation for much future work in this area.

- **Period II (1900-1930) *Age of Mediums and Field Observations*** during which we have some of the greatest systematic and organized attempts by scholars, scientists, inventors, physicists, physicians, philosophers, magicians, and gifted amateurs to come together to observe, classify, compare, and experimentally control and manipulate spontaneous psychic phenomena, most notably trance mediumship.
- **Period III (1930-1947) *Experiments with Statistics*** began when John Banks Rhine with William McDougall of Harvard University founded the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University and the *Journal of Parapsychology*.



### **Spiritualism**

**Spiritualism: Past and present.** Most of the large-scale parapsychological events recorded in the history of parapsychology reportedly occurred during the later half of the nineteenth century when a quasi-religious movement called Spiritualism held sway throughout Europe and the United States 150 years ago (Fodor, 1974; Judah, 1967; Moore, 1977).

Incredible as it may seem to modern readers 150 years ago millions of Americans believed that modern science had incontrovertibly established the fact that there was life after death. The chief means by which people understood this to have been established was the mediumistic séance. Here it was believed that spirits of the dead or disembodied entities from some other plane of existence that had never been alive in a physical body would take possession of an entranced or otherwise sensitive subject, called a "medium," and through that person communicate with the living. (Taylor, 1999, p. 137)

**Spiritualism was an important part of American folk culture.** Spiritualism has been an important and significant part of American folk culture since its early beginnings in 1848 with the “Hydesville Rappings” and its rise in the 1890’s when as many as 11 million Americans were believed to belong to some spiritualist group (Judah, 1967) and continuing throughout the twentieth century with the trance channeled materials of famous psychics such as Arthur Ford, Edgar Cayce, Pearl Lenore Curran, Eileen Garrett, Pat Rodegast, Helen Schucman, and Jane Roberts (Hastings, 1991; Klimo, 1987).

**What is spiritualism?** What precisely is “Spiritualism”? According to the definition presented by the National Spiritualist Association of America which was founded in 1893 and is still operating today:

Spiritualism is the Science, Philosophy and Religion of continuous life, based upon the demonstrated fact of communication, by means of mediumship, with those who live in the Spirit World. Spiritualism is a science because it investigates, analyzes and classifies facts and manifestations, demonstrated from the spirit side of life. Spiritualism is a philosophy because it studies the laws of nature both on the seen and unseen sides of life and bases its conclusions upon present observed facts. It accepts statements of observed facts of past ages and conclusions drawn therefrom, when sustained by reason and by results of observed facts of the present day. Spiritualism is a religion because it strives to understand and to comply with the Physical, Mental and Spiritual Laws of Nature which are the laws of God. (quoted in Fodor, 1974, p. 360)

**Scientific proof of survival of bodily death.** Spiritualism was based on two main ideas: belief in the survival of the human personality after death and the ability of that personality to communicate with the living from “the other side” of life. Spiritualism asserted that such beliefs were not simply a matter of religious faith or mere acceptance of the writings of ancient religious traditions but were based upon empirically-verifiable, repeatable observation under controlled scientific conditions in the laboratory of the séance room. The phenomena of spiritualism may be spontaneous, but they are also recurrent and can be produced at will by talented individuals.

**The phenomena of spiritualism.** Nandor Fodor (1974, p. 361) in his *Encyclopedia of Psychic Science* provides a catalogue of the remarkable large-scale PK effects observed to occur during the height of spiritualism in the United States, England, France, Germany, and Italy, some of which have been duplicated by the contemporary Indian holy man Sathya Sai Baba today (Haraldsson, 1987).



**D.D. Home.** Philosopher Stephen Braude (1997) in his book, *The Limits of Influence: Psychokinesis and the Philosophy of Science* describes in detail the best evidence for large-scale psychokinesis that occurred during the period of Spiritualism - particularly the case of Daniel Douglas Home (1833-1886) in which phenomena were produced that exceed any technology of the period, in locations never before visited by the medium where no opportunity existed for preparing a trick, before multiple independent witnesses (including those skeptical of them) under controlled, well-lighted conditions.

**Daniel Douglas Home.** One of the most extensively studied physical mediums of the nineteenth century was Daniel Douglas Home (1833-1886) for whom a great deal of outstanding evidence from many different sources (domestic and foreign) has been generated documenting remarkable phenomena that he produced under a wide range of conditions in locations he never visited before and in other settings where he had no opportunity to prepare a trick, plant an apparatus, or conceal a confederate and that exceeded any technology of the period (e.g., levitating in good light and with ample opportunity to inspect him before, during, and after the levitation). “During the entire period of D. D. Home’s mediumship – a period of almost 25 years – he was never detected in fraud of any kind,” despite careful efforts to expose them or prevent them by Nobel laureates, judges, university professors, magicians, medical doctors, government officials, members of the Royal Society, skeptics, and persistent critics (Braude, 1997, p. 65).

**Catalogue of phenomena.** Braude (1997) catalogues the mind-boggling physical phenomena manifested by D.D. Home during his 25 years has a medium (and excluding the healings, messages from spirits, and trance-impersonations of dead persons known only to the sitters) (Braude, 1997, pp. 65-66).

- 1) Raps, or knocking sounds, heard not just in the séance table, but in all parts of the room, including the ceiling.
- 2) Object levitations and movements, including the complete levitation of pianos and the movement and complete levitation of tables with several persons on top.
- 3) Tables would tilt or move sharply, although objects on the table would remain stationary. Sometimes the objects would alternatively move and remain in place in response to sitter's commands.
- 4) Alteration in the weight of objects. On command, objects would become heavier or lighter. Before Crookes measured the phenomenon with instruments, its typical manifestation was that a table would become either too heavy for one or more persons to tilt or lift, or at least more difficult to move than it was before.
- 5) The appearance of lights or luminous phenomena in various parts of the room.
- 6) The appearance of partially or fully materialized forms in various parts of the room.
- 7) Touches, pulls, pinches, and other tactile phenomena occurring while the hands of all present were visible above the table.
- 8) Auditory phenomena (e.g., voice, sounds), and also music occurring without instruments in various parts of the room. Odors, produced in the absence of any visible object with which they might be associated.
- 9) Earthquake effects, during which the entire room and its contents rock or tremble.
- 10) Hands, supple, solid, mobile and warm, of different sizes, shapes and colors. Although the hands were animated and solid to the touch, they would often end at or near the wrist and eventually dissolve or melt. Sometimes the hands were said to be disfigured exactly as the hands of a deceased ostensible communicator (unknown to Home) had been.

- 11) The playing of an accordion, guitar, or other musical instrument, either totally untouched (and sometimes while levitated in good light), or while handled in such a way as to render a performance on the instrument impossible.
- 12) The handling of hot coals, and the transfer of incombustibility to other persons and objects.
- 13) Elongations, in which the medium grew from several inches to more than a foot.
- 14) Levitation of the medium. This is perhaps the least well documented of Home's major phenomena, occurring (according to Home himself) only once in daylight.

**Skeptical explanations are mere theoretical possibilities, not likely probabilities, to anyone familiar with the evidence.** Philosopher Stephen Braude (1997) points out, "it is still too easy for skeptics to cast doubt retrospectively on these reports, usually by ignoring the reasons for having confidence in the testimony and by raising the mere theoretical possibility of error under the conditions that actually prevailed" (pp. 122-123). Nevertheless, considering (a) the nature and magnitude of these dramatic, and extraordinarily impressive large scale psychokinetic (PK) effects, (b) the conditions under which they were observed (e.g., in good light; with ample opportunity to inspect the objects before, during, and after the incidents), (c) the expertise, competence, critical attitude, and informed judgment of investigators who are familiar with conjuring, and (d) the precautions taken to rule out fraud and the use of an accomplice in the published account that was recorded immediately as phenomenon occurred, then skeptical explanations (i.e., unreliable testimony or biased reporting, faulty observation or misperception, mistaken memory or biased recollection, collective hallucination or hypnosis, fraud and sleigh-of-hand) are mere theoretical possibilities, not likely probabilities, that explain little of what can be considered serious evidence for the reality of psychokinetic phenomena that cannot be lightly dismissed by the intellectually honest and open-minded person who is familiar first-hand with the investigative reports

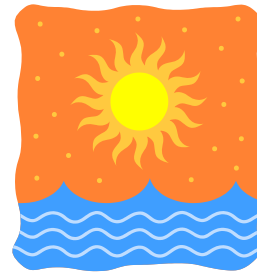




**Transpersonal psychology as a sign of a “New Awakening.”** As the academic incarnation of America’s visionary “folk psychology,” transpersonal psychology has been a component of American popular culture since its inception and is reflected in the unprecedented spiritual activity that is now occurring in the United States. The widespread flourishing of spirituality that is occurring on the American scene is not originating from mainstream science, religion, or academic psychology, but from the hearts and minds of individuals who no longer confine themselves to single religious traditions. The widespread social and cultural interest in “things spiritual” originates from individuals who no longer believe in the materialistic and mechanistic assumptions of conventional science and who are looking beyond biology and environment for answers to the problems of meaning and identity. We are experiencing, in the words of Eugene Taylor (1999), a “New Awakening” as a species.

The American philosopher-psychologist William James referred to such examples as an awakening to a new sense of the mystical... The motivational psychologist Abraham Maslow referred to them in terms of both peak and plateau experiences and associated them with the emergence of the self-actualizing aspect of the personality. And the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung described them as an integral part of the process of individuation, which he said was a movement away from egoism toward autonomous selfhood. (Taylor, 1999, p. 6)

**The two cultures of transpersonal psychology.** From a naturalistic (“times-make-the-person”) viewpoint, then, the historical development of transpersonal psychology can be viewed as the contemporary face of a 400-year-old psychospiritual tradition in American popular culture. Transpersonal psychologists, “live in two cultures at once – one, the dominant culture of normative science and mainstream religion; the other, a shadow culture of mythic and visionary proportions” (Taylor, 1999, p. 13).



**Psychosynthesis as first major spiritual psychology in America’s alternative realities tradition.** The system of psychology called “Psychosynthesis” developed by Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli was to become the first form of alternative approaches to healing and human development that American folk psychology and its alternative realities tradition was to embrace. “Psychosynthesis became a major school in the alternative culture for work with the spiritual search that engaged so many people at the time” (Weiser & Yeomans, 1988, p. 2). Assagioli pioneered a religiously neutral, psychologically oriented, and experientially based approach to the inner realms of human consciousness that assumed that each human being is a soul as well as a personality.

**Psychosynthesis adapts itself well to American culture.** Although of European origin, *Psychosynthesis* adapted itself well to the American culture in the 1960s because it was “pragmatic, rich in techniques, democratic, experimental, and esoteric” (Weiser & Yeomans, 1988, pp. 2-3).

- It was “pragmatic” in that it emphasized behavioral change as a consequence of non-drug altered states of consciousness and emphasized the conscious mind, will, and the integration of results into one’s everyday work-a-day world.
- It was “rich in technique” in that it utilized a range of techniques to promote personal and spiritual growth ranging from bodywork, guided imagery, meditation, and self-hypnosis.
- It was “democratic” in that neither Self nor Being were conceived to be hierarchical in structure, the inner transpersonal Self being seen as embedded in human experience and the ego was not something to be transcended but integrated by the direct and personal use of unconscious life processes.

- It was “experimental” in that it was open-minded enough to test untried techniques in the interest of promoting personal and spiritual growth in the individual and in society at large.
- It was “esoteric” in that it drew upon Eastern and Western spiritual traditions in understanding the underlying process of psycho-spiritual growth and development.



### *The Americanization of Eastern and Asian Systems of Thought*

#### **The importation of Eastern psychologies to the West.**

The Americanization of Eastern and Asian religious, philosophic, and psychological systems of thought began at the end of the nineteenth century, through the writings of the Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda, and Japanese monk Soyen Shaku (whose work was translated by Daisetz Taitaro Suzuki). This Americanization of Eastern and Asian systems of thought continued through the early twentieth century as American popular culture was exposed to the meditative practices of the Hindu yogi Paramahansa Yogananda, the Russian mystic G. I. Gurdjieff, and theosophist Jiddu Krishnamurti (Taylor, 1999, Chapter 9).

#### **Integration of Asian ideas with Western concepts.**

Transpersonal psychology's interest in both meditation and Asian philosophy and in developing theories that integrate Asian ideas with Western concepts and research can be traced directly to this initial period of popular American culture when, “for the first time, the various religious ideas of Asia were presented to American audiences by Asians themselves” (Taylor, 1999, p. 189). Eventually Americans began reading books on Asian philosophy and religion written by Americans who sought an ecumenical reconciliation of Western Christianity and Eastern Zen in the *Gospel of Zen* (Sohl & Carr, 1970).

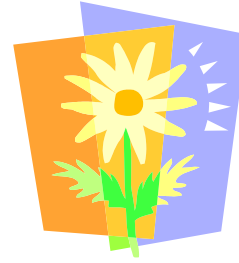
**American promoters of Eastern psychologies (1950s-1970s)** From the 1950s through the 1970s, a large number of pioneers in the humanistic and transpersonal psychology movement were to spread the wealth of information on exceptional psychological health contained in the non-Western psychologies of Asia, India, and Japan and the methods for cultivating them. These included

- **Alan Watts** (1951, 1958a, 1958b, 1961, 1963, 1968) whose interpretation of Taoist, Buddhist, and Hindu thinking had a major impact on the counterculture of the 1960's
- **Aldous Huxley** (1970) whose 1944 book *The Perennial Philosophy* argued for the existence of a unifying philosophy underlying all religions influences transpersonal theories to this day.
- **P. D. Ouspensky** (1957, 1971) popularized the teachings of Russian mystic Georgei Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866-1949).
- **D. T. Suzuki** (1970) popularized Zen philosophy in the West, especially through his book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* and the establishment of the Zen Center in San Francisco.
- **Tenzin Gyatso** (14th Dalai Lama) who spread the philosophy and psychology of the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual tradition and made America aware of the plight of the Tibetan people after the Chinese Communist takeover in 1959.
- The Hindu influence of **Maharishi Mahesh Yogi** (Forem, 1973), spiritual guru to the Beatles and popularizer of Transcendental Meditation.
- The Buddhist influence of **Chogyam Trungpa** (1973), author of the popular book *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* that warned of the dangers of ego-centered versions of spirituality, who established the Buddhist college Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, that has served as a center for meditative and academic studies in Tibetan Buddhism to numerous American students.

- **Thich Nhat Hanh** (1975), poet, Zen master, chairman of the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation during the Vietnam war, who was nominated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., for the Nobel Peace Prize, has written many books on Eastern meditation providing Westerners a method of learning the skills of mindfulness.
- **Ram Dass** (formerly Richard Alpert and doctoral student under Timothy Leary) shaped the awakening consciousness of a generation with his books *Be Here Now* (Dass, 1971) and *The Only Dance There Is* (Dass, 1974).

These are only a few of the many Asian-influenced spiritual teachers who have gained a following in American folk culture, and whose work had a visible influence on the theorizing of modern transpersonal theorists (e.g, Ken Wilber, Roger Walsh, Jack Kornfield).

**The rise of a spiritualized version of the unconscious.** This unprecedented cross-cultural exchange of ideas between East and West, coupled with the Americanization of Jungian and Freudian ideas about the psychodynamic nature of the human psyche, gave rise to transpersonal psychology and a spiritualized version of the unconscious that has proved productive for understanding altered states of consciousness, transcendent experience, and non-Western views of reality and human personality functioning, as well as providing some direction for the modern transpersonal psychologies to come.



**The Counterculture Movement (1960-1980)**

**The cultural revolution and transpersonal psychology.** The social and political upheavals of the 1960's drew psychology into the social movement that was popularly referred to as the "Counterculture" which changed American society, culture, and academic psychology forever. According to historian of psychology Eugene Taylor (1999), the counterculture movement of the 1960's launched the cultural revolution in consciousness, transformed Humanistic psychology, and was a benchmark in the larger alternative-reality tradition in the West that was to become called Transpersonal Psychology and related movements (e.g., the New Age movement, new paradigms of science movement in the physics of consciousness, holistic health and energy medicine, feminist psychology, animal rights movement, ecology movement).

**Transpersonal psychology as a bridge connecting science and religion.** The spiritual awakening that occurred in modern popular consciousness that began in the 1960's and developed into "New Religions" (Needleman & Baker, 1981), the "Aquarian Conspiracy" (Ferguson, 1980), and "New Age" movement (Lewis & Melton, 1992) of the 1980s represented a "turning point" in science, society and culture (Capra, 1982) that continues to influence American society today. Transpersonal psychology, as an outgrowth of that era, continues to refine the interface between science and religion (Wilber, 1998) and integrating innovative and cross-cultural forms of spirituality and psychotherapy into its theory and practice (Walsh, 1999).

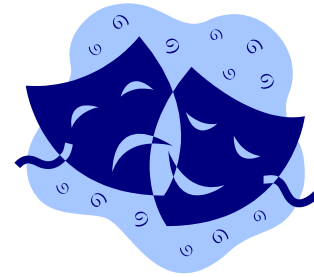
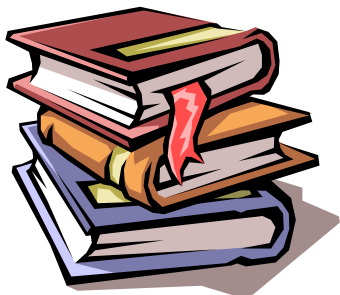




**The 1940s and 1950s laid the groundwork for the 1960s.** In the late 1940s the world had just been released from the repressive, dictatorial, authoritarian fascism of Hitler and in the early 1950s entered the uncertain future of the atomic bomb and the advent of new technologies that the world had never seen before. Television replaced radio and the computer revolution was born. As Marshall McLuhan (1964) predicted in his influential book, *Understanding Media*, the concept of a “global village” was to increasingly become a reality where physical borders and boundaries became permeable, despite the building of Walls.



**Cultural revolution.** A spirit of optimism and a bright and hopeful future characterized the American and European Zeitgeist in those countries where democracy reigned free. The population exploded, as did technological and medical inventions and advances. Americans became more aware of non-Western Eastern and Asian philosophies, esoteric religion, and pre-modern, indigenous cultural traditions. Conventional social, religious, cultural traditions were challenged as change and novelty became the order of the day. Critiques of the dominant positivist, technocratic models of science and society proliferated as books such as Herbert Marcuse’s (1964) *One-Dimensional Man* and Herman Kahn’s (1962) *Thinking About the Unthinkable* became assigned reading on many college campuses.



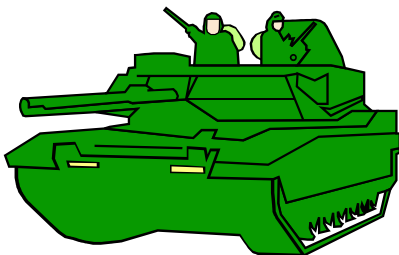
**Opportunity to turn attention toward inner realities of mind.** During this time of relative economic prosperity, people in the 1960’s and early 1970’s had the luxury of turning attention inward toward subjective realities of mind. Drug experimentation with marijuana, peyote, LSD, and mescaline was widespread in American society, opening up doors of consciousness to reveal alternate realities that were perceived to be as valid, significant, legitimate, and real as the outer realities of everyday life. Large portions of the population were reading such books as Aldous Huxley’s (1963) *Doors of Perception*, Alan Watts’s (1962) *Joyous Cosmology*, Carlos Castaneda’s (1968) *The Teachings of Don Juan*, Joseph Chilton Pearce’s (1971) *Crack in the Cosmic Egg*, and C. T. Tart’s (1969) *Altered States of Consciousness*. According to historiographer Eugene Taylor (1999),

In the 1960’s, existentialism and psychoanalysis gave way to humanistic psychology, Jungian thought, and Asian ideas about consciousness. A large segment of an entire generation began to experiment with mind-altering drugs, to read Alan Watts, Abraham Maslow, and Timothy Leary, and to join the counterculture. (Taylor, 1999, p. 280)

**Non-drug alterations of consciousness explored.** The creative impulse of the counterculture generation eventually led to subsequent interest in non-drug means of entering non-ordinary states of consciousness, and wide-spread popularity of books such as De Ropp’s (1968) *The Master Game: Beyond the Drug Experience*, Masters & Huston’s (1972) book *Mind Games: The Guide to Inner Space*, Andersen & Savary’s (1973) book *Passages: A Guide for Pilgrims of the Mind*, and Edward Rosenfeld’s (1973) *The Book of Highs: 250 Methods for Altering Your Consciousness Without Drugs*.

**A time of great social, cultural, religious and political change in America.** The 1960's and 1970's was a time of great social, cultural, religious, and political change in the American inner landscape that brought great tragedy as well as great hope. On the one hand, our scientific and technological advancements landed us on the moon in 1969, improved medicines, and brought knowledge of the genetic structure.

**The good, the bad, and the ugly.** On the other hand, under the umbrella of possible nuclear conflict and the Cold War, people were "thinking about the unthinkable:" the likelihood of thermonuclear war. The assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy and the war in Vietnam all within a single decade showed how violent a people that we as Americans could be. Eldridge Cleaver in his popular book *Soul on Ice* declared: "Violence is as American as apple pie." Civil disobedience inspired by such individuals as the Berrigan brothers and others who followed in the footsteps of Gandhi were met by uncompromising punishment by government authorities. The mayor of Chicago mercilessly crushed demonstrators during the national Democratic Convention; student protesters at Kent State were shot and killed by members of the state National Guard. Student organizations such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were being established on college campuses across the country. Marches on Washington in protest against the Vietnam War were a common occurrence. Sons and daughters were rebelling against the wishes and commands of their parents. To many people of the World War II generation, it seemed that American society was coming apart at the seams. Discipline and authority, law and order seemed to be breaking down everywhere they looked. All these events too were a part of the *Zeitgeist* out of which the transpersonal movement was born. Robert Pirsig's 1974 book, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* became the modern tale of America's search for its soul.



**"The times, they were a'changin'."** Revolution was the watchword of the times. It was a time that gave birth to rock n' roll music and its subculture as the "British Invasion" in the guise of *The Beatles* changed the way youth wore their hair and the clothes they wore. It was a time of the sexual revolution, as "freelove," swinging, and alternative life styles came into prominence. The Civil Rights movement, the Anti-War movement, and Social Justice movement were in full swing. Caesar Chavez and others protested the social injustices of the migrant farm worker as scores of young people picketed outside of supermarkets to boycott the sale of non-union lettuce and grapes. The ecology movement was born with the publication of Rachel Carson's (1962) book *Silent Spring* and the animal rights movement 13 years later with the publication of Peter Singer's (1975) book *Animal Liberation*. To quote Bob Dylan, poet, songwriter and a voice of the 1960's generation, "The times, they were a'changin'." The change in American society and culture was so deep and so widespread that some individuals believed that a "conspiracy" must be involved. Indeed, one of the best summary chronicles of that time period can be found in Marilyn Ferguson's (1980), *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980's*.



**Changes in American higher culture.** The institutions of American higher culture (e.g., education, business organizations, psychology, psychiatry, philosophy, religion) were also in a state of change and transition.

- In **higher education**, Paul Goodman's (1962) assessment of colleges and universities in the United States in his book *Compulsory Mis-Education* and *The Community of Scholars* and Ivan Illich's (1970) call for *Deschooling Society* presented a challenging critique of the structure of American education.
- Gregory Bateson's (1972) book *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* promoted **systems theory and ecology** and introduced a new way of thinking about the nature of order and organization in living systems.

- In **psychology**, there was the decline of the behaviorist model of human behavior and the rise of cognitive psychology. Gestalt therapy, encounter groups, Schutz’s 1967 book *Joy*, and Harris’s 1967 book *I’m OK-You’re OK* opened new directions in psychotherapy and education.
- In **psychiatry**, concepts that had been deified for decades were suddenly deflated by iconoclastic R. D. Laing’s (1967) *The Politics of Experience* and Thomas Szasz’s (1974) characterization of *The Myth of Mental Illness*.
- In **philosophy**, modernity was counteracted by post-modern thought in the form of Alfred North Whitehead’s (1969, 1975) process philosophy.
- In **religion**, traditional religiousness characterized by church attendance and dogmatic belief was met with a more free-flowing spirituality, as exoteric religion became replaced with esoteric spirituality.
- In **society and culture**, the “New Age” was upon us and was reacted to with great hostility by religious fundamentalists who recognized its power to offer youth an alternative faith system, as communes, cults and “new religions” proliferated.



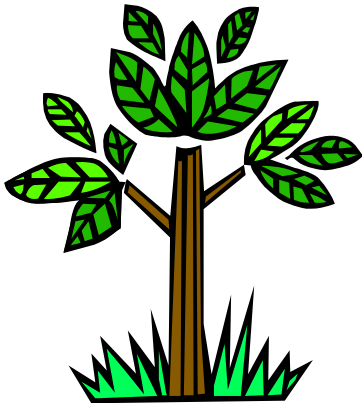
**Pioneers of humanistic-transpersonal psychology.** Gordon Allport, Andras Angyal, Jacques Barzun, Mendard Boss, James Bugenthal, Charlotte Buhler, James Clark, Viktor Frankl, Eugene Gendlin, Amedeo Giorgi, Kurt Goldstein, Sidney Jouard, George Kelly, Stanley Krippner, R. D. Lange, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Clark Moustakas, Lewis Mumford, Gardner Murphy, Henry Murray, Fritz Perls, Donald Polkinghorne, Carl Rogers, Anthony Sutich, Thomas Szasz, Robert Tannenbaum, Frederick Wertz, and countless other humanistic psychologists moved mainstream psychology away from a strict focus on psychopathology, behaviorist reductionism, and biological determinism to a more generous view of human nature and a more expansive understanding of personality growth (DeCarvalho, 1981, 1992). Through the work of these pioneers of humanistic and transpersonal psychology “the predominant themes of psychotherapy quickly became those of choice, responsibility, meaning, awareness, development of the will, problems of intentionality and decision making, and self-realization” (Taylor, 1999, p. 266).

**Changes in American humanistic psychology.** Humanistic psychology was not immune to the social-cultural events that were occurring in American culture (Chinen, 1996). According to historian of psychology, Eugene Taylor (1999), between 1967 and 1969 humanistic psychology divided into three separate paths – transpersonal psychology, psychophysical body-oriented therapies, and constructive post-modernism - which facilitated its further assimilation into American popular culture.

The first [path] was transpersonal psychology, with its emphasis on spiritual practice, meditation, and higher states of consciousness. The second [path] was experiential encounter, which emphasized emotional relationships, cultivation of sensory experience, and a greater awareness of the body. Finally, there was radical therapy, a catchall term referring to the marriage of psychology and radical political action in such divergent areas as militant feminism, the anti-psychiatry movement, critical thinking, and what has come to be called human science. (Taylor, 1999, p. 274)

**Humanistic Psychology**

**Humanistic psychology (1940-1970).** Alongside the counterculture movement and infusion of Eastern and Asian religious, philosophic, and psychological systems of thought into America and their later promotion into American popular culture, “humanistic psychology thrived as an alternative within the academic university community” (Taylor, 1999, p. 273). “Like the transcendentalist movement a hundred years earlier, the humanistic revolution in American culture became the voice for a deep disquiet that had been building throughout the twentieth century” (Taylor, 1999, p. 261).



### The Birth of Modern Transpersonal Psychology

**The birth of the transpersonal psychology movement in California.** The cultural context of the 1960s and 1970s provided fertile ground for the emergence of transpersonal studies as a separate field of study within psychology. The infusion of ideas from the Eastern contemplative traditions of Zen, Advaita, Vedanta, and Taoism, coupled with the institutionalization of the humanistic revolution in academic psychology, and the growing interest in consciousness and altered states of consciousness that was triggered by the widespread use of psychedelics, paved the way for the birth of transpersonal psychology movement in California of the late 1960s (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 5-6).

**Transpersonal psychology is an extension and expansion of humanistic psychology.** Modern transpersonal psychology emerged out of the field of humanistic psychology in the late 1960's in order to expand the field of psychological inquiry beyond traditional psychoanalytic and behaviorist perspectives, models, and concepts to study "the farther reaches of human nature" (Maslow, 1971), especially "religions, values, and peak-experiences" (Maslow, 1964). This new development in psychology grew out of humanistic psychology, yet had quickly outgrew that framework by calling attention to possibilities of selfhood and psychological development beyond the humanistic model of self-actualization. According to historian of psychology, Eugene Taylor (1999), "in the 1970's, humanistic psychology graduated to transpersonal psychology" (p. 280) as a result of several factors:

- There was the widening of interest among humanistically-oriented psychologists such as Sutich, Maslow, Grof, Fadiman, Vich., Buhler, Jouard, Moustakas, Pahnke, Frankl, and others into matters of ultimate or cosmic value, meaning, and purpose, and into phenomena that traditionally occupied only the interests of psychologists of religion.
- There was the increasing interdisciplinary and holistic character of explorations into mind and consciousness that were taking place, especially in cognitive science.
- There was the growing recognition that official, traditional, orthodox Western psychology must overcome its highly limited concepts about the nature of the self if it is to achieve its greatest fulfillment as a discipline.

**The next logical development in humanistic psychology.** Anthony J. Sutich and Abraham H. Maslow, two founders of humanistic psychology, recognized it had reached a point where a newer development of psychology was not only feasible but necessary. It was the next logical development in humanistic psychology – affirmation of our spiritual identity.



**Abraham Maslow** (1908-1970) is considered the intellectual father of transpersonal psychology (Hoffman, 1988).

Maslow espoused a philosophy of science that set the stage for the development of humanistic and transpersonal psychology. He studied persons he considered self-actualized and described the spiritual values, beliefs, and actions of such individuals. He concluded that there is an inherently spiritual dimension to human nature and explicated a hierarchy of motivations that completes itself in spiritual self-realization. Maslow proposed the term *transpersonal* and addressed many of the basic concepts of the field. (Battista, 1996, p. 52)

#### **Higher potentials of human nature recognized.**

Maslow's studies on metamotivation, peak-experiences, and self-actualization suggested the possibility of alternate modes of experience and higher potentials of human nature that could form the basis of a new psychology that was "trans-humanistic" (Maslow, 1969a). Based on his study of "peak experiences" Maslow came to propose a model of human personality "beyond self-actualization." Peak experiences once stabilized are one path to higher personality development,

Peak experiences can occur to individuals at almost any stage of development... Nonetheless, the way in which those states or realms are experienced and interpreted depends to some degree on the stage of development of the person having the peak experience... In order for higher development to occur, those temporary states must become permanent traits. Higher development involves, in part, the conversion of altered states of consciousness into permanent realization (say, for example, through the practice of meditation techniques). (Wilber, 2000b, pp. 14-15)

**Humanistic psychology as transitional to a "higher" Transpersonal psychology.** Abraham H. Maslow, a co-founder of both humanistic and transpersonal psychology, soon came to consider "Humanistic, Third Force Psychology to be transitional, a preparation for a still 'higher' Fourth Psychology, transpersonal, transhuman, centered in the cosmos rather than in human needs and interest, going beyond humanness, identity, self-actualization, and the like" (Maslow, 1968, pp. iii-iv).

**Toward a psychology of being.** In the preface to the second edition of *Toward a Psychology of Being* published in 1968, Maslow wrote:

These new developments may very well offer a tangible, usable, effective satisfaction of the 'frustrated idealism' of many quietly desperate people, especially young people. These psychologies give promise of developing into the life-philosophy, the religion-surrogate, the value-system, and the life-program that these people have been missing. Without the transcendent and the transpersonal, we get sick, violent, and nihilistic, or else hopeless and apathetic. We need something 'bigger than we are' to be awed by and to commit ourselves to in a new, naturalistic, empirical, non-churchly sense, perhaps as Thoreau and Whitman, William James and John Dewey did. (Maslow, 1968, pp. iii-iv)





**Anthony J. Sutich (1907-1976).** Abraham Maslow did not found humanistic or transpersonal psychology alone. He had a great deal of help, notably from his long-time friend Anthony (Tony) Sutich. Sutich (1976) was a remarkable individual who played a pioneering role in the founding of both humanistic and transpersonal psychology. Transpersonal psychologist James Fadiman (1999) describes this unsung and unknown hero of the transpersonal revolution in his “irreverent history” of transpersonal psychology.

William James is well known; he is a hero we share with mainstream psychology, but Tony Sutich is uniquely our own...Tony created two of the four major schools of psychology that exist in the world – while lying in a slant bed with muscles that worked only half his face and one hand, enough so he could pull a cord to turn his phone on and off. He had been disabled by arthritis from age 18, finishing his education and getting his license to practice clinical psychology at a time when such a feat was close to impossible. (Fadiman, 1999, p. 5)

#### **What to call the “Fourth” Force of psychology?**

Shortly after becoming founding editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and one of the founders of the Association for Humanistic Psychology in 1961 - which included notable future proponents of transpersonal psychology such as James Fadiman, Sidney Jouard, Abraham Maslow, Michael Murphy, and Miles Vich - Anthony Sutich became interested in developing a “psychology of mysticism, modified by humanistic considerations and the Western attitude of empiricism” (Sutich, 1976, p. 8) and was looking for a name for the newer development of psychology that would expand the humanistic orientation

**“Transhumanistic” is first proposed.** In conversations with fellow humanistic psychologists Miles Vich and Abraham Maslow, a term suggested by Sir Julian Huxley, “transhumanistic,” was proposed. This was the term that Maslow (1969a) used in his first public reference to the “Fourth Force” in psychology in a lecture presented at the San Francisco Unitarian Church on September 14, 1967.

**“Transpersonal” is decided upon.** A name change was soon to occur, however. In a later letter written to Anthony Sutich in February 1968, Abraham Maslow refers to a meeting with Stanislav Grof who had earlier used the word “transpersonal” in a lecture given September 21, 1967 in Berkeley in connection with the terms “supra-individual” and “death and rebirth of the ego”:

The main reason I am writing is that in the course of our conversations we thought of using the word “transpersonal” instead of the clumsier word “transhumanistic” or “transhuman.” The more I think of it, the more the word says what we are all trying to say, that is, beyond individuality, beyond development of the individual person into something which is more inclusive than the individual person, or which is bigger than he is. What do you think? (Sutich, 1976, p. 16)

In later correspondences among Anthony Sutich, Abraham Maslow, Viktor Frankl, James Fadiman, and Stanislav Grof, the term “transpersonal” was agreed upon to describe the new movement.





**Origin of the word “Transpersonal.”** Miles Vich (1988), former editor of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* and executive director of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology, has documented the various historical psychological and philosophical uses of the term “transpersonal.” He notes that “there seems to be no record of ‘transpersonal psychology’ as a phrase, name or title being used prior to the 1967-1969 discussions among Anthony Sutich, Abraham Maslow, Stanislov Grof, Viktor Frankl, and James Fadiman. There were, however, use of the single term “transpersonal” much earlier in the century” (Vich, 1988, p. 108) by William James and Carl Jung, and later by Erich Neumann.

**William James’s “trans-personal” meaning interpersonal.** William James is credited with the first English-language use of the term “trans-*personal*” in a course syllabus at Harvard in 1905-1906 to refer to the specific idea that an “object” may be “trans-*personal*” in the sense that “my object is also *your* object” (Vich, 1988, p. 109). “James had used the term ‘transpersonal’ in a course description at Harvard in 1905-1906 to describe the concept of ‘outside of’ or ‘beyond’ in relation to how humans experience the world” (Taylor, 1999, p. 274).

**C. G. Jung’s “transpersonal” meaning “collective unconscious.”** C. G. Jung, who emphasized archetypes and the transcendent function in personality functioning, used the term *ueberpersonlich* in reference to contents of the collective unconscious in his 1917 book titled *Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology* (Jung, 1917). The term was translated as “superpersonal” in 1914 and later as “transpersonal” in 1942. For instance, in the section, “The Psychology of Unconscious Processes” of *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (Jung, 1953), Chapter 5 is titled, “The Personal and the Collective (Transpersonal) Unconscious.”

We have to distinguish between a personal unconscious and an impersonal or transpersonal unconscious. We speak of the latter also as the collective unconscious, because it is detached from anything personal and is entirely universal, and because its contents can be found everywhere, which is naturally not the case with the personal contents. The personal unconscious contains lost memories, painful ideas that are repressed (i.e., forgotten on purpose), subliminal perceptions, by which are meant sense-perceptions that were not strong enough to reach consciousness, and finally, contents that are not yet ripe for consciousness. It corresponds to the figure of the shadow so frequently met with in dreams (Jung, 1953, p. 65).

**C. G. Jung’s “transpersonal” meaning “extra-human.”** In the following passage, Jung refers to the transpersonal as the “extra-human.”

The [dream symbol] points specifically to the extra-human, the transpersonal; for the contents of the collective unconscious are not only the residues of archaic, specifically human modes of functioning, but also the residues of functions from man’s animal ancestry, whose duration in time was infinitely greater than the relatively brief epoch of specifically human existence. (Jung, 1953, pp. 96-97)

**C. C. Jung’s other uses of the term.** Jung also used the term “transpersonal” to refer to the unconscious development of what he calls the “transpersonal control-point” or “guiding function [that]...gained influence over the resisting conscious mind without the patient noticing what was happening...a virtual goal, as it were, that expressed itself symbolically” (Jung, 1953, pp. 131-132). Elsewhere, Jung used to term “transpersonal” in relation to contents of the unconscious: “These transpersonal contents are not just inert or dead matter that can be annexed at will. Rather they are living entities which exert an attractive force upon the conscious mind” (Jung, 1953, p. 142).



**Erich Neumann and the transpersonal as the “Ground of Being.”** Jungian analyst Erich Neumann in his 1954 book on *The Origins and History of Consciousness* used the word “transpersonal” to describe the depth psychology that studies what he considers the deepest layer of the unconscious – the transpersonal unconscious - that is largely independent of individualized ego consciousness and yet is the psychic layer from which the ego is derived, upon which it is based, by which it is nourished, and without which it cannot exist (Neumann, 1954).



#### **Transpersonal Psychology: After the Founding**

**The passing of Abraham Maslow.** In 1969, Maslow was elected president of the American Psychological Association (APA). Maslow’s election as president of APA indicated the recognition by the 70,000-member organization of the influence of humanistic theory. Maslow’s election also provided an extraordinary opportunity for the ideas behind transpersonal psychology to assert themselves throughout the discipline. Tragically, Abe Maslow died the following year in June 1970 at the age of 62, of a second heart attack, before his vision of transpersonal psychology could be further developed beyond the tentative outline he presented in his book *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* published posthumously by his wife Bertha Maslow in 1971. In a 1976 article after reflecting upon the death of his close friend, Abraham Maslow, Anthony Sutich wrote:

Both humanistic and transpersonal psychology had reached the point at which they were already independent, evolving, self-developing orientations and that given mutual cooperation their long-run influence would be incalculable” (Sutich, 1976, p. 18)

**The crossing over of Anthony Sutich.** On April 10, 1976, one day after receiving his doctoral degree having completed his dissertation on “The Founding of Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology: A Personal Account,” Anthony J. Sutich died (Vich, 1976).

**The next generation of transpersonal psychologists.** With Abraham Maslow’s death in June 1970 and Anthony Sutich’s passing in 1976, the transpersonal movement in the later 1970’s passed to younger professionals, including

- *William Braud* who works to develop transpersonal research methods of inquiry emphasizing intuition, empathy, and self-awareness.
- *Ram Dass*, formerly Richard Alpert and student of Timothy Leary, who speaks to the older generation of transpersonalists about aging and how to live in the light of death.
- *James Fadiman and Robert Frager* who wrote the first textbook in personality theory to include a section on transpersonal psychology.
- *Daniel Goleman*, Buddhist meditator and writer for the NY times whose book on “Emotional Intelligence” promotes affective education and the integration of intellect and emotion.
- *Christina and Stanislav Grof*, who did pioneering LSD research to discover deeper realms of the unconscious and address spiritual emergencies.
- *Jorge Ferrer and Richard Tarnas*, who offer evocative postmodernist criticisms of modern transpersonal theory.
- *Jack Kornfield*, Buddhist meditator who promotes mindfulness as a way of being in the world.
- *Charles Tart*, interested in the parapsychology of spirituality.
- *Frances Vaughn*, psychotherapist who writes on intuition, therapy, and holistic personality development.
- *Roger Walsh*, transpersonal psychiatrist who has successfully promoted transpersonal psychology in the popular culture.
- *John Welwood*, transpersonal psychotherapist interested in love and relationships.
- *Ken Wilber*, prolific writer who has emerged as a spokesperson for a transpersonal “integral” psychology and the “structures of consciousness” paradigm.



**The history of transpersonal psychology since 1970.** Eugene Taylor (1999, p. 280) describes the history of transpersonal psychology after 1970.

Since the 1970's, transpersonal psychology, like the humanistic movement that preceded it, has splintered into three different groups.... One, represented by Grof's ideas, believes that transcendence can occur only in the presence of an altered state of consciousness. This group generates conceptual models of nonordinary states of consciousness.... The second group, led by Wilber, includes those who attempt to map inner states of consciousness. Self-consciously identifying himself with the monistic and perennial philosophy of Aldous Huxley, Wilber...finds that all expressions of the highest state of consciousness in each tradition are the same... [with] psychopathic states occur at the bottom, normal waking realities in the middle, and meditative states of higher consciousness at the top...The third and, by far, the largest segment of the transpersonal movement has no identifiable standard-bearer... [and] sees self-actualization as getting up and going to work in the morning...Higher consciousness consists of sweeping the floor, doing the dishes, and raking the leaves. Enlightenment is doing whatever we are supposed to be doing at this minute. It is not a preconceived thing; it is not an altered state of consciousness...It is simply the philosophy of the profound, which is to be discovered most clearly in the mundane. (Taylor, 1999, p. 280)



**The Academic, scientific and professional status of transpersonal psychology.** Since its emergence out of humanistic psychology in the 1960's, transpersonal psychology or what Abraham Maslow referred to as the *fourth force* of psychology has developed into a full-fledged academic, scientific, and professional discipline [A *Guide to the Transpersonal Internet* can be found at [www.internetguides.com](http://www.internetguides.com)].



**Schools and programs.** In recognition of the validity and significance of transformative or spiritual experiences and behavior as a legitimate field of study, numerous colleges and universities across the United States have instituted academic courses and degree-granting programs in the field of transpersonal studies, including the

- Institute of Transpersonal Psychology ([www.itp.edu](http://www.itp.edu))
- John F. Kennedy University ([www.jfku.edu](http://www.jfku.edu))
- Saybrook Graduate Institute ([www.saybrook.edu](http://www.saybrook.edu))
- California Institute of Integral Psychology ([www.ciis.edu](http://www.ciis.edu))
- Naropa Institute ([www.naropa.edu](http://www.naropa.edu)).

**International studies.** Academic programs in transpersonal studies are also offered in Belgium, Brazil, Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Scotland, Spain, and Switzerland. The Association for Transpersonal Psychology identifies over 60 degree-granting institutions (and over 50 non-degree granting programs) offering graduate and undergraduate courses in transpersonal psychology, and allied areas in their 2002 *Listing of Schools and Programs*. A partial listing of schools and programs in transpersonal psychology can be found at [www.atpweb.org/public](http://www.atpweb.org/public).





*Academic journals and books. A number of peer-reviewed journals and book publishers provide a forum for the communication of theoretical and empirical research into human transformative capacities and exceptional human experience, including*

- *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* ([www.atpweb.org](http://www.atpweb.org)) established in 1969 [by the same Tony Sutich who founded the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*]
- *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* ([www.panigada.hypermart.net](http://www.panigada.hypermart.net)) founded in 1981
- *Journal of Consciousness Studies* ([www.imprint.co.uk/jcs](http://www.imprint.co.uk/jcs))
- *Revision: A Journal of Consciousness and Transformation* ([www.heldref.org/html/body\\_rev.html](http://www.heldref.org/html/body_rev.html))
- *Journal for Scientific Exploration* ([www.jse.com](http://www.jse.com)) established in 1987.

The State University of New York Press (SUNY) publishes the SUNY series in *Transpersonal and Humanistic Psychology* ([www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)) edited by Richard D. Mann that presents transpersonal psychology to the academic community. The publishing houses of Jeremy P. Tarcher (Los Angeles, CA), Shambhala Publications (Boston, MA), and Theosophical Publishing (Wheaton, IL) support the dissemination of transpersonal theories and research to the general public.

Book anthologies that serve as excellent introductions to transpersonal psychology include:

- Charles Tart's (1975/1992) *Transpersonal Psychologies: Perspectives on the Mind from Seven Great Spiritual Traditions*.
- Roger Walsh and Deanne Shapiro's (1983) *Beyond Health and Normality: Explorations of Exceptional Psychological Well-Being*.
- Roger Walsh and France Vaughn's (1993a) *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision*.
- Seymour Boorstein's (1996) *Transpersonal Psychotherapy*.

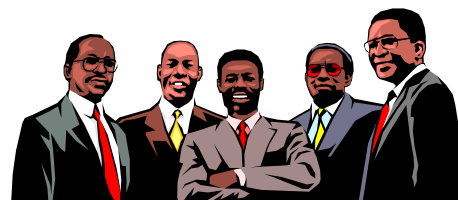
- Bruce Scotton, Allen Chinen, and John Battista's (1996) *Textbook of Transpersonal Psychiatry and Psychology*.



*Professional national and international associations and conferences. The formation of professional national and international associations promote the field and facilitate productive interaction among people involved in transpersonal therapy and scientific research of "anomalous" phenomena, including*

- Association for Transpersonal Psychology ([www.atpweb.org](http://www.atpweb.org)) founded in 1971.
- Institute of Noetic Sciences ([www.noetic.org](http://www.noetic.org)) founded in 1973.
- European Transpersonal Psychology Association ([www.europsy.org/etpa](http://www.europsy.org/etpa)) founded in 1999.
- Mind & Life Institute founded in 1987 ([www.mindandlife.org](http://www.mindandlife.org))
- International Conference on Science & Consciousness ([www.bizspirit.com](http://www.bizspirit.com))
- Society for Scientific Exploration ([www.scientificexploration.org](http://www.scientificexploration.org)) founded in 1982.

These Associations and Conferences offer workshops for clinicians interested in using clients' spiritual-orientations to assist in therapeutic interventions and outcomes, and for researchers interested in the relationship between science and consciousness. They also give recognition at their conferences to those individuals past and present who have made contributions to the field of transpersonal studies.





### Transpersonal Psychology Around the World

The present account of the intellectual history of transpersonal psychology has focused largely upon its development in the United States. Ideas spread, of course, out of the country that gave them birth to influence other countries, societies, cultures, especially in a world interconnected by a vast webwork of communication via newspaper, television, telephone, and especially the Internet. We have indeed become a global village, and journals dedicated to discourse in the area of transpersonal studies recognize this. Beginning with its 2002 issue, for instance, *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* presents summaries of research briefs that introduce readers to transpersonal researchers in countries such as Italy, Denmark, Russia, India, and South America. *The International Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* is devoted to publishing transpersonal theory and research from a full spectrum of international contributors. We will briefly consider two international venues for transpersonal psychology – Europe and Russia.

**Europe.** Transpersonal psychology's growth in free Europe has been slow but continuous. Laura Boggio Gilot (2000), founder and president of the Italian Association of Transpersonal Psychology (IAPT) and cofounder and president of the European Transpersonal Psychology Association (ETPA), identifies origins of transpersonal thought in Europe in the works of the Swiss C.G. Jung (founder of Analytical Psychology), the Italian Roberto Assagioli (founder of Psychosynthesis), the German Karl Durckheim (mystic and writer), the French Robert Desoille (creator of the guided daydream), and the Austrian Viktor Frankl (the founder of logotherapy). According to Boggio Gilot, "The formal transpersonal movement started in Europe with the establishment of the *European Transpersonal Association* (EUROTAS) in 1987...and is not limited to any particular discipline, school of thought, or technique" (Gilot, 2000, p. 140).

**European Transpersonal Association (ETPA).** Continuing professional growth of the transpersonal movement in Europe gave rise to the establishment of the *European Transpersonal Association* (ETPA) in 1999, which includes the national transpersonal associations of six countries including, Italy, France, Brazil, Spain, Germany, and Norway.

ETPA was established...as an association of professional psychologists and psychiatrists for the study, teaching, and research of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy in the integral perspective. Pointing out the relevance of integral psychology, as defined by Ken Wilber, ETPA is focused on transformative spirituality and consciousness development beyond ego, through spiritual practices, in order to understand reality and heal individual and social life. In this context, ETPA fosters a dynamic epistemology toward body, mind, soul, and Spirit wholeness, and unified or nondual consciousness, in which the qualities of intuitive awareness, compassion, and discriminative wisdom are expressed in a socially engaged spirituality.... ETPA's members are recommended to be committed to daily spiritual practices, such as meditation, action without attachment, service, cultivation of altruistic love, and truthfulness. (Gilot, 2000, p. 140)

**Russia.** In Russia, transpersonal psychology's development has been rapid and compressed ever since the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Brevde, Kozlov, & Maykov (2002) report on the first conference of the *Russian Transpersonal Psychology and Psychotherapy Association* (RTPPA) which provides an overview of the history of the transpersonal movement in Russia. Prior to the 1970's transpersonal concepts were not formally recognized or accepted in Russia, although ideas derived from Christian Gnosticism, Greek Orthodox Christianity, Shamanism and Sufism had long influenced Russian folk culture and, more recently the theosophical ideas of Rudolf Steiner (Nalimov, 2001). From 1970-1990, as the transpersonal movement developed in the United States and started to spread elsewhere, it eventually found its way to Russia. Political repression pushed transpersonal ideas underground until 1990-1995 when Communism fell and organized associations and conferences began to be held.

**Russian transpersonal psychology.** The establishment of a Humanistic Psychology Association in 1990, two Russian-American conferences on humanistic-transpersonal topics conducted in 1991-1992, and publication by the Academy of Science of the work of Stanislav Grof all promoted the field. From 1995-2000, the transpersonal movement entered Russian folk culture through its identification with New Age spirituality and spread through the work of figures such as Evgeny Torchinov (1956-2003) and Vassily V. Nalimov (1991-1997).

**Figure 2-1** identifies selected milestones in the intellectual history of the transpersonal movement.

**Figure 2-1. “Unofficial “ Intellectual History of Modern Transpersonal Psychology**



**Section Summary**

1. There are many probable histories of transpersonal psychology, depending upon what aspect of transpersonal psychology is emphasized and considered to be important in the present – lived experience, Eastern influences, idealism and panpsychism, the unconscious and superconscious, or spiritual inner experience and concept of the soul.
2. The roots of modern psychology lie in a spiritual tradition that is thoroughly transpersonal in character as reflected in the work of Gustav Fechner, William James, F.W.H.Myers, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, and Roberto Assagioli. Each of these early contributors attempted to address those elements of the soul that religion refused to examine.
3. Modern transpersonal psychology is a uniquely American psychology and a reflection of America’s visionary “folk psychology” and “alternative reality tradition” embodied in Swedenborgism, spiritualism, utopianism, and the New England Transcendentalist movement at the turn of the century. Psychosynthesis was the first transpersonal psychology to be embraced in American popular culture.

4. The Americanization of Eastern and Asian systems of thought that began at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued through the 1950s laid the groundwork for the integration of Eastern spiritual ideas and Western psychological concepts, the promotion of Eastern systems of thought into American popular culture, and the rise of a spiritualized version of the unconscious. The unprecedented cross-cultural exchanges of ideas between East and West proved most productive for understanding non-Western views of reality and theories of personality development, altered states of consciousness, and methods for cultivating them.

5. The Counterculture movement of the 1960’s that expressed the deep disquiet in American culture with the modern worldview and its militarism, nuclearism, consumerism, spiritual problems, ecological devastations, materialism, scientism, social injustices, individualism, nationalism, anthropocentrism, and androcentricism that had been building throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century provided fertile ground for the emergence of a constructive, revisionary postmodern humanism that involved a creative synthesis of premodern spiritual wisdom and modern scientific facts.

6. Modern transpersonal psychology emerged out of humanistic psychology in the late 1960’s calling attention to possibilities of growth and development beyond self-actualization. The widening of interest among humanistic psychologists into matters of ultimate values, unitive consciousness, transcendence, and practices of meditation and spiritual paths, reached a point where a newer development of psychology was not only feasible but necessary.

7. Since the 1970s, transpersonal psychology, or what Abraham Maslow referred to as the *Fourth Force* of psychology, has developed into a full-fledged academic, scientific, and professional discipline nationally in the United States and internationally in Europe, Russia and other countries of the world.



### Figure 2-1. An “Unofficial” Intellectual History of Modern Transpersonal Psychology

- 1882 The Society for Psychical Research (SPR) is founded in England “to examine without prejudice or prepossession and in a scientific spirit those faculties of man, real or supposed, which appear to be inexplicable on any generally recognized hypothesis” (i.e., thought-transference, mesmerism, haunted houses and apparitions, physical mediumship).
- 1885 The American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) is co-founded by William James (president of the SPR in 1894-1895 and vice-president from 1890-1910) for the systematic and organized study of paranormal phenomena in the United States whose open espousal of the cause of psychical research greatly benefited the reputation and early experimental forms of this nascent science.
- 1900 Sigmund Freud publishes what he considered to be his most important work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and one of the first attempts to analyze the psychological purpose of dreams.
- 1901 Psychiatrist Richard M. Bucke publishes *Cosmic Consciousness*, the classic case study investigation of the development of humanity’s mystic relation to the infinite.
- 1902 American psychologist William James publishes *Varieties of Religious Experience*, a collection of anecdotal reports of religious and mystical experiences and a valuable contribution for the reconciliation of science with religion.
- 1903 Classicist and scholar W. H. F. Myers publishes *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, a two-volume 1,360 page classic in the field of psychic research that presents case studies of exceptional human experiences strongly suggestive of survival of bodily death and the existence of a subliminal “self” and a quasi-independent train of thought (called “subliminal consciousness”)
- 1926 Walter Franklin Prince, M.D. publishes his classic study of *The Case of Patience Worth* concerning a purported spirit-entity who claimed to have lived in seventeenth century England and who dictated through the Ouija board (via Mrs. Lenore Curran) novels that were published and given critical acclaim in American popular culture, concluding: “Either our concept of what we call the subconscious mind must be radically altered so as to include potencies of which we hitherto have had no knowledge, or else some cause operating through, but not originating in, the subconscious of Mrs. Curran must be acknowledge.”
- 1927 The Parapsychology Laboratory is founded at Duke University by J. B. Rhine and William MacDougal.
- 1934 J. B. Rhine publishes *Extra-Sensory Perception*, summarizing the experimental studies of ESP conducted at Duke University that provided scientific evidence for ESP and Psychokinesis (PK).
- 1935 Psychiatrist Carl G. Jung introduces the concept of the *collective unconscious* into psychiatry referring to that portion of the psyche that transcends the personal unconscious of the individual.
- 1937 The *Journal of Parapsychology* is founded.
- 1940 J. B. Rhine with John Pratt publish *Extrasensory Perception After Sixty Years* (referring to the six decades of research on ESP since the SPR’s founding in 1882) that summarize the 145 experimental studies of ESP that had been carried out at Duke University strongly supportive of the reality of psi.
- 1943 Swiss pharmacologist Albert Hoffman discovers lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD-25) in the course of studying the properties of the ergot fungus of rye while seeking a drug to improve blood circulation.
- 1951 *Gestalt Psychology* is published by Paul Goodman, Ralph Hefferline, and Fritz Perls that outlined Gestalt psychotherapy and its new approach to the recovery of emotions, the re-enlivening of sensory awareness, and an approach to the patient as a whole person.

### Figure 2-1. An “Unofficial” Intellectual History of Modern Transpersonal Psychology

- 1945 Author of intellectual and utopian novels and nonfiction works concerning mysticism, transcendental philosophy, futurism, and the evolution of intelligence, Aldous Huxley, publishes *Perennial Philosophy*, his classic anthology of Eastern and Western mysticism that expresses the monistic system of thought called “Philosophia Perennis” with an emphasis on higher consciousness, that popularizes the idea that a single Truth can be found at the core of the mystical teachings of the world religious traditions.
- 1951 Carl Rogers, who was to receive APA’s first Distinguished Contributions to Psychology Award in 1956, publishes his pioneering book, *Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory*, that defined a new direction in clinical psychology and psychiatry.
- 1951 The Parapsychology Foundation is established to encourage and financially support the scientific study of psi phenomena, including telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis.
- 1954 Aldous Huxley, author of *Brave New World* (1932), publishes *Doors of Perception*, referring to William Blake’s quote, “When the doors of perception are cleansed, every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite,” in which he described his mescaline experience and its philosophic, religious, and aesthetic implications, that helps launch the psychedelic drug revolution in the 1960’s (and that served as inspiration for the rock group, *The Doors*, which took its name from its title).
- 1957 The Parapsychological Association is founded “to advance parapsychology as a science, to disseminate knowledge of the field, and to investigate the findings with those of other branches of science.”
- 1956 Alan Watts establishes the California Institute for Asian Studies, the first formal organization to offer graduate study in Eastern religion, philosophy, and psychology.
- 1957 Philosopher, teacher, and counterculture leader Alan Watts publishes *The Way of Zen* that interprets Zen Buddhism to Western audiences.
- 1958 The *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* is founded by Abraham Maslow and Anthony Sutich.
- 1958 The Psychosynthesis Research Foundation is established in New York City at the request of Roberto Assagioli.
- 1958 Rollo May, in collaboration with Swiss existential psychiatrist Henri Ellenberger, publishes his pioneering book *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychology and Psychiatry*, that introduced existential psychotherapy to American psychology.
- 1959 Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl’s remarkable book, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (first published in Austria in 1946), introduces to an American audience his experiences in the Nazi concentration camps that led to his discovery of logotherapy (“meaning therapy”) and his philosophy of existential analysis.
- 1961 The Association for Humanistic Psychology is founded by Joseph Adams, James Fadiman, Harriet Francisco, Sidney Jouard, Abraham Maslow, Michael Murphy, Miles Vich, and Anthony Sutich.
- 1962 Marghanita Laski writes a classic treatise about the nature of ecstatic rapture.
- 1962 Walter Pahnke administers small capsules of psilocybin to twenty Protestant divinity students at Boston University’s March Chapel on Good Friday to begin one of the first scientific experiments designed to investigate the potential of psychedelic drugs to facilitate mystical experience.
- 1962 Esalen Institute is founded by Michael Murphy and Richard Price, an important growth center of humanistic psychology that sponsored seminars and residential training programs, which promoted the American counterculture movement and spiritual visionary tradition in the modern period.

### Figure 2-1. An “Unofficial” Intellectual History of Modern Transpersonal Psychology

- 1962 Counterculture guru Alan Watts publishes *The Joyous Cosmology: Adventures in the Chemistry of Consciousness* that had a profound impact on the emerging psychedelic drug culture.
- 1963 Alan Watts publishes *Psychotherapy East and West*, that describes parallels between Western psychotherapy and Eastern schools of thought, including Buddhism, yoga, Taoism, and Vedanta.
- 1964 The historic *Old Saybrook Conference* is conducted that brings humanistic-oriented thinkers and psychotherapists together for the first time to discuss the future of the humanistic movement in America.
- 1965 Psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli publishes *Psychosynthesis* that describes his psychological system for bridging spiritual concepts and psycho-therapeutic principles of health.
- 1966 Psychologists Robert Masters and Jean Houston publish the results of their LSD experiments in *Varieties of Psychedelic Experiences* in which they identified four levels of the unconscious during LSD experiences, including self-transformation, religious enlightenment, and mystical union.
- 1967 Abraham Maslow gives the first public presentation of transpersonal psychology in a lecture at the First Unitarian Church in San Francisco (under the auspices of the Esalen Institute), just two years prior to his election as president of the American Psychological Association in 1969.
- 1968 *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* that catalyzed the emergence of the transpersonal movement is founded by Anthony Sutich and its first edition is published in 1969. Board of Editors included: Roberto Assagioli, Menard Boss, Charlotte Buhler, James Fadiman, Viktor Frankl, Stanislav Grof, Sidney Jourard, Arthur Kostler, Clark Moustakas, Michael Murphy, Ira Progoff, Huston Smith, and Alan Watts.
- 1969 The Transpersonal Institute (parent corporation of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* and the Association for Transpersonal Psychology) is organized by Anthony Sutich to investigate unitive consciousness, peak experiences, mystical awakenings, self-actualization and transcendence.
- 1969 The first Voluntary Control of Internal States Conference sponsored by the American Association for Humanistic Psychology and the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas initiated a science of altered states of consciousness.
- 1969 Biopsychologist Elmer Green and researcher Alyce Green publish *Beyond Biofeedback* that helped to launch the study of the voluntary control of internal states.
- 1969 The Parapsychological Association, an international organization of professionals engaged in the study and research of parapsychological phenomena, becomes an affiliate of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- 1969 Transpersonal psychologist Charles T. Tart publishes his pioneering textbook, *Altered States of Consciousness*, the first book to deal with topics ignored or overlooked in psychoanalytic and behaviorist psychology and that led to the development of “state-specific” sciences and the wide-spread introduction of transpersonal themes to American popular culture.
- 1969 Abraham Maslow is elected president of the American Psychological Association, a 70,000-member organization of professional psychologists, that represents the pinnacle of recognition of humanistic and transpersonal psychology ideas by mainstream psychology.
- 1970 The Humanistic Psychology Institute is established (later to be called the Saybrook Institute in 1981 that gathers luminaries such as Rollo May, Stanley Krippner, Amedeo Giorgi to its faculty to grants master’s and doctoral degrees in humanistic-transpersonal psychology).

### Figure 2-1. An “Unofficial” Intellectual History of Modern Transpersonal Psychology

- 1970 R. K. Wallace publishes “Physiological effects of Transcendental Meditation” in *Science* magazine demonstrating that meditation practice had physiological correlates, giving legitimization to the phenomenon, subsequently initiating decades of research on the physiological and psychological aspects of meditation.
- 1970 Abraham Maslow, co-founder of (“Third Force”) humanistic psychology and (“Fourth Force”) transpersonal psychology dies suddenly of a heart attack.
- 1971 The American Association for Transpersonal Psychology is organized by Anthony Sutich.
- 1972 Neurophysiologist John C. Lilly, inventor of the sensory deprivation flotation tank and who conducted ground-breaking experiments in dolphin-human communication, publishes *Center of the Cyclone*, an account of his mystical experiences while ingesting LSD in a flotation tank, demonstrates the vast range of the states of being of the human mind not limited by the biophysical structure of the brain
- 1972 The Omega Institute for Holistic Studies is founded in Rhinebeck, New York to become part of an informal learning network through which transpersonal thinkers, healers, and educators could disseminate their ideas and train individuals and professionals in new healing approaches.
- 1972 The first explicitly *International Conference on Psychobiology and Transpersonal Psychology* took place at Bifrost, Iceland sponsored by the Institute for Consciousness Research (Reykjavik, Iceland) and the Transpersonal Institute (Palo Alto, California) on the topics of transcendental growth, psychic and spiritual healing, the psychobiology of transcendental states, research methods and future developments in transpersonal psychology.
- 1973 The first *Conference on Applications of Transpersonal Psychology* is conducted by the Association for Transpersonal Psychology at Vallombrosa (Menlo Park, California) on the topics of the nature of transpersonal psychology, the transpersonal attitude in psychotherapy, transpersonal education, psychic healing, transpersonal work in public institutions, and the popularization of transpersonal practices.
- 1973 *New Dimensions Radio* (produced by Michael and Justine Toms) is founded which extends the impact of transpersonal psychology beyond the back bay area of San Francisco to world-wide distribution of transpersonal concepts and ideas through its programs and audiotapes of Esalen seminars (recorded, edited, and marketed by Paul Herbert).
- 1973 Transpersonal psychiatrist Stanislav Grof launches the International Transpersonal Association (ITA) which holds its first meeting in Iceland. Later conferences have been held in other exotic place, such as Finland, Brazil, Australia, and India for programs that would not otherwise be possible in the United States.
- 1973 Edgar Mitchell, Apollo 14 astronaut and sixth person to walk on the moon, organizes *The Institute of Noetic Sciences*, an organization devoted to the support of research and education on human consciousness whose purposes are “to broaden knowledge of the nature and potentials of mind and consciousness, and to apply that knowledge to the enhancement of the quality of life on the planet.”
- 1973 Neuropsychologist Robert Ornstein publishes *The Nature of Human Consciousness: A Book of Readings* that summarizes current insights into human consciousness drawn from the fields of anthropology, psychology, philosophy, mystical religion, and physiology.
- 1973 Naropa Institute, the college modeled after the great Buddhist center of learning, Nalanda University in India, is founded in Boulder, Colorado by Tibetan monk, Chogyam Trungpa to spread Buddhist philosophy, psychology, and culture in the United States.

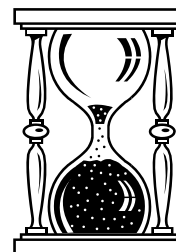
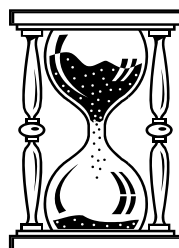


### Figure 2-1. An “Unofficial” Intellectual History of Modern Transpersonal Psychology

- 1975 Parapsychologist Charles T. Tart publishes *Transpersonal Psychologies*, the first major work to systematically examine from a transpersonal perspective the world’s major religions as “spiritual psychologies” with teachings on sensation, perception, learning, memory, cognitive processes, emotions, motivation, personality, psychopathology, mind-body relationship, social relationships, altered states of consciousness, death, and potential new faculties.
- 1975 Psychiatrist Stanley Dean publishes *Psychiatry and Mysticism*, a collection of papers from three historic panel-symposia on psychic phenomena held at the 1972-1974 annual meetings of the American Psychiatric Association that initiates the field of “metapsychiatry” – a developing branch of psychiatry that concerns itself with psychic phenomena in the context of psychiatry and mysticism.
- 1976 Psychologist and Japan scholar Robert Frager organizes the *Institute for Transpersonal Psychology*, the first institution to develop an experiential distance-learning global program dedicated to education of the whole person: mind, body, intellect, and soul.
- 1976 Transpersonal psychologists James Fadiman and Robert Frager publish *Personality and Personal Growth*, the first college-level personality theory textbook in the English language to include a transpersonal viewpoint and major Eastern theories of personality, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sufism.
- 1976 Anthony Sutich, pioneer in psychology and co-founder of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, dies of rheumatoid heart disease at the age of 68.
- 1977 Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber publishes *Spectrum of Consciousness* that synthesizes Western developmental psychologies and Eastern religious systems of thought into an integrated philosophy of consciousness.
- 1978 The International Association of Near Death Studies (IANDS) is founded to promote scientific research on near-death experiences by Kenneth Ring, Bruce Greyson, and John Audette to become the principle organization in the world for distributing information about near-death experiences (NDEs), supporting and publishing research into the scientific study of NDEs.
- 1979 Robert G. Jahn, aerospace scientist and dean emeritus of the School of Engineering and Applied Science at Princeton University, establishes the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR) lab at Princeton University to investigate the reality of psychokinesis and the role of consciousness in the physical world.
- 1980 Psychiatrist Seymour Boorstein publishes *Transpersonal Psychotherapy*, an anthology of theories and techniques in the transpersonal orientation in psychotherapy.
- 1980 Psychiatrist and Zen practitioner Roger Walsh and psychotherapist France Vaughn publish *Beyond Ego: Transpersonal Dimensions in Psychology*, a collection of essays by 16 different authors providing the first comprehensive overview of the field of transpersonal psychology (and updated in 1993).
- 1981 *The Australian Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* is founded by transpersonalist Don Diespecker.
- 1983 *Common Boundary* magazine is founded to promote exploration of the interface between psychotherapy and spirituality by psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, counselors, psychiatric nurses, pastoral counselors, and others in the healing and helping professions.
- 1985 Czechoslovakian-born psychiatrist, Stanislav Grof, publishes *Beyond the Brain* that presents the transpersonal research findings following his development of LSD-assisted psychotherapy.
- 1987 The *European Transpersonal Association* (EUROTAS) is established that starts the formal transpersonal movement in Europe.

### Figure 2.1. An “Unofficial Intellectual History of Modern Transpersonal Psychology

- 1988 Michael Washburn publishes *The Ego and the Dynamic Ground*, a psychoanalytic theory on transpersonal human development.
- 1989 Phenomenologists Ronald Valle and Steen Halling publish *Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology: Exploring the Breadth of Human Experience with a Special Section on Transpersonal Psychology* that attempts for the first time to integrate transpersonal psychology with existential-phenomenological topics, issues, and methods of investigation.
- 1990 Hilgard and Atkinson’s *Introduction to Psychology*, one of the most widely-used and respected American college textbooks, includes for the first time a section entitled “Psi Phenomena” featuring a discussion of current ESP research and a statement calling the Gansfeld procedure “worthy of careful consideration.”
- 1991 Arthur Hastings, former President of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology and Dean of Faculty and President at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, publishes *With the Tongues of Men and Angels: A Study of Channeling* that identifies the topic of channeling activities and channeled information as a legitimate topic of transpersonal research.
- 1993 Transpersonal psychiatrist Roger Walsh and psychotherapist France Walsh published *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision* (an updated version of their 1980 landmark book, *Beyond Ego*), a thoroughly revised review of all the major transpersonal areas by 37 authors reflecting the dramatic growth of transpersonal psychology into a multidisciplinary transpersonal movement.
- 1994 Inclusion of “psychoreligious” and “psychospiritual problems” as diagnostic categories in the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV)* signaled increasing professional acceptance of transpersonal issues.
- 1998 William Braud, Research Director of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (Palo Alto, California) and Rosemarie Anderson, Associate Professor at the institute, publish *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences* intended to help researchers develop new research strategies to study extraordinary human experiences and transformative capacities.
- 1999 The *European Transpersonal Psychology Association (ETPA)* is established for the study, teaching, and research of transpersonal psychiatry and integral psychology.
- 2000 Transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber publishes the revised edition of his magnum opus *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution* that attempts to establish an overarching framework for an integral and integrative psychology.
- 2002 The Russian Transpersonal Psychology and Psychotherapy Association (RTPPA) was officially founded at its first conference in Moscow, representing the formal professionalization of transpersonal psychology in Russia.
- 2002 Jorge Ferrer writes a critique of prevailing transpersonal scholarship in his landmark book *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality*.





# Contemporary Perspectives in Transpersonal Psychology



## CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Transpersonal psychology is concerned with the nature of consciousness as it functions and manifests in experience and behavior. Transpersonal psychology focuses on the questions: What are the functions and structures, states and traits of consciousness as they develop over time? Above all, what are the “higher” post-post-conventional, post-formal operational, transpersonal “spiritual” aspects of consciousness? What is the phenomenology of spiritual experiences? What are the varieties, causes, effects, and correlates of transpersonal experiences and development? Does spirituality itself unfold in developmental stages and what is its relationship to other types of psychological development (cognitive, psychosocial, moral, emotional, sexual)?

### Contemporary Approaches in Transpersonal Psychology

**Transpersonalists differ as to what constitutes the major transpersonal perspectives.** Transpersonal psychologists will differ about what precisely constitutes the major transpersonal perspectives. Beyond acknowledging the basic set of minimal assumptions articulated in the *Articles of Association for Transpersonal Psychology* (Sutich, 1972, pp. 93-97), transpersonalists will vary in what they count as “major” approaches in the field. Michael Washburn (2003) professor of philosophy at Indiana University, for instance, identifies five psychological perspectives as transpersonal:

- **Structural-hierarchical** perspective typified in the work of Ken Wilber (1980) that focuses on the structure and development of human consciousness.

- **Spiral-dynamic** perspective typified in the work of Michael Washburn (1995) that focuses on the psychodynamics of human consciousness.
- **Participatory** perspective typified in the work of Jorge Ferrer (2002) that focuses on the social construction of consciousness, knowledge, and reality.
- **Feminist** perspective typified in the work of Peggy Wright (1998) that focuses on sex differences in spiritual development.
- **Ecological** perspective typified in the work Fisher (2002) that focuses on the spirituality of creaturehood and the sacredness of Nature.

Because the aim of the present monograph is to keep transpersonal psychology in connection with mainstream psychology, perspectives that are defined in terms of specific content domains (i.e., feminist or ecological issues) or perspectives that are defined in terms of particular theory-laden orientations designed to guide research (i.e., structural-hierarchical, spiral-dynamic, or participatory) will not be examined here.

Instead five perspectives that represent common approaches used in contemporary mainstream psychology (biological, environmental, cognitive, psychodynamic, phenomenological) and one perspective that is unique to transpersonal psychology (integral) and arguably represents the field’s most important contribution to the study of psychology will be described in terms of how they are used by transpersonal psychologists to look at exceptional human experiences and transformative capacities.

1. The Biological Perspective
2. The Environmental Perspective
3. The Cognitive Perspective
4. The Psychodynamic Perspective
5. The Phenomenological Perspective
6. The Integral Perspective

The **biological** perspective focuses on neurobiological processes (genetic factors, neurotransmitters, neuro-mechanisms, brain wave states, psychopharmacology) assumed to underlie exceptional human experiences and behaviors, and relates to all transpersonal events to genetic, electrical, chemical, biological activity inside the body.

The **environmental** perspective focuses on the external conditions and circumstances (ecological context and social situations, structures, and systems) assumed to act on individuals and condition their behavior, and relates all transpersonal events to observable environmental stimuli and behavioral responses.

The **cognitive** perspective focuses on the mental processes (e.g., attending, perceiving, remembering, believing, expecting, intending, valuing, reasoning, planning, and judging) assumed to underlie transpersonal experience and behavior, and relates all transpersonal events to underlying mental processes and contents.

The **psychodynamic** perspective focuses on subconscious-unconscious processes assumed to underlie all transpersonal experiences and behavior and relates all transpersonal events to underlying forces (e.g., ideas and memories, fears and desires, needs and drives) of which a person is unaware but nevertheless influence behavior and experience.

The **phenomenological** perspective focuses on the individuals' subjective experience and intersubjective social cognitions of transpersonal events, how these experiences are represented in conscious awareness and culture, and how these abstract representations of subjective experience, communal meanings, and shared values guide behavior. All transpersonal events are related to the conscious, subjective and intersubjective representations that people actively construct.

The **integral** perspective focuses broadly on the biological, environmental, cognitive, psychodynamic, and phenomenological aspects of transpersonal events and integrates the information obtained by these disparate approaches into a comprehensive, interrelated, logically coherent, multi-layered overview of transpersonal development.

**Integral perspective is commonly used.** Given the multidisciplinary character of transpersonal studies, a broadly integrative approach that spans multiple perspectives is commonly used among transpersonal psychologist.

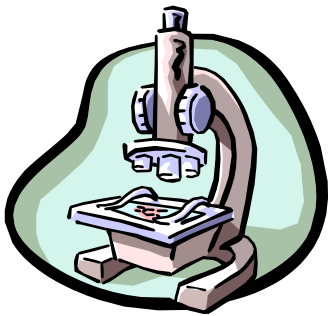


*Multiple perspectives provide the most inclusive viewpoint. Because each of the six perspectives focuses on a different aspect or dimension of transpersonal events, each provides a unique and valuable viewpoint about how transpersonal events occur and what they mean. The six approaches may appear mutually exclusive and incompatible with one another when viewed in isolation or when individual perspectives are taken to extremes. Our understanding of transpersonal events, however, can always benefit from the inclusiveness provided by multiple perspectives to any given phenomenon.*

**Any single perspective is likely to be partial, limited, perhaps even distorted.** The extraordinarily complex, many-layered, multi-dimensional phenomena of consciousness almost certainly require a pluralistic, multi-perspective approach if anything like an adequate understanding of transpersonal phenomena is to be obtained. Any event or action that we physically perceive is only a portion of the true dimensionality of that event simply because our sensory receptors do not allow us to tune into their full range of actuality, being or reality (“bottom-up” processing). Moreover, the meaning that any phenomenon has for the observer will depend upon the context or framework of knowledge within which the phenomenon viewed (“top-down” processing). Because any given event is never fully disclosed in one perception, and for any perception, other perceptions are possible, “any single perspective is likely to be partial, limited, perhaps even distorted, and only by honoring multiple perspectives and multiple contexts can the knowledge quest be fruitfully advanced” (Wilber, 2000a, p. 167).

**An integral perspective is the most “scientific” approach.** Given the multi-dimensional character of transpersonal experiences and behaviors, the physical nature of perception, the context-dependent nature of meaning, and the fact that there are many possible ways to describe and explain transpersonal action and events, multiple approaches that focus on different aspects of the phenomena would seem to be the most “scientific” thing to do.

**Understand, control, and predict transpersonal phenomena.** One goal of transpersonal psychology is the same goal of mainstream psychology: to understand transcendental experiences and behaviors in as many of its aspects as possible so that we may control and predict both their occurrence and growth-promoting benefits within others and ourselves in order that “the farther reaches of human nature” may be developed and the further evolution of our species be promoted. As psychologist Andrew Neher said in his book, *The Psychology of Transcendence*: “We need not mystify transcendental experiences in order to benefit from them” (Neher, 1990, p. 227).



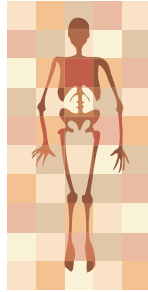
#### *The Biological Perspective*

The **biological** perspective relates exceptional human experience and behavior to biological processes (brain mechanisms, neurotransmitters, neuronal pathways, computational biocircuits, brain wave patterns, blood chemistry) occurring inside the body that can be measured by scientific instruments (EEG machines, PET and fMRI imaging scans, GSR devices, ERP and EMG recordings, MEG technology).

**“Transcendent consciousness” has biological correlates.** The biological approach has made valuable contributions to our understanding of the neurophysiological correlates of exceptional human experiences and behaviors. Whereas premodern psychology had little understanding of objective brain states (i.e., the way in which consciousness is correlated with brain states, neurophysiology and neurotransmitters), we now know that methods of achieving transcendental states (e.g., drugs, alterations in breathing, fasting, fever, excitement, exertion, fatigue, and loss of sleep) involve altering basic bodily conditions and various physiological conditions that correlate with the occurrence of altered states of awareness (Ludwig, 1972). Lucid dream states have correlates in rapid eye movements. Likewise, exceptional human experiences and behaviors have physical correlates that can be measured by scientific instruments (i.e., not reducible to brain states, but not completely “transcending” them either). As someone once said: “The spirit speaks with a physical voice and the physical body is a creation of the spirit.”

**Examples of transpersonal research using the biological approach.** The biological perspective has assisted in expanding our understanding of the biological correlates of lucid dreaming (Gackenbach & Bosveld, 1989), the voluntary control of bodily processes (Green & Green, 1977), spontaneous remission and miracle cures (O’Regan & Hirshberg, 1993), multiple identities (Putnam, 1984), mind-body communication (Rossi, 1986), out-of-body experiences (Monroe, 1985), near-death experiences (Sabom, 1982, 1998), psi functioning (Dean, 1962, 1966; Tart, 1963; Ullman, Krippner, & Vaughn, 1973), meditation (Earle, 1981), and trance channeling (Hughes & Melville, 1990). Michael Murphy’s (1992) book, *The Future of the Body: Explorations into the Further Evolution of Human Nature*, provides a comprehensive survey of the psychophysiological correlates of a range of extraordinary human transformative capacities.

**The biological approach to meditation.** Michael Murphy and Steven Donovan’s (1997, Chapter 2) *The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation* and James Austin’s (1999) *Zen and the Brain* provide excellent overviews of how the biological approach has been applied to identifying the neurobiological events that accompany the act of introspection known as “meditation.”



**The biological correlates of meditation.** For instance, the biological approach to meditation has expanded our understanding of this contemplative experience in terms of changes in *cardiovascular system* (e.g., heart rate, redistribution of blood flow, blood pressure and hypertension), activity of the *brain and nervous system* (e.g., alpha, theta, and beta brain wave activity, EEG hemispheric synchronization and dehabitation, specific cortical control), *blood chemistry* (e.g., adrenal and thyroid hormones, amino acids and phenylalanine, plasma prolactic and growth hormone, lactate, white blood cell count and red blood cell metabolism, cholesterol levels), *metabolic and respiration systems, muscle tension, skin resistance*, and other physiological effects (e.g., brain metabolism, salivary changes, effectiveness in the treatment of disease such as cancer, body temperature, alleviation of pain). Using the biological approach we now know that advanced meditators show pronounced changes in brain wave patterns (high amplitude theta and delta waves, hemisphere synchronization).



**Correlations mistaken for cause-and-effect.** Many neuroscientists unfortunately take this key discovery (“All transpersonal experiences can be *related to* the activity of the brain and nervous system”) to its extreme (“All transpersonal experiences are *caused by* and *result from* the activity of the brain and nervous system”) and commit a category mistake by claiming that transcendent or spiritual experiences have no substantial reality *on their own*, but are nothing other than cognitive *representations* or *emergent processes* of neurobiological activity which alone are real (LeDoux, 2003; Damasio, 1994).



### The Environmental Perspective

The **environmental** perspective focuses on the external conditions and social circumstances assumed to act on individuals and condition their behavior, and relates all transpersonal events to perceptible environmental stimuli and behavioral responses. “The behavioral [environmental] perspective focuses on observable stimuli and responses and regards nearly all behavior as a result of conditioning and reinforcement” (Smith et al., 2003, p. 11). Learning is important in transcendental experience and the basic forms of learning known as associative conditioning (classical and operant) are emphasized in this perspective.

**Examples of transpersonal research using the environmental approach.** The environmental approach has been applied to the study of automatic writing, the placebo effect, hypnotic behavior, biofeedback training, out-of-body experiences, extrasensory perception, mystical experience, and other unusual, exceptional human experiences (Neher, 1990; Zusne & Jones, 1982).

It will help to understand the relevance of classical and operant learning to transcendental psychology if we show how ecstatic feelings, for example, can be brought about through both kinds of learning. First of all, we inherit the capacity to respond joyfully to certain stimuli, such as being cuddled and played with as a child. Then, years, later, some stimulus that was associated with those occasions (a melody, an odor, a photograph) evokes their memory in us. Through the mechanism of classical conditioning, this stimulus will reactivate in us the joyful feelings we experienced as a child. In fact, because of the numerous experiences this stimulus may have come to represent, our feeling may be even stronger than it was as a child; as a consequence, adults may be more able than children to experience profound ecstatic feelings. Much nostalgia probably arises from classical associations of this kind. (Neher, 1990, p. 58)

**The environmental approach to meditation.** The environmental approach to meditation attempts to understand this contemplative experience in terms of habituation and dishabituation to stimuli, and the conditioning of mental and physical processes to stimuli present during meditation (Shapiro & Zifferblatt, 1976; Carrington, 1977).

First of all, meditation helps free us from learned fixations such as stereotyped ways of perceiving and obsessional thinking. In addition, the process of meditation conditions us in new ways. For example, one effect of meditation often reported is the learned ability to relax in the face of problems that previously provoked anxiety. Also, it is well known that meditation is a cumulative process and that practiced meditators achieve profound meditative states more easily than novices. This is largely a conditioning effect. With each meditation session, meditators classically condition themselves so that the stimuli present during meditation – the place, the posture, the focus of meditation, and so on – are increasingly effective in producing the meditative state. In addition, this conditioning of mental and physical processes is rewarding – or reinforcing in operant conditioning terms – to meditators; thus they are likely to devote themselves even more to meditation. Finally, most schools of meditation directly or indirectly offer suggestions about what psychological states meditators might experience during meditation, and these suggestions serve as additional conditioning to help produce these states. All in all, the effects of meditation truly would be minimal without the conditioning that occurs during the meditation process. (Neher, 1990, pp. 58-59)

**The psychology of transcendence from an environmental perspective.** Andrew Neher's 1990 book *The Psychology of Transcendence* is an excellent example of the consistent application of the environmental approach to the investigation of various exceptional human experiences and behavior. It provides a comprehensive survey of how classical and operant conditioning principles and social structures, systems, and practices may play a role in shaping and influencing the manifestation of certain aspects of transpersonal experiences and behavior.

**Correlations mistaken for cause-and-effect.** The environmental approach has made a valuable contribution to our understanding the environmental and social correlates of transcendent or spiritual experiences and behaviors, especially the role of learning, conditioning processes, social situations and influences. When the key idea of the environmental approach (“All psychological events can be *related to* observable environmental stimuli, social situations and behavioral responses”) is taken to its extreme (“All psychological events are *caused by* and *result from* conditioning and reinforcement”), however, then subjective experiences become reduced to its exterior ecological correlates. As Smith et al., (2003) note, “Historically, the strict behavioral [environmental] approach did not consider the individual's mental processes at all, and even contemporary behaviorists usually do not conjecture about the mental processes that intervene between stimulus and the response” (p. 11).



**“Empty organism” of radical behaviorism.** B.F. Skinner (1904-1990), whose “empty organism approach” emphasized the idea that the motivating force of all behavior comes from the environment, the external world, not from forces within ourselves, declared that the human organism, like any machine, behaves in lawful and predictable ways in response to external stimuli that impinge upon it (Skinner, 1953).

The hypothesis that man is not free is essential to the application of the scientific method to the study of human behavior. The free inner man who is held responsible for the behavior of the external biological organism is only a prescientific substitute for the kinds of causes which are discovered in the course of a scientific analysis. ... Science insists that action is initiated by forces impinging upon the individual, and that [freedom] is only another name for the behavior for which we have not yet found a cause. (quoted in Harman, 1998, p. 26)



**Consequences of a narrow environmental approach:**

**Volition is an illusion.** From a strict environmental perspective, intentionality (purpose, intent, will) has no reality apart from its manifestation in specific observable behavior. The “mind” itself is just a “black box” unobservable by empirical science (that is, unknowable by the physical senses) and thus not open to scientific investigation (translation: not really real). All behavior is determined by material causes outside the organism from the environment. Will and active agency is an illusion. Transpersonal psychologists do not take this extreme position to be an accurate representation of the psychological facts.

**The same environmental principles that govern exterior behavior also govern interior experience.**

Mainstream psychologists who use the environmental approach and focus on observable stimuli and responses may, in some cases, grant the mind existence and obtain a verbal self-report (another kind of behavior) about what people say concerning their conscious experience. The same kind of environmental principles that are believed to shape and influence observable exterior behavior, however, are used to explain and understand mental activity inferred from the verbal reports. The mind itself, if its existence is granted at all, is then considered to be a *tabula rasa* – a blank slate – filled with nothing but *internal stimuli and responses*. There is nothing in the mind that was not first in the physical senses, and thus all modes of cognition are reduced to internal conditioned and unconditioned stimuli and responses, discriminative stimuli and operant responses.

**A psychology without a psyche.** Now when psychologists who use the environmental approach focus their attention on the external physical, social, and cultural conditions and circumstances assumed to operate on individuals and condition their behavior and report what they see, then the environmental approach can provide an accurate report of the environmental correlates of interior experiences. When behaviorists go further to say not only that interior experiences have environmental correlates, but also that such experiences are nothing but the result of reinforcement contingencies, conditioning, or social influences, then we end up with what Jung (1960) called “a psychology without a psyche” (p. 343). Transpersonal psychologists, while honoring the partial truths of the environmental perspective, recognize that environmental correlates of transpersonal experiences and behavior are not the whole story.

*The Cognitive Perspective*

The **cognitive** perspective focuses on the cognitive processes assumed to underlie transpersonal experience and behavior, and relates all transpersonal events to these underlying mental processes and their contents. The cognitive approach attempts to understand exceptional human experiences and behaviors in terms of attention and perception, thinking and memory processes, imagery and general knowledge, language production and comprehension, creativity and problem solving, reasoning and decision making.

**Examples of transpersonal research using the cognitive approach.** The cognitive perspective has been employed to study the relationship between meditation and visual sensitivity (Brown, Forte, & Dysart, 1984a, 1984b), reaction time and perceptual motor skill (Jedrczak, Toomey, & Clements, 1986), field independence (Fergusson, 1992), concentration and attention (Spanos, Steggle, & Radtke, 1979), memory and intelligence (Cranson, Orme-Johnson, Gackenbach, et al., 1991), and other mental processes (Boals, 1978). Michael Murphy and Steven Donovan’s 1997 *The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation* (Chapter 3) provides an excellent overview of how the cognitive approach has been applied to specifying the sensory, perceptual and cognitive abilities that are enhanced by meditation, for instance.

**Understanding altered states of consciousness (ASC).**

The cognitive approach has made great strides in helping transpersonal psychologists understand and assess consciousness (a “behavior” unobservable to external viewers) through verbal reports and other measures, how ASCs can be self-produced and controlled, and how cognitive processes in an ASC (e.g., dreams, hypnosis, drug-induced) differ from performance in the waking state of consciousness (Wallace & Fisher, 1991).

**What is an “altered” state of consciousness?** Ludwig (1972) defines an “altered state of consciousness” as

Any mental state(s), induced by various physiological, psychological, or pharmacological maneuvers or agents, which can be recognized subjectively by the individual himself (or by an objective observer of the individual) as representing a sufficient deviation in subjective experience or psychological functioning from certain general norms for that individual during alert, waking consciousness. This sufficient deviation may be represented by a greater preoccupation than usual with internal sensations or mental processes, changes in the formal characteristics of thought, and impairment of reality testing to various degrees. (Ludwig, 1972, p. 11)

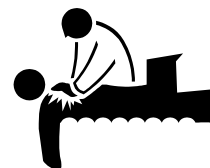
**Common characteristics of ASCs.** The cognitive approach to ASC has revealed that there are similar features that are characteristic of many ASC including: “alterations in thinking,” “disturbed time sense,” “loss of control,” “change in emotional expression,” “body image change,” “perceptual distortions,” “change in meaning or significance,” “sense of the ineffable,” “feelings of rejuvenation,” and “hypersuggestibility” (Ludwig, 1972, pp. 15-19).

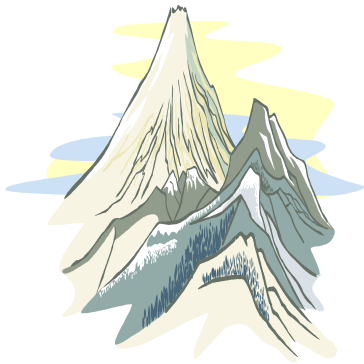
**State-Specific Sciences.** Transpersonal psychologist Charles T. Tart has examined altered states of consciousness from a cognitive perspective in terms of changes in the configuration and operation of underlying mental processes (Tart, 1971, 1976, 1983, 1992b). Tart conceptualizes any state of consciousness as constituted by 10 underlying psychological structures, which interact with one another to define a state of consciousness. A state of consciousness (SoC) involves the operation of the following cognitive subsystems: exteroceptors (receives sensory input), interoceptors (receives kinesthetic input), input processing (working memory), subconscious processes, sense of identity, evaluation and decision-making, emotions, space/time sense, long-term memory, motor output (behavior), plus latent functions. These 10 subsystems (plus potential latent functions) define any discrete state of consciousness (d-SoC). The particular configuration of subsystems at any given moment is shaped and limited by the deployment of attention, body energies, characteristics of the structures themselves, and the particular social and cultural environments in which operate.

**Alternate states of consciousness.** By applying the requisite disruptive force to the baseline state of consciousness (either through some physiological action such as drugs or attentional deployment such as meditation) the current organization of the cognitive subsystems becomes de-stabilized until a new patterning force (such as mental set, setting, expectations, drug effects) is applied to shape the subsystems into a new overall system, producing an entirely new discrete state of consciousness with its own stabilization processes.

**Information theory.** In another application of the cognitive approach, transpersonal psychiatrist, John Battista (1996b) applies information theory to transpersonal states of consciousness. “Consciousness is information and...different forms of consciousness refer to different, more encompassing levels of information” (Battista, 1996b, p. 85). Battista identifies eight levels of information (or orders of consciousness and corresponding self-structures), each level transcending yet including the previous level (from sensory to perceptual to emotional to subjective to cognitive to existential to metacognitive to transcendental). Furthermore, “each level of information processing gives rise to distinct kinds of psychopathology that require specific types of treatment” (Battista, 1996b, p. 90).

**Consciousness and behavior.** The cognitive approach to consciousness has helped transpersonal psychologists differentiate degrees of waking states of consciousness. Consciousness, for instance, is not a single homogeneous thing but varies and changes like the colors of the rainbow. It is possible to stratify and order states of waking consciousness from alert and focused concentration to relaxed and diffuse cosmic consciousness. A range of ASCs have been identified - drug-induced states, hypnosis, biofeedback, daydreaming, night dreaming, sensory deprivation, dreamless sleep, and paranormal experiences - with each state consisting of many levels and functions. In each region or area of consciousness, individuals are capable of processing different types of information at different levels of control (Goleman & Davidson, 1979; Ornstein, 1972; Tart, 1983; Wolman & Ullman, 1986).





### *The Psychodynamic Perspective*

The **psychodynamic** perspective focuses on those subliminal ideas and memories, fears and desires, needs and drives that exist just below the stream of waking consciousness or more deeply in what is commonly referred to as the unconscious of which a person is consciously unaware but that none the less influence behavior and experience. The psychodynamic approach has been applied to the study of numerous transpersonal phenomena, including meditation (Epstein, 1990; Leone, 1995). Work by transpersonal psychologists such as Roberto Assagioli, Stanislav Grof, and Michael Washburn has made the psychodynamic perspective a respectable approach in the study of the nature, structures, and functions of human consciousness in contemporary transpersonal psychology.

**Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974)** was an Italian psychiatrist who developed an early paradigm of transpersonal psychology called *Psychosynthesis*. Influenced by the Jungian concepts of the times, he proposed an original formulation of the ego-Self axis in which self-realization required ego contact with an inner self-structure called the Transpersonal self. In order to achieve this realization of one's greater identity, a personal Psychosynthesis was required in which repressed, ignored, or overlooked elements of the ego-directed personality become integrated into self-awareness. Once personal psychosynthesis is accomplished, a spiritual psychosynthesis may be achieved in which this integrated personal identity becomes expanded to incorporate elements of one's transpersonal identity into ego-directed self-awareness (Assagioli, 1991, 1992 1993).



**Stanislav Grof** is one of the co-founders of the transpersonal psychology movement who was trained as a psychiatrist (Grof, 2000; Yensen & Dryer, 1996). His observations of the effects of LSD on consciousness pioneered state-of-consciousness theory and research and expanded our understanding of the unconscious dimensions of the human psyche (Grof, 1980b, 1985). More recently, he has verified the existence of these same areas or regions of the psyche that were observed during LSD therapy sessions using a nondrug experiential technique called "holotropic breathwork" (Grof & Bennet, 1993).

**A cartography of the psyche – its human expression.** Grof's LSD and holotropic breathwork research has revealed a cartography or map of the psyche that includes not only the Freudian personal subconscious, but also Rankian birth memories, the Jungian collective unconscious, and deeper levels containing reincarnational and racial memories, and multidimensional encounters with nonphysical beings and entities (Grof, 1985). Rather than consider patients' experiences in psychedelic sessions (high dose of 300-500 mcg to facilitate mystical experiences) as manifestations of toxic psychosis, Grof views LSD as an "unspecific amplifier or catalyst of mental processes that confronts the experiencer with his own unconscious" (Grof, 1980b, p. 342) that has great relevance for the understanding the levels of actuality of the human mind.

**Dimensions of the human psyche.** Clinical observations reveal four major types of experiences catalyzed and amplified by LSD and holotropic breathwork sessions:

1. **Abstract and aesthetic experiences**, involving vivid, dramatic, and intense changes in sensation and perception.

2. **Psychodynamic experiences**, involving “important memories, emotional problems, and unresolved conflicts from various life periods of the individual...regression into childhood and even infancy, reliving of traumatic memories, infantile sexuality, conflicts in various libidinal zones, Oedipus and Electra conflict, castration anxiety, penis envy” (Grof, 1980b, p. 345).
3. **Perinatal experiences**, involving “experiences related to the circumstances of the biological birth” (Grof, 1980b, pp. 448-349).
4. **Transpersonal experiences**, involving “spiritistic and mediumistic experiences, experiences of an encounter with superhuman spiritual entities, archetypal experiences, and experiences of an encounter with blissful and wrathful deities...the activation of different *charkas* and arousal of the Serpent Power (Kundalini), consciousness of the Universal Mind, and the Supracosmic and Metacosmic Void” (Grof, 1980b, p. 357).

**Spiritual emergency.** Individuals encountering these various areas or regions of the psyche during psychotherapy often experience significant relief of addictions, physical health problems, and psychopathologies (Grof, 1988). In addition, Stanislav Grof and his wife Christina Grof have coined the term *spiritual emergency* to help professionals differentiate mystical states from mental illness and have organized a national network of therapists to assist individuals who may experience emotional or psychological crises of a spiritual or transpersonal nature (C. Grof & S. Grof, 1990; S. Grof & C. Grof, 1989).



**Michael Washburn's** (1995) book, *The Ego and the Dynamic Ground: A Transpersonal Theory of Human Development* (Rev. ed.), integrates Freudian psychoanalytic and Jungian analytical psychodynamic theories with writings from Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. The resultant transpersonal theory of human development charts the course of human development from the earliest stages of ego emergence to the “highest” stages of ego transcendence, while acknowledging both the biological roots and “higher” or “deeper” spiritual potentialities of the psyche documented in the writings of Eastern and Western wisdom traditions.

The perspective of this [theory] is *dynamic* in that its primary focus is on the ego's interaction with dynamic life, the source of which is referred to as the *Dynamic Ground*. Accordingly, I [focus]...on the relation of the ego to possible religious (e.g., numinous, infused, charismatic, illumined) experience...It is a fundamental assumption that these two expressions, psychological and spiritual, of our dynamic life derive from a single source. It is assumed that these two expressions are not different effects of two different dynamic realities but are rather two different modes of appearance of the same power, the power of the Dynamic Ground, Libido and spirit...are ultimately one. (Washburn, 1995, p. 4)

**The spiral-dynamic perspective.** Washburn views human development during the first half of life as moving in a direction away from the Dynamic Ground (from prepersonal, pre-egoic stage to personal, egoic stage). Development during the second half of life spirals back to the Ground on the way to a higher union with the Ground (from personal, egoic stage to transpersonal, transegoic stage) – a development whose aim is whole-psyche integration.

**Dynamic potentials are not inherently stage specific.**

Washburn's theory proposes an alternative spiral-dynamic paradigm to Ken Wilber's structural-hierarchical paradigm of human development (Washburn, 2003). Instead of viewing human development as movement through a progressive series of increasingly more differentiated-and-inclusive hierarchical stages, Washburn (1995) proposes a spiral movement that is played out between the ego and its ultimate source - the Dynamic Ground. Instead of inherently different potentials as asserted in Ken Wilber's structural-hierarchical model, the same "dynamic potentials" are given expression at each prepersonal, personal, and transpersonal stage of personality development.



**The Phenomenological Perspective**

The **phenomenological** perspective focuses on the individual's subjective and intersubjective experience of transpersonal events, how this experience is represented in conscious awareness and social (cultural) cognitions, and how these abstract representations of experience and culture guide behavior (Polkinghorne, 1983; Valle, 1998). All transpersonal events are related to the conscious, subjective and intersubjective representations that people actively construct (values, norms, symbols, language, communal meanings, and shared values). Mainstream psychologists commonly refer to the phenomenological approach as "the subjectivist perspective" (Smith et al., 2003).

The subjectivist perspective contends that human behavior is a function of the perceived world, not the objective world.... To understand human social behavior, this view holds, we must grasp the person's own "definition of the situation," which is expected to vary by culture, personal history, and current motivational state. This perspective, then, is the most open to cultural and individual differences and to the effects of motivation and emotion. (Smith et al., 2003, p. 13)

**The phenomenological approach to meditation.** The *phenomenological* approach to meditation tries to understand this contemplative experience qualitatively, from a "holistic viewpoint, looking at the human being as a unity of body and mind, behavior and situation" (Moss, 1989, p. 63). Experiential dimensions of the meditative experience that have been explored using the phenomenological method reveal the quality of equanimity (i.e., tranquility of mind and body) (Walsh, 1977), detached neutrality (Brown et al., 1982-1983), ineffability (Kornfield, 1979), bliss (Goleman, 1978-1979), energy and excitement (Kornfield, 1979), altered body image and ego boundaries (Deikman, 1982), hallucinations and illusions (Walsh, 1978), dream recall (Reed, 1978), empathy (Lesh, 1970), and a variety of disturbing experiences such as anxiety, tension, and anger (Walsh, 1979). Michael Murphy and Steven Donovan's (1997) *The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation* (Chapter 4) provide an excellent overview of how the phenomenological approach has been applied to identifying the qualitative, experiential aspects that accompany the act of introspection called meditation.



**Transpersonal-phenomenological Inquiry.** Ronald Valle, senior editor of *Phenomenological Inquiry: Existential and Transpersonal Dimensions*, and Mary Mohs, transpersonal psychologist at Rosebridge Graduate School of Integrative Psychology (Valle and Mohs, 1998) report how the phenomenological approach can be applied to experiences with transpersonal qualities

**Thematic analysis of verbal reports as data.** In a thematic analysis of seven phenomenological studies of experiences with transpersonal qualities (i.e., experiences of being silent, being with a dying person, being with suffering orphaned children, being carried along by unforeseen events, feeling grace, experiencing unconditional love, encountering a divine presence during a near-death experience) previously reported in Valle (1998), 11 common themes or elements were subsequently identified as being interwoven throughout the description of the seven transpersonal-type experiences.

**The eidetic structure of transpersonal experience.**

The following 11 themes can be thought of as comprising an identifiable structure or essence that characterizes each of the seven experiences as “transpersonal” (Valle and Mohs, 1998, pp. 105-106):

1. An instrument, vehicle, or container for the experience
2. Intense emotional or passionate states, pleasant or painful
3. Being in the present moment, often with an acute awareness of one’s authentic nature
4. Transcending space and time
5. Expansion of boundaries with a sense of connectiveness or oneness, often with the absence of fear
6. A stillness or peace, often accompanied by a sense of surrender
7. A sense of knowing, often as sudden insights and with a heightened sense of spiritual understanding
8. Unconditional love
9. Feeling grateful, blessed, or graced
10. Ineffability
11. Self-transformation

**Similar are to be similarly understood.** These 11 characteristics are consistent with Richard Bucke’s (1969) description of cosmic consciousness, Abraham Maslow’s (1968) discussion of peak experiences, Stanislov Grof’s (1985) research of nonordinary states of consciousness, Daniel Goleman’s (1988) study of the varieties of meditative experience, Evelyn Underhill’s (1961) classic study of mysticism, Bernadette Roberts’s (1984) experience of no-self, Lex Hixon’s (1989) descriptions of the experience of enlightenment in sacred traditions, and Swami Muktananda’s (1978) account of his spiritual realization.

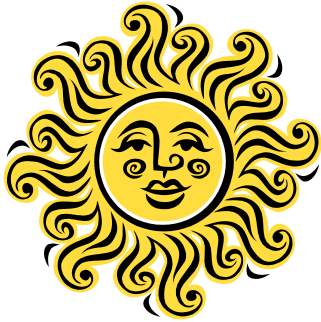
**Similar but not identical states of consciousness.** It is important to keep in mind that all these are *spontaneous* states of consciousness, and that it would not be proper to claim that they are identical states of consciousness. Major differences are likely to emerge if we are to map these transpersonal experiences on multiple experiential dimensions (e.g., self-sense, content of the experience, cognitive control) as occurs in the research method called “phenomenological mapping.”



**Phenomenological mapping.** Another example of how the phenomenological perspective may be used to look at topics within transpersonal psychology is called “phenomenological mapping” (Walsh, 1993). Using this method, alternate states of consciousness and the psycho-technologies that produce them (e.g., meditation, yoga, LSD, hypnosis) may be categorized and compared along specific experiential dimensions (e.g., cognitive control, concentration, arousal, emotion, sense of self) to identify differences between states of consciousness that, on the surface, appear similar or identical.

Phenomenological mapping...allows us to map, compare and differentiate states of consciousness on not one, but multiple experiential dimensions with greater precision than has heretofore been achieved... [so that] we can better appreciate the richness and variety of transpersonal states as well as clearly differentiate them from pathological states such as schizophrenia, with which they have sometimes been confused. (Walsh, 1993, p. 126)

Using this method, Walsh (1993) identified major differences in variables such as cognitive control, arousal, affect, sense of identity, awareness of the environment, and content of experience among the states of consciousness which occur during shamanic, yogic, and vipassana meditation, and that differentiate them from pathological states such as schizophrenia.



### The Integral Approach

**The integral perspective.** All interior experiences and exterior behaviors are inextricably embedded within their biological, environmental, cognitive, and psychodynamic correlates and cannot be easily understood without reference to those correlates. An adequate understanding of exceptional human experiences and transformative capacities can only be obtained when seen within the context of other domains of knowledge. This is exactly the aim of the integral approach. The *integral* perspective focuses on the integration of biological, environmental, cognitive, psychodynamic, and phenomenological aspects of transpersonal events into a comprehensive, logically-coherent, multi-dimensional overview of transpersonal experience and behavior.

**A multi-factorial approach.** The integral perspective is a multi-factorial approach that includes and integrates our understanding of psychology's four distinct subject matters: mental processes (including phenomenological experience), behavior (including its neurobiological substrates), social situations (including environmental stimuli such as the presence and behaviors of others), and culture (including social cognitions such as knowledge, language, symbols of all kinds, values, and norms) (Wilber, 2000a, 2000b). Every objective behavior has subjective and intersubjective components; every subjective and intersubjective action has objective, material correlates. Since subjective consciousness, objective behavior, and intersubjective culture and society are interdependent, mutually arise and develop, jointly limit and constrain each another, and reciprocally influence and determine one other, then any one domain cannot be easily understood without reference to the others (Wilber, 2000a, 2000b).

**An integral approach is not tied to any set of contingent beliefs.** Transpersonal psychology regularly builds upon, extends, and integrates traditional concepts used in neuropsychology, psychoanalysis, experimental analysis of behavior, cognitive science, and phenomenological-existential psychology to describe and explain transpersonal behavior and experience. Not being limited to one domain or one type of demonstration, the scientific pursuit of truth is not tied to any set of contingent beliefs (e.g., the elementary units of nature are devoid of sentience or intrinsic value, the laws of nature are constant and unchanging, freedom and purposive or teleological causation are illusory, brain causes mind, humans are completely determined by genetic inheritance and environment).

**Ken Wilber** is regarded by many transpersonal psychologists to be the leading proponent of the integral approach. Using the metaphor of the spectrum of light, Wilber orders the various states and traits of consciousness with their corresponding deep structures and functions, psychopathologies and psychotherapies into a series of "holoarchitectural levels" (Wilber's phrase) from which he formulates his various ontological (Wilber, 1977), epistemological (Wilber, 1990), developmental (Wilber, 1980; Wilber et al., 1986), psychotherapeutic (Wilber, 1979, 1984), sociological (Wilber, 1983), and evolutionary (Wilber, 1981) theory of the development and structure of human consciousness. Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughn (1996) summarize Ken Wilber's contributions to transpersonal psychology in the following way:

[Wilber] has forged a systematic, broad-ranging, multidisciplinary, integrative, visionary yet scholarly worldview based in psychology, grounded in philosophy, spanning sociology and anthropology, and reaching to religion and mysticism. His integration of apparently conflicting schools and disciplines reduces conflict and sectarianism; his incorporation of Asian traditions reduces Western ethnocentricity; and his contemporary interpretation of the perennial philosophy makes its wisdom comprehensible and helps us recognize that at their contemplative core, the world's great religions contain road maps and techniques for inducing transcendent states of consciousness. (Walsh & Vaughn, 1996, p. 71)

**An integral approach avoids committing the “category mistake.”** Transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber (2002b) identifies an important problem in modern psychology that an integral perspective attempts to avoid.

The great problem with psychology as it has historically unfolded is that, for the most part, different schools of psychology have often taken one of those aspects of the extraordinarily rich and multifaceted phenomenon of consciousness and announced that it is the only aspect worth studying (or even that it is the only aspect that actually exists). Behaviorism notoriously reduced consciousness to its observable, behavioral manifestations. Psychoanalysis reduced consciousness to structures of the ego and their impact by the id. Existentialism reduced consciousness to its personal structures and modes of intentionality.... What if... *all* of the above accounts was an important part of the story? What if they all possessed true, but partial, insights into the vast field of consciousness? At the very least, assembling their conclusions under one roof would vastly expand our ideas of what consciousness is and, more important, what it might become. (Wilber, 2000b, pp. 1-2)

**A constructive postmodern transpersonal psychology.** A truly constructive postmodern transpersonal psychology finds a way to assemble together the enormous wealth of theories, research, and practices of the various schools of thought to honor the truths and profound insights of *all* perspectives in a way that does them justice while bracketing their excesses, overstatements, and distortions (Wilber, 1997). A constructive postmodern psychology moves away from reductionistic accounts of the individual that are a part of the given wisdom of modern psychology to a more holistic account that allows 1<sup>st</sup>-person (“I”) subjectivist accounts of phenomenological experience, 2<sup>nd</sup>- person (“We”) intersubjective psychoanalytic and cognitive interpretations that give the facts of experience their shared meaning, and 3<sup>rd</sup>-person (“It”) objective scientific descriptions of the corresponding biological mechanisms, environmental events, and overt behaviors that give the interior subjective experience and intersubjective meanings their exterior, concrete, material expression and form (Wilber, 2000a).

We can, for example, investigate meditative states using first-person phenomenological accounts (the accounts of those actually doing the meditating), while also investigating any effects meditation has on brain wave activity, blood chemistry, immune functions, and neurophysiology. We can examine the ways in which various cultural backgrounds, linguistic processes, and ethical systems affect meditative states, and the types of social institutions and practices that are most conducive to those states. (Wilber, 2000b, p. 77)

**Benefit of an integral approach to resolving the “crisis of disunity” in mainstream psychology.** The transpersonal vision of a theoretical and methodological unified psychology is accommodative, not assimilative. The answer to the problem of the “crisis of disunity” in psychology (Staats, 1991, p. 889) is not to forcibly translate the goals of the social science of psychology into the theoretical language of the natural sciences, impose positivist philosophic assumptions and theoretical models on our understanding of psychological and spiritual phenomena, or restrict topics to be investigated to those amenable to laboratory demonstration. As Ernest Hilgard (1992) of Stanford University in an article with the telling title, “Psychology as an Integrative Science versus a Unified One” said: “There is no point in forcing all interpretations to fit some standard or ‘accepted’ model” (p. 7). Unification of psychology as a science under a single explanatory scheme or common set of theoretical principles “may be neither possible nor necessary” (McNally, 1992, p. 1054). All perspectives need to be honored and incorporated into an integrated view of transpersonal experiences and behaviors and their correlates.





Gregory Kimble of Duke University notes the potential benefits that a truly integrative model of psychology would have for illuminating the practice of psychology:

Most obviously, it would bring coherence to the science by offering a framework within which the diverse perspectives on psychology could work together instead of in opposition.... A unified psychology would be in a stronger position than it is now to fulfill the obligation that George Miller (1969) identified as giving psychology away to serve the common good. (Kimble, 1994, p. 518)

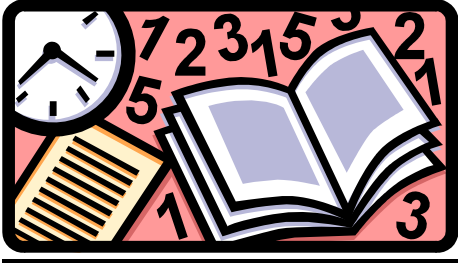
**Benefit of an integral approach seen in health psychology.** The benefit of an integral approach is seen most clearly in the field of health psychology. The establishment of a reciprocal relationship between the immune system and behavioral, psychological, and social factors by the field of psychoneuroimmunology, for instance, have involved numerous academic disciplines working in collaboration, including: biochemistry, biophysics, endocrinology, immunology, microbiology, neurobiology, neuropharmacology, pathology, physiology, psychiatry, and psychology. In terms of the body's health and illness, our mental states are indeed highly important. A person's private experience of health and illness occurs not only within the context of his or her personality type, personal habits, and levels of social support, but basically cannot be separated from the larger framework of his or her philosophic and religious beliefs, cultural and political environment, psychological and socio-economic status (S. Taylor, 2003). The individual's personal experience of health and illness must be viewed in the light of all these issues. The question of health and illness simply cannot be answered from a biological standpoint.



**Benefit of an integral approach to resolving the “crisis of disunity” in transpersonal psychology.** The need for an integral approach in transpersonal psychology is as great for transpersonal psychology as it is for psychology generally. As transpersonal psychologist Jorge Ferrer states in his 2002 book, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*:

Disagreements among transpersonalists are the norm rather than the exception. And these divergences are not merely about minor theoretical issues, but often about the central philosophical and metaphysical foundations of the field, for example, the understanding of transpersonal phenomena, the meaning of spirituality, or the very nature of reality. The lack of consensus on fundamental matters in the transpersonal movement is so pronounced that rather than talk about a transpersonal paradigm, it may be more accurate to talk about different transpersonal paradigms under the roof of one transpersonal vision. (Ferrer, 2002, p. 7)

**Diversity as a sign of health.** This state of disunity in transpersonal psychology, in certain terms, represents a sign of its vitality and reflects the natural history of psychological sciences in general. As historiographer B. R. Hergenhahn (2001) of Hamline University notes, “In psychology’s long history, there has never been a time when all psychologists accepted a single paradigm” (p. 568). Differing definitions of the nature of psychology, philosophical orientations and perspectives, hypotheses and theories bearing on the same domain are striking characteristics of the history of psychology from voluntarism to structuralism to functionalism to behaviorism to Gestalt psychology to psychometric psychology to psychoanalysis to cognitive psychology to neuropsychology to humanistic psychology (Hergenhahn, 2001; Schultz & Schultz, 2004). The lack of consensus in transpersonal studies on goals and subject matter, research methods and topics to be investigated, philosophic assumptions and theoretical models, definitions of the field and theoretical language is a part of the dignity of our discipline, and is something to be recognized, acknowledged, and embraced as “a consequence of the natural maturation of the science and the expanding range of its application” (Bower, 1993, p. 906).



### Concerning Contemporary Perspectives in Transpersonal Psychology

It is important to note in the preceding discussion of contemporary perspectives in transpersonal psychology what they include and what they exclude (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a, p. 4; 1993b, pp. 199-207). Contemporary perspectives in transpersonal psychology

1. Do not exclude the personal ego.
2. Do not limit the type of expansion of identity possible.
3. Are not limited to any particular philosophy or worldview.
4. Do not limit research to a particular method.
5. Do not limit inquiry to a particular domain.

#### **1. Transpersonal Psychology Does Not Exclude the Personal Ego**

Transpersonal psychology does not ignore, overlook, or deny the personal ego. Clinical psychologist Steven Hedlin simply put it: "You have to be somebody before you can be nobody."

Too often people try to lose their 'ego,' or sense of self, before they have actually worked through their own personal psychological material, and established a healthy sense of self – one which enables them to live effectively in the world....This 'trap' amounts to a 'disrespect, discounting, or denigration' of the ego itself, and erroneously assumes that the normal concerns of the ego – such as being able to function well in the world – have nothing to do with the 'quest for oneness.' This amounts to... 'premature disidentification' with ego functions such as identity, security, and self-esteem. (Hedlin, quoted in Fields, Taylor, Weyler, & Ingrasci, 1984, p. 11)

**"You need an ego to get the bus."** As the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama once observed: "You need an ego to get the bus." The need to address the interests of the ego is one reason why the transpersonal psychotherapeutic system of *Psychosynthesis* developed by psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli has both a personal psychosynthesis *and* a transpersonal psychosynthesis component.

#### **The ego is not inferior to other portions of the self.**

The ego is not inferior to other portions of the self, nor is the ego of a lower quality than the inner, transpersonal self (Roberts, 1972). The ego, *your* ego, directs your behavior in physical world and your awareness of physical stimuli, and makes possible the clear brilliance and exquisite focus of normal waking consciousness. It is not something that needs to be overthrown in order to reach the inner self. In fact, to do so can create imbalance and psychopathology in the personality (Engler, 1983; M. Epstein, 1992).

**It is impossible to separate portions of the self.** The ordinary ego should not be thought of as something separate from the inner self (or soul). Traditional psychoanalytic personality theories may make distinctions, for instance, between ego, id, and superego, but such distinctions are made only in an effort to explain the many facets of the human personality. The outer ego is a portion of the inner self and has emerged from that source. The ego cannot really be separated from the rest of the psyche because the life of the ego takes place within (not apart from) the framework of the psyche's greater existence (Roberts, 1979b). The psyche's greater existence cannot be separated from the intimate knowledge of the ego whose clear and exquisite focus in one small area of reality creates a given kind of experience that is valid, real, and necessary to the life of the physical body.

**The ego is the three-dimensional face of the soul.** The ego may be only one segment of our larger identity and focus in but one of many dimensions of reality, but it is still nevertheless composed of the same universal energy and vitality that composes the transpersonal self, the larger psyche, and all consciousness. The ego does not exist outside of the psyche, but within it. The ego is supported, sustained, and filled with the universal energy that is its source. The ego can hardly be inferior to what composes it or to the reality of which it is a necessary and vital part.

**We have become “ego-bound” as a species.** Unfortunately, through social and cultural conditioning, the individual ego has become “muscle-bound,” a tyrant that does not want to admit the existence of any dimensions of reality other than those with which it is familiar and comfortable and accepts. Separating itself from the more intuitive portions of its overall identity, it becomes isolated, afraid, and held in a kind of spiritual rigidity that limits its understanding of the nature of reality. This is not the ego’s intrinsic nature, however.

**The ego is far more flexible and resilient than is generally supposed.** The ego is far more resilient, curious, creative, and eager to learn than generally supposed by most ego psychologists. It is quite capable of allowing freedom to the inner self’s intuitions and creative impulses so that some knowledge of its own greater dimensions can indeed be communicated to this most physically-oriented portion of the personality.



**2. Transpersonal Psychology Does Not Limit the Type of Expansion of Identity**

Reality is not limited nor is identity dependent upon physical form (Roberts, 1972). Clinical observations from deep experiential self-exploration (e.g., sensory deprivation, sleep deprivation, biofeedback for voluntary control of internal states, hypnosis) and transpersonal psychotherapy (e.g., bioenergetics, primal therapy, rebirthing, guided imagery with music, holotropic breathwork, psychedelic sessions with LSD, episodes of psychospiritual crises) indicate no apparent boundaries to the types of identifications or personifications of which the human psyche is capable. The psyche loves to personify itself. After all, it gave rise to you and me.



**Figure 3-1** identifies different types of expansion of identity beyond usual ego-body boundaries that have been observed to occur in LSD psychotherapy sessions.

**Figure 3-1. Varieties of Expansion of Identity Observed in Psychedelic Sessions**

**No single standard, invariant response to LSD.** After analyzing the records of over 2,600 LSD sessions, transpersonal psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (1980a, 1985) could not identify one experiential pattern that represented a single standard, invariant response to the chemical action of the drug. Drug responses varied among individuals even though they were given the same dosage levels under identical psychological sets and physical settings. Experiential patterns were strongly modified by psychological and contextual factors, including the personality and behavior of the therapist, the personality and belief system of the participant, the therapeutic relationship, the psychological set and contextual setting in which the drug is administered

**LSD as a non-specific catalyst or amplifier of deep levels of the psyche.** These observations suggested to Grof an important idea: The transpersonal experiences observed to occur during LSD were not simply toxic effects manufactured or produced by the chemical action of the drug. Rather, the drug acted as a *non-specific catalyst* or amplifier that activated deep levels of the psyche. The psychedelic (“mind manifesting”) agent simply intensified and accelerated the emergence of material from inner realms of the human unconscious to reveal aspects of the human mind unrecognized and unacknowledged by classical psychoanalysis or any existing system of psychology other than transpersonal psychology. In his later development of a non-drug technique called “holotropic breathwork” for producing a non-ordinary state of consciousness, Grof (1988) discovered that similar transpersonal phenomena as occurred during LSD sessions were being produced, except now it was a non-drug catalyst that was activating the deep levels of the human unconscious.

### Figure 3-1. Varieties of Expansion of Identity Observed in Psychedelic Sessions

(Grof, 1975a, pp. 311-345)

#### I. Temporal Extension (or Expansion) Within the Framework of “Objective Reality”

Content of the experience consists of elements of the phenomenal world as we know it in our normal waking consciousness that can be verified, are understandable, or can be accepted on the basis of consensual validation, empirical evidence, or scientific research.

##### A. Temporal Expansion of Consciousness

1. *Perinatal Experiences* – related to physiological and emotional re-experiencing of various aspects of biological birth.
  - a. Cosmic Unity – related to primal union with the mother, characterized by tension-free transcendence of the subject-object dichotomy, with strong positive affect (serenity, bliss, peace, tranquility, harmony, equilibrium), feelings of sacredness, unity with eternity and infinity, and experience of “oceanic ecstasy.”
  - b. Cosmic Engulfment – related to initial biochemical and physiological changes in the womb signaling the onset of delivery, characterized by feelings of imminent threat and vital danger, paranoid ideation, and bodily sensations of being swallowed, consumed or pulled into an abyss by some malevolent entity (such as a dragon, python, octopus, whale, spider, witch, alien, or whirlpool).
  - c. “No Exit” or Hell – related to initial uterine contractions, characterized by feelings of unbearable, inescapable, and eternal suffocation and claustrophobic entrapment, the prospect of endless and hopeless psychological and physical tortures, agonizing metaphysical loneliness, alienation, inferiority, guilt, and unbearable suffering where existence appears completely nonsensical, meaningless, absurd, and futile with no way out either in time or space.
  - d. Death-Rebirth Struggle – related to the gradual and difficult propulsion through the birth canal, characterized by feelings of condensation and explosive release of immense energy, excessive sexual excitement, and intense aggression.
  - e. Death-Rebirth Experience – related to the completed expulsion through the birth canal, characterized by the extreme intensification of tension and suffering, followed by sudden relief and relaxation, decompression and expansion of space, culminating in an experience of total annihilation referred to as an “ego death,” followed by an experience of “cosmic union” and feelings of forgiveness, belongingness, love, perfection, harmony, redemption, self-respect, and respect for others.
2. *Embryonal and Fetal Experiences* – concrete episodes that are identified as specific physical or chemical occurrences during intrauterine development including attempted abortions, maternal diseases, teratogens, and parental sexual intercourse experienced during advanced stages of pregnancy.
3. *Ancestral Experiences* – characterized by feelings that one is actually re-living episodes from the lives of one’s ancestors., ranging from the identification with specific ancestors to feeling the psychological atmosphere in families, clans, tribes to obtaining insights into cultural attitudes, beliefs, traditions, and customs.
4. *Collective and Racial Experiences* – characterized by the experience of episodes from various cultures in the history of humankind independent of the subject’s own racial background, cultural tradition, previous training, education and interests, that frequently contain unusual and specific data beyond that known by the person previously but verified by archeological sources.

**Figure 3-1. Varieties of Expansion of Identity Observed in Psychedelic Sessions**  
(Grof, 1975a, pp. 311-345)

A. **Temporal Expansion of Consciousness** (continued)

5. ***Phylogenetic (Evolutionary) Experiences*** – characterized by the identification with animal ancestors at various levels of development, frequently generating information about zoological and ethological facts that exceeded the levels of subjects' natural science education.
6. ***"Past Incarnation" Experiences*** – characterized by the experience of vivid, dramatic scenes that happened at another time and place in history, involving other people, accompanied by negative affect (e.g., physical pain, hatred, anguish, aggression, jealousy, greed, despair, etc.) and the conviction that one is re-living concrete episodes that actually happened in one's previous incarnation.
7. ***Precognition, Clairvoyance, and "Time Travels"*** – involves those ESP phenomena characterized by temporal extension of consciousness in the form of precognitive and clairvoyant visions.

B. **Spatial Extension of Consciousness**

1. ***Ego Transcendence in Interpersonal Relations*** - characterized by partial loss of ego boundaries and feelings of emerging into union and oneness with another person to the point of experiencing "dual unity" with the interpersonal partner (separate yet a part of another's identity), accompanied by feelings of love and sanctity of the relationship involved.
2. ***Identification with Other Persons*** – characterized by total loss of one's ego boundaries and complete identification with others (i.e., parents, relatives, friends, acquaintances, teachers, political figures, famous historical personages or religious figures).
3. ***Group Identification and Group Consciousness*** – characterized by complete identification with typical groups of people of the individual's own race, religion, or profession (e.g., experience the role of Jews persecuted through the centuries, of Christians tortured by the Romans, of victims of the Spanish Inquisition, of all soldiers who have died on the battlefields of the world, of all terminal patients or persons dying, of all prisoners in concentration camps, etc.), and feelings that one is exploring one's own developmental history.
4. ***Animal Identification*** – characterized by complete identification with various forms of animal life, experiencing the consciousness of animal life, with information frequently reported about the animal's psychology, ethology, sexual and breeding habits.
5. ***Plant Identification*** – characterized by complete identification with various plant forms, with feelings of witnessing and consciously experiencing the basic life processes of the plants (e.g., germination of seeds, vegetable growth, pollination, and photosynthesis).
6. ***Oneness with Life and All Creation*** – characterized by complete identification with the totality of life on the planet Earth, experiencing problems related to survival and extinction of species, the viability of life as a cosmic phenomenon, or the complexity of phylogenetic development of life forms.
7. ***Consciousness of Inorganic Matter*** – characterized by experiencing consciousness in inorganic material (e.g., atoms, elements, materials such as diamond, granite, gold), resulting in a conviction that consciousness is a basic phenomenon existing throughout the universe and of which human consciousness is only a part.
8. ***Planetary Consciousness*** – characterized by complete identification with the Earth and all its phenomena, both organic and inorganic.

**Figure 3-1. Varieties of Expansion of Identity Observed in Psychedelic Session**  
(Grof, 1975a, pp. 311-345)

**B. Spatial Extension of Consciousness** (continued)

9. *Extra-Planetary Consciousness* – characterized by experiencing phenomena related to other planets, moons, stars, and interstellar space, with feelings of tranquility, infinity, eternity, and the unity of all opposites.
10. *Out-of-Body Experiences, Traveling Clairvoyance, “Space Travels” and Telepathy* – characterized by the experience of leaving one’s own body, traveling to far off places, occasionally demonstrating genuine ESP communication with a distant person.

**C. Spatial Construction of Consciousness**

1. *Organ, Tissue, and Cellular Consciousness* -- characterized by the feeling of tuning into the consciousness of certain portions of one’s own body (e.g., heart, liver, kidney, bone, white and red blood cells, germinal cells, etc.), associated with knowledge of biochemical and physiological processes beyond the person’s level of medical education.

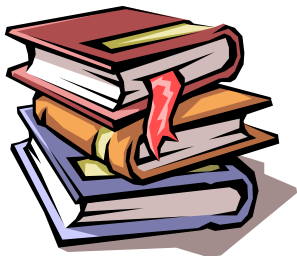
**II. Experiential Extension (or Expansion) Beyond the Framework of “Objective Reality”**

Content consists of phenomena which are not based on generally accepted “objective reality.”

1. *Spiritistic and Mediumistic Experiences* – characterized by signs of mediumistic trance and experiences of encounters spiritual entities of deceased persons.
2. *Experiences of Encounters with Supra-Human Spiritual Entities* – experience of being in the presence of spiritual entities existing on higher levels of consciousness and higher energy levels, appearing in the role of guides, teachers, and protectors (e.g., Jesus, Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, etc.).
3. *Experiences of Other Universes and of Encounters with their Inhabitants* – persons encounter the inhabitants of strange worlds and alien universes not a part of our cosmos, and experiencing dramatic adventures of various sorts.
4. *Archtypal Experiences* – characterized by experiences of typical Jungian archetypes and of generalized, universal social roles (e.g., the Martyr, Fugitive, Outcast, Ruler, Tyrant, the Great Mother,, etc.).
5. *Experiences of Encounter with Blissful and Wrathful Deities* – encounters and/or identification with concrete deities related to specific cultures (e.g., Isis, Apollo, Baal, Astarte, etc.), accompanied by feelings ranging from metaphysical horror to ecstatic rapture.
6. *Activation of the Chakras and Arousal of the Serpent Power (Kundalini)* - experiences related to descriptions in Indian philosophy and religion of the activation and opening up of the individual “charka” energy points (i.e., centers of primal energy radiation located at spinal levels).
7. *Consciousness of the Universal Mind* – characterized by ineffable experiences of the ultimate force in the Universe, infinite existence, infinite wisdom and infinite bliss, occasionally associated with insight into the process of the creation of the three-dimensional world and into the Buddhist concept of the Wheel of Death and Rebirth.
8. *The Supracosmic and Metacosmic Void* – characterized by ineffable experiences of the ultimate source of all existence, of primordial Emptiness and Nothingness, being beyond time and space, beyond change and polarities, such as good and evil, light and darkness, stability and motion, agony and ecstasy.

**Implications for psychology: The quality of identity is far more mysterious than we can presently comprehend.** What are the implications for psychology of Grof's pioneering consciousness research into the psyche's greater reality revealed by drug and non-drug alterations of consciousness? First, all such expansions of identity beyond usual ego boundaries should be considered valid and real experiences that hint at the multidimensional nature of the human psyche. They tell us something important about the abilities that lie within each individual. There is no *a priori* reason for supposing otherwise. The data of modern consciousness research indicate that the quality of identity is far more mysterious than we can presently comprehend within the framework of core beliefs currently operative in contemporary schools of psychology (Grof, 2000).

**Implications for psychology: Potential for broadening "official" concepts of the self.** Second, consciousness research has the potential of overcoming conventional psychology's highly limited ideas about the nature of the self by introducing original concepts and theories into discussions regarding the nature of the human psyche's private and collective reality, and by proposing research agendas that promise to give us a greater understanding of human potential and exceptional well-being beyond the norm (Braud & Anderson, 1998). Where old, accepted ideas of selfhood fail to do justice to the multitudinous creativity of personality action, transpersonal psychology dares to conceptualize previously unknown elements of the self and to propose new ways to explore its greater reality.



### 3. Transpersonal Psychology is Not Limited to Any Particular Philosophy or Worldview.

The original definition of transpersonal psychology articulated in the "Statement of Purpose" of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* in 1969 does not commit transpersonal psychology or its practitioners to any specific interpretation of transpersonal experiences and behaviors (American Transpersonal Association, 1969).

The "Statement of Purpose" of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* states: "This formulation [of the definition of transpersonal psychology] is to be understood as subject to *optional* individual or group interpretations, either wholly or in part, with regard to the acceptance of its contents as essentially naturalistic, theistic, supernaturalistic, or any other designated classification", p. i). Transpersonal psychologists, in other words, can be psychoanalysts, behaviorists, cognitivists, humanists, or neurobiologists. They can be theists, agnostics, or atheists.

**Key ideas that define a transpersonal orientation.** What differentiates transpersonal psychology from other schools of thought that are committed to other goals and subject matter, other philosophic assumptions and conceptual models, other definitions of psychology and theoretical languages? Transpersonal psychologists - whether they choose to take a biological, environmental, cognitive, psychodynamic, phenomenological, or integral perspective to the study of exceptional human experiences and transformative capacities - will be united in their affirmation of four key ideas articulated in the *Articles of Association for Transpersonal Psychology* (Sutich, 1972, pp. 93-97) that identify the set of minimal assumptions about the nature of the psyche and its human expression that define a transpersonal orientation.

- a) Impulses toward an ultimate state are continuous in every person.
- b) Full awareness of these impulses is not necessarily present at any given time.
- c) The realization of an ultimate state is essentially dependent on direct practice and on conditions suitable to the individual concerned.
- d) Every individual has the right to choose his [or her] own path.

Each of these data-driven principles is intended to convey a minimal amount of theory-laden philosophic assumptions about the nature of exceptional human experiences and transformative capacities.

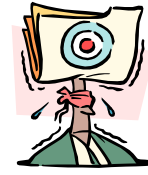


**A. Impulses toward an ultimate state are continuous in every person.**

The first key idea that defines a transpersonal orientation posits the existence of “ultimate states” and “impulses toward” those states. The term “ultimate states” has many levels of meaning but basically means that each being (or manifestation of consciousness) comes into existence with inner ideals and values that seek fulfillment. Each being is endowed with an impulse toward self-actualization and the fulfillment of “Being-values” (Maslow’s phrase). Each being, in other words, comes into existence with an inner impetus to fulfill and actualize its “self,” to seek the greatest possible fulfillment and extension of its own innate abilities and its own interior systems of “value fulfillment” in a way that benefits not only the individual, but the species as well (Roberts, 1981b, p. 256).

**Impulses toward ultimate states are instinctoid and required for health and growth.** This impulse toward ultimate states of growth and actualization is not learned but is inbred and innate. It is “instinctoid” (i.e., biologically necessary to avoid illness and achieve growth) (Maslow, 1971, p. 316). It is an inner predisposition meant to motivate all persons in the proper directions and lead them to express their abilities.

**Quality, not quantity, of life is most important.** The impulse demands that a certain quality of experience be maintained by which the individual and species can attain its main goals and fulfill those particular qualities that are characteristic of it (Roberts, 1981b). Its operation engenders a sense of safety, assurance, and an expectation that needs will be satisfied, abilities actualized, and desires fulfilled. It is constantly operative and acts as a creative, rejuvenating, compensatory force that maintains and supports life and that triggers the proper bodily responses required for health and growth. The impulse toward ultimate states is evident in those conditions of body and mind that promote feelings of physical health and psychological vitality, peace and joy (Butts, 1997a).



**B. Full awareness of these impulses is not necessarily present at any given time.**

The second key idea that defines a transpersonal orientation recognizes that impulses toward an ultimate state may not be something we are always aware of in daily life and that the egotistical self can pretend not to know the impulse exists. There may be beliefs blocking in that direction that blind the individual to the existence of such impulses. Negative expectations or concepts, fears and doubts, when multiplied and hardened, may begin to diminish the person’s own natural impulses toward “ultimate” states of health, expression, and fulfillment. Using their free will, individuals can stray from that great impulse, forget it, ignore it, or deny its existence.

**Impulses toward ultimate states continue to exist whether they are consciously materialized or not.** The impulse toward ultimate states of being and knowing (the “farther reaches of human nature” to use Maslow’s phrase), however, continues to operate beneath the surface of conscious awareness whether the person is aware of them or not. The individual will still possess the impulse but will be unable to perceive his or her own greater fulfillment, uniqueness, or integrity and will become blind to other attributes with which he or she is naturally gifted and to which the impulse is intended to lead.

**The individual may spontaneously experience but not recognize impulses toward ultimate states.** Naturally and left alone, the individual will at various times spontaneously experience such impulses, though they may not recognize them as such. During those times, you may suddenly

- Feel at peace with yourself and your world.
- Feel a part of events of which you usually considers yourself apart.
- Feel unexpectedly happy and content with your daily life.
- Feel one with the universe.
- Experience something in which you seem to go beyond yourself.



**States of grace.** When the impulse toward ultimate states consciously manifests itself, the individual experiences what writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1974) calls “states of grace” or “illumination,” though the person may not use those terms (pp. 175-196). During such times, there occurs an emotional recognition and appreciation of one’s own intrinsic worth, good nature, and necessary place within the framework of existence. Such experiences are natural and a part of our biological heritage.



**C. The realization of an ultimate state is essentially dependent on direct practice and on conditions suitable to the individual concerned.**

The third key idea that defines a transpersonal orientation acknowledges that, although transcendental experiences may occur spontaneously, what is often needed to allow such impulses to become *consciously materialized* is a belief in their existence, an intense desire and expectation of their occurrence, and a disciplined openness that permits their emergence. Individuals do not lose contact with such impulses simply because they do not focus upon them or trust them. Often a “path” or disciplined spiritual practice is required that serves to expand the private reality of each individual and his or her understanding of the “unknown” elements of the self and its greater world.

**Spiritual practice “opens what is closed,” “balances what is unbalanced,” and “reveals what is hidden”.** Engaging in a spiritual practice such as “insight meditation” for a sufficient amount of time, for instance, can generate enough experiential data to counteract an individual’s limited ideas of the nature of the psyche and the nature of reality so that it becomes easier for the egoistically-oriented portions of the self to accept the possible existence of other streams of perception and consciousness (see, for example, J. Goldstein & Kornfield, 1987; Kornfield, 1993). As this occurs and the individual’s ideas of his or her own reality become changed and expand, the limitations to personal growth become removed. Once the individual acknowledges the existence of such impulses and as he or she learns to trust them, the person will quite naturally be led to give freer expression to the source of his or her own creativity and being.



**D. Every individual has the right to choose this own path.**

The fourth key idea that defines a transpersonal orientation accepts the existence of individual differences, free will, and choice. In the creative field of reality that is characterized by probable actions and events, there is always more than one way to discover the vital reality of the “impulse toward ultimate states” or to become acquainted with those deeply creative aspects of one’s own being. Actions and events that are worthwhile, desirable, and significant for one individual may be meaningless to another because of differences in temperament, inclination, curiosity, training, education, past experience, or desire for knowledge. Individual’s can choose among courses of action precisely because they are uniquely suited to sense what course of action will lead to their own most probable development and fulfillment.

Each person lives by their intent, which springs up about the force of their being... Your will is your intent. All the power of your being is mobilized by your will, which makes its deductions according to your beliefs about reality. ... The will...operates according to the personality’s beliefs about reality, so its desires are sometimes tempered as those beliefs change. ... Each of you use your will in your own way. Each of you have your own way of dealing with challenges.... No one can be healed against his or her will. There is no such coercion. (Roberts, 1979b, pp. 388-389)



**Alternate visions and versions of transpersonal psychology.** Beyond these four minimal assumptions that define a transpersonal orientation articulated in the *Articles of Association for Transpersonal Psychology* (Sutich, 1972, pp. 93-97), transpersonalists are free to recognize, acknowledge, and accept more theory-laden philosophic assumptions about the nature of reality that makes transpersonal phenomena possible in the first place.

**Philosophy cannot be divorced from action.** Although transpersonal studies prides itself as being basically independent of any particular religious, metaphysical, or philosophical worldview, the fact of the matter is that there is a continuum of philosophies, metaphysics, worldviews, and theoretical orientations that guide both transpersonal inquiry and interpretation of the facts that human inquiry reveals. Ontology can be divorced from epistemology only in theory, never in practice. As physicist Werner Heisenberg once said: “What we see is not nature, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.” Philosophy cannot be divorced from action. Just as any cognitional theory presupposes some theory of personality who has the cognitions, so does every epistemology presuppose a particular metaphysics about the nature of the world it seeks to know and that makes such an epistemology possible, legitimate, and worthwhile. Metaphysical frameworks, worldviews, and philosophies necessarily form the implicit context within which the obtained data (data of sense or data of consciousness) are interpreted and given meaning in terms that are understandable to the comprehending ego. Otherwise, they might make no sense to the physically-oriented self.

**Perspectives are often highly theory-laden.** The various perspectives to the contemporary study of transpersonal phenomena, like the various definitions of transpersonal psychology itself, are often highly theory-laden and metaphysically laden, and imply, either overtly or covertly, a commitment to certain beliefs and presuppositions about the nature of human experience and behavior, the nature of the psyche, the relationship between mind and body, and the nature of physical reality itself (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993b).

**A continuum of theoretical orientations exist.** Some perspectives may assume that “a transcendent reality underlies and binds together all phenomena” (Valle, 1989, p. 261) or that a Transpersonal Self exists. Other perspectives may deny the independent and separate existence of transcendent realities apart from the human experiencer or deny the existence of a transpersonal self as occurs in more Buddhist-oriented interpretative frameworks. Wilber’s (1977) *Spectrum of Consciousness* model requires adoption of a particular worldview that includes concepts such as a “Great Chain of Being” and a “Perennial Philosophy.”



**One end of the continuum of theoretical orientations: The Perennial Philosophy.** One theoretical orientation that many transpersonal psychologists believe to be essential to transpersonal inquiry and that has been most engaged in critical disputes in the paradigm debates of recent years is the theory-laden “spiritual universalism” of what is known as the “perennial philosophy” (Ferrer, 2002; Huxley, 1970).

Philosophia perennis... the metaphysics that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being. (Huxley, 1970, p. vii)

The perennial philosophy is a statement of the universal, common ground of all spiritual traditions, that single truth that underlies the apparent diversity of religious forms and that integrates harmoniously all the religious traditions from ancient to modern times.

Known as the “perennial philosophy” – “perennial” precisely because it shows up across cultures and across the ages with many similar features – this world view has, indeed, formed the core not only of the world’s great wisdom traditions, from Christianity to Buddhism to Taoism, but also of many of the greatest philosophers, scientists, and psychologists of both East and West, North and South. So overwhelmingly widespread is the perennial philosophy...that it is either the single greatest intellectual error to appear in humankind’s history... or it is the single most accurate reflection of reality yet to appear. (Wilber, 1997, pp. 38-39)

**The Perennial Philosophy as a foundational metaphysical framework.** Many transpersonal psychologists believe that the “Perennial Philosophy” (a phrase coined by the philosopher Leibniz) provides “an identifiable structure or essence that characterizes any particular psychology or philosophy as transpersonal” (Valle, 1989, p. 261). It includes the following five premises:

- ❖ A multidimensional reality exists that includes yet transcends three-dimensional physical existence and of which all consciousness (human and nonhuman) is a unique, valid, and significant manifestation of an infinitely greater gestalt of meaning and organization. The everyday world and our personal consciousness is a manifestation of a larger, divine reality.
- ❖ The conscious ego is only a portion of a much larger, inner multidimensional identity and consciousness. All beings have a hidden, “higher” and “deeper” identity that reflects, or is connected to, the divine element of the universe.
- ❖ The self-evidential quality of this knowledge is such that it is experienced as indubitable fact, truth, and reality. The legitimacy and significance of transpersonal experiences is self-validating.

- ❖ Ego-directed consciousness has available to it knowledge concerning its multidimensional origin and identity, its infinite creativity, its unlimited possibilities of development, and the greater “unknown” reality in which it dwells. The powers of the Higher Self can be awakened and harnessed to take a central part in the everyday life of the individual.
- ❖ An expansion of consciousness and identity follows upon appropriate practice of a spiritual path as the individual ego becomes aware and acquainted with the knowledge and intuitions of one’s inner self and allows them to flow through the conscious ego. This “awakening” is the purpose or goal of life.

**The perennial philosophy is a primary theoretical orientation in transpersonal psychology.** Many transpersonal psychologists subscribe to this “universalist vision of a common core of spirituality” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 3). Ken Wilber (1994), a foremost writer in the field says: “the aim of transpersonal psychology ...is to give a psychological presentation of the perennial philosophy and the Great Chain of Being” (p. x). France Vaughn (1982), one of the leaders of the transpersonal movement, also asserts that the transpersonal perspective “has its roots in the ancient perennial philosophy” (p. 38), and “recognizes the transcendent unity of all religions and sees the unity in the mystical core of every spiritual tradition” (p. 37). Stanislav Grof (1998) states: “Modern consciousness research has generated important data that support the basic tenets of the perennial philosophy” (p. 3).

**Figure 3-2** presents eight “key assumptions that define a transpersonal approach” to the practice of psychotherapy (Cortright, 1997, p. 16), that integrates the five premises of the perennial philosophy and the four assumptions of a transpersonal orientation expressed in the *Articles of Association for Transpersonal Psychology*.

**Figure 3-2. Key Assumptions of an Transpersonal Approach to Psychotherapy**

**Figure 3-2. Key Assumptions that Define a Transpersonal Approach to Psychotherapy**

(Cortwright, 1997, pp. 16-21)

**1. Our essential nature is spiritual.**

- “The transpersonal view gives primacy to the spiritual source which supports and upholds the psychological structures of the self” (p. 16).

**2. Consciousness is multidimensional.**

- “The normal, ordinary consciousness most people experience is but the most outward tip of consciousness.... Other dimensions or aspects of consciousness show the cosmic connectedness of all beings” (p. 16).

**3. Humans beings have valid urges toward spiritual seeking, expressed as a search for wholeness through deepening individual, social, and transcendent awareness.**

- “The search for wholeness...takes the individual into increasing levels of self-discovery, actualization, and seeking for transcendence.... Not only is spiritual seeking healthy, it is essential for full human health and fulfillment. The definition of mental health must include a spiritual dimension to be complete...The deepest motivation for all human beings is the urge toward spirit...The growth of consciousness focuses upon building up the physical, emotional, mental structures of the self...Transpersonal psychology completes the process, putting this motivational path into the context of a spiritual journey” (p. 17).

**4. Contacting a deeper source of wisdom and guidance within is both possible and helpful to growth.**

- “Western psychotherapy seeks to uncover a deeper source of guidance than the conscious ego or self (e.g., Gestalt therapy’s “wisdom of the organism,” Jungian psychotherapy’s “Individuation of the Self,” Self psychology’s “real self,” existential psychotherapy’s “authentic self”).... All of modern psychotherapy may be seen to be an intuitive groping toward a deeper source of wisdom than the surface self....It is a deeper, spiritual reality that is the source of the self’s or the organism’s wisdom” (p. 18).

**Figure 3-2. Key Assumptions that Define a Transpersonal Approach to Psychotherapy**

(Cortwright, 1997, pp. 16-21)

5. **Uniting a person's conscious will and aspiration with the spiritual impulse is a superordinate health value.**
  - “Affirming the infinite ways in which the spiritual impulse may express itself is a primary value in transpersonal psychotherapy. This cognitive set and, more fundamentally this spiritual orientation, puts one into greater alignment with the healing forces of the psyche and the universe.... Transpersonal psychology supports the spiritual urge...In spiritual seeking it is crucial for the therapist to honor all spiritual paths. Dogmatic clinging to any particular spiritual practice is severely limiting to transpersonal practice...There is no one way to the Divine, the paths are as varied as there are individuals, and a broad knowledge of and respect for these varied paths (including atheism) is crucial” (p. 19).
6. **Altered states of consciousness are one way of accessing transpersonal experiences and can be an aid to healing and growth.**
  - “From its beginnings transpersonal psychology has been influenced by altered state research in general and psychedelic research in particular... While not for everyone, the judicious induction of altered states of consciousness has a respected place in transpersonal work” (pp. 19-20).
7. **Our life and actions are meaningful.**
  - “Our actions, joys, and sorrows have significance in our growth and development. They are not merely random, pointless events.... Often it is the wounds and tragedies of life that provide the impetus to make the inward journey... The outer, surface show is not the only perspective, and there is a larger process of transformative growth occurring” (pp. 20-21).
8. **The transpersonal context shapes how the person/client is viewed.**
  - “A transpersonal approach (in agreement with the humanists) views the client, just like the therapist, as an evolving being and fellow seeker” (p. 21).



**Constructive postmodern critique of the perennial philosophy.** Jorge Ferrer (2002) takes issue with the perennial philosophy and the view that “the various spiritual traditions and insights correspond to different interpretations, dimensions, or levels of a single spiritual ultimate that is both pregiven and universal” (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 3-4). Ferrer does not argue with the possibility that there may not be common elements among the various religious traditions or that the perennial philosophy is necessarily mistaken, only that “the commitment of transpersonal theory to the perennial philosophy may have been not only premature, but also misleading and counterproductive” (p. 73).

**Revisoning the perennial philosophy.** Ferrer (2002, pp. 87-105) identifies what he considered to be fundamental problems of the perennial philosophy, including the following:

1. **Religious diversity is not artifactual.** The diversity of religious traditions (e.g., the Christians who encounter a personal God and the Buddhists who do not) is neither accidental nor the result of historical and cultural artifact, but may represent essential and unique solutions to spiritual experiences of transcendence. “The spiritual history of humankind suggests that *spiritual doctrines and intuitions affected, shaped, and transformed each other, and that this mutual influence led to the unfolding of a variety of metaphysical worlds – rather than to one metaphysic and different languages*” (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 93-94).

2. **Pregiven ultimate reality is not to be assumed.** The perennial philosophy is geared to an objectivist epistemology that posits a pregiven ultimate reality that can be known by taking a really good look at the already out there now real. “What the spiritual literature suggests is that neither the order of emergence of dual and nondual insights is preordained nor is their spiritual value universal or pregiven” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 105).

3. **Tendency toward intolerance exists despite inclusive appearance.** The perennial philosophy tends to fall into religious dogmatism and intolerance in spite of its avowed inclusive stance. It dismisses traditions that are dualistic, pluralistic, theistic or that do not posit a metaphysical Absolute or transcendent ultimate reality by calling them inauthentic, less evolved, lower in level of spiritual insight, merely relative in relation to the single Absolute that perennialism champions, or simply false. “Wilber’s neoperennialism privileges a nondual spirituality, of which he himself is a practitioner (Wilber, 1999). This bias leads him ipso facto to prejudice as spiritually less evolved any mystic or tradition that does not seek the attainment of nondual states” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 105).

4. **Overemphasizes commonalities while overlooking differences.** The perennial philosophy leans toward the belief that what is common among religious traditions is what is essential or more explanatory, instead of looking to the distinctive, unique, individual practices and understandings of a religious tradition.

The nature of this problem can be illustrated by the popular story of the woman who, observing her neighbor entering into an altered state of consciousness three consecutive days first with rum and water, then through fast breathing and water, and finally with nitrous oxide and water, concludes that the reason for his bizarre behaviors was the ingestion of water. The moral of the story, of course, is that what is essential or more explanatory in a set of phenomena is not necessarily what is most obviously common to them. (Ferrer, 2002, p. 91)



**Multiple interpretations of transpersonal phenomena allowed.** Not all transpersonalists, therefore, believe that transpersonal theory needs the perennial philosophy as its foundational metaphysical framework (Ferrer, 2002). Other theorists posit the notion of the “Great Chain of Being” as comprising the essential structure of transpersonal reality (Wilber, 1977, 1980, 1981). Some prefer Whiteheadian process philosophy as the framework for understanding transpersonal phenomena (de Quincey, 2002; Griffin, 1988, 1997), while others prefer to “leave the field wide open for surprises and new discoveries” (Grof, 1998, p. 114).



**At the extreme end of the continuum of theoretical orientations: The Western Creed.** At the opposite end of the continuum of theoretical assumptions underlying contemporary approaches to the study of transpersonal phenomena is the version of scientific psychology represented by what transpersonal psychologist Charles T. Tart (1992a, Chapter 2; 1997a) calls the “Western Creed.” The assumptions underlying the Western Creed stand in stark contrast to the quite different assumptions that underlie many of the “spiritual psychologies” (Tart’s phrase) of the world’s major religions. A list of the assumptions about the nature of the psyche and the nature of reality that characterize the Western Creed are presented in **Figure 3-3**.

**Figure 3-3. Some Assumptions of Orthodox, Western Psychology**

**Beliefs that take on the appearance of unquestionable facts.** Transpersonal psychologist Charles Tart (1992a) states in his book *Transpersonal Psychologies: Perspectives on the Mind from Seven Great Spiritual Traditions*, that “most of the assumptions... are implicitly held by a majority of orthodox, Western psychologists today” (p. 66). Tart believes that a majority of mainstream psychologists consider these assumptions as established *facts* rather than as scientific *hypotheses* - assumptions that often go unquestioned because of prior education, training, and conditioning and subsequently take on the appearance of facts *of* existence rather than beliefs *about* existence.

Transpersonal writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1979b) observes: “Clear understanding or effective exploration of the unknown reality can be achieved only when you are able to leave behind you many ‘facts’ that you have accepted as criteria of experience” (p. 407). The research and theory that is occurring in the various transpersonal, spiritual psychologies being developed today are intended to bring many of “official” psychology’s taken-for-granted beliefs about the nature of reality and the nature of the psyche into question, so that we will be able to look at the Life we live with new eyes.



**Primary theoretical orientations in the field are a matter of healthy debate.** Whether transpersonal psychology is to be defined in terms of the “perennial philosophy,” “Great Chain of Being,” “altered states of consciousness,” “developmental structures of consciousness,” or “psychological health and well-being,” or in opposition to the “Western Creed” remains a matter of healthy debate (see, for example, Rothberg & Kelly, 1998). Transpersonal psychologist Donald Rothberg (1986), for instance, has described how a theory of “hierarchical ontology” has become central to many transpersonal theories and outlines basic objections to it and the need to examine the core claims associated with it. Usatynski (2001) has examined the implicit metaphysical presuppositions that underlie transpersonal discussions of spirituality, religion, and contemplative practice, and argues for alternative perspectives.

Stanislav Grof (1985), a co-founder of transpersonal psychology, concisely summarizes what he considers to be a core belief that defines the transpersonal orientation and that is the point of view taken in this monograph:

What truly defines the transpersonal orientation is a model of the human psyche that recognizes the importance of the spiritual or cosmic dimensions and the potential for consciousness evolution. (Grof, 1985, p. 197)

### **Figure 3-3. Some Assumptions of Orthodox, Western Psychology**

(Tart, 1992a, Chapter 2, pp. 61-111)

#### **The Nature of the Universe**

- The universe was created accidentally or created itself or has always been around and there is no purpose or reason for the universe existing.
- The universe is dead; life is only an infinitesimal, insignificant part of the universe.
- Physics is the ultimate science, because physics is the study of the real world.
- What is real is what can be perceived by the senses or by a physical instrument, and what can be perceived by the senses can be detected by a physical instrument.
- Only the present moment exists.
- We can understand the physical universe without understanding ourselves.

#### **The Nature of Man**

- Man is his body and nothing more.
- Man exists in relative isolation from his surrounding environment. He is an essentially independent creature.
- Man starts life “fresh,” except for limitations set on him by his genetic inheritance, his cultural environment, and accidental happenings, all modified by his reactions to them.
- Man is completely determined by his genetic inheritance and environment.
- Even though we believe man is completely determined, in practice we must act as if he has free will.
- We have a rather good understanding of the history of man.
- We understand the origin and evolution of man.
- We can't expect too much from a creature like man, or there are no limits on man's attainments.
- Each man is isolated from all others, locked within his nervous system.
- Psychological energy is completely derived from physical energy, as expressed in physiological processes in the body.

#### **Man's Function in the Universe**

- Man has no function in a purposeless universe.
- The only real purpose of life is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.
- The universe is a harsh, uncaring, unresponsive place.
- We are here to conquer the universe.
- We are by far the supreme life form on earth, and are probably the only intelligent life form in the whole universe.
- Lower organisms exist for man's benefit.

#### **The Nature of Human Consciousness**

- Only human beings are conscious.
- Man is conscious
- Consciousness is produced by the activity of the brain, and therefore the activity of consciousness is identical with the activity of the brain.

#### **Altered States of Consciousness**

- Altered states of consciousness are simply a temporary reorganization of brain functioning.
- Our ordinary state of consciousness is generally the most adaptive and rational way the mind can be organized, and virtually all altered states of consciousness are inferior or pathological.
- A person who spontaneously goes into altered states of consciousness is probably mentally ill.
- Deliberately cultivating altered states of consciousness is also a sign of psychopathology.



### **Figure 3-3. Some Assumptions of Orthodox, Western Psychology**

(Tart, 1992a, Chapter 2, pp. 61-111)

#### **Death**

- Death is the inevitable end of human life.
- Physical death is the final termination of human consciousness.

#### **Personality**

- An individual's personality is what makes him unique, skilled, worthwhile, and gives him his sense of identity.
- A sense of personality, personal identity is vital, and its loss is pathological.
- The basic development of personality is finished or complete in adulthood, except in the cases of neurotics or other mentally ill persons.
- A healthy personality is one which allows the individual to be well-adjusted in terms of his culture.
- A normal adult has a fairly good degree of understanding of his own personality.
- Personality is a relatively unified structure in normal adults.

#### **Cognitive Processes**

- Reasoning is the highest skill possessed by man.
- Developing the logical mind, one's reasoning abilities, is the highest accomplishment a person can aim for.
- Extension of our basically sound knowledge and cognitive processes is the way to greater knowledge and wisdom.
- Knowledge is a hypothesis, a concept in the mind, and there is no direct, certain knowledge of anything.
- Philosophers are the ultimate authorities about the nature of knowledge.
- Almost all important knowledge can be transmitted by the written word, and the written word is the least ambiguous, most accurate way of transmitting it.
- Logical inconsistencies in the expression of something indicate its invalidity.
- When people agree with me they are being rational; when they disagree they are probably irrational.
- Fantasy is a part-time cognitive activity, usually done in our leisure hours.
- Faith means believing in things that are not real or that you have no solid evidence for.
- Intuition is a word we use for lucky guesses, coincidences, or rational processes that are outside of conscious awareness but are nevertheless rational.
- Symbols are nothing but physical objects with emotional meaning, or electrophysiological patterns within the brain.
- Our beliefs and psychological experiences affect only ourselves, not the "real" world, except when expressed by motor activities.

#### **Emotion**

- Emotions are electrical and chemical shifts within the nervous system.
- Emotions interfere with logical reason and make man irrational; therefore they should generally be suppressed or eliminated except for recreational purposes.
- Emotions have no place in scientific work, or while they may motivate individuals, they must be filtered out of the final product.
- Negative emotions are the inevitable lot of man.
- There are no higher emotions; all emotions are basically self-serving and animal.
- Play is for children.
- Pain is bad and should be avoided.

### **Figure 3-3. Some Assumptions of Orthodox, Western Psychology**

(Tart, 1992a, Chapter 2, pp. 61-111)

#### **The Relationship Between Mind and Body.**

- The body is a relatively passive servo-mechanism for carrying out the orders of the nervous system.
- The physical body is the only body we have.

#### **Learning**

- Learning is a matter of permanent and semi-permanent electrochemical changes in the brain and nervous system.
- Learning is a matter of accumulating knowledge.
- Intellectual learning is the highest form of learning, and a person with a very high IQ has the potential to learn practically everything of importance.
- Learning is a matter of taking in sensory impressions and applying cognitive processes to them.

#### **Memory**

- Memory is not very reliable; it is far better to depend on an objective record.
- The only memory we have is of impressions in this life up to the present moment.
- The only memories we have direct access to are our own.

#### **Motivation**

- Desiring things is the basic motivation that keeps a person's life functioning, and lack of desire for things is pathological.
- The primary motivations affecting people are desires for power and desires for sexual pleasure, along with an avoidance of pain.

#### **Perception**

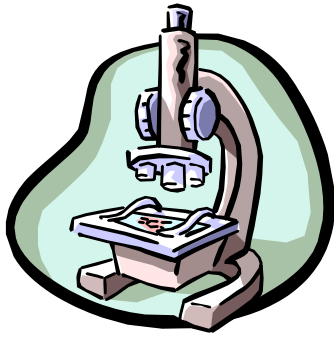
- The only things there are to perceive are the physical world and the sensation from the internal operations of our body and nervous system.
- The nature of our sense organs determines the nature of our perceptions.
- Perception is somewhat selective and biased, but generally gives us a very good picture of the world around us.

#### **Social Relationships**

- The selfish, neurotic, unreasonable actions of others are the major source of our personal suffering.
- No normal person likes to suffer.
- Progress comes from improving society.

#### **Miscellaneous Assumptions**

- Scientific progress is cumulative.
- Our civilization (and its psychology) is the greatest civilization that ever existed on this planet.
- Our civilization (and our psychology) is steadily progressing.
- An active, conquest-oriented approach is the way to make progress in understanding and controlling the universe.
- Being a scientist and being a mystic are incompatible.



#### 4. Transpersonal Psychology Does Not Limit Research to a Particular Method.

Moving beyond the fragmented, specialized, and sometimes contradictory and mutually-exclusive explanations of human experience and behavior that has come to characterize much of modern psychology (Koch, 1993; Staats, 1991), transpersonal psychology takes a multi-layered, developmental approach to the study of transpersonal events. By using a pluralism of research methods adequate to the different domains of being that it investigates, transpersonal psychology endorses *epistemological pluralism* as the best way to introduce questions of spirituality to scientific speculation.

To date, transpersonal disciplines stand alone in adopting an eclectic epistemology that seeks to include science, philosophy, introspection, and contemplation to integrate them in a comprehensive integration adequate to the many dimensions of human experience and human nature....Any valid epistemology (way of acquiring knowledge) is welcome. (Walsh and Vaughn, 1993a, p. 5)

**1-2-3 of consciousness studies.** Not merely eclectic, but broadly integrative, transpersonal research methods allow equal inclusion of subjective (1<sup>st</sup>-person), intersubjective (2<sup>nd</sup>-person) and objective (3<sup>rd</sup>-person) points of view to understand the full spectrum of exceptional human experiences and transformative capacities (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Hart, Nelson, & Puhakka, 2000; Wilber, 2000a). It systematically attempts to include and integrate the enduring insights of premodern religion, modern psychological science, and constructive postmodern philosophy in its investigations of transpersonal phenomena (de Quincey, 2002; Ferrer, 2002; Griffin, 1988, 1997; Murphy, 1992).



**Balance of quantitative and qualitative methods used.** Quantitative and qualitative research methods and diverse data sources are combined and blended to obtain a comprehensive, rich, broadly textured description and analysis of the multi-leveled complexity and dynamic nature of transpersonal phenomena. Transpersonal psychology examines so-called “occult” and “paranormal” topics not only within the context of traditional research designs, hypothesis testing, and quantitative and qualitative analysis of data, but also uses expanded methods of disciplined inquiry (e.g., integrated quantitative and qualitative inquiry, hermeneutic- phenomenological research methods) to explore these “farther reaches of human nature” (Maslow’s phrase).



**Transpersonal research methods avoid committing a “category mistake.”** Including the best of modern scientific research from all major approaches to the contemporary study of psychology (from biological to behavioral to psychometric to social-cultural to cognitive to psychodynamic to phenomenological), transpersonal psychology does not commit the “category mistake” (Ryle, 1949) of *reducing* all psychological and spiritual realities to aspects of the material world, or reduce all interior phenomenological, cognitive, cultural, and psychodynamic actions and events to their exterior biological, behavioral, social, and psychometric correlates (Wilber, 1990). Transpersonal psychology insists that all the diverse approaches are important, possessing true, but partial insights into the nature of body, mind, and spirit and offers a framework in which the various perspectives work together instead of in opposition (see, for example, Wilber, 2000a).



### 5. Transpersonal Psychology Does Not Limit Itself to a Particular Domain.

Transpersonal theory and practice has expanded beyond its foundation discipline of psychology to become a multi-disciplinary “movement” and “vision” that encompasses a variety of academic disciplines, which focus beyond the individual personality to include transpersonal issues related to society, culture, economics, politics, anthropology, the environment, and the cosmos (e.g., militarism, social justice, ecological devastation, consumerism).

As the field has matured, a more general study of the common boundary between spirituality and psychology has expanded to include the shared affinities between “the transpersonal” and an increasingly wide spectrum of professional endeavors, including anthropology, sociology, medicine; and especially immunology, parapsychology, consciousness studies, philosophy, religion, Yoga, the creative arts, and a variety of body work and healing practices....Through time, transpersonal psychology (and more generally, transpersonal studies) has become a more generously inclusive field, both assenting to the many contributions of psychoanalytic, humanistic, and behavioral inquiry within psychology and drawing on the strengths of other related disciplines as it endeavors to further understand the expansive potential of human experience. (Braud & Anderson, 1998, pp. xxi-xxii)

Transpersonal studies incorporate knowledge from diverse academic fields such as art and music, biology and ecology, business and education, philosophy and religious studies, social and behavioral sciences into its theories and research practices in order to provide a more comprehensive perspective concerning the varieties, causes, and effects of transpersonal phenomena than could occur from a single perspective alone (Scotton, Chinen, & Battista, 1996; Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a).



### Section Summary

1. Six major approaches are used by transpersonal psychologists to look at topics within transpersonal psychology. The first five perspectives (biological, environmental, cognitive, psychodynamic, phenomenological) represent common approaches used in contemporary mainstream psychology. The sixth perspective (integral) is unique to transpersonal psychology and arguably represents the field’s most important contribution to the contemporary study of psychology. Given the multidisciplinary character of transpersonal studies, a broadly integrative approach that spans multiple perspectives is commonly used among transpersonal psychologists.
2. A continuum of theoretical orientations guide transpersonal inquiry and inform interpretation of research data, including the perennial philosophy, the Great Chain of Being, altered states of consciousness, spiral-dynamic, and structural-hierarchical. What theoretical orientation is essential to transpersonal inquiry is a matter of health debate. At one end of the continuum is the Perennial Philosophy that is primarily concerned with single divine Reality that is the source of all life, mind, and consciousness. At the other end of the continuum is the Western Creed that is based on the philosophies of positivism, materialism, mechanism, and reductionism.
3. Contemporary perspectives in transpersonal psychology do not exclude the personal ego, do not limit the type of expansion of identity possible, do not limit themselves to any particular philosophy or worldview, do not limit research to a particular method, and do not limit human inquiry to a particular domain.



# How Is Transpersonal Research Conducted?



**Transpersonal Research Methods**

Transpersonal psychology does not limit research to a particular method. Conventional quantitative and qualitative research methods usually applied to the study of everyday human experience and behavior are equally applicable to the study of transpersonal topics, including:

- Historical and Archival Approaches
- Descriptive Approaches
  - Phenomenological Approach
  - Heuristic Research
  - Experiential Research Method
  - Cooperative Inquiry
  - Participatory Research
  - Content Analysis, Textual Analysis, and Hermeneutics
  - Narrative and Discourse Analysis
  - Feminist Approaches
- Developmental Approach
- Case Studies and Life Stories
- Naturalistic and Field Studies
- Correlational Approaches
  - Interviews, Questionnaires, and Surveys
  - Causal-Comparative Studies

- Experimental Designs
  - True Experimental Designs
  - Quasi-Experimental Designs
  - Single-Subject Designs
- Parapsychological Assessment and Design Issues
- Action Research
- Theory-Building Approaches
  - Meta-Analysis
- Behavioral & Physiological Assessments
- Integral Inquiry
- Intuitive Inquiry
- Organic Research
- Transpersonal-Phenomenological Inquiry
- Inquiry Informed by Exceptional Human Experience

**Figure 4-1. Transpersonal Research Methods**

**Figure 4-1** describes each research method in more detail and presents at least one reference study that illustrates its use. William Braud (Braud & Anderson, 1998), Research Director of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology describes the aims of transpersonal research methods for the social sciences in the following way:

The methods are intended primarily for studying extraordinary or ultimate human experiences, such as unitive consciousness, peak experiences, transcendence, bliss, wonder, group synergy, and extrasensory and interspecies awareness... Transpersonal approaches expand the usual dimensions for studying human experience by directly employing alternative modes of awareness and intuition in the conduct of research. (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p.ix)

### Figure 4-1. Varieties of Transpersonal Research Methods

(Braud & Anderson, 1998)

- **Historical and Archival Approaches** – Archival data are obtained by inspecting the records and documents produced by a society recounting the activities of individuals, institutions, governments, and other groups to check the validity of other measures, as a part of multimodal approaches to test the external validity of laboratory findings, to test hypotheses about previous behavior, or assess the effect of a natural treatment (i.e., naturally occurring events that have a significant impact on society at large or on particular individuals (e.g., Murphy, 1980; O’Reagan & Hirshberg, 1993; Ryan, 1998a).
- **Descriptive Approaches** – To describe systematically, factually, and accurately a situation or area of interest.
  - **Phenomenological Approach** - Aims at developing a complete, clear, accurate description and understanding of a particular human experience or experiential moment (Gifford-May & Thompson, 1994; Kornfield, 1979; Patrik, 1994; Peters, 1989; VanderKooi, 1997).
  - **Phenomenological Mapping** – Categorize and compare transpersonal experiences (e.g., shamanism, meditation, yoga) on multiple experiential dimensions (e.g., cognitive control, awareness of the environment, concentration, arousal, emotion, self-sense, content of experience) to differentiate qualities of experiences and behavioral characteristics (e.g., Carr, 1993; Walsh, 1993).
  - **Heuristic Research** – Understand an experience from all possible perspectives by an intensive self-engagement and immersion into the phenomenon, drawing upon the reports of others, insights from novels and poetry, dreams and other states of consciousness (e.g., Moustakas, 1990).
  - **Experiential Research Method** - Research participants write about an experience they are currently living or re-living using the first-person, present tense, using a number of related experiences to discover similarities and commonalities in the inner qualities of the experience (Casey, 1976; Walsh, 1977, 1978).
  - **Cooperative Inquiry** - Research participants are co-researchers and co-participants with the researcher who participate in all aspects of the research project - its focus, design, conduct, and interpretation of results (Reason & Heron, 1995).
  - **Participatory Research** – The researcher identifies thoroughly with the object of inquiry, employing compassionate and empathic consciousness, indwelling, meditating on the form of the other, tuning into the uniqueness of the phenomena being studied (Peters, 1981; Skolimowski, 1994).
  - **Content Analysis, Textual Analysis, and Hermeneutics** – Involves systematic identification of predetermined categories within a text, a careful analysis of the structure of implicit meanings within a record of human action for purposes of explicating the meaning of the text (Chinen, 1985, 1986; Gross & Shapiro, 1996; Weimer & Lu, 1987).
  - **Deep Structural Analysis** – By focusing on the similarities and ignoring the differences among different experiences, a common “deep structure” is posited to exist across the diverse experiences that are theorized to be responsible for the similarity among the experiences (e.g., Wilber, 1980, 1984).

### Figure 4-1. Varieties of Transpersonal Research Methods

(Braud & Anderson, 1998)

- **Narrative and Discourse Analysis** – Tries to tell the story or narrative as the participants or community of believers would tell the story, including an analysis of semantic, linguistic, or textual structure (Steele, 1993).
- **Developmental Approach** – Investigate patterns and sequences of growth and/or change as a function of time (Doblin, 1991; Dubs, 1987).
- **Case Studies** – Study intensively the background, current status, and environmental interactions of a given social unit, be it an individual, group, institution, or community (e.g., Carlat, 1989; Deatherage, 1975; Gackenbach, Moorecroft, Alexander, & LeBerge, 1987; J. J. Miller, 1993; Ossoff, 1993; Urbanowski & Miller, 1996; Waldman, 1992; Waldron, 1998).
- **Life Stories** - Typically gathered through a series of oral reports, analyzed to find important themes or to find unique features of the life (Diaz & Sawatzky, 1995).
- **Naturalistic and Field Studies** – Observe behavior in a more or less natural setting, without any attempt by the observer to intervene in order to describe behavior as it ordinarily occurs and to investigate the relationship among variables that are present (e.g., Katz, 1973; Langford, 1980).
- **Correlational Approaches** – Investigate the extent to which variations in one factor correspond with variations in one or more factors, usually based on correlation coefficients (Knoblauch & Falconer, 1986; Meadow & Culligan, 1987; Thomas & Copper, 1980).
- **Interviews, Questionnaires, and Surveys** – Assess more directly the nature of people’s thoughts, opinions, and feelings about a transpersonal experience. (e.g., Hughes, 1992; Jamnien & Ohayv, 1980; MacDonald, LeClair, Holland, Alter, & Friedman, 1995; Maquet, 1975; Page, Weiss, Stowers Wright, et al., 1997; Puhakka, 1998; Ryan, 1998b; Thomas & Cooper, 1980).
- **Causal-Comparative Studies** – Investigate possible cause-and-effect relationships by observing some existing consequence and searching back through the data for plausible causal factors (Brown & Engler, 1980; Greyson, 1993; Shapiro, 1992; Tart, 1991).
- **Experimental Designs** – Investigate possible cause-and-effect relationships by exposing one or more experimental groups to one or more treatment conditions and comparing the results to one or more control groups not receiving the treatment (random assignment being essential).
- **Quasi-Experimental Designs** – Approximate the conditions of a true experiment in a setting which does not allow the control and/or manipulation of all relevant variables. The researcher must clearly understand what compromises exist in the internal and external validity of his design and proceed within these limitations (Haimerl & Valentine, 2001; Kohr, 1977; Lu & Heming, 1987; Osis, Bokert, & Carlson, 1973; Thapa & Murthy, 1985).
- **Single-Subject Designs** – Focuses on the behavior change of a single individual in which (unlike case studies) contrast conditions are being systematically controlled and monitored (Hersen & Barlow, 1976).



**Figure 4-1. Varieties of Transpersonal Research Methods**  
(Braud & Anderson, 1998)

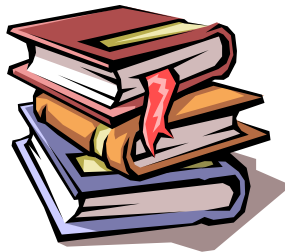
- **Parapsychological Assessment and Design Issues** – Investigate non-sensory based information transfer, and action-at-a distance phenomenon (Irwin, 1989; Rao, 2001)
- **Action Research** – Develop new skills or new approaches to solve problems with direct application to an applied setting (Dubin, 1994; Murdock, 1978).
- **Theory-Building Approach** – Develop theories, models, and conceptualizations that attempt to integrate sets of findings or explain various transpersonal phenomena or processes, integrates and interrelates previously unrelated findings, permitting a theory to emerge directly from the data and be grounded in the data (Boals, 1978; Leone, 1995; Tart, 1995; M. C. Washburn, 1978; Wilber, 2000a).
- **Meta-Analysis** – A statistical tool for combining statistical information across studies to obtain an estimate of effect size and chance outcomes and to compare effects between studies in order to better understand moderating factors (e.g., Honorton & Ferrari, 1989; Nelson & Radin, 2001).
- **Behavioral and Physiological Assessments** - Specialized methods and instrumentation are used for measurement to identify behavioral or physiological correlates of a transpersonal experience (Earle, 1981; Echenhofer & Coombs, 1987; Greyson, 2000; Hughes & Melville, 1990; Murphy & Donovan, 1997).

**TRANSPERSONAL APPROACHES TO RESEARCH**

- **Integral Inquiry** – An array of research methods are used to describe as fully as possible the phenomena, explain the phenomenon historically or theoretically, identify causal factors for the emergence of the phenomena, and consequences on the life of the participant (Braud & Anderson, 1998, pp. 256-258; Wilber, 2000a).
- **Intuitive Inquiry** – Using intuition, empathy and altered states of consciousness as core methods of inquiry, the researcher collects data from a wide variety of sources (e.g., Anderson, 1996; Braud, 2001).
- **Organic Research** – Inviting, listening to, and presenting individual participants' stories about important aspects of their lives, using the participants' own voices and words as much as possible, recorded and reported in the researcher's own voice as well, whose goal is personal transformation of the reader of the study (Anderson, 2001; Ring & Valarino, 1998).
- **Transpersonal-Phenomenological Inquiry** – Explore transpersonal awareness when it presents itself in awareness, and the experience is explored using empirical phenomenological research method (e.g., Valle and Mohs, 1998).
- **Inquiry Informed by Exceptional Human Experiences** – Emphasizes the tacit knowing and other forms of personal knowledge of the researcher to exceptional human experiences (i.e., unitive and mystical, paranormal, death-related experiences) that are studied for their own sake (e.g., Palmer & Braud, 2002; Wren-Lewis, 1994).

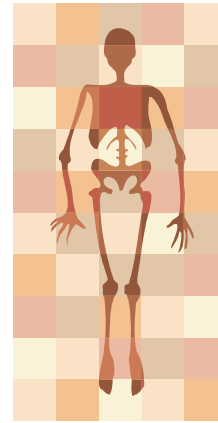
**“Separateness science” and “wholeness science” compared.** Braud and Anderson (1998, Chapter 1) explain how the conventional view of “separateness science” and the expanded view of “wholeness science” usually have different assumptions about what constitutes legitimate content domains, valid types of research demonstrations, and the kinds of explanations that are appropriate for scientific knowledge. Braud & Anderson (1998) maintain that quantitative and qualitative research methods appropriate for scientific knowledge under the conventional view of “separateness sciences” are *equally applicable* to the study of transpersonal topics. New methods of human inquiry that are appropriate for scientific knowledge under the expanded view of “wholeness science” (e.g., direct knowing, dream and imagery work, meditation, creative expression, storytelling, and intuition), however, may “better suit the ideographic and personal nature of transpersonal experiences...and that become as creative and expansive as the subject matter we wish to investigate” (Braud & Anderson, 1998, pp. x, 4).

Let’s examine several of these research methods in more detail to illustrate how they have been applied to the study of transpersonal human experiences and behaviors.



**Historical and Archival Approaches**

**Spontaneous Remissions.** Spontaneous remission refers to “the disappearance, complete or incomplete, of a disease or cancer without medical treatment or with treatment that is considered inadequate to produce the resulting disappearance of disease symptoms or tumor” (O’Regan & Hirshberg, 1993, p. 2). Although some psychologists and physicians may argue that spontaneous remissions do not really occur but are the result of a mistaken diagnosis of the individual’s condition and that the person never really had the disease in the first place, or simply reflect a temporary abatement in the natural history of a disease that will inevitably reoccur, best evidence indicates that spontaneous remission is a genuine phenomenon.



**Noetic Science’s Remission Project.** Brendan O’Regan and Caryle Hirshberg (1993) as a part of the Institute of Noetic Science’s *The Inner Mechanisms of the Healing Response Program* and *The Remission Project* have assembled “the largest database of medically reported cases of spontaneous remission in the world, with more than 3,500 references, from more than 800 journals in 20 different languages” (p.3). The collection of abstracts of research reports of remission reported in their 1993 book, *Spontaneous Remission: An Annotated Bibliography* indicate that extraordinary forms of healing are widespread and occur for practically all medically known diseases, including:

- Cancers
- Infectious and parasitic diseases
- Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases
- Immunity disorders
- Diseases of the circulatory system, blood and blood forming organs
- Disorders of nervous system and sense organs
- Respiratory and digestive system disorders
- Disorders of genitourinary system
- Pregnancy and childbirth-related disorders
- Diseases of the skin
- Subcutaneous and connective tissue diseases
- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Injury-related disorders

**Biological correlates of spontaneous remission.** Interestingly, O’Regan & Hirshberg’s (1993, pp. 11-39) collection of research reports indicates that spontaneous remissions have been observed to occur with no medical intervention at all, but following a complex range of events one would not expect to cure the person at all, including:

- Diagnostic biopsy procedures
- Bacterial skin infections
- Wound infections
- Hypoglycemic coma
- Hemorrhage
- Menopause
- Smallpox infection
- Typhoid fever
- Pneumonia
- Heat (fever)
- Hepatitis
- Hysterectomy
- Cauterization
- Inflammation
- Pregnancy
- Abortion
- Incomplete operations

**Influence-at-a-distance effects in remission.** One of the more intriguing observations reported in O'Regan & Hershberg's 1993 collection of remission research articles is that in some cases when the organ that was the primary site of cancer was surgically removed (and the largest category of spontaneous remissions involve cancer), the other organs to which the cancer had spread ("metastases") would frequently heal. In other cases, when a simple needle biopsy procedure of the primary cancer site occurred (i.e., there was no surgery to remove the cancer), secondary metastases would disappear. "Biopsy can be part of the process of inducing remission somehow. When you intervene in one area, it sets up a process which can help in another" (O'Regan, 1991, p. 50).

**Psychological and spiritual correlates of spontaneous remission.** O'Regan & Hirshberg's (1993, p. 45) collection of research abstracts indicates that remissions occur in conjunction with a host of psychological and spiritual factors that correlate with and appear to promote the occurrence of remission including:

- Group support
- Hypnosis/suggestion
- Meditation/Relaxation techniques
- Mental imagery
- Psychotherapy/behavioral therapy
- Prayer/spiritual belief
- Religious/spiritual conversion

- Sense of purpose
- Placebo effect
- Diet/exercise
- Autonomous behavior/increased autonomy
- Faith/positive outcome expectancy
- Fighting spirit/Denial
- Lifestyle/attitude/behavioral (changes)
- Interpersonal relationship changes
- Positive emotions/acceptance of negative emotions
- Environmental/social awareness/altruism
- Expression of needs
- Sense of control/internal locus of control
- Desire/will to live
- Increased or altered sensory perception
- Taking responsibility for illness

**Clues to the transpersonal nature of the body.** The rare, spectacular and understudied demonstrations of self-healing processes known as *spontaneous remissions* persist in the annals of medicine and provide important clues to understanding the innate healing potentials and transpersonal nature of the physical body



**Descriptive Approaches**

**Deep Structural Analysis.** Ken Wilber (1977, 1980; Wilber, Engler, & Brown, 1986) has pioneered the use of the transpersonal research method called "deep structural analysis." In this method, similarities among transpersonal experiences are focused upon and differences are ignored. The common experiential qualities are theorized to constitute "deep structural" elements responsible for the underlying similarities that unite or connect the different experiences. The "deep structural elements" are then clustered and organized into a developmental sequence that provides an overarching theory of their function and relationships. Using this technique, Wilber has been able to organize and systematize a vast number of different states of consciousness into a relatively few number of deep structures.

**How deep structural analysis works: An example.**

The shaman seeing power animals, the Christian contemplative envisioning angels, and the Hindu practitioner merging with her *Isha deva* are all clearly having different experiences. Yet at a deep structural level they are all seeing archetypal spiritual figures. (Walsh, 1993, p. 127) In this case, seeing “archetypal spiritual figures” is a reflection of a common structural element underlying the specific forms that all mental phenomena in a particular state of consciousness may take. It is the deep structural element that defines what, in this instance, Wilber (1980) refers to as the “subtle stage of consciousness.” In this stage of consciousness, all mental phenomena may take the specific form of archetypal spiritual figures. Different stages of consciousness each have their own corresponding deep structures that are responsible for generating the common phenomena experienced while in that stage of consciousness.

**Transpersonal structures of consciousness beyond formal operations.** Using this technique, Wilber has identified a small number of deep structures underlying different states of consciousness beyond Piagetian formal operations and has *ordered and stratified* them into a developmental sequence consisting of three transpersonal stages he calls “subtle” (in which archetypal figures arise into awareness), “causal” (in which no objects or images arise into awareness), and “absolute” (in which all phenomena are understood to be creations of consciousness).



**Case Studies and Life Stories**

Miraculous Cures at Lourdes. Another source of evidence for the hypothesis of the transpersonal nature of the physical body is found in instances of so-called “miraculous” cures. Miracle cures are defined as “the sudden, permanent, and complete cure of a long-lasting condition of a more or less organic in nature for which no adequate treatment can be held responsible” (Van Kalmthout, 1985, p. 1).



**Miraculous remissions differ from spontaneous remissions.** “Miraculous” remissions differ from pure remissions (or regressions) by their time course and the definitiveness of the cure. Whereas “miraculous” remissions are sudden, total, permanent, and inexplicable, spontaneous remissions tend to be gradual and temporary. Despite these temporal and curative differences, miraculous healings, such as those carefully documented by the Roman Catholic Church, appear to involve some of the same psychoneuroimmunological pathways as placebo effects and spontaneous remissions (Ader, Felten, & Cohen, 2000).

**Rules of evidence for miracle cures.** Originally formulated in 1735 by Cardinal Lambertini (afterwards Pope Benedict 14th), five sets of criteria must be satisfied in order for a healing to be considered a “miraculous cure” by the Roman Catholic Church (Dowling, 1984, p. 634):

- The disease must be serious, incurable or unlikely to respond to treatment.
- The cure must be sudden and reached instantaneously (or developed over a period of days). The disease that disappeared must not have reached a stage at which it would have resolved by itself. No medication should have been given, or if some medicines were prescribed then they must have had only unimportant effects (or potentially curative treatments can be demonstrated to have failed).
- The cure must be complete, not partial or incomplete.
- All claims for a miracle cure have to pass through the procedures of an International Medical Commission.

**Figure 4-2** describes the procedures of the International Medical Commission by which all claims of cures are scrutinized before they can be declared to be miraculous by the Roman Catholic Church. They are among the most rigorous in science.

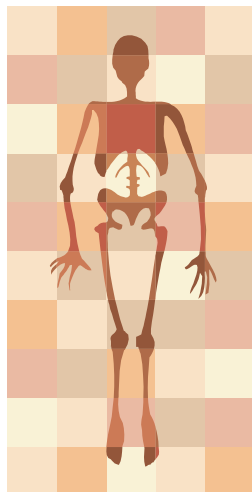
**Figure 4-2. Miracle Cures and Their Medical and Ecclesiastical Assessment**

**Only 64 of 6,000 claims recognized as “miracles.”**  
 Lourdes, France has been the site of cures and healings ever since 1858 when three children saw a vision of the Virgin Mary. In 1954 a medical commission was established to scientifically verify the occurrence of reported cures that have resulted from drinking or bathing in the waters that flow from an underground spring there. Of the 6,000 claims of miraculous cures that have been evaluated by the International Medical Committee of Lourdes, only 64 have been identified as medically inexplicable and officially recognized as “miracles” by the Roman Catholic Church.

**Figure 4-3** illustrates the range of organic disorders that have been cured at the famous shrine or by waters taken from its springs.

**Figure 4-3. Case Studies of Healing at Lourdes**

Can faith reconstruct decaying bone? Apparently so. A remarkable case of reconstruction of the hip bone and cavity in the hip that had disintegrated as a result of a malignant sarcoma was documented by the Commission in 1972, a cure that is considered impossible from the viewpoint of current medical science (Salmon, 1972).



**The remarkable case of Vittorio Michelli.** In 1962 Vittorio Michelli was admitted to the hospital in Verona, Italy with cancer of the bone and within 10 months the cancerous tumor had entirely eaten away his hip bone to such a degree that his left leg was only attached to his body by soft tissue and skin. As a last resort, with his leg in a plaster cast to keep it in place, he traveled to Lourdes and while bathing in the waters at Lourdes, immediately felt a heat permeate his body. Heat, generated as a result of the body’s activity being quickened, is characteristic of many, if not most, of Lourdes healing experiences. Soon afterwards his appetite and energy returned, and subsequent X-rays disclosed that the tumor had grown smaller until it eventually disappeared and the bone of his hip actually began to regenerate. Within months Vittorio was walking again and by 1965 his hip joint had completely reconstructed itself, an event unknown in the annals of medical science. The remarkable pelvis reconstruction represented a permanent cure as verified by subsequent X-rays in 1968 and 1969 – an event unparalleled in the history of modern medicine.

**A medical explanation is sought but not found.** According to the official report of the Medical Commission:

Definitely a medical explanation of the cure of sarcoma from which Michelli suffered was sought and none could be found. He did not undergo specific treatment, did not suffer from any susceptible recurrent infection that might have had any influence on the evolution of the cancer. A completely destroyed articulation was completely reconstructed without any surgical intervention. The lower limb which was useless became sound, the prognosis is indisputable, the patient is alive and in a flourishing state of health nine years after his return from Lourdes. (quoted in O’Regan, 1991, p. 51)

**Documented cures at Lourdes.** Michael Murphy in his 1992 book *The Future of the Body: Explorations into the Future Evolution of Human Nature* identifies the range of maladies for which complete remissions have been documented as cures at Lourdes, including:

- Ulcers on hands, feet and legs with extensive gangrene
- Anterolateral spinal sclerosis (motor disorder of the nervous system)

#### **Figure 4-2. Miracle Cures and Their Medical and Ecclesiastical Assessment**

(Dowling, 1984, pp. 635-636)

“At present there are 25 members of the Commission: thirteen French, two Italian, two Belgian, two English, two Irish, one each from Spain, Holland, Scotland and Germany. Then they have a wide spread of specialties. Four each from general medicine and surgery, three from orthopedics, two each from general psychiatry, neuropsychiatry, dermatology, ophthalmology, pediatrics, cardiology, oncology, neurology and biochemistry. Ten members hold chairs in their medical schools. All are practicing Catholics. Many are doctors who come regularly to Lourdes as pilgrimage medical officers, but some have little or no connection with the shrine.

“If, after the initial scrutiny and follow-up, the Medical Bureau thinks that there is good evidence of an inexplicable cure, the dossier [on the cure] is sent to the International Medical Commission which usually meets once a year in Paris. The preliminary investigation of the data is made, and if the members agree that the case is worth investigating, they appoint one or two of their members to act as rapporteur. The rapporteur then makes a thorough study of the case, usually seeing the patient himself [or herself], and presents the material in a detailed written dossier circulated to the members before the meeting at which they will make their decision.

“The report is then discussed critically, at length, under 18 headings, a vote being taken at each stage. In the first three stages, the Committee considers the diagnosis and has to satisfy itself that a correct diagnosis has been made and proven by the production of the results of full physical examination, laboratory investigations, x-ray studies and endoscopy and biopsy where applicable: failure at this stage is commonly because of inadequate investigation or missing documents. At the next two stages, the Committee must be satisfied that the disease was organic and serious without any significant degree of psychological overlay.

“Next it must make sure that the natural history of the disease precludes the possibility of spontaneous remission. The medical treatment given cannot have affected the cure...Then the evidence that the patient has indeed been cured is scrutinized and the Committee must be satisfied that both objective and subjective symptoms have disappeared and that investigations are normal. The suddenness and completeness of the cure are considered together with any sequelae. Finally, the adequacy of the length of follow-up is considered. After this detailed study, the question, ‘Does the cure of this person constitute a phenomenon which is contrary to the observation and expectations of medical knowledge and scientifically inexplicable?’ is put. A simple majority carries the case one way or the other.

“The declaration by the [International Committee] does not make it a miracle because that is a matter for the Church, not doctors. The verdict is sent to the patient’s bishop and if he thinks fit he appoints a Canonical Commission with its own medical advisors. If it reports favorably and the bishop accepts the report, he issues a decree declaring the case to be a miracle.

### **Figure 4-3. Case Studies of Healing at Lourdes**

(Garner, 1974; Murphy, 1992, pp. 269-271; O'Regan, 1991, p. 51;  
O'Regan & Hirshberg, 1993, pp. 547-548)

*Gerard Bailie*, born with normal vision, in 1943 at the age of two and a half, developed bilateral chorioretinitis and double optic atrophy - a normally incurable inflammation of the choroid tissue and retina of the eye, resulting in the reduction of blood supply and a wasting away of the optic nerve - and lost his sight entirely as a result of an unsuccessful surgical operation. Four years later, Bailie's sight was completely restored during a visit to Lourdes. The Members of the International Medical Commission confirmed that Bailie's previously atrophied optic nerves had been completely restored in size and that he could now see objects clearly.

*Delizia Cirolli* in 1976 at the age of 12 was diagnosed with a case of Ewing's sarcoma in her right knee - a malignant tumor of the bone that produces painful swelling in the tissue of the knee -. Refusing the advice of the surgeon to have her leg amputated, Delizia's parents took her to Lourdes where she spent four days attending the ceremonies, praying at the Grotto, and bathing in the waters. There was no improvement and X rays taken the following month showed a spreading of the malignant tumor. As family and friends prepared for her funeral, they prayed to the Virgin Mary for a cure and Delizia's mother regularly gave her Lourdes water to drink. Three months later, the malignant tumor had vanished, and subsequent X-rays showed repair of the bone that had metastasized. The Members of the International Medical Commission confirmed that Ewing's tumor had been the correct diagnosis and in 1982 declared that the cure was scientifically inexplicable.

*Francis Pascal* in 1937 at the age of three contracted meningitis - an inflammation of the membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord - that caused loss of sight and partial paralysis. One year later, Pascal was brought to Lourdes and, after two immersions in the waters that flow from an underground spring there, was instantly cured of his blindness and paralysis. Members of the International Medical Commission confirmed that Pascal's previous blindness and paralysis had been organic, not functional., and that his cure was authentic. The cure was pronounced to be miraculous by the archbishop of Aix-en-Provence in 1949.

*Serge Perrin* in 1970 developed organic hemiplegia with ocular lesions - a paralysis of one side of the body caused by a brain lesion with loss of sight caused by cerebral circulatory defects. After praying at the Grotto and bathing in the water, Perrin was suddenly and completely cured of his afflictions, regaining motor movement and restoration of his sight. The Members of the International Medical Commission confirmed the original diagnosis and deemed the cure scientifically inexplicable.

- Tuberculosis (inflammation of the lungs)
- Peritonitis (the inflammation of the walls of the abdomen caused by inflammation of abdominal organs, perforated gallbladder, ruptured cyst, internal bleeding)
- Leg and abdominal tumors (a swelling caused by uncontrolled and progressive new growth of tissue)
- Dorsolumbar spondylitis (a degenerative change in the spine)
- Blindness of cerebral origin
- Bilateral optic atrophy (a wasting away of the optic nerve resulting in loss of vision and permanent blind spot in the center of the visual field)
- Multiple sclerosis (the demyelization of the white matter of the brain and spinal cord resulting in paralysis)
- Sarcoma of the pelvis (cancer of the hip)
- Budd-Chiari syndrome (a circulatory system disorder involving closure or obstruction of blood vessels to the liver) (Murphy, 1992, p. 271).

**Alex Carrel's voyage to Lourdes.** One of the most evocative accounts of spiritual healing that occurred at Lourdes is described by Dr. Alex Carrel in his 1903 book *Voyage to Lourdes* (Carrel, 1950). Dr. Carrel was a rationalist, a skeptic and a Nobel Laureate in medicine who, during a train trip to Lourdes, decided to personally observe a young woman named Marie Bailly whom he met on the train. On the verge of death and suffering from the last stages of tubercular peritonitis (inflammation of the lining of the walls of the abdominal and pelvic cavities), Dr. Carrel watched Marie slowly heal right before his eyes after only a few hours in the Grotto where Bernadette is reported to have seen her vision of the Virgin Mary. As a result of his experience at Lourdes, Carrel came away convinced that many of the cures at Lourdes were indeed authentic and could not solely be attributed to the power of suggestion or to the relief of mere functional (psychosomatic) disorders. Although he found it "distressingly unpleasant to be personally involved in a miracle," he declared that "to say something is not true without having first investigated the facts is to commit a grave scientific error... it is also the duty of science not to reject things simply because they appear extraordinary or because science is powerless to explain them... The only thing that matters is to look at the facts" (Carrel, 1950, pp. 50-51).



**Birthmarks Suggestive of Reincarnation.** In his two-volume, 2,080-page monograph titled *Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects*, Ian Stevenson (1997a), professor of psychiatry and director of the Division of Personality Studies at the Health Sciences Center at the University of Virginia, reports on 225 highly detailed case studies correlating birthmarks and other physiological manifestations (e.g., birth defect) with children's experiences of remembered past life events, particularly violent death. A concise 240-page summary (including photographs) of 112 of those cases is provided by Stevenson in his book *Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect* (Stevenson, 1997b).

**Why birthmark evidence is important to the case for reincarnation.** Stevenson has collected over 2,600 reported cases of past-life memories of which 85 detailed reports have been published. Children who claim to remember a previous life have been found all over the world: many in Hindu and Buddhist countries of South Asia, Shiite peoples of Lebanon and Turkey, and indigenous tribes of West Africa and northwestern North America; fewer in Europe, the United States, and Canada. Stevenson (1997b) asserts that cases involving birthmarks (that differ noticeably from the kind of birthmark that almost everyone has) and birth defects are especially important for the following three reasons (pp.2-3):

1. *The birthmarks and birth defects provide an objective type of evidence well above that which depends on the fallible memories of informants.* "For many of the cases, we have a medical document, usually a port-mortem report, that gives us a written confirmation of the correspondence between the birthmark (or birth defect) and the wound on the deceased person whose life the child, when it can speak, will usually claim to remember" (Stevenson, 1997b, p. 2).



2. *The birthmarks and birth defects derive importance from the evidence they provide that a deceased personality – having survived death – may influence the form of a later-born baby.*
3. *The cases with birthmarks and birth defects provide a better explanation than any other now available [e.g., genetic factors, viral infections, chemicals, chance, postnatal environment] about why some persons have birth defects when most do not and for why some persons have birth defects have theirs in a particular location instead of elsewhere.*

**Key features of cases suggestive of reincarnation.**

Stevenson (1997b) describes how a case suggestive of reincarnation typically develops. A case may begin when a dying person expresses a wish to be reborn to a particular couple (prediction of rebirth), or when a person has a dream in which a deceased person appears and announces an intention to be reborn to particular parents (announcing dream). Shortly after the baby is born, its parents immediately notice the presence of a major birthmark. Soon after the child begins to speak, usually between the age of 2 and 4 years old, he or she speaks about a previous life, and continues to do so until he or she is about 5 to 8 years old, at which time the memories usually begin to fade away (or at least stops talking about them). Other key features that vary from one culture to another are noted by Stevenson (1997b, pp.5-9)

- **Emotional intensity of memories.** “Most of the children speak about the previous life with an intensity, even with strong emotion, that surprises the adults around them. Many of them do not at first distinguish past from present, and they may use the present tense in reference to the previous life” (p. 5).
- **Death recall /family recognition** “The content of what the child states nearly always includes some account of the death in the previous life. This is particularly true if the death was violent, but occurs also – less frequently – when it was natural. Beyond that, the child usually speaks about the family of the previous life” (p. 5).
- **Person recognition.** “If the child has given sufficient and adequately specific details, especially of proper names and places, it is usually possible to identify a deceased person the facts of whose life closely matches the child’s statements” (p. 6)

- **Object recognition.** “The child may also recognize spontaneously (or on request) various persons, objects, and places known to the previous personality” (p. 6).
- **Behavioral memory.** “The child displays unusual behavior... that is unusual for the child’s family, but harmonious with what can be known or conjectured about the person of whom the child speaks” (p. 7).
- **Phobias.** “Phobias, nearly always related to the mode of death in the previous life, occur in about 35% of the cases” (p. 7), often lasting into adulthood after the child can no longer remember memories of a prior life.
- **Phobias.** “Phobias take the form of a desire or demand for particular foods (not eaten in the subject’s family) or for clothes different from those customarily worn by the family members...also...cravings for addicting substances, such a tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs that the previous personality was known to have used” (p. 7), also often lasting into adulthood after memories of a previous life have faded.
- **Skills.** “A few subjects show skills that they have not been taught (or sufficiently watched others demonstrating, but which the previous personality was known to have had” (p. 7)
- **Sex-change types.** “In cases of what we call the ‘sex-change’ type, the child says it remembers a previous life as a person of the opposite sex. Such children almost invariably show traits of the sex of the claimed previous life. They cross-dress, play the games of the opposite sex, and may otherwise show attitudes characteristics of that sex” (p. 7).
- **Unusual behaviors.** “Particularly vivid examples of unusual behavior occur in subjects who claim to remember previous lives as natives of a country different from that of their parents” (e.g., Burmese children who claim to have been Japanese soldiers killed in Burma during World War II displaying traits typical of Japanese people but not Burmese people) (p. 8).
- **Nature of the death** “The deaths remembered by the children are predominantly violent. The overall percentage of violent deaths in the previous life is 51%... [This] percentage far exceeds those of violent death in the general population of the countries where the cases occur” (p. 8).

- **Persons connected with the death.** “The children often remember the other persons concerned in the death – usually murderers. The children often show strong animosities and attitudes of vengefulness toward these persons, especially if they happen to meet them. The animosity may generalize to other members of the same group” (p. 8).
- **Play activity.** “Many of the children express memories of the previous life in their play” (e.g., assuming the role during play activity of a school teacher or a garage mechanic whose life they remember)...A few children enact in their play the mode of death in the previous life” (e.g., play at drowning) (p. 8).
- **Interval between death and rebirth.** “The range in the median length of the interval between the previous personality’s death and the subject’s birth extends from only 4 months among the Haida of northwestern North America to 34 months among the Igbo of Nigeria” (p. 9).
- **Characteristics of birthmarks.** “Birthmarks differ from ordinary nevi in various ways...[especially] when we consider the cases of correspondences between two birthmarks and two wounds...Many of these (and other) birthmarks have unusual details in which they correspond to details of a relevant wound” (pp. 110-111).

**How a case is investigated.** When Stevenson investigates a case, he begins with an a series of interviews of the subject (i.e., the child if he or she will talk with him or who may be adult at the time of the interview), his or her parents, and other informed persons who can provide *firsthand* testimony about the subject’s statements and any unusual behavior (e.g., older siblings, grandparents, teachers). Birthmarks or birth defects are examined, sketched, and photographed. Written documents are obtained to provide exact records of dates (e.g., birth certificate, identity cards, diaries). Next the family of the claimed previous life is interviewed in a similar fashion who must be firsthand witnesses of what they describe and to ascertain any previous acquaintance between the two families or the possibility of some mutual acquaintance. In cases with birthmarks and birth defects, postmortem reports and other documents are obtained to establish the location of the wounds on the deceased person of the claimed previous life.

**Alternative explanations are ruled out.** After normal (and paranormal) explanations for the case are systematically evaluated and ruled out (e.g., mistaken identification of the deceased person, chance correspondence of wound with birthmark, presence of a similar birth mark or birth defect in the family, the two families had knowledge of or contact with each other before the case developed, the child shows ability for extrasensory perception of the magnitude necessary for obtaining their information in this way, informants’ descriptions of events are inaccurate, unusual behaviors or identity is imposed by the parents on the child to explain the birthmark, etc.), “the [indisputable] correspondence between wounds and birthmarks and the child’s correct statements about the life of the deceased person usually leave no doubt that the correct previous personality has been identified” (Stevenson, 1997b, p. 11).



**Sri Sathya Sai Baba.** Using a case study approach, Dr. Erlendur Haraldsson (1987), Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Iceland, uses extensive interviews of various witnesses supported by contemporary documents, dairies and letters to support the eyewitness testimony to investigate the transpersonal phenomena associated with the contemporary Hindu holy man (“baba”) and religious leader, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. According to Haraldsson, “Many of these alleged miracles, we are told, resembled those we read about in the New Testament, such as multiplication of food, ‘changing of water into wine,’ wondrous healings, and the reading of a person’s innermost thoughts at a first meeting” (p. 14).

Haraldsson (1987) attended celebrations at Puttaparti (India) where Sai Baba lives and recorded spontaneous conversations, gathered interview data, collected depictions of written accounts and narratives of stories of Sai Baba’s life, videotaped devotees and Sai Baba himself, gathered a focus group of devotees and ex-devotees together to share their understanding, analyzed personal experiences of other researchers of their direct encounters with Sai Baba, and shared and partook of experiences with devotees.



According to Karlis Osis, Research Fellow at the American Society for Psychical Research, who also investigated claims of Sai Baba's feats of materialization: "the stories of Baba's paranormal phenomena describe powers of a magnitude, variety, and sustained frequency not encountered anywhere else in the modern world" (quoted in Haraldsson, 1987, p. 9).

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba** (1926-present) was born in the small remote village of Puttaparti, in Southern India. With the name, Sathyanarayana Ratnakara Raju (a.k.a. Sathya Sai Baba). Sai Baba has been performing extraordinary feats of materializations ever since age 14 after recovering from a near fatal scorpion sting. Out-of-doors, in full daylight, and observed by literally thousands of witnesses including magicians, scientists, highly educated physicians, governors, judges, college professors, Sai Baba has materialized a range of materials including locket, pendants, rings, finely crafted jewelry, Indian delicacies and sweets, *vibuti* (sacramental ash), *amrith* (a honey-like substance) in vast quantities many times a day in various locations over the past 60 years without anyone ever detecting a hint of deceit, fraud, or trickery.

**Materializations of assorted objects "out of thin air."** Unlike the short-lived materializations attributed to the physical mediums of the 19th and early 20th century such as D. D. Home and Indridi Indridason, Sai Baba's materializations remain as solid objects, appearing out the swami's bare hand, except on the few occasions when he apparently caused them to disappear. Materialized objects have consisted of both inorganic (metal, stone) and organic (plant) material. They are produced invariably in full daylight or under normal lighting conditions.



Practically all who have met Baba believed they had observed materializations, and most had a locket or a ring of some kind they were proud to show us. Each treasure had reportedly appeared out the swami's bare hand, and he had made a present of it to them. These objects were varied and made of a range of materials, including gold and precious stones, some of the pieces being jewellery of exquisite quality. (Haraldsson, 1987, p. 29)

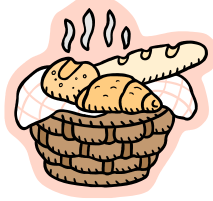
**The charisma of agility.** Some observers have witnessed Sai Baba controlling the rain, levitating, appearing to groups of people at two different places at the same time, and suddenly disappearing at one place and almost instantaneously at another. For instance, one witnessed reported the following incident:

As we were approaching the river and passing a hill on our right side, he (Baba) would sometimes suddenly disappear. He would, for example, snap his fingers and ask those around him to do the same. And hardly had we snapped our fingers when he vanished from amongst us and we could see him on top of the hill waiting for us. (Haraldsson, 1987, p. 258)



**Transformation of matter.** Baba has been observed in public and under well-lighted conditions to have changed water into sweet liquids, water into petrol, leaves or pebbles into toffees and locket, coffee into milk, sand into bronze figurines, pieces of granite into sugar-candy, and a stone into an apple. In one instance, a witness reported the following:

In full daylight at Horseley Hills, Baba gave me a rather flat stone of irregular size and asked me to throw it up in the air. I threw it high up, and he asked me to catch it when it came down. I was afraid the stone might hurt my hands. By the time I caught it, it was an apple. I gave the apple to Swami, who took a knife and cut it into pieces, and everyone got a piece of the size into which we normally cut apples. From this one apple he gave pieces to some 25 people. This was a medium-size apple; normally it might have sufficed for 8 to 10 people. (Haraldsson, 1987, p. 222)



**Multiplying food.** Witnesses report his multiplying food – both hot and cold, solid and fluid, homemade and even factory-produced - for large groups of people at a time. For instance,

Usually, after a *namkara* [a name-giving ceremony for a newborn baby], it is auspicious to distribute some sweets. After producing the pendant (a golden medallion with a chain given to the baby), Baba called my wife over, saying: “Let’s have some sweets.” He asked her to spread her palms to form a cup. Baba rubbed his palms together above hers and filled up both her hands with a powerlike sweet that we call crushed *ladus*. It took only a few seconds, and there was so much of it that it was pouring out of his hands like rain, making a mound perhaps half an inch higher than the upper part of her palms. Baba went around and distributed the sweet to the five or six people who were also present. There was enough for everyone, and a little more besides, so when he came to my wife, he told her: “See, a double share for you.” It tasted very good. (Haraldsson, 1987, p. 211)



**Action-at-a-distance.** Objects or materials inexplicably appear from Sai baba’s hands, forehead, mouth, and feet. There is also some evidence that objects appear at some distance from him (e.g., when he tells a person to pick an apple from a nearby tamarind tree and the individual finds an apple on a branch of that tree). Vibuti has appeared in distant places, such as on photographs of Sai Baba that hung on walls or that stand on tables in private homes, in some cases oozing out of the photo on and off for several months.



### **Transcendental Meditation and Continuous**

**Consciousness** The experience of “enlightenment” has been characterized in the mystical traditions of the East as involving a form of heightened awareness during both waking and sleeping states of consciousness.

Through advanced meditation practice, one can allegedly access so-called “pure consciousness” by developing a “witness” – a silently observing portion of the self that witnesses all other states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep) without trying to change them (see, for example, Deikman, 1982). Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of Transcendental Meditation (or TM) defined “cosmic consciousness” operationally as the ability to maintain pure consciousness throughout a 24-hour period of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep (Roth, 1987). Is such a state of consciousness fact or fiction?

**Meditation stabilizes awareness in sleep.** An advanced practitioner of Transcendental Meditation™ demonstrated enhanced awareness of dreams (called “lucid dreaming”) and the ability to the maintained heightened awareness in unbroken continuity throughout a twenty-four-hour cycle of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep (as operationalized by increasing EEG coherence across left and right hemispheres of the brain during both waking and dreaming states (Gackenbach, Moorecroft, Alexander, & LeBerge,, 1987).

Meditation serves to stabilize the experience of consciousness in sleep.... Meditation does contribute to the continuity of consciousness in sleep and helps to stabilize it Once an individual has reached this level, he or she may often or continually be an observer of him- or herself in the waking state. (Gackenbach & Bosveld, 1989, pp. 150-151)

**The Great Realization.** This state of consciousness is called “the Great Realization.” The lucidity that the subject brings into sleep causing her to “awaken” to the fact that she is dreaming is also brought into the waking state to cause her to “awaken” to the fact that her everyday waking experience is actually a dream (LeBerge, 1993).



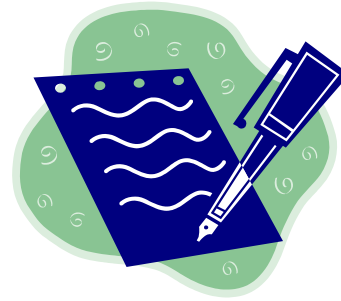
### Interviews, Questionnaires, and Surveys

**Measurement of stimulus-response variables.** A number of standardized, paper-and-pencil assessment instruments have been developed to measure transpersonal concepts for use in transpersonally-oriented research (see, for example, MacDonald, LeClair, Holland, Alter, & Friedman, 1995).

**Behavioral, physiological, psychological, sociological correlates.** While it is recognized that such measurement devices may not directly assess the nature of the transpersonal experience itself (which may be trans-verbal and beyond words or trans-rational and beyond logic), it may assess its behavioral, physiological, psychological (cognitive/ emotional) or sociological correlates, causes, effects, expressions, or outcomes of the experience.

**Questionnaires and surveys.** Questionnaires and surveys can be used to correlate the theoretical constructs of specific personality theories with particular type of transpersonal experience and self-concepts (e.g., MacDonald, Tsagarakis, & Holland, 1994). As MacDonald et al. (1995) state:

In light of the fact that there are language descriptors which have been developed to express aspects of transpersonal experience and identity (e.g., transcendental, mystical, spiritual, holy), as well as generally predictable behaviors (and behavior changes) associated with such experiences, it appears that it may be possible to develop measures of various expressions of transpersonal experience based on how the experiencers use language in describing their experience and/or in how they behaved before, during and/or after the experience. (MacDonald et al., 1995, p. 172-173)



As with all psychometric measurements in psychology, the assessment of transpersonal constructs/phenomenon face the problems of

- **reliability** (test-retest, internal consistency),
- **content validity** (adequately operationalizing the construct in terms of the behaviors and verbalizations that truly reflect the phenomenon/construct),
- **concurrent validity** (degree to which the test score is related to some other standard or criterion measure obtained at the same time),
- **predictive validity** (degree to which the test score predicts some other criterion measure),
- **construct validity** (adequately distinguishing between those who are known to have the experience and those who have not),
- **response bias** (i.e., adequately distinguishing between those who have had the experience and those who have not but who say they have) (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2002).

**Complement quantitative with with qualitative response measures.** McDonald et al. (1995) recommends that “alternative criteria (e.g., clinical judges) which aid in the reliable detection of test response bias/style...and...more qualitative research strategies, such as the phenomenological method...be utilized in conjunction with objective measures... in studying transpersonal states of consciousness” (p. 175).





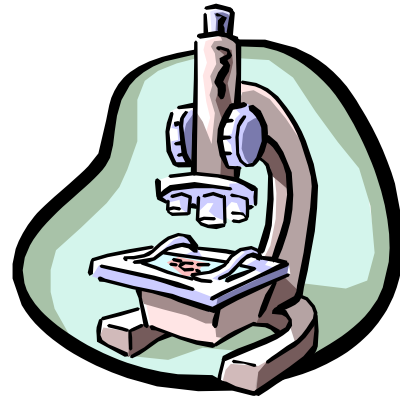
### Behavioral and Physiological Assessments

#### **Physiological Measurements of Experienced**

**Meditators.** Physiological assessments of experienced Buddhist meditators have demonstrated a capacity for heightened awareness (i.e., enhanced perceptual processing speeds and visual sensitivity) during the waking state compared with non-meditating control subjects as measured by detection and discrimination thresholds of tachistoscopic presented light flashes (Brown, Forte, & Dysart, 1984a, 1984b).

**Meditation enhances perceptual processing speed and visual sensitivity.** Brown, Forte, & Dysart (1984a, 1984b) summarize the design and results of their research in the following way.

Practitioners of the mindfulness form of Buddhist meditation were tested for visual sensitivity before and immediately after a three-month retreat during which they practiced mindfulness meditation for sixteen hours each day. A control group composed of the staff at the retreat center was similarly tested. Visual sensitivity was defined in two ways: by a detection threshold based on the duration of simple light flashes and a discrimination threshold based on the interval between successive simple light flashes. All light flashes were presented tachistoscopically and were of fixed luminance. After the retreat, practitioners could detect shorter single-light flashes and required a shorter interval to differentiate between successive flashes correctly. The control group did not change on either measure. Phenomenological reports indicate that mindfulness practice enables practitioners to become aware of some of the usually preattentive processes involved in visual detection. The results support the statements found in Buddhist texts on meditation concerning the changes in perception encountered during the practice of mindfulness. (Quoted in Murphy & Donovan, 1997, p. 82)



**Imagery Effects on White Blood Cells.** Transpersonal psychologist Jeanne Achterberg's (1985) book *Imagery in Healing* describes research demonstrating that mental imagery can be used to control very specific physiological processes, including the electrical activity of neurons and the number of particular types of white blood cells in the body that combat cancer (e.g., neutrophils or T-cells).

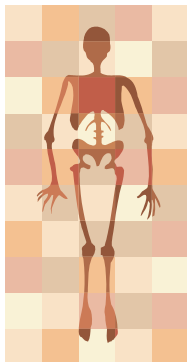
**Imagery in the laboratory.** In one study conducted at Michigan State University, eight male and eight female healthy medical and psychology students who believed they would be able to use their conscious mind to affect their immune system were selected for six training sessions in relaxation and the creative visualization of the shape, form and function of neutrophils as "garbage collectors that picked up trash and dumped it outside the body" (Achterberg, 1985, p. 200).

**Images are the language of the body.** Total white blood cell count for all 16 participants subsequently *decreased* significantly from pretest to posttest sessions ( $p < .0001$ ) with almost the entire drop in blood cell count attributable to a decrease in circulating neutrophils. The count for all other white blood cells remained the same. Achterberg (1985) concluded: "Images... are the language the body understands, particularly with regards to the autonomic or involuntary nervous system" (p. 99). As far as the body is concerned, there is no relevant difference between an *imagined* reality (as in placebo effect) and a purely physical one (active chemotherapy).

**Imagery and neutrophils.** In a follow-up study, a different group of participants were asked to imagine the neutrophils remaining in the body. Results showed that the average number of cells staying in the blood stream showed a significant *increase* compared to the first experimental group (58% vs. 28%). “Imagery appears to have a direct impact on the function of the neutrophils, at least for those who believe it will” (Achterberg, 1985, p. 201).

**Imagery predicts disease outcomes.** The correlation between mental imagery and disease state is so strong that imagery assessment (e.g., “Describe how your cancer cells look in your mind’s eye” and “How do you imagine your white blood cells fight disease?”) has successfully been used to predict who will die of cancer and who will go into remission. In a landmark collaborative study conducted by Simonton, Matthews-Simonton, Achterberg, and Lawlis (cited in Achterberg, 1985, pp. 183-192), 126 patients having Stage IV metastatic cancer completed a battery of psychological tests, including imagery assessment of patient’s drawings of themselves, their cancer, treatment, and immune system. Of all the factors founded to be predictive of future events (including the psychological factors of denial, locus of control, and negative self-investment), imagery was most predictive of future health status. Remarkably

the total [imagery] scores were found to predict with 100% certainty who would have either died or shown evidence of significant deterioration during the two-month period, and with 93% certainty who would be in remission...What the patients’ imaginations predicted were the dramatic changes that would occur within a short period of time. (Achterberg, 1985, p. 189)



### Experimental Designs

**Direct Mental Interactions with Living Systems.** The hypothesis that people have an ability to unconsciously detect and physiologically respond to distant mental influences is given support by the 37 experiments conducted by psychologist William Braud and anthropologist Marilyn Schlitz from 1974-1991. These experiments were comprised of 655 sessions with 449 individuals (human and non-human animals) as receivers and 153 individuals (humans) as senders (see Braud & Schlitz, 1989, 1991 and Braud, 2003, for summaries of these experiments on direct mental interactions with living systems). Braud (in Tart, 1997a, p. 143) describes the experimental design typically used in experiments with humans.

We monitored electrodermal activity, which reflects the activity of the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system [and reflects states of emotional arousal]. The monitored person was stationed in one room and the “influencer” was stationed in a separate, distant room [that are sound and electromagnetically shielded]. Under the conditions of the experiments, sensory and other conventional forms of communication between the two persons were eliminated. The influencer attempted to influence the distant person’s electrodermal activity according to a random schedule unknown to the person being influenced. The experimental procedure was computer-controlled and the electrodermal measurements were scored objectively by computer. (Braud, 1997, p. 143)



**Method.** Sessions typically lasted 20 minutes with one-minute intervals of attention-directed mental-influence treatment periods randomly alternating with one-minute intervals of no-influence control periods. The dependent variable outcome measure was the proportion of the total electrodermal activity that occurred during the 10-minute treatment periods divided by the total electrodermal activity for the 20 sessions. The proportion of electrodermal activity expected to occur during treatment intervals simply on the basis of chance alone would be 50 percent of the total activity recorded during the session.

**Within-subjects experimental designs.** Using within-subjects experimental designs, Braud and colleagues found that

Compared to no-influence control periods, the distant persons did indeed evidence greater autonomic nervous activity during periods when the influencers were mentally intending for this to happen, and showed lowered autonomic activity when reduced activity was the aim [with an average effect size of 53 percent compared to the 50 percent expected by chance]. We also found preliminary indications that people were able to “block” unwanted influences upon their own physiological systems through their own interfering intentions and imagery... Using similar designs, we found that persons were able to protect their own and others’ red blood cells (i.e., to decrease the rate at which the cells broke down and died under osmotic stress), mentally and at a distance, using strategies of attention, intention, and visualization of the desired outcomes. In these hemolysis studies, the rate of death of the blood cells was monitored in a blind fashion and objectively by means of a spectrophotometer that detected the state of health of the cells. (Braud, 1997, p. 143)

**Factors that influenced performance.** Braud and colleagues explored a number of hypotheses related to factors that influenced successful facilitation and inhibition of various biological processes by attention focused upon another person.

The mental strategies used by the successful influencers included: (a) producing the desired bodily changes in themselves, using self-regulation techniques, while intending for the distant person to change similarly; (b) visualizing or imagining the distant person in situations that would be expected to produce the desired bodily changes if the distant person actually were to find himself or herself in such situations; and (c) intending and wishing for the polygraph indicator (which reflected the electrodermal activity) to behave appropriately (i.e., in line with the influencer’s intentions. (Braud, 1997, p. 143)

**Meta-analysis indicated statistically significant results.** Meta-analysis indicated that 57% of the 37 experiments conducted were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) whereas only 5% would be expected to be significant on the basis of random chance alone. The odds against 57% of the 37 experiments showing significant results on the basis of chance alone is more than one trillion to one.

This work on direct mental interactions involving living systems has two important implications for spirituality. First, the findings are consistent with the reported outcomes, within many spiritual traditions, of mental healing, spiritual healing, and intercessory prayer. Second, the fact that one person’s physiological activity can be shown to reflect or mirror that of another person, even when the two people are physically separated by distance and by shields, suggests that at certain levels the two apparently separate and distinct bodies are really one. Certain states of mind and stations of being can facilitate entrance into this realm wherein merging with another is possible. (Braud, 1997, p. 144)





### Parapsychological Assessment and Design Issues

**Parapsychology defined.** The Parapsychological Association (1989) defines “parapsychology” in *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology* as the discipline that employs observation and experimentation under controlled conditions to study “apparent anomalies of behavior and experience that exist apart from currently known explanatory mechanisms that account for organism-environment and organism-organism information and influence flow” (pp. 394-395).

**Psi defined.** *Psi* refers to two basic types of personality action considered under the broad heading of psychic or paranormal abilities. The first form of *psi* is classically known as *extrasensory perception* (ESP) (the “sixth” intuitional sense or the more neutral term, “anomalous cognition”), which is “the ability to acquire information that is shielded from the senses” (Rao, 2001, p. 3). The second form of *psi* is called *psychokinesis* (PK) (action-at-a-distance or the more neutral term “anomalous perturbation”), which is “the ability to influence external systems that are outside the sphere of one’s motor activity” (Rao, 2001, p. 3). The term *psi* is used as a common name for both ESP and PK because most parapsychologists believe they operate similarly and are two aspects of the same underlying ability.

**Four types of ESP distinguished.** ESP or the ability to obtain knowledge without the use of the five physical senses is further differentiated into four types based on the apparent source of the information: *telepathy* (perception of another’s thoughts), a term coined in 1889 by Frederick W. H. Myers, a co-founder of the Society for Psychical Research, *clairvoyance* (perception through space of remote objects and events) known today as “remote viewing,” *precognition* (perception through time of future events) also called “premonition”, and *retrocognition* (perception through time of past events).

**Outcome response formats.** Parapsychology ESP experiments usually make use of two types of structured response formats: forced-choice and free-response. In **forced-choice** experiments, there are a small number of known choices from which the subject must choose and the subject is aware of the possible target item alternatives (e.g., the five symbols in Zener cards, or the four lights in an automatic display). In **free-response** formats viewers are simply asked to describe the target and the target pool is unknown to the subject. Although free-response formats elicit rich and more meaningful responses, forced-choice experiments are easier to evaluate statistically because specific probabilities can be assigned to the results (i.e., a “correct” response is well-defined in advance and thus there is a standard for probabilistic comparisons). The response format can make a difference in the results of an experiment. The use of force-choice formats, for example, “have been traditionally less successful than free-response experiments” in remote-viewing studies (Utts, 2001, p. 112).

**Two types of PK distinguished.** Psychokinesis is commonly referred to as “mind over matter” and refers to instances where thought or mental intention is hypothesized to affect or influence physical processes but without usual physical contact or the mediation of known physical energy. Two kinds of psychokinetic phenomena (PK) are generally distinguished: micro-PK (small scale) and macro-PK (large scale) phenomena.

**Micro-PK and macro-PK.** *Micro-PK* or small-scale psychokinesis refers to PK effects that are too subtle, too small, or too fast to observe with the naked eye how the mind actually affects a physical system (e.g., tossed dice, flipped coins, random even generators, quantum mechanical systems). Micro-PK are the sorts of PK phenomena that are deliberately produced in experimental settings under controlled conditions, and require statistical analysis in order to demonstrate their occurrence. *Macro-PK* or large scale psychokinesis refers to PK effects that are slow enough that they can be readily observed with one’s own eyes as it happens (e.g., materialization and de-materialization of physical objects, poltergeist activity, rappings and bangings, levitation and movement of tables, metal bending, imprinting a mental image on photographic film). Macro-PK are the sorts of PK phenomena that are produced spontaneously, either sporadically or recurrently, outside the laboratory in ordinary life settings or situations, and do not require statistical analysis to demonstrate their occurrence.

**Types of evidence.** Philosopher and parapsychologist Stephen E. Braude (1997) distinguishes three broad categories of evidence for psychic functioning: (a) anecdotal or *sporadic spontaneous* evidence that are unique psi occurrences in the life of an individual outside a laboratory setting; (b) semi-experimental or *recurrent spontaneous* evidence of psi phenomena that occurs repeatedly in connection with a particular person or location outside a laboratory setting; and (c) *experimental* evidence of psychic functioning produced by laboratory demonstrations (Braude, 1997, pp. 1-2).

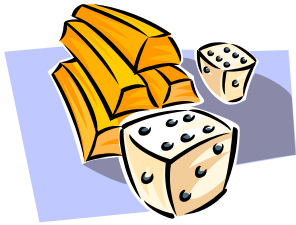


Figure 4-4 identifies experimental research studies that provide what many parapsychologists consider to be “best evidence” for *psi functioning*, some of which are described in more detail below.

#### Figure 4-4. Best Evidence for Psi Functioning

- **Rhine’s Zener-ESP and PK Experiments of 1920-1960.** The best known telepathy *experiments* are the ESP “forced-choice” card tests pioneered by J. B. Rhine and colleagues at Duke University (J. B. Rhine, 1964, 1977) involving hundreds of participants in thousands of individual trials from 1920’s to 1965. The *Pearce-Pratt Distance Series of ESP Tests* of 1933-34 were conducted during this period. By the 1940’s there had been numerous experimental reports confirming Rhine’s results (Pratt et al., 1966). There have been numerous experimental reports confirming J. B. Rhine’s ESP experimental results (see Pratt et al., 1966).
- **Dream Telepathy Experiments of the 1960s and 1970s.** One of the most successful, systematic “free-response” telepathy studies were conducted from 1966 to 1972 in the dream-research laboratory at Maimonides Medical Center (Child, 1985; Ullman, Krippner, & Vaughn, 1973). “Results suggested that if someone is asked to ‘send’ mental images to a dreaming person, the dreamer will sometimes incorporate those images into the dream” (Radin, 1997, p. 69).

- **Schmidt’s REG-ESP and PK Experiments.** Helmut Schmidt’s REG experiments have also successfully been replicated by several independent investigators (Jahn, 1982; Nelson & Radin, 2001).
- **PEAR’s REG-PK Experiments.** The Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR) laboratory has successfully replicated the REG-PK experiments (Jahn, Dunne, Nelson, Dobyms, & Bradish, 2001). Statistical replicability of psi has also been demonstrated by use of the statistical technique known as meta-analysis
- **Remote Viewing Studies of the 1970s and 1980’s.** Some of the most successful ESP studies were the government-sponsored studies in remote viewing or “anomalous cognition” (called “STARGATE”) designed and developed by the U.S. Army “for the specific purpose of using military intelligence personnel as psychics, to collect intelligence and to evaluate the degree to which our enemies might be capable of using psychics against us” (McMoneagle, 1998, p. 19). The research program in remote-viewing was conducted at what was then the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) from 1973-1988 (Bisaha & Dunne, 1979; Jahn & Dunne, 1987; Targ & Puthoff, 1977; Marks, 1986). The government-sponsored remote-viewing research project was continued at Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) from 1989-1993 (Utts, 2001), and is now continuing at the Cognitive Sciences Laboratory at Palo Alto (CA). Results of the overall 1973-1988 remote viewing experiments conducted by physicists Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff (1977) at the Stanford Research Institute “are consistent with results of similar experiments in other laboratories” (Utts, 2001, p. 121), including the experiments of Bisaha & Dunne (1979), Jahn & Dunne (1987), and Honorton & Ferrari (1989).

The results...show that remote viewing has been conceptually replicated across a number of laboratories, by various experimenters and in different cultures. This is a robust effect that, were it not in such an unusual domain, would no longer be questioned by science as a real phenomena. It is unlikely that methodological problems could account for the remarkable consistency of results. (Utts, 2001, p. 131)

**Figure 4-4**  
**Studies Providing “Best Evidence” for Authenticity of Psychic Functioning**

[Source: K.Ramakrishna Rao (Ed.). (2001). *Basic Research in Parapsychology*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland]

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- **Ganzfeld Telepathy Experiments from 1974 to 1997.** From 1974 to 1997, some 2,549 ganzfeld sessions were reported in at least 40 publications by researchers around the world ...After a 1985 meta-analysis (Hyman & Honorton, 1986)... [and] a six-year replication...[and] publication of autoganzfeld results in 1990...[and] the independent replication of these results...we are fully justified in having very high confidence that people sometimes get small amount of specific information from a distance without the use of the ordinary senses. Psi effects do occur in the ganzfeld. (Radin, 1997, pp. 73-88)

Smith et al., (2003) in the classic textbook *Atkinson & Hilgard's Introduction to Psychology* state:

The ganzfeld studies provide impressive replicability: 23 of the 28 studies [analyzed in the 1985 meta-analysis] obtained positive results, an outcome whose probability of occurring by chance is less than one in a thousand. An additional 11 replications using computerized procedures yielded results consistent with the original set of 28 studies (Bem & Honorton, 1994). A more recent meta-analysis of 40 additional ganzfeld studies, conducted between 1987 and 1999, revealed that the ganzfeld procedure continues to replicate. (Bem, Palmer, & Broughton, 2001) (p. 225)

- **Recurrent Spontaneous Psi Phenomena.** Semi-experimental or *recurrent spontaneous* evidence of psi phenomena that occurs repeatedly in connection with a particular person or location outside a laboratory setting also provide evidence of replication of a phenomenon and insight into the nature, limits, and causes of psi functioning (Braude, 1997). There have been phenomena that have lasted over 20 years that have been investigated.

**Importance of spontaneous, recurrent cases.** Some of the most famous recurrent cases of psi phenomena include the case of "Patience Worth" (Litvag, 1972; Prince, 1964), the trance-channeled *Seth Material* by Jane Roberts (1970), the mediumship of Mrs. Lenore Piper studied by William James, the PK effects of D.D. Home (Braude, 1997, pp. 63-94), the psychic phenomena associated with India's Sathya Sai Baba investigated by Erlendur Haraldsson (1987).

Three of the "best" kinds of evidence for psi functioning will be briefly described with special focus on the experimental designs used: (1) U. S. government-sponsored remote viewing "Star Gate" telepathy experiments of the 1970's and 1980's, (2) the Ganzfeld telepathy experiments from 1974 to 1997, and (3) Helmut Schmit's automated random event generator PK experiments.



### Remote Viewing Telepathy Studies of the 1970's and 1980's

For over 20 years the CIA and many other government agencies had used specially-trained clairvoyants (called 'remote viewers' by the program) in a variety of operational missions – to penetrate secret Soviet military installations; hunt down Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi; locate a downed Soviet Tupolev-22 bomber lost in the jungles of Zaire; look for an American general kidnapped by Italian terrorists; and other missions stilled classified. The list of government agencies using the services of psychic spies apparently included the CIA, the Pentagon, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Air Force, the National Security Council, NASA, and the DIA. Some \$20 million was spent on the remote viewing ESP program before it was terminated in 1995. (Schmicker, 2002, pp. 74-75)

In a typical telepathic remote-viewing experiment, an experimenter (called a *sender*) looks at a stimulus (called the *target*) that has been randomly selected from a set of five possible choices. At the same time, the subject (called a *viewer*), who is sensorily unaware of the target, attempts to draw or describe (or both) to a second experimenter the target the sender is viewing [i.e., a "free-response" test in which the target pool is unknown to the subject] (Targ & Puthoff, 1977). A judge later attempts to match the viewer's description to a predetermined pool of target items. The viewer eventually receives feedback about the actual target in which he or she learns about the accuracy of his or her response to see if it will affect subsequent test trials.

The target might be a remote location or individual, or a hidden photograph, or video clip. All possible paths for sensory leakage are blocked, typically separating the target from the viewer by distance, sometimes thousands of miles, or by hiding the target in an opaque envelope [clairvoyant remote viewing], or by selecting a target in the future [precognitive remote viewing]. (Radin, 1997, p. 100)

**Variations in protocol.** Variations of the typical remote-viewing protocol may include the presence of an interviewer who also does not know the true target (called a *blind monitor*) and who assists the viewer by asking probe questions to obtain further clarifying information about the viewer's impressions. Sometimes the sender is looking at the target item during the session (telepathy condition); sometimes there is no sender at the remote site or gazing at the target item (clairvoyance condition); sometimes the viewer draws (or describes (or both) the target item before it has been randomly selected (precognition condition).

**Basic statistical analysis.** In all the SAIC remote-viewing experiments conducted in 1989-1993 and most of the SRI experiments conducted in 1973-1988 a statistical evaluation method known as *rank-order judging* was used. Statistician Jessica Utts (2001) describes the procedure:

After the completion of a remote viewing, a judge who is blind to the true target (called a *blind judge*) is shown the response and five potential targets, one of which is the correct answer and the other four of which are 'decoys'...The judge is asked to assign a rank to each of the possible targets, where a rank of one means it matches the response most closely, and a rank of five means it matches the least. The rank of the correct target is the numerical score for that remote viewing... The average rank by chance would be three. Evidence of anomalous cognition occurs when the average rank over a series of trials is significantly lower than three... [Using a computational formula to calculate effect sizes] small, medium, and large effect sizes (0.2, 0.5, and 0.8) correspond to average ranks of 2.72, 2.29, and 1.87, respectively. (Utts, 2001, pp. 115-116)



**Four requirements.** Joseph McMoneagle (1998, p. 24) one of the "expert" remote viewers who participated in the study identifies four requirements that must be followed in any remote-viewing experiment:

- The target is totally blind to the remote viewer.
- The target is totally blind to the facilitator or monitor (person in the room with the remote viewer, if any)
- The person who may be judging or evaluating the results does not participate in any other portion of the remote viewing.
- The person who selects the target for remote viewing does not participate in any other portion of the remote viewing experiment or in the attempt at information collecting.

**Methodological concerns.** Statistician Jessica Utts (2001, pp. 116-117) at the University of California (Davis) describes the numerous methodological issues that must be addressed before a remote experiment can be conducted so that all alternative explanations of results other than the intended one (psychic functioning) can be ruled out.

- No one who has knowledge of the specific target should have any contact with the viewer until the response has been safely secured.
- No one who has knowledge of the specific target or even of whether or not the session was successful should have any contact with the judge until after that task has been completed.
- No one who has knowledge of the specific target should have access to the response until after the judging has been completed.

- Targets and decoys used in judging should be selected using a well-tested randomization device.
- Duplicate sets of target photographs should be used, one during the experiment and one during the judging, so that no cues (like fingerprints) can be inserted onto the target that would help the judge recognize it.
- The criterion for stopping an experiment should be defined in advance so that it is not called to a halt when the results just happen to be favorable. Generally, that means specifying the number of trials in advance, but some statistical procedures require or allow other stopping rules. The important point is that the rule be defined in advance in such a way that there is no ambiguity about when to stop.
- Reasons, if any, for excluding data must be defined in advance and followed consistently, and should not be dependent on the data. For example, a rule specifying that a trial could be aborted if the viewer felt ill would be legitimate, but only if the trial was aborted before anyone involved in that decision knew the correct target.
- Statistical analyses to be used must be planned in advance of collecting the data so that a method most favorable to the data isn't selected *post hoc*. If multiple methods of analyses are used the corresponding conclusions must recognize that fact (Utts, 2001, pp. 116-117).

Few experiments in mainstream psychology must address such a variety of methodological concerns, or are as rigorously well-designed, and conducted with such exquisite careful planning and thought as a modern experiment in parapsychology.

#### **Statistical analysis of remote viewing experiments.**

Subsequent analysis of overall results of the 154 experiments conducted at SRI during 1973-1988 consisting of over 26,000 trials of 227 participants yielded “overwhelming” results that were so extreme that they could have occurred by chance only once in every  $10^{20}$  instances ( $p < 10^{-20}$ ). “Obviously some explanation other than chance must be found” (Utts, 2001, p. 120). The overall results obtained at SRI during 1973-1988 were also “consistent with results of similar experiments in other laboratories” (e.g., Honorton & Ferrari, 1989) (Utts, 2001, p. 121).

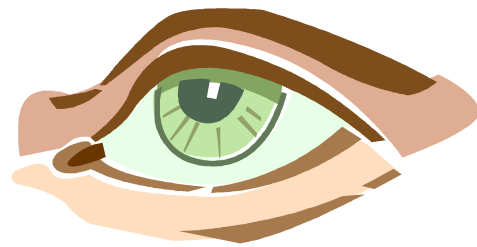
According to Michael Schmicker in his 2002 book *Best Evidence*, “like Honorton’s Ganzfeld studies, the Star Gate program results...provide us with some of the best scientific evidence available for the reality of ESP (Schmicker, 2002, p. 75).

#### **Government-sponsored remote viewing experiments.**

The “Report on Government-Sponsored Remote Viewing Programs” written by scientists who ran the program (physicist Harold Puthoff, physicist Harold Puthoff, and physicist Edwin May) and scientists who later evaluated its results (statistician Jessica Utts and psychologist Ray Hyman) can be found on the website of the Cognitive Sciences Laboratory [www.lfr.org/csl/] and in the Spring 1996 issue of *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 10, 88-100. The Star Gate program is described in detail by science writer Jim Schnabel (1997) in his book *Remote Viewers: The Secret History of America’s Psychic Spies* and in Elmar Gruber’s (1999) English language edition of his book *Psychic Wars: Parapsychology in Espionage – and Beyond*.

**American Institutes of Research.** The report written for the American Institutes of Research was commissioned by the CIA at the request of Congress to evaluate the government program in remote viewing called “Star Gate, a famous psychic spy program that is generally unknown to the general public or to the scientific community because most of the research was classified until November 1995.

**Evaluation of remote viewing statistical data.** Jessica Utts (2001), Professor of Statistics at the University of California (Davis) and Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, was one of the two principle evaluators who reviewed the formerly classified research data for the CIA at the request of the U. S. Congress.



After her examination of the body of evidence statistician Jessica Utts concluded:

It is clear to this author that anomalous cognition is possible and has been demonstrated. This conclusion is not based on belief, but rather on commonly accepted scientific criteria. ...The statistical results examined are far beyond what is expected by chance. Arguments that these results could be due to methodological flaws in the experiments are soundly refuted. .. The results show that remote viewing has been conceptually replicated across a number of laboratories, by various experimenters and in different cultures...I believe that it would be wasteful of valuable resources to continue to look for proof. No one who has examined all of the data across laboratories, taken as a whole, has been able to suggest methodological or statistical problems to explain the ever-increasing and consistent results to date. Resources should be directed to the pertinent questions about how this ability works. (Utts, 2001, pp. 131-133)

**Evaluation of remote viewing experimental design.**

The other principle reviewer, Ray Hyman, psychology Professor Emeritus at the University of Oregon and a longtime skeptic of psi phenomena, after reviewing the same evidence, likewise concluded:

I agree with Jessica Utts that the effect sizes reported in the SAIC experiments and in the recent ganzfeld studies probably cannot be dismissed as due to chance. Nor do they appear to be accounted for by multiple testing, filedrawer distortions, inappropriate statistical testing or other misuse of statistical inference ... So, I accept Professor Utts assertion that the statistical results of the SAIC and other parapsychologists experiments 'are far beyond what is expected by chance.' The SAIC experiments are well-designed and the investigators have taken pains to eliminate the known weaknesses in previous parapsychological research. In addition, I cannot provide suitable candidates for what flaws, if any, might be present. (Hyman, 1996, pp. 39-40)



**Prima facie evidence.** According to Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary* (Merriam, 1961), *prima facie* evidence is "evidence having such a degree of probability that it must prevail unless the contrary be proved" or "evidence sufficient to raise a presumption of fact or establish the fact in question unless rebutted" or an alternative explanation can be found.

**Prima facie evidence: Remote viewing.** Utts (2001) cites several remote viewing cases that would seem to meet that criterion for evidence. For example, there was the case of

two remote viewers [who] purportedly identified an underground secret facility. One of them apparently named code words and personnel in this facility accurately enough that it set off a security investigation to determine how that information could have been leaked. Based only on the coordinates of the site [the latitude and longitude expressed in degrees, minutes, and second], the viewer first described the above-ground terrain, then proceeded to describe details of the hidden underground site. (Utts, 2001, p. 118)

Michael Schmicker (2002) is able to provide a number of additional details about this particular double-blind test.

The two remote viewers, a New York artist named Ingo Swann and a California ex-police commissioner named Pat Price, did more than simply draw a detailed map of the building and grounds of the target, the National Security Agency's secret listening post at Sugar Grove West Virginia. Price was also somehow able to get inside the super-secure building with his mind and read the names of facility personnel off desk placards, read the titles of documents on desks, and labels off folders inside locked cabinets at the site – a feat that understandably set alarm bells ringing at the government agency responsible for security of the site. The information they provided was later verified as accurate by the government agency that had sponsored the test. (Schmicker, 2002, p. 76)



### **Ganzfeld Telepathy Experiments from 1974 to 1997**

How the Ganzfeld procedure differs from remote viewing. **The ganzfeld procedure differs from the remote viewing protocol in three important ways.**

First, a “mild altered state is used,” second, senders are [usually] used, so that telepathy is the primary mode, and third, the reviewed (viewers) do their own judging just after the session, rather than having an independent judge... The ganzfeld experiments differ in the preferred method of analysis as well. Rather than using the sum of ranks across sessions, a simple count is made of how many first places matches resulted from a series. Four rather than five choices are given, so by chance there should be about 25% of the sessions resulting in first place matches. (Utts, 2001, p. 130)

#### **Three phases of the typical ganzfeld experiment.**

According to parapsychologist Dean Radin (1997), the ganzfeld experiment has three phases: (1) preparing the receiver and sender, (2) transmitting the target, and (3) evaluating results. A single ganzfeld session takes about 90 minutes. The ganzfeld procedure uses double-blind control procedures, two experimenters working together, and sensory isolation to prevent possible experimenter bias, fraud, and inadvertent sensory leakage.

**Preparation.** During the first phase of preparation, the subject (the telepathic receiver) is led to an acoustically isolated room, sits in a soft, reclining chair and two halves of a Ping-Pong ball are taped over the eyes while a uniform red light is focused upon them from about two feet. This creates a homogeneous, unchanging visual field called a Ganzfeld (or “total field”). The subject may also wear headphones through which “white noise” is played (like static noise between TV stations). Sometimes a ten-minute progressive relaxation tape is played to help the subject relax.

After about 10 minutes in the ganzfeld chamber, the subject begins “talking aloud” about whatever feelings, images, and thoughts come to mind, and continues speaking until instructed to stop, about 20 minutes later. The subject’s verbalizations are monitored and recorded by an experimenter acting as a recorder in another room via a microphone link. The receiver is told to not try to actively work at seeking out images but to simply relax and let the images spontaneously, and naturally arise.

“After being in the ganzfeld for about one half hour, subjects typically report being immersed in a sea of light. Some subjects report total ‘black out,’ complete absence of visual experience” (Rao, 2001, p. 35). The goal of the ganzfeld procedure is to reduce sensory input in order to develop a “psi conducive” state similar to the states of consciousness written about in descriptions of mystical and meditative experiences and in the ancient religious texts of India, the Vedas, in which siddhis or psychic abilities occur (Honorton, 1977). Theoretically, the ganzfeld sensory deprivation technique is predicted to create certain perceptual effects that would permit the individual to perceive faint internal stimuli (images) that would be overwhelmed by usual sensory input.

**Sending.** During the second phase of sending, a second experimenter, acting as a sender, located in a different acoustically isolated room from the receiver and apart from the first experimenter monitoring the subject, is presented with a distinct, dramatic visual stimulus (picture, slide, or brief videotape sequence) with a strong visual and emotional impact that has been randomly selected from a large pool of similar stimuli that serve as the target for the ganzfeld session. In fully automated ganzfeld experiments (called autoganzfeld), a computer-controlled, closed-circuit audiovisual system records the subject’s verbalizations and selects and presents the stimulus material to ensure that experimental protocols are conducted the same way every session.

The sender looks at the visual stimulus for about 20 minutes, attempting to “transmit” it to the receiver in the ganzfeld chamber. The sender may alternate between periods of actively sending and relaxing during the period. The sender tries to become “immersed” in the target employing visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, and gustatory imagery if possible. Sometimes an audio link is established so that both the sender and the recorder can listen in on everything the receiver is saying to provide audio feedback to the sender to help “adjust” the mental strategy being used.



**Judging.** At the end of the ganzfeld period (about 30 minutes), during the third and final phase of *judging*, the first experimenter (the *recorder*) informs both the *receiver* and the *sender* that the “sending phase” is completed. The *receiver* removes the eyeshades and headphone, and then

The monitoring experimenter gives the subject four pictures with a request to rank them 1 through 4 on the basis of their correspondence to the subject’s mental images and impressions during the ganzfeld. The monitoring experimenter of course does not have any knowledge as to which of the four pictures is the one looked at by the agent [*sender*]. After all the four pictures are ranked, the subject is shown the target picture. The rank the subject gives to that picture provides the score for statistical analysis of the matching of the subject’s mentation with the target. Sometimes, the ranking is done by a judge in addition to or in the place of the subject. (Rao, 2001, p. 35)

**Statistical analysis.** Only if the *receiver* correctly assigns a rank of 1 to the actual target is the session regarded as a “hit;” otherwise the entire session is recorded as a “miss.” One hit every four sessions would occur simply by random chance (25% chance hit rate). Any hit rate greater than that over four sessions would indicate that information about the sender’s target picture somehow became accessible to another distant person in some way other than through any of the known sensory channels.

**Results.** The first ganzfeld experiments were reported in 1974 with significant results (Honorton & Harper, 1974). “Between 1974 and 1981 there were in all 42 published ganzfeld-ESP experiments of which 19 [about 55 %] gave significant evidence for psi; it seemed that psi in the ganzfeld is a highly replicable effect” (Rao, 2001, p. 35). In 1985, psychologist Ray Hyman (1985) raised questions about the adequacy of the procedures and statistical analyses used in the ganzfeld experiments, and a new setup called autoganzfeld now replicates the ESP ganzfeld effect meeting the “stringent standards” requirement as recommended by Hyman and Honorton (1986) in their joint communiqué.



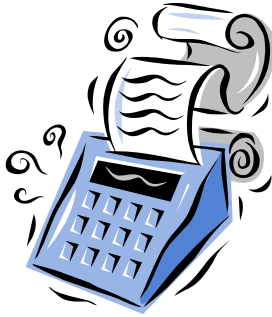
In subsequent publishing of Ganzfeld results, Bem and Honorton (1994)

showed 106 hits out of 329 sessions, for a hit rate of 32.2 percent when 25 percent was expected by chance. The corresponding p-value was 0.0002 [i.e., the odds of this positive result being due just to chance is 20,000 to one]. As mentioned earlier, the hallmark of science is replication. This result has now been replicated by three additional laboratories [ at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands and the University of Edinburgh, Scotland] (Bierman, 1995; Boughton & Alexander, 1995; Morris, Dalton, Delanoy & Watt, 1995). (Utts, 2001, pp. 130-131)

Bem, Palmer & Broughton (2001) updated the ESP ganzfeld database by adding ten more studies published after 1997. “As it stands now, we have a broad range of replications covering over a period of 25 years, involving over 90 experiments by a wide range of investigators. They show a fairly robust effect comparable across studies that adhere to the standard ganzfeld protocol (Rao, 2001, p. 37).

Key findings that Honorton has discovered through his meta-analysis of ganzfeld experiments include (Schmicker, 2002, p. 73):

- Certain persons typically will do better in a Ganzfeld experiment than others. The people most likely to succeed at ESP include people who
  - are artistic and creative.
  - have personally experienced a psychic event in their lives.
  - believe in the reality of ESP.
  - regularly practice meditation, relaxation or biofeedback.
  - are extroverts.
  - have intuitive personalities.
  - had earlier participated in other psi experiments.
- Dynamic visual images (video clips with motion and sound) are easier to communicate via ESP than static images (still photo or drawing).
- Friends make better “senders” to receivers than strangers.
- A warm, friendly laboratory ambiance is more conducive to ESP than a cold, clinical, unemotional laboratory.



**Schmidt's REG – ESP and PK Experiments**

**Random Event Generator.** Whereas J. B. Rhine investigated micro-PK effects using tossed dice, most modern PK laboratory research studies of micro-PK effects use high-tech devices called random number generators (RNGs) - also called random event generators (REG) - a type of electronic coin-flipper that is designed to produce a random sequence of bits (the numbers 1 and 0) derived from some random source such as the rate of decay of some radioactive material (or electronic noise). In a typical experiment a participant is asked to influence the RNG's output so that more 1's or more 0's are produced, depending on instructions, with a measured hit rate greater than 50 percent.

**Advantages of automation.** The experimental psi research conducted by physicist Helmut Schmidt "comes as close as one can get to a definitive experiment in such controversial areas as parapsychology" (Rao, 2001, p. 10). Schmidt invented a specially built machine that has come to be known as "The Schmidt Machine" that randomly selects stimulus material (called the "targets") and then automatically records subject's responses.

This automated system of selecting independent variable targets and recording dependent variable responses controls confounding variables such as recording errors, sensory leakage, subject cheating, and improper analyses of data. Complete automation provides for complete control over the presentation of instructions, permits feedback on a trial-by-trial-basis, assures proper data storage and data analysis, "eliminates the possibility that experimenters may inadvertently contaminate the data set, and allows the experimenter to act as participants in their own studies without fear of introducing recording biases into the data" (Radin, 1997, p. 140).

In his first psi experiments titled "Precognition of a quantum process" (Schmidt, 1969),

the subject's task was to select which of the four lamps in the panel would light up and then press the corresponding button to indicate the selection [i.e., a "forced choice" test procedure in which the subject is aware of the possible target alternative – the four lights]. Random lighting of the lamps was achieved by a sophisticated random event generator (REG) with a weak radioactive source, strontium 90. After extensive testing in control trials, it was determined that the output of the REG did not deviate significantly from chance. The results of each of the three experimental series gave highly significant results suggesting ESP on the part of the subjects tested. (Rao, 2001, p. 10)

Helmut Schmidt's REG experiments have been successfully replicated by a wide number of independent laboratories (Nelson & Radin, 2001), especially by engineer Robert Jahn and associates at Princeton University (Jahn, 1982) and has withstood detailed scrutiny by critics (Rao & Palmer, 1987).

Princeton University psychologist Roger Nelson and Dean Radin conducted a meta-analysis of 832 independent experiments (597 experimental and 235 control studies) conducted using REGs by 68 investigators between 1959-1987 (including both strong and weak replications) to answer the fundamental question of whether an observer's intention can influence the average statistical output of the random events (Nelson & Radin, 2001). Results showed unequivocal evidence for a replicable statistical effect of REG-PK experiments with odds against chance beyond a trillion to one. Analysis indicated that the quality of REG studies improved over time, hit rates were not correlated with experimental quality, and that 54,000 unpublished, unsuccessful studies would need to have been conducted to cancel the observed REG psi effect – almost 90 times the number of studies that were actually published.

During a period of 12 years, Jahn and associates conducted more than 1500 experiments with over 100 unselected participants to generate an enormous database of more than 5.6 million independent trials, that provided strong evidence for psi ( $p = 3.5 \times 10^{-13}$ ) (Jahn, Dunne, Nelson, et al., 2001). The research continues at the Princeton PEAR Laboratory and papers describing the experiments can be found at the PEAR website [www.princeton.edu/~pear/].

In the experiments by Jahn and colleagues, REGs based on a commercial noise source were used. The subject's task in these experiments was to influence the device mentally to produce an excess of hits on predesignated PK+ trails and an excess of misses on PK-trails. The hits were displayed on the instrument panel and were permanently recorded on a strip printer and stored in a computer file.... Jahn and colleagues utilized a variety of experimental strategies, equipment, and modes of feedback to the subjects. For example, in some experiments a large scale mechanical device called "Random Mechanical Cascade" was used. In this device polystyrene spheres trickled downward through a five-chute array and are scattered into 19 collection bins. The subjects task is to shift by volition the mean bin population to the right or the left. (Rao, 2001, pp. 11-12)

Michael Schmicker in his 2002 book *Best Evidence* lists reasons why the PEAR experiments provide "best evidence" for the reality of PK ability:

- The sheer number of experiments conducted.
- The systematic approach applied to the problem.
- Rigorous laboratory controls devised to eliminate possible fraud and human or machine error.
- Willingness to have other colleagues and skeptical investigators independently examine the equipment, protocols, and results of experiments.



### **Statistical Issue of Replicability**

**Statistical replicability.** It is important to understand the meaning of "replicability" in the statistical sense, because *it is in this sense that replicability of psi experiments has been achieved.*

Scientific evidence in the statistical realm is based on replication of the same average performance or relationship *over the long run*.... A good baseball hitter will not hit the ball exactly the same proportion of times in each game but should be relatively consistent over the long run. The same should be true of psychic functioning. Even if there truly is an effect, it may never be replicable on demand in the short run even if we understand how it works. However, over the long run in well-controlled laboratory experiments we should see a consistent level of functioning, above that expected by chance. The anticipated level of functioning may vary based on the individual players and the conditions, just as it does in baseball, but given players of similar ability tested under similar conditions the results should be replicable over the long run. In [the SAIC remote viewing experiments]... replicability in that sense has been achieved. (Utts, 2001, p. 113)

In other words, replicability, properly understood in its statistical sense means repeatability demonstrated not over the short run, but instead over the long run.

Remember that such events should not replicate with any degree of precision in the short run because of statistical variability, just as we would not expect to always get five heads and five tails if we flip a coin ten times, or see the same batting averages in every game. (Utts, 2001, p. 125)

We can expect to boil sea water at 212<sup>0</sup>F each and every time we heat it. It never shows a "decline" effect due to boredom. Human beings, however, are different. ESP may not be produced each and every time in a row but it can be produced every once in a while and over the long run show a consistency in performance that justifies stating that the underlying ability giving rise to the performance certainly exists.

**Why replication is difficult to achieve in psychological science.** This does not mean that every experimental effect of psi can be easily produced *on demand* in the laboratory.

Few human capabilities are perfectly replicable on demand. For instance, even the best hitters in the major baseball leagues cannot hit on demand. Nor can we predict when someone will hit or when they will score a home run. In fact, we cannot even predict whether or not a home run will occur in a particular game. That does not mean that home runs don't exist. (Utts, 2001, pp. 112-113)



**Psi, like most human abilities, is variable.** Like most complex and subtle psychological traits and states, psi skills and abilities are difficult to capture with traditional laboratory techniques. Most normal psychological effects are known to be exceptionally difficult to repeat (S. Epstein, 1980). Human behavior and cognition is highly variable, and experiments involving human beings never turn out *exactly* the same way twice.

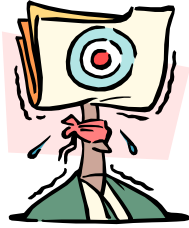
**Positive replications of previous studies in psychology is rare.** Surprisingly, given the high value placed on the ability to repeatedly demonstrate the reality of claimed psychological effects commonly described in introductory psychology textbooks, positive replications of previous studies are exceedingly rare in psychology in particular, and in science generally (Bozarth and Roberts, 1972; Collins, 1985). Two likely reasons why replications are rarely conducted in behavioral science research is because of the time and expense involved in repeating well-designed, rigorous experiments, and because many scientific journals have editorial policies that discourage publication of "mere" replications (Neuliep & Crandall, 1991).

"The situation is not quite as dismal for psi research, [however], because psi is so curious and represents such a huge challenge to scientific assumptions, hundreds of investigators over the years have conducted thousands of replication studies" (Radin, 1997, p. 39).



### **Theory-Building Approaches: Meta-Analysis**

**How do we know that psi experiments have been replicated?** We know that psi experiments have been replicated by measuring how much replication has taken place (Utts, 1991). The technique for assessing this is called "meta-analysis" or "the analysis of analysis" (see Broughton, 1991, pp. 279-284; Glass, McGaw, & Smith, 1981). The basis units of analysis in meta-analysis are the results of individual experiments, instead of the results of individual subjects. By combining thousands of people's performances over hundreds of similar experiments, coding the experimental procedures used, quantifying effect sizes, calculating confidence intervals, and analyzing results to detect clear patterns across studies, highly reliable and accurate estimates about the repeatability of any highly variable phenomenon involving human performance can be obtained (Cohen, 1988; Cook, Cooper, Cordray, et al., 1992; Copper & Rosenthal, 1980; Glass, 1976; Hedges, 1987; Rosenthal, 1991). Meta-analyses have made a ground-breaking and persuasive case for the reality of psychic functioning (e.g., Bem & Honorton, 1994; Honorton, 1985; Honorton & Ferrari, 1989; Nelson & Radin, 2001; Jahn, Dunne, Nelson, et al., 2001).



**Meta-analysis of ESP Evidence - Precognition.** Charles Honorton and Diane Ferrari (1989) published a meta-analytic study of all English-language forced-choice experiments conducted between 1935 and 1987 on the topic of precognition.

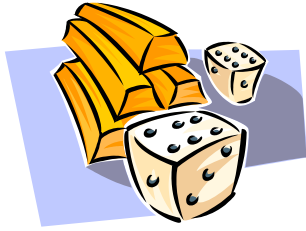
In a typical forced-choice precognition study, a person is asked to guess which one of a fixed number of targets will be selected later. The targets could be colored lamps, ESP card symbols, or a die face. Later, one target is randomly selected, and if the person's guess matches the selected symbol, this is counted as a "hit." In many such studies, immediately after the person guesses a symbol the target is randomly generated and presented as feedback. (Radin, 1997, p. 113)

**Meta-analysis included over 300 studies.** The meta-analysis included 309 forced-choice precognition studies reported in 113 articles by 62 different investigators constituting a database of nearly 2 million individual trials by more than 50,000 subjects.

The combined results of the 309 studies produced odds against chance of ... ten million billion billion to one [ $10^{25}$ ]...The possibility of a selective-reporting bias – the file-draw problem – was also eliminated by determining that the number of unpublished, unsuccessful studies required to eliminate these astronomical odds was 14,268. Further analysis showed that twenty-three studies of the sixty-two investigators (37 percent) had reported successful studies, so the overall results were not due to one or two wildly successful experiments. In other words, the precognition effect had been successfully replicated across many different experimenters. (Radin, 1997, p. 114)

**Trimmed analysis.** After trimming away the outliers (i.e., the 10% of studies producing the largest effects and the bottom 10% of studies producing the smallest effects), Honorton & Ferrari's (1989) analysis of the remaining 248 studies conducted by fifty-seven different investigators indicated that

- The combined effect of the remaining 80% of the data still produced odds against guessing that many "hits" was an astronomical billion to one.
- A non-significant *positive correlation* was found between study quality and precognition performance with the better-designed studies showing greater effects than poor-designed studies.
- Study quality tended to improve over time with later experiments showing better experimental controls than earlier experiments.
- The effect size (i.e., the number of standard deviations the results fall above chance) of precognitive results across time remained remarkably stable despite changes in study quality.
- Effect size did not vary among different populations (i.e., students, children, unselected adult volunteers, adult participants selected on the basis of special abilities).
- Studies using selected (gifted) participants produced larger effects than unselected volunteers ( $p < .001$ ).
- Trial-by-trial feedback produced better results than no feedback, time-delayed feedback, or trial-series feedback ( $p < .01$ ).
- The shorter the time intervals between subjects' response and target feedback the larger the effect produced ( $p < .01$ ).



### Meta-analysis of PK Evidence - Dice-throwing.

Parapsychologists Dean Radin and Diane Ferrari (1991) at Princeton University report the results of a meta-analysis of all dice-throwing experiments conducted between 1935-1987. Each experiment was categorized on the basis of a set of “quality criteria” that, according to Radin (1997, p. 311) cover virtually all often-cited design criticisms of psychokinetic (PK) experiments.

- *Automatic recording.* Die faces were automatically recorded onto a permanent medium (e.g., photographed onto film).
- *Independent recording.* Someone other than the experimenter also recorded the data.
- *Data selection prevented.* Use of a data recording technique that ensured that all data were used in the final analysis (e.g., sequential-frame photographic data recordings, use of bound record books).
- *Data double-checked.* Data were manually or automatically double-checked for accuracy.
- *Witnesses present.* Witnesses were present during data recording to help reduce the possibility of mistakes or fraud.
- *Control noted.* A control study was mentioned, but no details were published.
- *Local control.* Control data were obtained under the same conditions as the experiment, using the same subject(s) in the same conditions, but with no specific mental effort applied to the dice.
- *Protocol control.* The study was designed in such a manner that controls were inherently a part of the experiment (e.g., equal number of throws for each die face).
- *Calibration control.* A long-term randomness test was conducted, usually immediately before and immediately after an experimental series..
- *Fixed run lengths.* Optional stopping was ruled out by a prespecified design.
- *Formal study.* The study used a prespecified methodology, as well as statistical analyses specified in advance of experimentation.

- *Dice toss method.* By hand, bounced against a back wall, use of a cup or chute, or tosses automatically by machine.
- *Subject type.* Unselected subjects, selected, experimenter as sole subject, experimenter along with subjects, unselected subjects.

### Odds against chance of more than a billion to one.

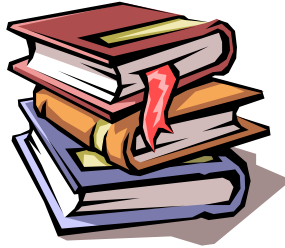
Radin and Ferrari (1991) identified 148 experiments conducted by 52 experimenters using 2,569 participants who tried to mentally influence 2.6 million dice throws (compared to 31 control studies where no one attempted to influence 150,000 dice throws). Radin (1997) graphically summarized the results of the study by year with confidence intervals. While probability would predict a 50% hit rate simply by chance,

The overall hit rate for all *control* studies (i.e., studies in which no one tried to influence the tossed dice) was 50.02 percent, and the confidence interval was well within chance expectation, resulting in overall odds against chance of two to one. But for all experimental studies, the overall hit rate was 51.2 percent. This does not look like much, but statistically it results in odds against chance of more than a billion to one. (Radin, 1997, p. 134)

### No replication problem, no inadequate controls, no file drawer problem.

Radin & Ferrari’s (1991) meta-analysis of the overall combined experimental results also indicated that the overall hit rate was not due either to a few extremely successful studies or to a few exceptional investigators who reported the bulk of the successful experiments after these experiments/investigators were excluded from the analysis. They calculated that an additional 17,974 unpublished, unsuccessful, unretrieved studies would have been needed to nullify the observed effect and reduce the overall odds down to  $p=.05$  (i.e., 121 additional nonsignificant studies would have been required for each study included in the analysis, sometimes called the “file drawer” problem).

That many studies would have required each of the fifty-two investigators involved in these experiments to have conducted one unpublished, nonsignificant study per month, every month, for twenty-eight years. This isn’t a reasonable assumption; thus, selective reporting cannot explain these results. (Radin, 1997, pp. 135-136)



**Parapsychology is an Active Research Area in Psychology**

Statements that parapsychology is “not a viable area of active research in modern psychology” (e.g., Stanovich, 2001, pp. 196-197) are misleading and misrepresent the facts. Psi research continues to be an active research area not only in the psychological sciences but throughout the sciences generally.

- “Parapsychology” is listed as an official subcategory of research articles in the American Psychological Association’s (APA) *Psychological Abstracts*.
- “Parapsychology” is an official subcategory of federal grants in the Fedix system within the category of Behavioral and Social Sciences providing government-sponsored funding and resources for psi research.
- The Parapsychological Association (founded in 1957) has been an affiliate of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) since 1969.
- The *Journal of Parapsychology* (founded by the Parapsychological Association) has published psi-related research since 1937.
- London’s Society for Psychic Research (SPR) has published psi-related research since 1882.
- New York’s American Society for Psychical Research has published psi-related research since 1885.

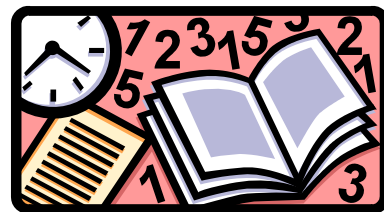
Parapsychological-related studies have been published in a wide range of peer-reviewed journals including:

- *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*
- *American Psychologist*
- *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*
- *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*
- *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*

- *Journal of Analytical Psychology*
- *Journal of Near-Death Studies*
- *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*
- *Journal of Parapsychology*
- *Journal of Scientific Exploration*
- *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*
- *Omega: Journal of Death & Dying*
- *Perceptual & Motor Skills*
- *Personality & Individual Differences*
- *Psychiatry*
- *Psychological Bulletin*
- *Psychological Reports*
- *Psychopathology*
- *Social Behavior & Personality*

Well-known scientific journals have published articles favorably reviewing the body of evidence for psi functioning including:

- *Foundations of Physics* (Radin, D. I. 1989. Evidence for consciousness-related anomalies in random physical systems. 19: 1499-1514).
- *American Psychologist* (Child, I.L. 1985. Psychology and anomalous observations: The question of ESP in dreams. 40: 1219-30).
- *Statistical Science* (Utts, J. M. 1991. Replication and meta-analysis in parapsychology. 6: 363-82).
- *Proceedings of the Institute for Electronic and Electrical Engineers* (Jahn, R.G. 1982. The persistent paradox of psychic phenomena: An engineering perspective, 70: 136-170).
- *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (Rao, K. R., & Palmer, J. 1987. The anomaly called psi: Recent research and criticism. 10: 539-55).
- *Psychological Bulletin* (Bem, D.J., & Honorton, 1994. Does psi exist? Replicable evidence for an anomalous process of information transfer. 115: 4-18).
- *Physical Review* (Stapp, H.E. 1994. Theoretical model of a purported empirical violation of the predictions of quantum theory. 50: 18-22).





**Psi-related topics in numerous master's theses and doctoral dissertations.** Since 1940, "some 40 universities in the U.S. awarded 57 master's degrees and over 115 doctorate degrees to students who wrote their theses and dissertations on some aspect of the paranormal" (Schmicker, 2002, pp. 50-51; White, 1994).

- Adelphi University – Psychokinesis and the mind-over-matter concept.
- Boston University – ESP and mediums.
- California State University at Fullerton - Archeology and parapsychology.
- California State University at Long Beach - The use of psychics by police as an investigative aid.
- Carleton University at Ottawa – The psychology of people who report having seen a UFO.
- City University of New York - Correlated hemispheric asymmetry in sensory and ESP processing of emotional and non-emotional videotapes.
- City University of New York – Hypnotizability, creativity, and psi in the Ganzfeld.
- Columbia University – The Kirlian (aura) effect.
- Harvard University – A comparative study of medieval, Christian and contemporary accounts of near death experiences.
- New York University – Telepathy between mothers and daughters.
- Northern Illinois University – Meditation and psi performance.
- Stanford University – Lucid dreaming.
- University of California at Berkeley – Possession trances.
- University of California at Berkeley – Psychic readers and human auras.

- University of California at Los Angeles – The psychic reader as shaman and psychotherapist.
- University of Chicago – The seer Edgar Cayce.
- University of Georgia - Clairvoyance and creativity.
- University of North Carolina – Faith healing.
- University of Oklahoma – Philosophical implications of psi phenomena leading to a reconciliation of science and religion.
- University of Wisconsin - History of spiritualism.
- West Georgia College – Testing for a psychokinetic effect on plants: The effect of “laying on of hands” on germinating corn seeds.
- Yale University – The effects of the drugs amytal and dexadrine on ESP.

A careful study of the historical, sociological, and psychological record of research into psi functioning reveals that much of the evidence comes not from anecdotal reports of sporadic, spontaneous psi occurrences, but from *recurrent spontaneous* psi phenomena, and from *experimental* evidence of psychic functioning produced by laboratory demonstration.

The reality of psychic phenomenon is now no longer based solely upon faith, or wishful thinking, or absorbing anecdotes. It is not even based upon the results of a few scientific experiments. Instead, we know that these phenomena exist because of new ways of evaluating massive amounts of scientific evidence collected over a century by scores of researchers. (Radin, 1997, p. 2)

**Figure 4-5** describes some “interesting findings” that have been identified as process variables that influence psi performance and “how psi works.”

**Figure 4-5. How Psi Works**





## Figure 4-5

### How Psi Works: Some Interesting Findings

**Be Free.** “Free-response” remote viewing is more successful than “forced-choice” remote viewing. Although *forced-choice* response formats are easier to evaluate statistically than *free-response* formats, the use of force-choice formats “have been traditionally less successful than free-response experiments” in remote-viewing studies (Utts, 2001, p. 112).

**Differences Matter.** Psi is an ability that differs across individuals. Much like athletic ability or musical talent, some individuals are naturally better a remote viewing than other individuals. “Mass screening efforts found that about one percent of those who volunteered to be tested were consistently successful at remote viewing” (Utts, 2001, p. 121). Rhine’s research showed that the same applies to ESP generally. “The average person off the street could perform ESP; but some people are clearly better than others. ESP is not spread equally among humans. Strong ESP ability is more an unusual talent than an ordinary one” (Schmicker, 2002, p. 65).

**Some People are “Naturals.”** It is easier to find than to train good remote viewers. “It appears that certain individuals possess more talent than others, and that it is easier to find those individuals than to train people. It also appears to be the case that certain individuals are better at some tasks than others” (Utts, 2001, p. 132).

**More is not necessarily better.** Multiple viewers are not necessarily better, more accurate, or increase the possibility of accuracy through consensus. “Time and again, when there was 80-90 percent consensus, the consensus group proved to be wrong” (McMoneagle, 1998, p. 29).

**Remote viewers cannot be blocked.** “Electromagnetic shielding does not appear to inhibit performance” (Utts, 2001, p. 121). Joseph McMoneagle (1998), one of the expert remote viewers used in the SRI-SAIC series of experiments states: “I believe that shielding is possible, but only when using a combination of things/techniques not yet explored. There are times when remote viewing just doesn’t seem to work on its own” (McMoneagle, 1998, p. 33).

**Feedback Not Required.** Feedback on a target is not a requirement. “Feedback may not be a requirement for the remote viewer to perform. There have been remote viewings accomplished by viewers who died prior to receiving their feedback... However, feedback is absolutely essential for judging or evaluating a report for accuracy” (McMoneagle, 1998, pp. 33-34). Statistician Utts states: “It is not clear whether or not feedback (showing the subject the right answer) is necessary, but it does appear to provide a psychological boost that may increase performance” (Utts, 2001, p. 121)

**Distance does not matter.** “Distance between the target and the subject does not seem to impact the quality of the remote viewing” (Utts, 2001, p. 121). In one successful remote viewing experiment, the sender visited target sites in Rome, Italy while the receiver remained in Detroit, Michigan (Schlitz & Gruber, 1980, 1981). J. B. Rhine (1964) likewise found that increasing the distance between the receiver and the sender in his telepathy experiments, and between receiver and target in his clairvoyance studies (as far away as 4,000 miles in one study) did not diminish performance, unlike as occurs with our usual five senses.

**Motivation matters.** Highly motivated, positive, and enthusiastic people have a better chance of producing ESP than someone who does not care about the results. Bored subjects who lose interest in the task perform worse than subjects who enjoy the task. One likely explanation why the 1973-1993 government-sponsored remote-viewing experiments were so successful and did not suffer from J. B. Rhine’s “decline effect” was that the experiments were less boring and repetitive.

## Figure 4-5

### How Psi Works: Some Interesting Findings

**Quiet please.** ESP experiments such as the ganzfeld, conducted in a relaxed, quiet state of mind produces better results than those conducted under normal waking consciousness conditions, such as Rhine conducted.

**Psi improves as GMF fluctuations decrease.** “Psi performance is better on days when the earth’s geomagnetic field (GMF) is quiet” (Radin, 1997, p. 178). The most accurate telepathic dreams, for instance, tend to occur during 24-hour periods of quiet geomagnetic activity (i.e., fluctuations in earth’s geomagnetic field as the earth interacts with highly-charged solar particles, sun spot activity such as solar flares, other planets, movement of the earth’s molten core, etc.) (Persinger & Krippner, 1989).

**Nobody’s Perfect.** Information remote viewers receives is not perfect. It often has inaccurate details and information mixed in which accurate information, although accuracy could reach as high as 80% at times. Psychic performance can be compared to sport performance or musical ability that is affected by relative skill, knowledge, attitude, health, emotion, and belief, and level of interest the performer brings to the experiment. Automatic, mechanical repeatability of results should not be expected any more than they are expected from sport players. Failure does not mean earlier successes were necessarily the result of fraud or trickery.

**ESP in Dreams.** The dream state is conducive to psi functioning (Ullman, Krippner, & Vaughn, 1973; Van de Castle, 1977). Approximately 65 percent of spontaneous psychic experiences occur in dreams (L. E. Rhine, 1962).

**Experimenter effects in psi research** Studies of experimenter expectancy effects show that the testing environment and attitudes of onlookers and scientists running the tests can affect the results (Rosenthal & Rubin, 1978). Tension and hostility toward the test subject can make it difficult for the subject to produce results; treating the person as an unfeeling, inanimate machine can doom an experiment to failure (Honorton, Ramsey, & Cabibbo, 1975). Negative comments and distractions from observers can lower scores. People perform better in front of friendly, supportive crowds. If people want you to fail, let you know they want and expect you to fail and radiate hostility, they can usually affect your performance even without physically touching you. Performing psi for a crowd of hostile debunkers is more difficult than performing before a friendly audience, or a neutral one (White, 1977). Success in psi experiments may even be partially dependent on the psi abilities of the experimenters (West & Fisk, 1953; Kennedy & Taddonio, 1976; Wiseman & Schlitz, 2001).

**Believing Is Seeing.** Believers tend to score higher than skeptics. Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler demonstrated that “believers also tend to score higher than skeptics in psychic experiments. Skepticism, doubt and unemotional neutrality apparently work to decrease or eliminate psychic abilities” (Schmicker, 2002, p. 65). Some things you have to believe in order for them to work; in other things belief doesn’t matter, but in psi it does. All things being equal, if you don’t believe you can hit a homer, you probably have a lesser chance than someone who does believe.

**Stimulants matter.** Drinking alcohol (a depressant) seems to lower scores while drinking coffee or Coca-Cola (a stimulant) appears to raise them.



### Concerning Transpersonal Research Methods

**Figure 4-6** provides a list of selected of recommended literature resources that are useful to consult before beginning to conduct a transpersonal research project.

### Figure 4-6. Transpersonal Psychology Research Reviews

**The call for a generalized empirical method in science.** Transpersonally-oriented psychologists have come to see the scientific method as something more inclusive and flexible than that proposed by the natural sciences with its narrow sensory-empiricist, mechanistic interpretive framework. A generalized empirical method is conceived that encompasses all experience (not just the sensory kind) and that is capable of including subjective 1<sup>st</sup> person reports, 2<sup>nd</sup> person intersubjective accounts, and 3<sup>rd</sup> person objective measurements of psychological experiences. In addition to the data of sense, there are the data of consciousness (Lonergan, 1958). Scientific information and spiritual knowledge are not necessarily exclusive, but interrelated (Tart, 1975). After all, is it not the same subjectivity that gives rise to both?

**The call for a return to the introspective method.** If mental processes, imagery, and dreams can be studied scientifically, the further question naturally arises: Why not transcendental experiences? Why not the nature of inner spiritual reality as well as inner psychological reality? Psychology has become well acquainted with exterior methods of trying to find out about the nature of behavior, studying the objective environment and physiological functioning and collecting facts upon which certain deductions are made. Interior ways of attaining, not necessarily facts, but knowledge and wisdom, can be used in conjunction with exterior methods, and must be if the potential of psychology as a social and behavioral science is ever to be fulfilled.

**Facts alone do not give us wisdom.** Biological and environmental facts, it is now being recognized, may or may not give us wisdom, but can, if slavishly followed, lead us away from true knowledge. Wisdom shows us the insides of facts and the realities from which facts emerge. An inside look at the nature of the psyche is now needed to complement the exterior method that have been emphasized during most of modern psychology's history (Schultz & Schultz, 2004).

**Two outcome measures are better than one.** Quantitative research methods may not be able to adequately assess by themselves the richness and variety of transpersonal experiences. Qualitative research methods that provide a more comprehensive contextual description of transpersonal experience are also recommended to be used. Convergent measures of both behavior and experience provide a more complete and accurate picture than either alone.

**Balance of quantitative and qualitative methods.** In transpersonal research, a balance of quantitative and qualitative research methods and diverse data sources are combined and blended in order to obtain a comprehensive, rich, broad description, analysis, and presentation of the multi-leveled complexity and dynamic nature of the existential and transformative human experience under study (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Hart, Nelson, and Puhakka, 2000).

**Problems in studying transpersonal states.** No field of research is immune from methodological or conceptual problems. Michael Nagel (1999), for instance, discusses methodological problems of subject selection in research of advanced meditative states. Lukoff & Lu (1988) discuss the conceptual problems involved in the widely different definitions of transpersonal states used among researchers.

A major problem in studying transpersonal states is the wide conceptual variability among researchers...While most researchers have related their definitions to the literature on mystical experience, particularly to the writings of Stace (1960), others have developed idiosyncratic definitions that seem to have no basis in prior writing...Progress ultimately depends on obtaining some shared agreement regarding definitions and method...[Research topics are] ripe for a meta-analysis...that would integrate both the qualitative and quantitative findings. (Lukoff & Lu, 1988, pp. 163-164, 183)

### Figure 4-6 Transpersonal Psychology Research Review

Recommended literature resources that are useful to consult before beginning to conduct a transpersonal research project include:

#### GENERAL RESOURCES

- **Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Science** (1998) by W. Braud & R. Anderson (Eds.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- **A Survey of Measures of Transpersonal Constructs** (1995) by D. A. MacDonald, L. LeClair, C. J. Holland, A. Alter, & H. L. Friedman. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 27, 171-235.
- **A Survey of Measures of Spiritual and Transpersonal Constructs: Part one – Research Update** (1999) by D. A. MacDonald, H. L. Friedman, & J. G. Kuentzel. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 31, 137-154.
- **A Survey of Measures of Spiritual and Transpersonal Constructs: Part two – Additional Instruments** (1999) by D. A. MacDonald, J. G. Kuentzel, & H. L. Friedman. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 31, 155-177.
- **Transpersonal Psychology Research Review: Computerized Databases, Specialized Collections, and Archives** (1989) by D. Lukoff & F. G. Lu. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 21, 211-223.
- **Phenomenological Inquiry in Psychology: Existential and Transpersonal Dimensions** (1998) by R. S. Valle (Ed.). New York: Plenum Press.
- **Annotated Bibliography of Selected Articles on Ethnic Minorities, Cultural Perspectives, and Transpersonal Psychology** (2001) by A. Hastings, P. Balasubrahmanyam, G. Beard, et al. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 33, 151-162.

#### MENTAL HEALTH

- **Transpersonal Psychology Research Review: Psychospiritual Dimensions of Healing** (1993) by D. Lukoff, R. Turner, & F. G. Lu. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 25, 11-28.
- **Transpersonal Psychology Research Review: Psychoreligious Dimensions of Healing** (1992) by D. Lukoff, R. Turner, and F. G. Lu. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 24, 41-60.
- **Toward a Working Definition of Transpersonal Assessment** (1997) by H. L. Friedman & D. A. MacDonald. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 29, 105-122.
- **Measuring the Psychological Construct of Control: Applications to Transpersonal Psychology** by J. A. Astin & D. H. Shapiro. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 29, 63-72.

#### PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENA

- **Advances in Parapsychology** (1977, Vol. 1; 1978, Vol. 2; 1982, Vol. 3. New York: Plenum Press; 1984, Vol. 4, Jefferson, NC: McFarland) edited by S. Krippner.

**Figure 4-6**  
**Transpersonal Psychology Research Review**

PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENA

- **The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena** (1997) by D. Radin. New York: Harper.
- **Parapsychology: The Controversial Science** (1991) by R. S. Broughton. New York: Ballantine.
- **An Introduction to Parapsychology** (1989) by H. J. Irwin. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

MEDITATION

- **The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation: A Review of Contemporary Research with a Comprehensive Bibliography 1931-1996** (1997) by M. Murphy and S. Donovan (2nd ed.). Sausalito, CA: Institute of Noetic Sciences.
- **Phenomenological method and meditation** (1994) by L. E. Patrik. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 26, 37-54.
- **Researching Advanced Meditative States: Problems of Subject Selection** (1999) by M. Nagel. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 31, 11-21.
- **Meditation Research: An Introduction and Review** (1979) by R. N. Walsh. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 11, 161-174.
- **Intensive Insight Meditation: A Phenomenological Study** (1979) by J. Kornfield. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 11, 41-58.
- **Meditation: Aspects of Research and Practice** (1978) by R. N. Walsh, D. Goleman, J. Kornfield, C. Pensa, & D. Shapiro. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 10, 113-133.
- **Dimensions of the Meditative Experience** (1973) by K. Osis, E. Bokert, & M. Carlson. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 5, 109-135.
- **Meditation with Young Children** (1978) by M. H. Murdock. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 10, 29-44.
- **A Model for Viewing Meditation Research** (1982) by R. N. Walsh. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 14, 69-84.
- **The Psychology of Meditation** (1987) by M. A. Walsh. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- **Meditation: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives** (1984) by D. Shapiro & R. N. Walsh. New York: Aldine.
- **On the Psychology of Meditation** (1971) by C. Naranjo, & R. E. Ornstein. New York: Viking.

**Figure 4-6**  
**Transpersonal Psychology Research Review**

NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

- **The Near-Death Experience** (1984) by B. Greyson & C. Flynn (Eds.). Springfield, IL: Charles Thomas.
- **Life At Death: A Scientific Investigation of the Near-Death Experience** (1982) by K. Ring. New York: Quill
- **Death and Near-Death: A Comparison of Tibetan and Euro-American Experiences** (1993) by C. Carr. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 25, 59-110.
- **Aftereffects of Near-Death Experiences: A Survival Mechanism Hypothesis** (1994) by J. Wren-Lewis. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 26, 107-115.
- **Life Review in a Non-Near-Death Episode: A Comparison with Near-Death Experiences** (1990) by J. M. Holden & C. Guest. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 22, 1-16.

MEDIUMSHIP AND CHANNELING

- **With the Tongues of Men and Angels: A study of Channeling** (1991) by A. Hastings. Fort Worth, TX: Holt.
- **Channeling: Investigations of Receiving Information from Paranormal Sources** (1987) by J. Klimo. Los Angeles: Tarcher.
- **Inner Voices: Distinguishing Transcendent and Pathological Characteristics** (1996) by M. B. Leister. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 28, 1-30.
- **Differences between Trance Channeling and Multiple Personality Disorder on Structured Interview** (1992) by D. J. Hughes. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 24, 181-193.
- **Opening to Channel: How to Connect with Your Guide** (1987) by S. Roman & D. Packer. Tiburon, CA: H. J. Kramer.
- **Changes in Brainwave Activity during Trance Channeling: A Pilot Study** (1990) by D. J. Hughes & N. T. Melville. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 22, 175-189.
- **Inner Voice Experiences: An Exploratory Study of Thirty Cases** (1989) by M. W. Heery. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 21, 73-82.
- **The Afterlife Experiments: Breakthrough Scientific Evidence of Life After Death** (2002) by Gary E. Schwartz & William L. Simon. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- **How To Develop Your ESP Power** (1966/1993). by Jane Roberts. Hollywood, FL: Lifetime Books.

### Figure 4-6. Transpersonal Psychology Research Review

Recommended literature resources that are useful to consult before beginning to conduct a transpersonal research project include:

#### LUCID DREAMING

- **Control Your Dreams** (1989) by J. Gackenbach & J. Bosveld. New York: Harper Perennial.
- **Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming** (1990) by S. LaBerge & H. Rheingold. New York: Ballantine Books.
- **Lucid Dreaming: Some Transpersonal Implications** (1992) by R. N. Walsh & F. Vaughn. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 24, 193-200.

#### PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

- **Transpersonal Psychology Research Review: Psychoactive Substances and Transpersonal States** (1990) by D. Lukoff, R. Zanger, and F. G. Lu. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 22, 107-148.

#### OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCES

- **Toward the Objective Exploration of Non-Ordinary Reality** (1995) by C.T. Tart. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 27, 57-67.

#### BIOFEEDBACK RESEARCH

- **Some Problems in Biofeedback Research** (1978) by A. M. Green & E. E. Green. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 10, 135-142.
- **A Brief Review of Research and Controversies in EEG Biofeedback and Meditation** (1987) by F. G. Echenhofer & M. M. Coombs. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 19, 161-172.

#### MYSTICISM

- **Transpersonal Psychology Research Review: Mysticism** (1988) by D. Lukoff & F. G. Lu. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 20, 161-184.

#### RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS

- **Transpersonal Psychology Research Review: Researching Religious and Spiritual Problems on the Internet** (1995) by D. Lukoff, F. G. Lu., R. Turner, & J. Gackenbach. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 27, 153-170.
- **The Diagnosis of Mystical Experiences with Psychotic Features** (1985) by D. Lukoff. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 17, 155-182.

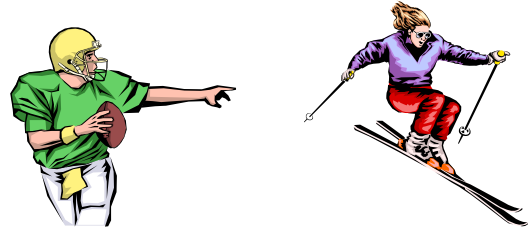
### **Importance of Non-Experimental Evidence**

**Non-experimental evidence has high heuristic value.** Philosopher Stephen Braude (1997) cogently argues that non-experimental evidence is an extremely valuable source of information concerning the nature, limits and existence of psychological phenomena generally and transpersonal phenomena in particular. Such evidence is at least as valuable and reliable as the evidence gathered from laboratory experiment because of its external validity.

**Artificiality of laboratory experiments may be inappropriate to the phenomenon under study.** The artificiality of laboratory experiments with its tightly controlled, sterile, stilted and unnatural environment – the very demands of laboratory research and the nature of the dependent variable tasks required of the subjects – may be cripplingly inappropriate to the phenomena under investigation. For instance, near-death experiences, death bed visions, so-called ghosts and poltergeists, and reincarnation claims that occur spontaneously outside the lab are not to be dismissed or the evidence thrown away simply because of the difficulty of putting them inside the laboratory setting.

**Some phenomena are best studied in naturally occurring contexts.** There are many phenomena studied by psychologists (and other scientists) that cannot be easily removed from their naturally-occurring context, dissected into component variables, and then independently manipulated or controlled (e.g., the ability to be happy, compassionate, find meaning in suffering, chair a psychology department, write a PhD dissertation, or manage a baseball team).

**Some human capacities are best studied in its natural setting.** Many psychological abilities and capacities can be adequately understood only in its natural setting (e.g., many athletic activities can be studied only in the context of a game or during the pressure of actual contests). Many psychological phenomena and psychic functioning occurs most naturally and typically in response to human needs, rather than those contrived for the purposes of scientific experimentation. This is why William James' *Varieties of Religious Experiences* is such a rich source of insight and understanding into dramatic forms of religious behavior and attitudes.



**Laboratory demonstrations rule out real but unique or rare events.** Focusing only on repeatable phenomena rules out studying events that are real but unique or rare, imposing artificial limits on human inquiry and on what are considered to be “real” events of nature. Such a partial view rules out more than it includes and provides us a very impoverished view of reality indeed, missing all fish smaller than our scientific net can capture. “Reality exists outside the laboratory as well as inside” (Schmicker, 2002, p. 36).

**The inherent limitation of laboratory demonstration.** Experimentation would not allow us to infer the nature, limits, or even existence of most ordinary human abilities if they did not manifest themselves first in the non-laboratory setting of everyday life. Braud (1997) observes that given the fact that laboratory experiments are originally conducted in order to study kinds of events that occur initially outside the lab, it is ironic to consider that psychologists can dismiss psychological phenomena only in connection with conditions appropriate to formal experimentation. If everything we knew about human experience and behavior were limited to the findings of animal experiments or laboratory demonstration, then we would have a very impoverished human psychology indeed.

**A continuum of evidential validity exists even for laboratory demonstrations.** Certainly there is a possibility of error in observation in anecdotal reports and field observations, but this possibility exists just as readily in laboratory experiments in the reading of instruments, peering through a microscope, or recording participant’s responses on dependent variable outcome measures. Laboratory studies in psychological science also rest on the fallible activities of observation, recording, and instrument reading. Certainly not all eyewitness testimony is scientifically equal or equally admissible as good data. The best anecdotal reports involve multiple, independent witnesses whose testimony agrees. Courts do not rule out all human testimony, but instead put them on a continuum of evidential validity and reliability, and psychology should do the same when it comes to self-reports.



**Laboratory demonstrations are only one of the tools of many tools in science.** There are many tools in the toolbox of science, not only laboratory demonstrations. In the spirit of post-1890 Jamesian psychology and the philosophy of pragmatism, all available scientific methodologies and tools ought to be used to study the phenomena and pursue knowledge without bias and prejudgment—wherever it leads. If evidence conflicts with philosophy, then philosophy should be revised.

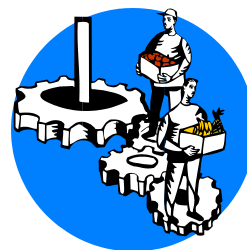
**Transpersonal research does not limit itself to laboratory demonstrations.** Research in transpersonal psychology therefore does not limit itself to laboratory demonstrations, but sees the value of anecdotal reports and field observations, just as William James (1936) did in his study of religious experience. Transpersonal psychology is empirical in the Jamesian sense. It is scientific in the Aristotelian sense. Its scientific data - including clinical studies of mystical and peak experiences and psycholytic LSD therapy and the empirical research of meditation, biofeedback, state-dependent learning, and parapsychological phenomena - have been produced using recognized scientific methods. The publication of results in peer-reviewed journal, the establishment of national and international conferences for the dissemination and discussion of its research, and its representation as a discipline on university campuses in courses and degrees programs are all indications of its legitimacy as a part of empirical psychology.

**Need for a new paradigm.** It has been primarily through its efforts at integrating the psychological insights of the world’s great premodern religious traditions with modern and postmodern concepts of spirituality and models of human personality currently popular in Western psychology that there has arisen an ever-growing awareness of the need for a new paradigm of human inquiry if psychology is going to provide a fully adequate understanding of the nature of human personality in all of its dimensions (Griffin, 1988; Harman, 1991). **Figure 4-7** outlines some differences between a transpersonal vs. traditional approach to research



**Main obstacle to the study of spiritual experiences is not the scientific method.** Transpersonal psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (2000) observes that the main obstacle to the study of spiritual or transpersonal experiences is not the scientific method, but traditional psychology’s commitment to a materialistic, reductionistic, and mechanistic philosophy of nature and a lack of understanding of authentic mysticism based on spiritual experiences.

The great mystical traditions have amassed extensive knowledge about human consciousness and about the spiritual realms in a way that is similar to the method that scientists use in acquiring knowledge about the material world. It involves methodology for inducing transpersonal experiences, systematic collection of data, and intersubjective validation. Spiritual experiences, like any other aspect of reality, can be subjected to careful open-minded research and studied scientifically. There is nothing unscientific about unbiased and rigorous study of transpersonal phenomena and of the challenges they present for materialistic understanding of the world... In actuality, there exists no scientific “proof” that the spiritual dimension does not exist. The refutation of its existence is essentially a metaphysical assumption of Western science, based on an incorrect application of an outdated paradigm. As a matter of fact, the study of holotropic states, in general, and transpersonal experiences, in particular, provides more than enough data suggesting that postulating such a dimension makes good sense. (Grof, 2000, pp. 213, 217)



**Figure 4-7. Differences between Transpersonal and Traditional Approaches to Research**

*Figure 4-7. Differences between Transpersonal and Traditional Approaches to Research*

<i>Transpersonal Approach</i>	<i>Traditional Approach</i>
1. Starting point is subjective, conscious experience	1. Starting point is observable behavior or biological processes (conscious experience is secondary)
2. Respect for the total experience of the person with feelings included.	2. Disconcern for feelings; more concern with biological makeup and environmental stimuli
3. The world is personalized and individualized.	3. The world is impersonal and general.
4. Individual consciousness is unique, valid and significant; worthwhile to study and creative; each of us possesses a thinking self.	4. Consciousness is relatively unimportant by-product of external environmental stimuli or internal biological processes.
5. The unconscious is dynamic, creative, personal, and the source of conscious life.	5. The unconscious is static, mechanistic, impersonal (if acknowledged at all), conscious mind (or its brain) is the source of all thoughts.
6. Verbal reports of experience are a source of valid information.	6. Facts and proofs are gained through sensory data and physical, quantitative measurement.
7. Non-materialistic (mind and body though they operate as one, are basically distinct)	7. Materialistic (mind is brain, brain like all matter is insentient).
8. Non-reductionistic (the whole is something different in quality than the mere sum of its parts)	8. Reductionistic (The whole is simply the complex sum of its individual parts and is thus explainable in terms of its parts) explainable in terms of reinforcement contingencies or biological events.
9. Non-mechanistic (The natural body is organic, not a machine)	9. Mechanistic (The physical body, nature, and the universe is mechanistic like a clock)
10. Experimenter/participant dialogue is encouraged.	10. Reduced contact between experimenter and participant is encouraged; empathy and subjective involvement discouraged.
11. Participant's humanness and experimenter's humanness is emphasized; I – Thou relationship with openness and trust.	11. The It-ness of the participant is emphasized (as in animal experimentation); deception permissible.
12. Freedom and dignity, choice and autonomy of the individual is acknowledged.	12. Control and manipulation of behavior by outside or inside forces are emphasized, not the will or intention of an autonomous agent.
13. Open-mindedness to all areas of human experience like creativity, love, psi, religious experiences, human transformative capacities.	13. Skeptical of all phenomena that cannot be studied in artificial experimental settings or displayed in laboratory demonstrations.
14. Ecological systems view of phenomena as they occur in natural settings emphasized.	14. Laboratory demonstrations are highly prized as most valid demonstrations of the existence, nature, and limits of a phenomenon.



### Is Transpersonal Psychology A Science?

**Transpersonal psychology is criticized as being “unscientific”** Transpersonal psychology has been criticized for being an unscientific, irrational approach – the product of undisciplined thinking by a group of extravagant, mystically-oriented professionals (Ellis & Yeager, 1989, chapter 5). The so-called scientific theories of transpersonal psychology are viewed as the most speculative of metaphysics whose claims violate basic scientific methodology. Transpersonal psychologists themselves have even criticized transpersonal psychology as being unscientific. Harris Friedman (2002), member of the Executive Faculty at Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center, asserts:

Transpersonal psychology has never developed a coherent scientific frame of reference, and despite numerous attempts to adequately define it (e.g., Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Walsh & Vaughn, 1993), still suffers from serious ambiguity regarding its scope and appropriate methodology. As a result, little progress in understanding transpersonal psychological phenomena from a scientific perspective has occurred since the founding of the field. (Friedman, 2002, p. 175).

Let us examine this claim in more detail to determine what merit it has in terms of the original intent of the founders of transpersonal psychology, the meaning of the word “science,” and the methodology that transpersonal psychologists actually use to explore the nature of the phenomena that it studies.

**Relationship to empirical science a key issue.** The importance of the question of the relationship of the transpersonal disciplines to empirical science cannot be denied. As transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber (1993) notes:

It is probably true that the single greatest issue today facing transpersonal psychology is its relation to empirical science. The burning issue is *not* the scope of transpersonal psychology, nor its subject matter, nor its methodology – not its premises, not its conclusions, and not its sources – because, according to modern thinking, *all* of those are purely secondary issues compared with whether or not transpersonal psychology itself is *valid* in the first place. That is, whether it is an *empirical science*. For, the argument goes, if transpersonal psychology is not an empirical science, then it has no valid epistemology, no valid means of acquiring knowledge. There is no use trying to figure out the range or scope or methods of knowledge of the new and “higher” field of transpersonal psychology until you can demonstrate that you *have* actual knowledge of any sort to begin with. (Wilber, 1993, p. 184)



### Original Intent of the Founders of Transpersonal Psychology

There are many transpersonal psychologists who advocate that the field of transpersonal psychology be grounded in scientific methodology of experience, control, manipulation, replicability, verifiability, falsifiability (Baruss, 1996; Boucouvalas, 1980; Braud & Anderson, 1998; Friedman, 2002; Griffin, 1988; Nelson, 1990; Rothberg, 1994; Welwood et al., 1978; Wilber, 1998). Transpersonal psychologists who claim the field should to be a part of scientific psychology recognize the need to articulate descriptions and theories of transpersonal phenomenon in ways that were natural and congenial to the majority of psychologists and to the general public who identify psychology as a science.

**Advocates for a scientific transpersonal psychology.**

Transpersonal psychologist Donald Rothberg (1999) states: “The term *transpersonal* arguably reflects an attempt to develop a secular and broadly ‘scientific’ vocabulary for the exploration and study of phenomena that historically have been usually understood within particular religious and spiritual traditions” (p. 62). Transpersonal psychologist Harris Friedman (2002) in his article “Transpersonal Psychology as a Scientific Field” goes so far as to argue that “to allow practices that are not scientifically based within the field of transpersonal psychology is neither legally nor ethically defensible” (p. 176).

**The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology.** The intent of the major founders of transpersonal psychology was always to establish a discipline that was based on the empirical (i.e., experiential and not only sensory) dimensions of transpersonal phenomena. The statement of purpose of the major publication that launched the field, for example, confirms the scientific intent of its founders when it states “*The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* is concerned with the publication of theoretical and applied research, original contributions, *empirical* papers, articles, and studies...” (American Transpersonal Association, 1969, p. i).

**Abraham Maslow.** Maslow likewise expressed a desire that the transpersonal vision be stated in empirical and scientific terms. In the preface to the second edition of his classic *Toward a Psychology of Being*, Maslow (1968) said: “We need something ‘bigger than we are’ to be awed by and to commit ourselves to in a new, naturalistic, *empirical* [my emphasis], non-churchly sense, perhaps as Thoreau and Whitman, William James and John Dewey did” (Maslow, 1968, p. iv). Elsewhere, Maslow wrote:

If we get the scientific vision – that is, the *empirical* [my emphasis] vision of something which is in truth a human being and which, therefore, can be actualized – if we can actualize that these are not pipe dreams but clear possibilities, then this realization will bring it all within the realm of human activity. What this all means to me is that there is scientific justification for much of what we hope for in each other and for all mankind. (Maslow, 1969a, p. 9)

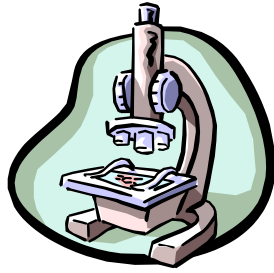
**William James.** William James, one of the godfathers of transpersonal psychology, recommended that the meaning of the word “empirical” be expanded to include the data of sense *and* the data of consciousness (McDermott, 1968, pp. 194-310).

What is it to be “real”? The best definition I know is that which the pragmatist rule gives: “anything is real of which we find ourselves obliged to take account in any way.” Concepts are thus as real as percepts, for we cannot live a moment without taking account of them. (quoted in McDermott, 1968, p. 253-254)

James’s radical empiricism is thought to provide a useful epistemological framework based on “pure experience” for validating the cognitive authenticity and intersubjective significance of spiritual knowledge claims (Frakenberry, 1987).

**Carl Gustav Jung.** C. G. Jung (Nagy, 1991) also argued for an empiricism of direct experience and a consensus theory of truth regarding experiential knowledge obtained in experiences of the sacred. “According to Jung, interior experience reveals genuine knowledge of psychological and archetypal realities which are phenomenologically testable by adequate observers” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 45). Indeed, for Jung the *empirical* nature of psychic life is not to be doubted.

Without a doubt [psychic life] is our only immediate experience. All that I experience is psychic... My sense-impressions – for all that they force upon me a world of impenetrable objects occupying space – are psychic images, and these alone constitute my immediate experience, for they alone are the immediate objects of my consciousness... We are in truth so wrapped about by psychic images that we cannot penetrate at all to the essence of things external to ourselves. All our knowledge consists of the stuff of the psyche, which, because it alone is immediate, is superlatively real. Here, then, is a reality to which the psychologist can appeal – namely, psychic reality... Between the unknown essences of spirit and matter stands the reality of the psyche – psychic reality, the only reality we can experience directly. (Jung, 1960, pp. 353, 384)



One of the thorniest of questions is whether a scientifically based, empirical transpersonal psychology is conceptually and methodologically possible. The answer depends in large part on how we define “science,” “empirical,” and “scientific method.”

**A generalized scientific method.** Scientific method in its broadest sense can be defined as “a method of gaining knowledge whereby hypotheses are tested (instrumentally or experimentally) by reference to experience (‘data’) that is potentially public, or open to repetition (confirmation or refutation) by peers” (Wilber, 1984, p. 13). The scientific method operationalized in this way does not logically require that it confine itself solely to sensory data produced by the physical senses, limit itself to one particular type of repeatable experiential demonstration such as the laboratory experiment, or exclude *a priori* the theoretical possibility of a science of spiritual (psychic) experience, if consensual validation of experiential data can be methodologically obtained.

**Science as “knowledge through causes”.** The word “science” comes from the Latin, “scientia,” which means “knowledge through causes.” Aristotle identified four possible kinds of causes: material, efficient, formal, and final. Using as an example the popular television program, *Star Trek*, the “material” cause of the *Star Trek* images you see on the TV screen is the television tube; the “efficient” cause of those TV images is the electric current and voltage and incoming electromagnetic signals; the “formal” cause of those TV images is the program concept in the mind of Gene Roddenberry; the “final” cause of those TV images is the ultimate purpose of the TV show to expand the imagination of its viewers and motivate them to face and overcome their problems and better their world.



*Modern psychological science restricts itself to material and efficient causes alone. Modern psychological science restricts itself to knowledge through material and efficient causes. The approach to the knowledge of causes (i.e., science) that psychology has borrowed from the natural sciences (i.e., physics, chemistry, biology) looks outward to seemingly externally-originating events in the physical world and ties itself to the data produced by the physical senses (the contents of acts of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling). This restricted approach to the knowledge of material and efficient causes alone may be able to tell us something about the apparent exterior material and efficient causes of exceptional human experiences and human transformative capacities from a simple examination of the brain and the environment, but can say next to nothing about its interior formal and final causes.*



**Overlooks inner dimensionality of material and environmental events.** By delegating the study of final causes to the discipline of theology, and formal causes to the field of philosophy, and limiting itself to knowledge of material and efficient causes, traditional, orthodox Western psychology narrows the boundaries of psychological life it is able to investigate. By confining itself to sensory information, psychological science is forced to pay almost exclusive attention to exterior behavior or material biology, and much of inner life escapes it as a consequence. By limiting the meaning of the word “empirical” to stimuli perceived by the physical senses, psychological science is forced to study only the topmost surfaces of events that are seen, and to overlook the power of thought and emotion, meaning and purpose, will and intentionality, working only with its physical effects and correlates.

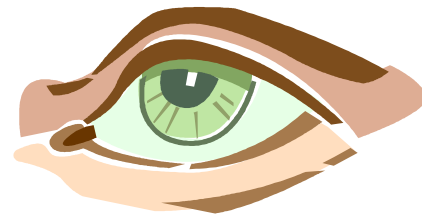


**The disaster of modern psychology.** Psychological science cannot partition one cause off to theology (e.g., final causes), another to philosophy (e.g., formal causes), another to biology and chemistry (e.g., material cause), and another to physics (e.g., efficient causes) and expect to obtain anything like an integrative picture of the true reality of life, mind, and consciousness. Unfortunately, this “divide and conquer” approach has guided the history of science since the Enlightenment. We end up with a fragmented and dissociated body of knowledge that like Humpty Dumpty in the children’s nursery rhyme takes “all the kings horses and all the kings men” to put together again. We end up with a discipline that is in a “crisis of disunity” (Staats, 1991) characterized by theoretical and methodological fractionation, insularity among the “specialities,” scattered psychological associations and university departments, narrowly focused research agendas, conflicting professional priorities, and bits and pieces of knowledge without an organizing theme (Bevan, 1991; Kimble, 1994; Koch, 1993).



**Transpersonal psychology seeks knowledge through all causes.** As an interdisciplinary discipline, transpersonal psychology seeks knowledge through all causes (material, efficient, formal, and final) because all four kinds of causes are important for an accurate and complete understanding of any phenomena. Transpersonal psychology is an *integral* psychology that addresses questions pertaining to all aspects, dimensions, levels of being human, not only the material and efficient (e.g., biological and environmental) causes of experience and behavior.

**Empiricism includes the experiential.** If transpersonal psychology is to obtain valid and significant knowledge of transpersonal phenomena through all four causes (material, efficient, formal, and final), then the word “empirical” has to be expanded to include *experience*. Once we understand that “empirical” in the broadest sense does not have to be confined to sensory experience alone, then it will become possible to accept the scientific canon that “genuine knowledge must be ultimately grounded in experience, in data, in evidence” without failing to see that, in addition to sensory experience, there is (a) the psychological (mental) *experience* of logic, mathematics, phenomenology, and hermeneutics and (b) the spiritual (psychic) *experience* of mysticism, cosmic consciousness, *satori*, *gnosis*, revelation, and meditation. It will then be easier to understand how the spirit of scientific inquiry can be carried into the interior domain of spirituality to disclose and produce an empirical science of spirituality.



**“Empirical” and “sensory” are not the same things.** Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1990) in his book *Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm* points out that it is a fallacy to think that the “empiricism” of the scientific method should refer narrowly to sensory experience alone. Sensory experience is only one of several different but equally legitimate types of empiricism. Webster’s (Merriam, 1961) *New Collegiate Dictionary*, for instance, defines the noun “empiric” (derived from the Greek, *empiricus*, meaning “experienced”) as “one who relies upon practical experience.” The adjective “empirical” is defined as “depending on experience or observation alone...pertaining to or founded upon, experiment or experience.” The noun “experience” is defined as “The actual living through an event or events; ...hence, the effect upon the judgment or feelings produced by personal and direct impressions.” “Empiricism,” in other words, in its broadest sense means *experiential* and includes direct, interior, immediate, psychological experience in general.

**“Scientific” and “sensory” are not the same things.**

Just as “empirical” and “sensory” are not the same things, so also “scientific” and “sensory” are not the same things. The dividing line between “scientific” and “non-scientific” is not between sensory and non-sensory, physical and metaphysical, but between “experientially testable” and “non-testable proof by authority.” If transpersonal phenomena are to be studied by the scientific method, then science, on the one hand, must recognize that its own method does not rest on narrow empiricism (sensory experience only) but on broad empiricism in the general sense (direct experience in general).



**A generalized empirical method.** Bernard J. F. Lonergan (1957), in his treatise *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, describes what such a “generalized empirical method” for the study of the data of consciousness might look like.

It may be urged that empirical method, at least in its essential features, should be applicable to the data of consciousness no less than to the data of sense. ... We have followed the common view that empirical science is concerned with sensibly verifiable laws and expectations. If it is true that essentially the same method could be applied to the data of consciousness, then respect for ordinary usage would require that a method, which only in its essentials is the same, be named a generalized empirical method (p. 72). ... A generalized empirical method that stands to the data of consciousness as empirical method stands to the data of sense. ... As applied solely to the data of consciousness, it consists in determining patterns of intelligible relations that unite the data explanatorily. ... However, generalized method has to be able to deal, at least comprehensively, not only with the data within a single consciousness but also with the relations between different conscious subjects, between conscious subjects and their milieu or environment, and between consciousness and its neural basis. (p. 243-244)

**The “inner empiricism” of direct experience.** Ferrer (2002) refers to transpersonal psychology’s attempt to ground the validity of its knowledge claims in intrasubjective experience or states of consciousness as “inner empiricism” (pp. 41-70).

Transpersonal and spiritual knowledge claims are valid because they can be replicated and tested through disciplined introspection, and can therefore be intersubjectively verified or falsified. Central to inner empiricism, then, is an expansion of the meaning of ‘public’ observation from the merely perceptible through the senses to any potentially intersubjective meaning or referent. (Ferrer, 2002, p. 42)

This extension of the word “empirical” to “experiential” in the name of developing an *empiricism of direct experience* is a necessary and valuable step if transpersonal knowledge claims are to be accepted as valid by mainstream psychology and to the general public who identify psychology as a science.

If an empirical science of transpersonal experience and behavior is theoretically possible, then what would it look like? Methodologically speaking, how would such a science be conducted, what would it reveal, and could it be actually verified? Let us look at two such research paradigms in the field of transpersonal psychology.



**Tart’s State-Specific Sciences**

**State dependent learning.** Charles T. Tart (1971, 1976, 1992b) proposes that most transpersonal experiences involve an altered state of consciousness (ASC) (e.g., meditative, mystical, hypnotic, psychedelic) and are therefore subject to state-dependent effects. He proposes the establishment of *state-specific sciences* to handle the fact that some knowledge may only be available when you are back in that same state of consciousness it was originally created in, something like the “encoding specificity” principle in cognitive psychology – retrieval of information is best if you are in the same context as when you originally encoded the information.

**The “state-specific” paradigm.** According to the “state-specific” paradigm, if knowledge gained in an altered state of consciousness is to be tested by another individual, then that individual would have to enter the “same” state of consciousness in order to verify it. “In principle, consensual validation of internal phenomena by a trained observer is possible” (Tart, 1983, p. 213). This assumes that a person is able to enter into the “same” altered state of consciousness as another. Consciousness research indicates that states of consciousness that are experientially, descriptively, and phenomenologically indistinguishable (e.g., psychedelic and mystical experiences) may be produced by different causes (e.g., drugs, meditation, fasting, sensory deprivation) (Grof, 2000) – a phenomenon theoretically referred to as “the principle of causal indifference” (Stace, 1988, p. 29).

**Challenges of the “state-specific” paradigm.** It may be difficult to demonstrate that one hypnotic, meditative, mystical, psychedelic state of consciousness is equivalent to another, however. Tart recognizes that states of consciousness are not homogeneous, and within the “same” discrete state of consciousness there are many levels. My normal state of consciousness may be your altered state of consciousness, and vice versa, and unless some sort of psychophysical scaling methods are used such as those used to obtain measurements of trance depth in self-hypnosis, state equivalence may be difficult to determine. If shifts in an entire state of consciousness result from changes in the functioning or interaction of a single psychological or neural process (e.g., exteroceptors, interoceptors, input processing, subconscious processes, sense of identity, evaluation and decision-making processes, emotions, space/time sense, memory, motor output), then much experimental control over set and setting will be required to assure the relative stability of any discrete state of consciousness (if such a thing exists).

**There are no duplicate states of consciousness.** It may be that no identical duplication of states of consciousness is possible, that variations may be slight but are always present, and that the state of consciousness achieved by one individual is never precisely the same state of consciousness reached by another individual (just as identical twins are hardly identical). One state may resemble another, but exact duplication is impossible.

The very attempt to duplicate a state of consciousness (or even a single thought, for that matter) would create strains and pulls that change it to a greater or lesser degree, actually forcing the psychological or neural processes to line up in a different pattern.

**Four basic rules of “essential science.”** Despite these difficulties with the state-specific paradigm, Tart (1983, 2001) identifies four useful rules of scientific method that can be applied to transpersonal research into altered states of consciousness.

1. **Observation (or experiential apprehension).** Observation of psychological processes is more difficult than observation of external objects because of its greater complexity and because our language is well given to describing the world of “outward things” perceived by the physical senses but lacks a proper vocabulary to describe the inner world of thoughts, emotions, and images perceived by the “inner senses.”
2. **Public Nature of Observation.** Observations are assumed to be replicable by any similarly specially trained observer. Consensual validation may be restricted by the fact that only observers in the same altered state of consciousness (ASC) are able to communicate adequately with each other. They may not be able to communicate adequately to someone in a different state of consciousness. Ultimately, “the validity of state-specific knowledge is anchored in the intersubjective agreement of adequately trained observers” (Ferrer, 2001, p. 47).
3. **Theorizing.** Theories about altered states of consciousness need to be internally consistent, comprehensive, logical and comprehensible. A person in one state of consciousness might come to a different conclusion about the nature of the same events observed in a different state of consciousness (Globus, 1980). It is important therefore that scientists trained in the same state of consciousness check on the logical validity of each other’s theorizing.
4. **Observable Consequences.** When a certain experience (observed condition) has occurred (if you do this), another (predicted) kind of experience will follow (you will know this).





### **Ken Wilber's Three "Eyes" of Knowledge**

Transpersonal theorist, Ken Wilber (1990) identifies three key features of the scientific method, and then generalizes these features to create what can be termed a "generalized empirical method of spiritual experience."

**Step 1. Instrumental injunction.** The first key feature of Wilber's (1990) *generalized empirical method of spiritual experience* refers to the set of instructions, procedures, exercises, activities, techniques, method, praxis, or experimental designs necessary to produce a direct experience or apprehension of spiritual Reality. Instrumental injunctions are always in the form: "If you want to *know* this, you must *do* this." For instance, if you want to see a cell, you must look through a microscope. If you want to know Spanish, you need to learn the language. If you want to know the truth of the Central Limit theorem, then you must learn statistics. If you want to know enlightenment, you must practice meditation.



**In order to "see" the "eye" must be trained.** The "instrumental injunction" (Wilber's phrase) implies that for whatever type of knowledge (sensory-empirical, cognitive-rational, transpersonal-spiritual), the appropriate "eye" must be trained (eye of flesh, eye of mind, eye of contemplation) until it is adequate (*adequatio*) to the illumination. Learning to read ushers us into a world that is not immediately given to the physical senses alone. Learning Buddhist meditation or Christian interior prayer discloses insights that cannot be perceived with physical senses or the reasoning mind alone.

**"If you want to know this, then do this."** What the founders of the major world religions gave to their disciples was not a series of dogmatic beliefs but a series of practices or prescriptions: If you want to *know* God, you must *do* this. For Christians, this may take the form: "Do this in remembrance of me," "If anyone loves me, he will keep my commandments," and so forth. For Jews, this may take the form: "If you want to know God, you must pray, keep holy the Sabbath, and obey the ten commandments." These directions were aimed to reproduce in the apostles and disciples the spiritual experiences or data of the founder. Transpersonal psychologist Roger Walsh's (1999) book, *Essential Spirituality: The Seven Central Practices to Awaken Heart and Mind*, for instance, is filled with simple, powerful exercises aimed to produce a direct experience or apprehension of the holy in those willing to devote the time and effort to their practice.



**Step 2. Direct apprehension.** The second key feature of Wilber's (1990) *generalized empirical method of spiritual experience* refers to the insight, experience, illumination, data, or cognitive content disclosed, evoked, elicited, or produced by carrying out the injunction (procedure, method, practice). The injunction leads to a direct disclosing of data, and these data are a crucial ground of genuine knowledge. All the founders of ancient spiritual traditions and their disciples underwent a series of profound spiritual experiences and direct apprehensions of what William James called "the higher part of the universe" (James, 1936, p. 507).

**Phenomenological accounts of direct illumination.**

The writings of Christian contemplatives, mystics, and saints (e.g., St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, Lady Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckhart, St. Augustine, Catherine of Siena, Origen) and non-Christian contemplatives, mystics, and saints (e.g., Sri Ramakrishna who died in 1886, Ramana Maharshi who died in 1950, and Paramahansa Yogananda who died in 1952) provide excellent descriptive accounts of individual illumination, enlightenment, and direct apprehension of insights during mystical states of consciousness. Other accounts include the following:

- Evelyn Underhill's (1961) *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*
- William James's (1936) *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study of Human Nature*
- Rudolf Otto's (1923) *Idea of the Holy*
- Paramahansa Yogananda's (1946/1974) *Autobiography of a Yogi*
- Lex Hixon's (1978/1989) *Coming Home: The Experience of Enlightenment in Sacred Traditions*
- Piero Ferrucci's (1990) *Inevitable Grace: Breakthroughs in the Lives of Great Men and Women*
- Anonymous (1961) *The Cloud of Unknowing*
- Bernadette Roberts's (1985) *The Path to No-Self: Life at the Center*
- Ralph Waldo Trine's (1897) *In Tune With the Infinite*
- Richard Maurice Bucke's (1901/1969) *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*
- Richard D. Mann's (1984) *The Light of Consciousness*

**Mystical consciousness.** Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1985) presents a description of mystical consciousness disclosed to him based on his 25 years of practicing Eastern forms of meditation:

In the mystical consciousness, Reality is apprehended directly and immediately, meaning without any mediation, any symbolic elaboration, any conceptualization, or any abstractions; subject and object become one in a timeless and spaceless act that is beyond any and all forms of mediation.... contacting reality in its 'suchness,' its 'isness,' its 'thatness,' without any intermediaries; beyond words, symbols, names, thoughts, images. (Wilber, 1985, p. 7)

**Illumination of the soul.** Transpersonal psychologist Thomas Yeomans (1992), in a monograph titled, *Spiritual Psychology: An Introduction*, describes his direct apprehension of the "soul" as disclosed through the practice of the techniques and exercises of Psychosynthesis:

When touched directly, it [the soul] is experienced as a pure beingness that is connected as well to all other beings and to an experience of larger Life, Great Spirit, or God. ...Though there is no specific content to this experience, there is a profound aliveness and connectedness, a freedom from the fear of death, and acceptance of one's life *as it is being lived in its uniqueness now*, and an infusion of joy and gratitude for Life as a whole. .... Sometimes the soul is experienced as that which gives meaning to life, or a sense of destiny and purpose. At other times it is experienced as that which guides and sustains a life. At still others it is experienced as that which goes beyond life and death, a principle of eternity and infinity that pervades and infuses mortal life. In still other traditions it is described as being no-thing, or emptiness, or a void, that which has no specific content, but which is in, and of, itself most alive and connected to all Life. And always it is seen as central and valued in human existence, sought for, discovered, and cultivated and then lived as fully as possible within the confines of ordinary daily existence. (pp. 13-14)

**Not all experiences of the sacred epiphanies.** Not all experiences of the numinous are of the extraordinary variety (Sinetar, 1986). “For many ordinary believers, religious experience will be in a lower key, mediated through sacrament, prayer, silence, and obedience” (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 119).

**When transpersonal experiences transform ordinary lives.** Psychologists William Miller and Janet C’de Baca (2001) describe contemporary examples of epiphanies and sudden insights that result in “vivid, surprising, benevolent, and enduring personal changes” (p. 4), some of which possess the characteristics of conventional mystical experience (i.e., ineffability, noetic quality, transience, passivity, unity, transcendence, awe, positivity, distinctiveness) (Chapter 10). Spontaneous experiences of the numinous are apparently more common than usually supposed, but can be cultivated by deliberately working to retrain habits of thought and behavior along more spiritual lines by long-term contemplative practice (Ferrucci, 1990; Hixon, 1989).



**Step 3. Communal confirmation (or rejection).** The third key feature of Wilber’s *generalized empirical method of spiritual experience* refers to the checking of results (the data, the evidence) with others who have appropriately completed or adequately performed the injunction. This is the intersubjective realm of shared knowing, the process of consensually proving and validating personal, interior knowledge with the personal, interior knowledge of others. This implies that if other competent individuals faithfully repeat the injunction or procedure (“Practice interior prayer”), then they will experience generally similar data (“Knowledge of God”).

The knowledge gained in any intuitive apprehension is considered valid only if it is confirmed by other individuals who have gone through the injunction and apprehension stages in each specific domain of experience. And vice versa, if these claims are not consensually established, they can be regarded as empirically falsified and refuted. (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 47-48)

**Checking one’s direct illumination with someone else who is adequately trained.** Any particular individual’s apprehension may be “mistaken,” and therefore at every stage, she or he has recourse to checking and obtaining confirmation (or refutation) by others who are adequately trained in the injunction. For Wilber, checking one’s direct illumination with the spiritual director is like checking math problems with the teacher when one is first learning geometry. If a person refuses to train the particular “inner senses” then we are justified in disregarding that person’s opinions as to communal proof. Someone who refuses to learn Christian meditation, for instance cannot be allowed to vote on the truth of the Holy Spirit, just as someone who has not examined the *psi* literature first-hand is inadequate to form a reasonable judgment about it.



**Verbal reports as data.** Some may object that spiritual knowledge is basically private and is not subject to verification. If that were the case, then all phenomenological accounts or self-reports of subjective experience would be suspect and none could be used as legitimate data in psychological experiments or clinical practice. Yet the fact of the matter is that protocol analysis – or the use of the subject’s own verbal reports as data – is frequently used to probe the individual’s internal states and to gain verifiable information about the course, structure, and content of an individual’s cognitive processes, past experiences, and current knowledge base. Verbal reports as data is a legitimate method of obtaining empirically verifiable data in a wide variety of areas in experimental psychology, including, psychophysics, perception, attention and reaction time, conditioning and learning, remembering and forgetting, thinking and problem solving, intelligence and personality (see Ericsson & Simon, 1984, for a theoretical and empirical review of the major issues surrounding the use and validity of verbal reports as data).



**Spiritual knowledge is “public” because it can be communicated, shared, and transmitted.** Wilber (1990) argues that spiritual knowledge is no more “private” and incommunicable than mathematical knowledge (i.e., geometric theorems are public knowledge to trained mathematicians but not to non-mathematicians). Spiritual knowledge is public knowledge to all contemplatives and mystics because it can be *communicated and shared* from teacher to student (e.g. the *transmission* of Buddha’s enlightenment all the way down to present-day Buddhist masters). A trained consciousness is a public, sharable, and intersubjective consciousness; otherwise it could not be trained or communicated in the first place.

**What does it mean to say we can have “empirical verification” of a spiritual experience?** According to Wilber (1990), to say that we can have “empirical verification” of a psychological (mental) or spiritual (psychic) experience simply means that we have some sort of direct, interior, immediate evidence (or data) for our assertions that we can publicly check (confirm or refute) with the aid of someone trained or educated in the domain. Both mathematical knowledge and spiritual knowledge are forms of “internal” knowledge. There is no external sensory proof that  $-1^2 = 1$  and no microscope or telescope have yet spotted the psyche. The truth of such internal knowledge, nevertheless, can be validated and proven to be true by a community of trained peers who know the interior conventions of psychological experience (or the interior conventions of mathematical deduction) and who decide whether the direct apprehension is true or not.



### **Mystical Consciousness as A Creative Act**

So far we have been discussing mystical consciousness as a simple *expansion* of normal creative capacity, in which the primary creative impulse is *tied to already existing knowledge* (i.e., customs, traditions, conventions, dogmas, sacred teachings) and *constrained and limited* by past learning and institutional memory (i.e., instrumental injunctions, illuminations, communal validation) of the world religion. One can also conceive of the possibility, however, of experiences of mystical consciousness that *surpass* normal creative capacity in the sense of exceeding or going beyond existing custom and convention about how to experience enlightenment (“instrumental injunctions”), what a mystical experience is supposed to look like (“direct apprehensions”), and whether one’s private vision and version of the “unknown” reality is valid and real by checking it with other’s visions and versions and the “official” line. (“communal confirmation.”).

**The “unknown” reality of mystical consciousness.** Transpersonal writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1977a, 1979b) tells how the “unknown” reality of mystical consciousness is “an ocean with many shores” (Jorge Ferrer’s phrase) and that spiritual knowing is a participatory affair between the individual and the universe, viewed through one’s own unique vision – valid, experiential, and “not therefore *unreal*, but one of the appearances that reality takes” (Roberts, 1979b, p. 398). Private visions and unique understandings of what William James (1936) called “the higher part of the universe” (p. 507) as an individual experiences it may be quite legitimate, real, and valid even though they would be regarded as “mistaken” because they do not conform with conventional doctrine or official religious dogma. Why should we be forced to interpret our unique mystical experience in the terms used by those who had gone “before” in order to make it more legitimate, acceptable, and believable? Why should we be concerned or worried if our private interpretations of transcendent realities do not agree?

**Instrumental injunctions as interior conventions that limit experience.** The epistemological requirement that knowledge gained in a mystical experience is considered valid only if other individuals adequately trained in the injunction confirm it rigidly limits, orders, and stratifies experience of “the higher part of the universe” (James’s phrase). The “instrumental injunctions” (Wilber’s phrase) become interior conventions that, like outer ones, force the individual seeker to conform to the generally accepted ideas of what it means to be “enlightened” and to make his or her inner experience (“direct apprehensions”) conform to preconceived packaging (“communal verification”) form by quite conventional religious beliefs that makes certain experiences possible and hides other very real realities that the seeker then does not perceive.



**Different religions turn the founder’s original interpretations into dogmatic conventions.** When the founders of the major world religions (Jesus, Buddha, Moses, Mohamud) gave their disciples a series of injunctions designed to reproduce in the disciples the spiritual experiences of the founder, those directions represented *original* interpretations, individual *versions* of paths beyond ego to transcendent realities. Those individual founders, interpreting their initial experiences to the best of their abilities, provided quite valid accounts of the transcendent realities they encountered, explored, and communicated to their disciples. The pictures of supreme reality that the different founders brought back with them, however, varied considerably from one another. The version of supreme reality that Jesus encountered (a personal God) varies considerably from the one that Buddha experienced in a different part of the world (an impersonal Nirvana). If we expect photographs of our own exterior physical world to be diverse according to where we go, why should we expect or require all of the “pictures” of interior transcendent realities to look alike?

**Instrumental injunctions program experience ahead of time.** At one time the teachings of Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammed represented initial original visions and individual interpretations of supreme reality expressed in terms that the people of that time and place could understand – otherwise they might make no sense to them. Having heard the teachings of Jesus, Buddha, or Mohammed, the disciples would begin to clothe their own private visions of supreme reality (or God) – as he or she experienced it - in the guise of the ideas, concepts, and images embodied in the teachings of the founders. The disciples no longer insisted upon their own private visions and unique expressions of the transcendent realities that they encountered when they carried out the required injunctions. After all, who would accept them? Later, after consulting beforehand with those who have been adequately trained in the injunction (“If you do this, then you will experience this”) and told what to expect, individual experiences of new disciples became programmed ahead of time. Programmed ahead of time, individuals would perceive data according to the conventions, custom, and dogmas that had now become established. The clear vision, the original interpretation, the individual reaction, the unique expression and vision of the founders and subsequent disciples became lost. If one’s inner experience did not conform, then it would be called “mistaken,” and you would be considered an outcast or at worst a heretic. And who wants that given the consequences of such a path?

**There is a difference between psychic reality and the maps given to us to depict it.** Guided tours of transcendent reality in which disciples are told to follow certain injunctions in order to experience the “same” thing rigidly limits experience and behavior rather than express it. In certain terms, mystical consciousness deals with the very nature of creativity itself. As such, the individual may want to experience “the higher part of the universe” directly through his or her own perceptions, as divorced from the customs and conventions set forth by the injunctions, teachings, and communal confirmations (or rejections) of those who have gone “before.” Those experiences are also valid and legitimate – are not therefore *unreal* and “mistaken” - but represent other appearances that the “unknown” spiritual reality may take and a picture of a very real environment that others could but do not perceive because of temperament, educational training, past experience, or cultural conditioning.



### Do Transpersonal Research Methods Reveal Actual Transpersonal Realities?

While being regarded as psychologically legitimate experience, transpersonal psychologists differ in their judgments about whether transpersonal or mystical experiences do actually reveal direct knowledge about the objective existence of extra mental transcendental realities.

On one side of the issue are those who would argue for “ontological neutrality” and a neo-Kantian agnostic epistemology regarding the existence of the object (noema) to which transpersonal experience (noesis) refers. Nothing is to be said about the nature of the reality that makes a particular mystical or spiritual experience possible. Carl Jung, Peter Nelson, and Harris Friedman are representative of this point of view.

On the other side of the issue are those who would argue that splitting ontology and epistemology into two pieces does not do justice to the validity and legitimacy of spiritual experiences as states of knowledge. To assert the validity of transpersonal experiences without acknowledge the existence of the referent to which these experiences refer is epistemologically suspect and spiritually alienating. Aldous Huxley and Ken Wilber are representatives of this point of view.

**“Ontological neutrality”** C. G. Jung declared himself agnostic on this issue. The interconnection between psychological experience and metaphysical realities is uncertain.

The fact that metaphysical ideas exist and are believed in does nothing to prove the actual existence of their content or of the object they refer to (Jung, 1968, p. 34)... Psychology treats all metaphysical claims as mental phenomena, and regards them as statements about the mind and its structure that derive ultimately from certain unconscious dispositions (Jung, 1992, pp. 48-49)... Mystics are people who have a particularly vivid experience of the processes of the collective unconscious. Mystical experience is experience of the archetypes. (Jung, 1935, p. 218)

Transpersonal psychologist Peter Nelson (1990) argues for an agnostic position in the name of radical empiricism concerning the nature of *that which is experienced* during moments of transcendental experience.

Ontological assumptions (such as the objective empirical reality of science or the divine of many religions) often force the direction of the research and thus pre-draw conclusions. In effect, neutrality requires that we suspend...as far as possible, all assumptions vis-à-vis the ultimate nature of the thing and events of our world and *return to the empiricism of our direct experience* (Nelson, 1990, p. 36).

*The assumptions about the nature of reality, the “self,” ultimate values, human motivation, and the like, that underlie all of the various approaches to transpersonal psychology (from biological to environmental to cognitive to psychodynamic to phenomenological) function as cognitive schema that shape selective attention, perception, memory and interpretation. A priori assumptions, presuppositions, and cognitive commitments may set up a barrier to a more pluralistic understanding of spiritual knowledge, and a can lead to a failure to “honor the diversity of ways in which the sense of the sacred can be cultivated, honored, and lived,” and overlooks the possibility that “spiritual traditions [may] cultivate, enact, and express, in interaction with a dynamic and indeterminate spiritual power, potentially overlapping but independent spiritual ultimates” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 4).*

In some cases, these presuppositions have reduced cognitive flexibility and the openness to new experiences necessary for proposing more adequate theories about the nature of transpersonal events and the human psyche that manifests them. Strictly biological and environmental approaches, for instance, have tended to dismiss the entire interior dimension of soul and spirit in their explanations of transpersonal events.

The field of transpersonal studies continues to evolve and while the physical and metaphysical assumptions that underlie the six perspectives may be valid, but partial truths, they all have a status of working hypotheses in the field and “their validity should be researched and assessed rather than presupposed” (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993b, p. 202).

Harris Friedman in his article “Transpersonal Psychology as a Scientific Field” likewise recommends a Neo-Kantian agnostic epistemology regarding spiritual or mystical claims of the extrasensory status of metaphysical realities (Friedman, 2002).

I think it wise, from a scientific perspective, to remain agnostic about the transcendent, even as to whether it can be meaningfully said to exist since it is beyond any categories, even the most fundamental ones of existence and nonexistence. Abandoning all direct speculation about the transcendent would be a productive scientific strategy. Those who operate under the banner of transpersonal psychology while engaging in speculation about the transcendent or, worse, endorsing one system or another that allegedly develops transcendent qualities as part of their professional practice should be regarded as outside the domain of the field... No religious or spiritual approaches to the transcendent need to be questioned as long as they are not promoted as part of the field of transpersonal psychology. (Friedman, 2002, p. 183)

Peter Nelson (1990) believes that there is need to develop models of altered states of consciousness that do *not* imply or presuppose any metaphysical framework or that require a religious or quasi-religious interpretation in order to make sense of the experience. “Our need is to conceptualize transpersonal experiences in a manner which begins to approach *ontological* neutrality, leaving interpretation to the individual reader” (Nelson, 1990, p. 36).

Ontological neutrality is an attitude toward our research in which we admit that we do not yet know what is “ultimately” real. In other words, we assume an open view towards making any final ascriptions of “meaning” and “truth” because we realize that not all the “data” is in yet, nor is it likely ever to be. (Nelson, 1990, p. 45)

Nelson (1990) proposes that any awareness, perception or state that is experienced be understood in terms of three dimensions: the “mind body psychotechnologies” that produced them (e.g., breathwork, psychedelics, self-hypnosis, meditation, etc.), the personality characteristics of the participant, and the phenomenological attributes of the experience itself. By focusing on the experiential methods that “cause” the transpersonal experience, the detailed phenomenological description of the experience, and personality facts (e.g., absorption, affectivity, arousal, social orientation), transpersonal psychologists will be better able to understand the experience in itself without reference to “reductionist” metaphysical explanations.

By conceiving personality factors as the background “set” of the experience (moderator variable), psychotechnology “setting” as the triggering mechanism (independent variable), and phenomenological report as providing the picture of the experiential quality of the experience (dependent variable), the researcher has a “matrix” that can be understood as “both creating and defining any awareness, perception, and state experienced or known and thus can be understood as *both cause and description of that experiential state* (Nelson, 1990, p. 37).

[This] three-dimensional, three-type model allows investigators to create an operationalized definition of experiential states which do not depend for their explanation on an ontological source outside the experiential data base itself... The qualitative description of the experience taken together with “set” and “setting” characteristics becomes a total definition of the experience without requiring any external references... [and] without having to solve the problem of epistemological referents either in relation to the empirical world (objective world) or in relation to the supposed experiential “container” of consciousness (subjective world). (Nelson, 1990, p. 44-45)



Many transpersonal psychologists would regard the call for “ontological neutrality” and a neo-Kantian agnostic epistemology as an extreme cautionary position concerning the nature of *that which is experienced* during moments of mysticism and transcendence.

Phenomenologically speaking, consciousness always has an object, except perhaps in those “higher” absolute states of consciousness described by Eastern religions in which “consciousness without an object” is believed to occur (Merrell-Wolff, 1973). Phenomenological psychology asserts that every act of experiencing (noesis) has a corresponding content (noema) that is inextricably interconnected together. There is a radical interpenetration between the act of knowing and what is known, between the cognizing self and the cognized world. “Noesis” and “noema” are of one piece. Psychology has too long been burdened by the theory that its so-called facts exist in isolation from the subjectivity that gives those facts meaning. The experiencing and the experienced are participatory in nature, co-created. Every experience requires a “hook” to hang its projections upon.

We cannot ignore, overlook, or deny the metaphysical import of spiritual knowledge and cannot remain silent about the ontological and metaphysical implications of mystical events. As Ferrer (2002, p. 127) points out:

In this account, William James’ (1902/1936) often quoted words are quite pertinent: “Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are state of insight into depths of truths unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full if significance and importance” (p. 300). Or as Bolle (1968) puts it in his minor classic book on the study of religion: “More than ‘mere’ experience, the mystic experience is knowledge” (p. 113). (quoted in Ferrer, 2002, p. 127)

Unless one believes that there is no epistemic validity to transpersonal or spiritual experiences, that there is no valid cognitive content to the act of cognition that occurs in transpersonal experiences, that there is no transpersonal knowing, then one cannot side-step the issue that transpersonal experiences may reveal valid and legitimate aspects of reality. Just as it is impossible to propose a cognitive psychology without simultaneously assuming some implicit theory of personality who has these cognitions, so also is it impossible to assume that transpersonal or spiritual experiences are legitimate and valid without also presupposing something about the reality that make such experiences or events possible. As soon as one make a statement of fact concerning a mystical experience, one automatically makes some cognitive or ontological commitment to a particular worldview or notion about reality or about the self whose subjectivity gives that statement of fact meaning. To assert the validity of transpersonal experiences without acknowledging the existence of the referent to which these experiences refer is to give only half the story.

Most modern interpreters of Eastern religions assert that the transcendental realities apprehended in certain mystical states do actually exist independent of the participant, that these realities can be empirically and experimentally verified and validated through personal practice and experience and through intersubjective verification or refutation (Huxley, 1970).

Virtually all contemplative traditions have claimed that objects of mystical insight such as Buddha Nature, God or Brahman are realities that exist independently of any human experience; they have also held that these objective realities can be apprehended through particular experiences (or data) that can be confirmed by the contemplative’s mentor or fellow seeker. On this they are, broadly speaking, empirical. (Murphy, 1992, p. 11)





### **Limitations of a Purely Intrapersonal “Experiential Approach”**

**Emphasis on the “experiential” and “empirical”** The emphasis upon the “experiential” character of transpersonal phenomena is understandable in terms of the original humanistic origins of the transpersonal orientation in peak experiences and studies of self-actualization. It is also understandable in terms of the discipline’s efforts to bolster the validity of transpersonal knowledge claims in the attempt to appear “empirical” and thus scientific.

**Limitations of a purely intrasubjective “experiential” approach** Transpersonal psychology’s emphasis upon the “experiential” and “empirical”, if taken to extremes, however, can become limiting and counterproductive, (Ferrer, 2002). Understanding transpersonal and spiritual phenomena solely in terms of individual inner experiences, according to Ferrer, perpetuates the Cartesian split between a subject “having” an experience of a separate spiritual “event.” Once this split is affirmed in theory, then it automatically raises the problem of correspondence between “my” experiences, on the one hand, and the “event” on the other. My mystical experience (as primarily the inner, subjective representation of an externally, independent and objective world) now requires that my knowledge claim be justified by matching it against a pre-given world that exists “already out there now real” (Lonergan’s phrase) independently of human cognition.

Giving up this dualism calls us *to move beyond objectivism and subjectivism toward the recognition of the simultaneously interpretive and immediate nature of human knowledge* (Ferrer, 2002, p. 142)...*No pre-given ultimate reality exists... Different spiritual realities can be enacted through intentional or spontaneous creative participation in an indeterminate spiritual power or Mystery* (Ferrer, 2002, p. 151)... Different mystical traditions enact and disclose different spiritual universes. (Ferrer, 2002, p. 148)

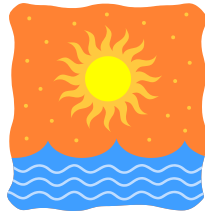
**Emphasis on the “experiential.”** By confining spirituality to the subjective world of the individual, however, the phenomena becomes reduced, limited, selective to only one pole of the phenomena (the subject, the noesis). This has the effect of ultimately marginalizing spirituality to the realm of the private and subjective, instead of expanding it to the objective and intersubjective (Ferrer, 2002). All human phenomena have subjective and objective, individual and collective dimensions (Wilber, 1990, 1997, 1998, 2000a).

The criteria... of spiritual knowing can no longer be simply dependent on the picture of the reality disclosed...but on the kind of transformation of self, community, and world facilitated by their enaction and expression...[and] their capability to free individuals, communities, and cultures from gross and subtle forms of narcissism, egocentricism, and self-centeredness. (Ferrer, 2002, p. 167-168)

Ferrer (2002) argues that we need to extend our understanding of spirituality out of the merely interior and individual. Transpersonal experiences are not merely inner experiences. Spirituality should not be reduced merely to the subjective world of the individual. Transpersonal experiences, by definition, extend the subjective outward as when “self-identity expands and encompasses other aspects of the psyche, life, and cosmos” (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a).

Transpersonal events do not exist solely within the experience of an individual but are essentially “non-local events,” and can occur also in relationships, communities, collective identities, and places. “Their confinement to the realm of individual inner experience is both inadequate and erroneous” (Ferrer, 2002, p.124). To argue otherwise, is to overlook the “trans-human sources of spiritual creativity” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 126).

**Vision of a participatory spirituality.** “What is called a transpersonal experience is better understood as the participation of an individual in a transpersonal event” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 126). Ferrer (2002) is not denying that there is a world out there apart from human ideation. There *is* something out there, but the features of that “something” are plastic, malleable, dynamic, not independent nor fixed, but depend upon the perceptive mechanisms and subjective focus operative at the time.



*We can remain aware of the distinction between what is subjective and what is objective, between subject and object, epistemology and ontology, while assuring that the whole is not broken into two pieces. The boundaries between what is objective and subjective are not clearly demarcated. We are always a part of any reality that we perceive. The physical world rises up before our eyes, while being a part of the world they perceive. "Subjective continuity never fails in that it is always a part of the world that it perceives, so that you and the world create each other, in those terms" (Butts, 1997a, p. 33). We are earth come alive, to view itself through conscious eyes, alive with a light from which the very fires of life are lit.*

Not only can what is subjective become objective (e.g., psychodynamic accounts of projection, "witness" accounts in mindfulness meditation practices, accounts of psychosynthesis dis-identification with the body), but also what is objective can become subjective (e.g., psychodynamic accounts of identification, cosmic consciousness) (Ferrer, 2002, p. 30).

There are no closed systems. Yes, there is an independent reality but not pre-given. It is plastic, creative, and participatory.

If reality is not merely discovered but enacted through co-creative participation, and if what we bring to our inquiries affects in important ways the disclosure of reality, then the fundamental interrelationship and even identity, between phenomenology and ontology...becomes a natural necessity. (Ferrer, 2002, p. 177)

Transpersonal psychologist Richard Tarnas (1991) states:

All human knowledge of the world is in some sense determined by subjective principles [meditating factors]; but instead of considering these principles as belonging ultimately to the separate human subject, and therefore not grounded in the world independently of human cognition, this participatory conception held that these subjective principles are in fact an expression of the world's own being, and that the human mind is ultimately the organ of the world's own process of self-revelation. (pp. 433-434)





**The need for new epistemological nets.** The scientific materialism of modern psychological science as it stands today constitutes a metaphysical net, so to speak, that captures metaphysical fish of only a certain size. This notion is illustrated in the following parable attributed to physicist Sir Arthur Eddington.

In a seaside village, a fisherman with a rather scientific bent proposed as a law of the sea that all fish are longer than one inch. But he failed to realize that the nets used in the village were all of a one-inch mesh. Are we filtering physical reality? Can we catch consciousness with the nets we are using? (quoted in N. Friedman, 1994, p. 27)

“Science must change, as it discovers its net of evidence is equipped only to catch certain kinds of fish, and that it is constructed of webs of assumptions that can only hold certain varieties of reality, while others escape its net entirely” (Roberts, 1981a, p. 137). Transpersonal psychology encourages us to take a more generous view of the nature of reality as a way of making sense of the broadest spectrum of human experience and behavior.



#### Section Summary

1. The question of whether transpersonal psychology is an empirical science is an important one. The original intent of its founders was that the transpersonal vision be stated in empirical and scientific terms. The answer depends in large part on how “science,” “empirical,” and “scientific method.”

2. Because transpersonal psychology seeks “knowledge through causes” (*scientia*), it is a science. Because it includes “direct experience” (*empiricus*), it is empirical. Because it utilizes problem identification; literature reviews; hypothesis construction; operational definitions; research designs; methodologies for observation,

control, manipulation, and measurement of variables; data analysis; public communication and evaluation of results, transpersonal psychology applies the scientific method.

3. Transpersonal psychology does not limit research to a particular method. Conventional quantitative and qualitative research methods usually applied to the study of everyday human experience and behavior are equally applicable to the study of exceptional human experience and creative transformative capacities.

4. Transpersonal studies introduce new methods of human inquiry that are appropriate to the idiographic, personal, creative, and expansive nature of transpersonal experiences and behaviors (e.g., Being-cognition, vision logic, dream and imagery work, meditation, creative expression, altered states of consciousness, empathy, storytelling, intuition, integral inquiry).

5. Conventional quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used to study many different transpersonal phenomena including: spontaneous remissions using historical/archival approaches; transpersonal structures of consciousness using deep structural analysis; miraculous cures at Lourdes, birthmarks suggestive of reincarnation, paranormal phenomena of Sai Baba, and continuous consciousness in advanced meditators using case study approaches; spiritual and transpersonal constructs using interviews, questionnaires, and survey measures; meditation and imagery health-effects using behavioral and physiological assessments.; direct mental interactions with living systems using true experimental designs; precognitive and psychokinetic functioning using meta-analysis.

6. Non-experimental evidence remains an extremely valuable source of confirmation concerning the nature, limits, and reality of transpersonal phenomena. The main obstacle to the study of spiritual experiences is not the scientific method, but traditional psychology’s commitment to scientism and a narrow, limiting materialistic and mechanistic philosophy of nature.

## Summary and Conclusion



Transpersonal psychology is a truly integral psychology in that it systematically attempts to include and integrate the enduring insights of premodern religion, modern psychological science, and constructive postmodern philosophy in its investigation of transpersonal experiences and behaviors (de Quincey, 2002; Ferrer, 2002; Griffin, 1988, 1997; H. Smith, 1976, 1989). Transpersonal psychology proposes original models of human development that integrate Western and Eastern (notably Hindu and Buddhist) perspectives and concepts of identity and consciousness (e.g., Wilber, 1977, 1980, 1981). Transpersonal psychology seeks to expand the boundaries of ego-awareness so as to include portions of the unconscious psyche and integrate the insights obtained into the individual's everyday life. Transpersonal psychotherapy develops and utilizes a wide variety of mind-body approaches to therapy that integrate conscious and subconscious levels of personality functioning in order to promote exceptional states of psychological well-being (e.g., Walsh & Shapiro, 1983).

Transpersonal psychology is not trying to indulge in "metaphysics" or to deify humans or humanize God. Its intent is much more humble, more personal, and more specific. Its intent is to encourage us to examine the age-old notion of the soul in an unprejudiced way and to test its empirical justification in our own experience and to keep spirituality in connection with the rest of science. A transpersonal orientation to the psyche - its human expression - is psychologically sound because it reinforces our uniqueness in the universe while also emphasizing the source of that separateness in the unity of that inconceivable interaction between Being and being. It is compatible with the enduring truths of premodern spiritual tradition because it views us as basically good creatures, alive in a meaningful universe that was fashioned by some kind of transcendent-immanent Source of all that is.

Evolutionary significance of the contemporary search for spirituality. The ancient, spiritual traditions of our species have had their extraordinary influence, I believe, because behind their power lies the unending reality of our species' inner source, and that it is this inner reality that each individual tries to explore, express, and define in his or her private or personal struggle to believe. In the great sweeping changes in religious concepts that are abroad in our world today, perhaps our consciousness – our psyche – is constructing and projecting greater images of our own probable fulfillment, and these are seen in our changing concepts of God (Chandler, 1988; Lewis & Melton, 1992; Needleman & Baker, 1981; T. Peters, 1991). Often the personality of God as generally conceived is based upon our small knowledge of our own psychology (Vitz, 1977). The promise and hopeful outcome of the sweeping changes in religious concepts that are abroad today is that in our attempt to reshape our understanding of God, in so doing we reshape ourselves.

The fact is that while you hold limited concepts of your own reality, then you cannot practically take advantage of many abilities that are your own; and while you have a limited concept of the soul, then to some extent you cut yourself off from the source of your own being and creativity. (Roberts, 1972, p. 92)

The human personality is multidimensional (Roberts, 1972, 1974, 1977a, 1979a, 1979b, 1981b, 1986a, 1986b). Until mainstream psychology recognizes and acknowledges the multidimensional reality of human personality, it will not have any understanding of the abilities that lie within each individual.



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### *Biographical Note*

Paul F. Cunningham received his B.A. degree in philosophy from Our Lady of Providence Seminary (Warwick, RI) in 1971, M.S. degree in educational psychology from Purdue University (W. Lafayette, IN) in 1975, and Ph.D. in general/experimental psychology from the University of Tennessee (Knoxville, TN) in 1986.

Currently a tenured faculty member, professor of psychology, and chair of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Department at Rivier College (Nashua, NH), he has taught undergraduate courses in behavior modification, cognitive psychology, educational psychology, experimental psychology, health psychology, history and systems, introductory psychology, personality theory, psychological assessment, sensation and perception, statistics, transpersonal psychology, and graduate courses in design and analysis of research.

As director of the Rivier College Assessment Program from 1997-2004, he delivered numerous paper/poster presentations on assessing student outcomes and institutional effectiveness in higher education at regional and national conferences. Member of the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) since 1997, he has served as consultant and workshop facilitator on assessment-related issues throughout the New England area.

He has published mainly on animal use, student choice policies, and non-animal alternatives in psychology education, serving as treasurer of Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PSYETA) from 1994-1996.

Member of the American Psychological Association (APA) since 1986, he has served on the Steering Committee of the New England Psychological Association (NEPA) for the past eight years, and was instrumental in bringing NEPA's annual meeting to the Rivier College campus in 2002. As 44<sup>th</sup> President of NEPA, he has been committed to continue NEPA's fine tradition of providing a forum for open discussion of scholarly and timely topics, facilitating student and professional development, and planning quality programming at its annual conferences.

He is currently writing an introductory textbook in transpersonal psychology for 2-year and 4-year colleges that covers topics ordinarily addressed in a typical introductory psychology course, but from a *transpersonal* point of view, in order to address the growing need for a generalized model of curricula for undergraduate courses in transpersonal psychology and as an encouragement to teachers of psychology to introduce this exciting area of investigation to their students.