

# Chapter 6 – Transpersonal Thought, Language, and Creativity

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## Chapter 6 TRANSPERSONAL THOUGHT, LANGUAGE, AND CREATIVITY

### Learning Objectives

1. Discuss how thinking, intelligence, and consciousness is defined in mainstream psychology.
2. Describe the ideal of the theoretical, rational personality.
3. Explain how we are not logical beings, but psycho-logical beings.
4. Explain why logic alone in isolation from inner ways of knowing is an uncertain path to truth.
5. Explain why logic is a tool of thought, not a principle characteristic of thought.
6. Describe the general nature, function, and purpose of the conscious reasoning mind., and tell why it is not to be belittled or shoved aside in one's pursuit of spiritual enlightenment.
7. Describe the adversarial relationship that is set up between the intellect, emotions, and intuitions in mainstream psychology, explain why it occurs, and identify two consequences this has for personality growth.
8. Describe the cooperative relationship that exists between the conscious and subconscious.
9. Explain how imagination is an important ally of the reasoning mind in the knowing process.
10. Describe the conscious mind's ability to be aware of and accept intuitional comprehensions.
11. Discuss the role of conscious beliefs in the creation of personal experience.
12. Describe how perception is organized and given meaning through ideas and beliefs, and provide one example of how this occurs.
13. Describe how ideas organize the perceptions and structure the knowledge of psychologists who conduct human research in the field of experimental psychology.
14. Describe how ideas organize the perceptions and structure the knowledge of psychologists who conduct animal research in the field of evolutionary psychology.
15. Describe the characteristics of spiritual intelligence and how it can be developed for personal growth and development.
16. Distinguish between meditated (indirect) and unmediated (direct) knowledge, and give two examples of each.
17. Distinguish between deficiency-cognition and being-cognition, and give two examples of each.
18. Summarize the characteristics of cognition in generalized peak experiences.
19. Define cosmic consciousness.
20. Distinguish between cosmic consciousness and self-consciousness.
21. Summarize the characteristics of cognition in generalized cosmic consciousness experiences.
22. List the characteristic "triggers" of blissful and ecstatic experiences.
23. Explain why the character of the knowledge provided during being-cognition, peak experiences and cosmic consciousness is so important in transpersonal psychology.
24. Identify the Being-values that are disclosed during episodes of Being-cognition, and explain why they are believed to characterize basic reality itself.
25. Explain why the knowledge of being that is disclosed in Being-cognition and cosmic consciousness is denied by mainstream psychology.
26. Outline the three steps of the "generalized empirical method."
27. Illustrate how the three steps of the generalized empirical method would be applied to the study of a mystical experience.
28. Explain how knowledge of transpersonal experiences obtained by use of the generalized empirical method is similar to knowledge obtained using conventional research methods of mainstream psychology.
29. Evaluate the claim that verbal reports provide reliable and valid information about cognitive processes and the structure of thought.
30. Distinguish between transpersonal and traditional approaches to religious knowledge.
31. Explain how the world's religions are "spiritual psychologies."

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32. Describe the role that changing concepts of God have played in the evolution of the species.
33. Distinguish between the exoteric (surface) and esoteric (deep) structure of religion, and tell why this distinction is important.
34. Explain why the terms “soul” and “spirit” are used in transpersonal psychology to describe the nature of human personality.
35. Identify the sorts of psychological phenomena that point to the existence of an “abiding psychical entity” that transpersonal psychology calls the “transpersonal self.”
36. Describe the characteristics of the inner, transpersonal self.
37. Describe the Dynamic Ground of the transpersonal self and identify the data/information resources that indicate such a Source is an actual reality?
38. Explain why it is important that transpersonal psychology remain theologically neutral in its study of the world’s spiritual psychologies.
39. Explain how the concept of alternate states of consciousness is useful for understanding different kinds of spiritual experiences and knowledge.
40. Identify the three major divisions of language studied by linguists.
41. Describe how the energy of sound and breath underlie all language.
42. Describe how silence is the ground out of which sound and meaning emerge and become figural.
43. Describe the relationship between phonology (sound) and semantics (meaning).
44. Describe how language production is largely a subconscious process.
45. Describe how language production is structured by physical time and the result of linear thought patterns.
46. Distinguish between language and speech.
47. Explain how speaking is an “act in the world” much like any other human action that brings about a special way of relating to the world, self, and others.
48. Describe how language in some ways determines *how* we think and in other ways simply influences *what* we think.
49. Describe how thought and perception are structured by verbal patterns that can limit experience of world, self, and others.
50. Describe a practical exercise that can free perception of objects from their familiar verbal “containers.”
51. Explain why there must always be a gap between languages and the thought or emotion that it attempts to convey.
52. Describe the inherent difficulties that verbally-structured thought poses for describing a dream or a mystical experience.
53. Describe how acquiring facility in communication between the conscious and the subconscious can benefit the overall self.
54. Define the psychological concept and process known as “dissociation,” distinguish between its non-pathological and pathological forms, and identify two different activities by which non-pathological dissociation may be produced.
55. Explain how transcendent inner voice phenomenon is an example of transpersonal speaking.
56. Identify two examples of transcendent inner voices that have been used as a source of creative inspiration, divine guidance, or intuitive knowledge.
57. Describe how the DSM-IV would classify transcendent inner voice phenomenon.
58. Identify five characteristics of transcendent inner voices.
59. Distinguish between transcendent and pathological inner voice phenomena.
60. Describe how facility in transcendent inner voice communication can be acquired.
61. Explain how channeling is an example of transpersonal speaking, and identify three different ways by which channeling phenomenon is known to occur.
62. Describe why channeling is an important topic of study in psychology.
63. Identify three differences related to the psychological functioning of trance channelers and individuals diagnosed with multiple personality disorder (MPD).

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64. Describe the outer history of the channeling phenomenon known as the *Seth Material*.
65. Describe the challenge that the *Seth Material* presents to mainstream psychology's current understanding of the nature and abilities of human personality.
66. Evaluate and judge the value of the *Seth Material* for furthering transpersonal psychology's understanding and investigation of the further reaches of human nature.
67. Identify three contributions that the *Seth Material* can make toward a psychology for the 21st century.
68. Evaluate and judge the confidence that can be placed in Seth/Jane Roberts's claims concerning the multidimensional nature of human personality and basic reality.
69. Define "transcendence" as Maslow understood the term.
70. Distinguish between "exotic" and "cosmogenic" abilities identified by educational psychologist John Curtis Gowan.
71. Distinguish between immanent (expansive) and transcendent (surpassing) forms of creativity that characterize transcendent knowing and speaking.
72. Explain why experiential exercises and practices are important in giving psychological roots to transpersonal theories and concepts.
73. Explain how dream construction represents a useful and practical method for handling waking-life problems.
74. Describe how dream elements become interwoven into waking-experience and the physical environment.
75. Discuss the vital role that the personality's intelligence and conscious reasoning mind play in the effective use of dreams as a problem-solving device.
76. Describe the connection between the effective use of dreams as a problem-solving device and the healthy personality.
77. Identify and discuss the various positions or stances that transpersonal psychologist may take toward the character of the knowledge that is disclosed during acts of religious-spiritual-transpersonal knowing, speaking, and creating.
78. Define "naïve realism."
79. Describe the problems and challenges that an immanent naïve realism poses for a sensory-based psychological science.
80. Compare and contrast immanent and transcendent naïve realism.
81. Define "ontological neutrality" and evaluate the utility of its stance toward the character of the knowledge that is disclosed during religious-spiritual-transpersonal experience.
82. Discuss the practical consequences if mainstream psychology were to take a position of ontological neutrality toward the actuality of the physical world.
83. Identify and discuss four consequences of the position of ontological neutrality for the field of transpersonal psychology.
84. Explain how every act of experiencing (noesis) has a corresponding content (noema) to which what is experienced refers.
85. Outline the key ideas of a "participatory" spirituality.
86. Explain how the "instrumental injunctions" of the generalized empirical method employed by transpersonal psychologists can serve as interior conventions that impede instead of facilitate authentic religious-spiritual-transpersonal experience.
87. Describe the epistemological position that William James referred to as "noetic pluralism."
88. List and describe three key variables identified by Seth/Jane Roberts that determine what aspects an individual can perceive and know during any experience of basic reality.
89. Explain how the sensory apparatus with which a physical body is perceived determines its basic reality?
90. Explain how the field of reality within which a physical body is perceived determines its basic reality?
91. Explain how the perspective from which a physical body is perceived determines its basic reality?

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92. Explain what constitutes the "objective" true reality of an object or event, according to the Aspect Psychology of Seth/Jane Roberts.

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## Chapter Outline

### TRANSPERSONAL THOUGHT, LANGUAGE, AND CREATIVITY

#### I. Transpersonal Nature of Thought

##### A. Ways of Ordinary Knowing

1. Thinking, Intelligence, and Consciousness
2. The Theoretical Ideal of the Logical, Rational Personality.
  - a. The reasoning mind is a part of who we are, but it does not contain our identity.
  - b. We are not logical beings; we are psycho-logical beings.
  - c. Logic alone in isolation from inner ways of knowing is an uncertain path to truth.
  - d. Logic is a tool of thought, not a characteristic of thought.
3. The Reasoning Mind: Its Purpose, Nature, and Function.
  - a. The reasoning mind is an important, necessary, and effective portion of the inner, transpersonal self.
  - b. The reasoning mind often is placed in an adversarial relationship with emotions, intuitions, and other sources of "unofficial" knowledge.
  - c. A cooperative relationship exists between the conscious and subconscious.
  - d. The imagination is an important ally of the reasoning mind.
  - e. The reasoning mind is equipped to be aware of and accept intuitional comprehension.
  - f. The reasoning mind has the beliefs of the egoic personality to contend with.
4. Perception and Knowledge are Organized through Ideas.
  - a. Example: Experimental psychology.
  - b. Example: Comparative psychology.

##### B. Ways of Transpersonal Knowing

1. Spiritual Intelligence
2. Unmediated (Direct) Knowledge
  - a. Unmediated (direct) knowing defined.
  - b. Distinguishing mediated and unmediated knowing.
3. Being Cognition
  - a. Deficiency-cognition and Being-cognition defined.
  - b. Distinguishing D-cognition and B-cognition
  - c. Characteristics of cognition in generalized peak experiences.
4. Cosmic Consciousness
  - a. Cosmic consciousness defined.
  - b. Cosmic consciousness distinguished from self-consciousness.
  - c. Characteristics of cognition in generalized cosmic consciousness experiences.
  - d. Characteristic "triggers" of blissful and ecstatic experiences.
5. Knowledge of Being
  - a. Epistemic character of transpersonal experience is central.
  - b. Being-values characterize reality itself.
  - c. Knowledge of being denied by mainstream psychology.
6. The Generalized Empirical Method of Transpersonal Knowing

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- a. Step 1. Instrumental injunction.
  - b. Step 2. Direct apprehension.
  - c. Step 3. Communal confirmation (or rejection).
  - d. Transpersonal knowledge like ordinary scientific knowledge is “public,” valid, and practical.
  - e. Protocol analysis: Verbal reports as data.
7. Approaches to Religious Knowledge -- Transpersonal and Traditional
- a. Religions viewed as “spiritual psychologies.”
  - b. Changing concepts of God as reflections of the evolution of human consciousness.
  - c. Distinguishing between a religion’s exoteric (surface) structure and esoteric (deep) structure.
  - d. Hypothesis of a transpersonal self – Psychology’s nearest corollary to the soul.
  - e. The dynamic Ground of the transpersonal self.
  - f. Transpersonal psychology is theologically neutral.
  - g. Religious-spiritual-transpersonal experiences as alternate states of knowledge.

### II. Transpersonal Nature of Language

#### A. Ways of Ordinary Speaking

1. Phonology – Sound and Breath
  - a. The energy of sound and breath underlies all language.
  - b. Silence as the ground out of which sound and meaning emerge and become figural.
  - c. Phonology (sound) and semantics (sense).
2. Language Production
  - a. Unconscious nature of language production.
  - b. The linear nature of language.
  - c. Distinguishing language and speech
  - d. Speaking is an action in the world that brings about a special way of relating to the world, self, and others.
3. Language Comprehension
  - a. Language shapes rather than mirrors thought and perception.
  - b. Thought and perception are structured through verbal patterns.
  - c. A practical exercise for the reader: Breaking the automatics patterning and structuring of thought and perception by language.
  - d. The gap between thought and language.
  - e. The inherent difficulties of verbally-structured thought for understanding the subjective framework of the inner psyche.

#### B. Ways of Transpersonal Speaking

1. The Spectrum of Dissociation
2. Transcendent Inner Voices
  - a. Characteristics of transcendent inner voices.
  - b. Distinguishing transcendent from pathological inner voice phenomena.
  - c. Cultivating transcendent inner voices.
3. Channeling

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- a. Why is channeling an important topic of study in psychology?
- b. Channeling is not a multiple personality disorder.
4. The Problem of Seth's Origin: A Study of Trance Possession
  - a. The outer history of the channeling phenomenon known as the *Seth Material*.
  - b. The challenge of the *Seth Material* for mainstream psychology.
  - c. What makes the *Seth Material* transpersonal?
  - d. What original contributions does the *Seth Material* make toward a psychology for the 21st century?
  - e. What confidence can be placed in Seth/Jane Roberts's claims about the multidimensional nature of human personality and basic reality?

### III. Transpersonal Nature of Creativity

#### A. Transpersonal Thought and Language as Creative Acts

1. Transcendence as a Creative Act
  - a. Transcendence as opening up and going beyond.
  - b. "Exotic" abilities and "cosmogenic" abilities.
2. Creativity as a Transcendent Act
  - a. Creativity as an expansion of normal capacity.
  - b. Creativity as surpassing normal capacity.
  - c. Difference between immanent (expansive) and transcendent (surpassing) creativity.
3. Active investigation and exploration of transpersonal ways of knowing, speaking, and creating is required.
4. Dream Construction as a Problem-Solving Device
  - a. Problem-solving as an important function of dreams.
  - b. Dream construction is a useful and practical method for handling waking-life problems.
  - c. Waking experience and the physical environment are colored and formed by dream solutions.
  - d. The dreaming subconscious relies upon the conscious mind for an accurate assessment of the problem situation.
  - e. Dreaming and the healthy personality.

### IV. Do Transpersonal Knowing, Speaking, and Creating Reveal Actual Transcendental Realities?

1. Immanent Naive Realism
  - a. The senses: Empirical knowledge
  - b. The problem with naive realism.
  - c. Immanent naïve realism in a sensory-based psychology.
2. Transcendent Naïve Realism
3. Ontological Neutrality
  - a. What is ontological neutrality?
  - b. Ontological neutrality in transpersonal psychology
  - c. The consequences of ontological neutrality for transpersonal psychology.
4. Ontological Alignment
5. Participatory Spirituality

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6. Noetic Pluralism
  - a. Instrumental injunctions serve as interior conventions that limit spiritual experience.
  - b. Mysticism is an "ocean with many shores."
7. Aspect Psychology
  - a. The senses with which the thing or action is perceived.
  - b. The fields of reality within which the thing or action is perceived.
  - c. The perspective from which the thing or action is perceived.
  - d. "Objective" true basic reality.
8. Do Transcendent Experiences Reveal Actual Transcendent Realities?

### V. Conclusion

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## Chapter Summary

*Ways of Ordinary Knowing.* When mainstream psychologists talk about ordinary thinking, or cognition, they are referring to how we form meaningful concepts and categories, solve problems and make decisions in intelligent and illogical ways, form judgments and communicate the results of our thinking to others. What is conscious is what consciousness is. Mainstream psychologists have long believed that human reasoning is reflected in the laws of formal logic and represents the way the normal mature mind works. Errors of thinking are all defined in terms of how they depart from this "gold standard" of the theoretical ideal of the logically reasoning human person. We are not logical beings, however; we are psycho-logical beings. Logic is a tool of thought, not the primary characteristic of thought. The qualities or excellence of the logical, reasoning mind are not to be doubted. It is only when the logically reasoning mind isolates itself from emotions and intuitions and forgets that it is the result of incredibly rich interactions and give-and-takes between conscious and subconscious portions of the personality that difficulties arise. Logic is but one of many vehicles for organizing data. When the conscious "I" forgets this fact, it can become short-sighted, limited in the practical use of its abilities, and limiting the scope of the conscious mind. The mind's powers are far greater than those assigned to rational thought alone by mainstream psychologists. Mainstream psychologists tend to pit the conscious mind - especially its logical reasoning dimension - in opposition to the emotions and the intuitions, narrowing its capacity for knowing to its analytical critical reasoning and logical qualities alone, while not recognizing the source of these qualities in the inner portions of the personality. Perception and knowledge are organized through ideas as the conduct of research in the fields of experimental psychology and comparative psychology illustrate.

*Ways of Transpersonal Knowing.* Transpersonal psychology recognizes and studies other kinds of intelligence and other ways of knowing beyond those recognized and studied by mainstream psychology, including spiritual intelligence, unmediated (direct) forms of experiential knowing, Being-cognition, cosmic consciousness, knowledge of being, spiritual knowledge, and the knowing that comes from application of a generalized empirical method. Spiritual intelligence represents a way of knowing oneself, the world, and others that integrates conscious and subconscious channels of awareness, reason and intuition, religious feelings and a spiritual way of life. The experiential knowledge gained through direct (unmediated) knowing is not the conceptual knowledge of "the world of outward things," but knowledge of *being* itself. Maslow distinguished between ways of ordinary knowing that are motivated by and based on deficiency needs (i.e., physiological, safety, belongingness, self-esteem, desire to know and understand) and B-cognition that is not motivated on the basis of satisfying ego-directed deficiency needs, but is conferred by transpersonal experiences during which human consciousness expands beyond its usual boundaries to yield further insight into the nature of reality. Mainstream psychology views the existence of knowledge of being reported to be disclosed in episodes of peak experience, cosmic consciousness, and "Being-Cognition" with skepticism because it does not conform with what is known using ways of ordinary knowing.

Transpersonal psychology insists that valid and legitimate knowledge of being can be obtained either directly through experience or indirectly through conceptual understanding. Transpersonal psychology employs what can be called a "*generalized empirical method*" in its study of knowledge of being obtained through direct experience. The generalized empirical method requires (a) an "instrumental injunction" to produce the experience, (b) a "direct apprehension" of data disclosed by the injunction, and (c) the "communal confirmation" (or rejection) of what is disclosed. We have 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. Transpersonal psychologists tend to approach the knowledge of being disclosed through conceptual understanding by the study of world's religions as "spiritual psychologies." When approaching religions as "spiritual psychologies," transpersonal psychology is less concerned with the "surface structure" of religion (i.e., its outer "exoteric," formal

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dogmatic aspects) and more concerned with its “deep structure” (i.e., its inner “esoteric,” mystical experiential aspects). It is transpersonal psychology’s public recognition and acknowledgement of the intrinsic validity and significance of organized religion’s deeper structural aspects (i.e., spiritual experiences and transformative behaviors) that most clearly distinguishes it from the traditional approach taken by the social sciences to the study of religion. Drawing upon laboratory and non-experimental studies of 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 begins with the hypothesis that we possess an inner, transpersonal self of extraordinary creativity, organization, and meaning – psychology’s nearest corollary to the soul. 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 psychologists tend to view experiences of “mystical union,” “enlightenment,” “nirvana”, and related experiences as natural and beneficial nonordinary, alternate states of consciousness that may be subject to state-dependent learning effects.

*Ways of Ordinary Speaking.* Different languages use sounds in their own peculiar manners with their own rhythms, one emphasizing what another language ignores. The sound itself, even without being a part of a recognizable word, carries a meaning. Sounds can physically affect the body. Silence is the ground out of which sound emerges. Technique can be used that can help break up the automatic patterning of perception and thought so that the world can be perceived in new, clearer, and more individual ways. Speaking and language differ in important ways. Speaking is living, ongoing behavior and language is a useful abstraction derived from an analysis of the ongoing flow of speech. Human beings can, by agreement, make any sound-symbol stand for anything. The origin and source of meaning lies not in the sound, word or context in which a language is spoken, but in the person. Some speaking and meaning transcends the context. Language production (speaking and writing) is largely an unconscious affair, and partially a function of physical time, neurological structure, and the result of linear thought patterns. Bilingual individuals are aware of how thought is verbally structured. It is often difficult to think about things for which we have no words. Thought automatically becomes translated into language, falling into prefabricated forms. Translation of thought from one language to another is often imperfect and imprecise, because the meaning of words can be understood only from one’s own particular cultural/linguistic point of view. Speaking and language is not a simple mirror of thinking but often controls what is or is not thinkable by the person that speaks the language. Language and speaking create a world as much as they are created by that world. Cause-and-effect thinking and concepts and categories perfectly well-suited for “the world of outward things” poses inherent difficulties and creates distortions when it comes to describing a dream or a mystical experience in which physical time sequences and single-line delineations of thought may not apply. Although language and thought are allied, there must always be a gap between thought and its expression in language. The words are not the thought or emotions they attempt to convey.

*Ways of Transpersonal Speaking.* Transpersonal psychology differentiates between pathological and non-pathological forms of dissociation. Non-pathological dissociation can give rise to various kinds of transpersonal speaking, including transcendental inner voices and trance channeling. Transcendent inner voice phenomenon have certain characteristics that distinguish it from pathological forms of hallucinations. Given the importance of transcendent inner voices in the history of human civilization, their cultivation can be an important and practical way to facilitate communication between the conscious and subconscious portions of the whole personality. In the phenomenon called “channeling,” the person goes into a trance and transmits messages through speaking or writing from what he or she perceives to be a discarnate spirit or personality. Channeling is an important topic in transpersonal psychology both because it is a prevalent, wide-spread phenomenon and because it has occurred through the history of our species providing an important source of inspiration for the formation of more world religions.

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Channeling is often confused with multiple personality disorder (MPD) in the popular imagination; although research indicates that they are two very different phenomena that fall along a continuum of what are called “dissociative” processes. One of the major assumptions of the transpersonal orientation is the acknowledgement that human beings have impulses toward transcendental realities and states of awareness. The fact that such an impulse exists and that its object is not illusory is dramatically illustrated in that provocative demonstration of personality action known as the Seth phenomenon and in the series of published books collectively called *The Seth Materials*. Either psychology's concept of what is called the subconscious mind must be radically altered so as to include potencies of which psychology hitherto has had no knowledge, or some cause operating through, but not originating in, the subconscious mind must be acknowledged.

*Ways of Transpersonal Creating.* The knowledge of being obtained in spiritual intelligence, unmeditated knowing, B-cognition, cosmic consciousness, the generalized empirical method, spiritual psychologies, transcendent inner voices, trance channeling, and other forms of transpersonal knowing, speaking, and creating can be understood in one of two ways: (a) the *expansion* of normal capacity and (b) *surpassing* normal capacity. In simple *expansion* of normal creative capacity, the primary originating impulse is constrained and limited by the individual's past learning and memory and value judgments, by the external criteria of a problem, and by the requirements of practical common sense that are imposed by the creator during the process of creation. Transcendence implies truly “alternate” frames of reference and experience different than the framework of perception and cognition ordinarily operative, and important sources of truly inspired thinking that carries an ordinary idea or stream of associative thinking outside reason's limiting and limited assumptions, and beyond the boundaries of established fact. Experiential exercises are important because they help individuals recognize, understand, and appreciate the nature and character of transpersonal knowledge and its relevance in their daily life. Dreams are an important device for creatively solving waking-experience problems in a manner that facilitates communication between the conscious and subconscious. The intellect and conscious reasoning mind are valuable allies in the partnership with subconscious portions of the whole self and the health of the personality will often rely upon satisfactory dream construction during the problem-solving process.

*Do Transcendent Experiences Reveal Actual Transcendent Realities?* The question of whether transpersonal forms of knowing disclose true and valid knowledge of being is examined from six different but allied viewpoints: naive realism (immanent and transcendent), ontological neutrality, ontological alignment, participatory spirituality, noetic pluralism, and aspect psychology. The belief that the nature of Being has an invariant structure “already out there now real” that can only be known through consensual validation is grounded in a philosophic belief known as “naïve realism”- “people's tendency to take their constructed, subjective realities to be faithful renderings of an objective world.” The problem with naive realism is its attempt to reduce all knowledge to veridical representations of an already out there now real basis. Ontological neutrality states that since nothing can be definitely known about the nature of transcendent realities independent of human experience, then the scientific enterprise must confine itself to the study of transpersonal experiences alone. One consequence (among others) in affirming ontological neutrality in theory is that transcendental phenomena becomes reduced, limited, selective to only one pole of the phenomena (the subject, the noesis), instead of expanding it to the objective and intersubjective. Ontological alignment argues that the existence of the object (noema) to which transpersonal experience (noesis) refers is not to be denied; there is something out there on which the proverbial mystical hat is hooked. Participative spirituality states that there *is* something out there, but it is not pre-given and its features are plastic, malleable, dynamic, creative, and participatory. Noetic pluralism and aspect psychology, a position related to participatory spirituality, argues that there are as many spiritual realities as there are individuals who experience them. Putting these positions together, we see that knowledge of basic reality depends on the perceptual apparatus, the field or dimensional context, and the frame of reference by which it is perceived. True reality is not as it appears nor what is invariant or constant; true reality is the sum of the reality of all perspective, all dimensions, all perceptions. The

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perceiver does not see what does exist, The attempt to perceive transcendent reality is an action that creates a distortion of that reality, creating in fact a new reality, than that is what is perceived. The perceiver perceives it because the perceiver has created it from basic reality. What is perceived is legitimate, valid, and real, for the very action of perceiving is the basis for its existence.

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## I. The Transpersonal Nature of Thought

### Ways of Ordinary Knowing

#### Thinking, Intelligence, and Consciousness

When mainstream psychologists talk about ordinary thinking, or cognition, they are referring to how we form meaningful concepts and categories, solve problems and make decisions in logical and illogical ways, form judgments and communicate the results of our thinking to others (Myers, 2008). Intelligence may refer to one's aptitude for successfully dealing with linguistic, logical and mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal (self), interpersonal (other people), or naturalistic objects, events, and situations (Gardner, 1983, 1999). Or intelligent thinking may be equated with analytical, creative, and practical problem-solving processes (Sternberg, 1985, 1999). The knowledge-making process involves stimuli from either the "outside" physical environment or the "inside" psychological realm being detected, encoded, organized, and interpreted using prior knowledge that is stored in memory. Prior knowledge and present expectation influences what outer and inner stimuli are attended to and what personal (episodic) experiences, factual (semantic) information, and (procedural) skills are eventually encoded and stored into memory (Matlin, 2005). Cognitive psychology, the branch of mainstream psychology that studies attention, memory, imagery, thinking, language, and creativity focuses primarily upon *conscious* cognitional processes and their biological, environmental, and behavioral correlates. To a large degree, the role of the subconscious is not included in many theories of cognition, if the existence of the subconscious is even granted at all. *What is conscious* is what consciousness *is*. The psyche does not exist in its own right, or if it does, is mere shadow of itself - a hypothetical construct mediating the physical processes that themselves are believed to be the source of the memories and emotions, thoughts and images, words and creative behaviors of the conscious personality. The subconscious portions of the personality, if they are granted existence, are deemed to be neither conscious nor reasonable.

#### The Theoretical Ideal of the Logical, Rational Personality

*The reasoning mind is a part of who we are, but it does not contain our identity.* Mainstream psychologists have long believed that human reasoning is reflected in the laws of formal logic and represents the way the normal mature mind works. Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development which is the gold standard of cognitive theories has the stage of formal operations – a stage eminently logical in characteristics and function - as the final phase of human cognitive development. Nothing is projected beyond the logical mind. The ideal of formal logic continues to characterize most theories of how humans make decisions. The many so-called biases and cognitive deficits that have been identified by cognitive psychologists have used logic as the criteria of proper thinking, and as the baseline against which all other forms of thinking are compared and judged. Anyone who does not act like the ideal theoretical rational man who calculates probabilities against baselines, or weighs costs against benefits to arrive at the optimal rational decision – like some non-emotional Spock or Sherlock Holmes – is considered to be functioning at a lesser level than he or she should be. Errors of thinking (e.g., cognitive deficits, biases, irrationality) are defined in terms of the degree to which they depart from logic as the gold standard against which all other kinds of knowing are compared. Subjectivity, emotions, and creativity are all considered to be sources of error as far as the logical idea is concerned. Transpersonal psychology recognizes, acknowledges, and accepts the importance and significance of the conscious reasoning mind in personality action. The reasoning mind is a part of who we are -- a vital, functioning portion of our cognitive processes. If we were not meant to use our conscious reasoning mind or intellect, then obviously we would not have one. But it is not *all* that we are, only a part. The reasoning mind does not contain our identity and is not intended to. When the person identifies solely with his or her intellect, automatically other characteristics become shunted aside. Transpersonal psychology aims to encourage individuals to enlarge the scope of their identity. Once that occurs, then those other, often ignored or

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denied abilities and characteristics begin to add their richness, fulfillment, and vitality to one's life automatically and effortlessly.

***We are not logical beings; we are psycho-logical beings.*** Cognitive psychology has found that although we do reason logically -- deductively from general propositions to specific experiences using rigorous inferences to arrive at certain conclusions -- when confronted with problems that require it, logical reasoning is not our usual or natural practice. More often we reason ana-logically (that is, inductively from specific experiences to general propositions using plausible inferences to arrive at probable conclusions) based on the perceived similarities between things. What this means is that we are more psycho-logical beings than strictly logical beings. We can reason pretty well as long as our everyday knowledge does not interfere with logical principles (Hunt, 1982, chap. 4). This is why words are replaced with letters like "A," "B," and "C" in formal logic training so we can manipulate the symbols without being distracted by meaning. Consider the following syllogism: "All A is B," "C is A", "Therefore C is B". This is world of thought that in certain terms is alien to the life we live in our work-a-day world. Compare this quasi-algebraic syllogism with the following: "Everything worthwhile in life requires hard work." "Love is one of the most worthwhile things in life." "Therefore, love requires hard work." If we were strictly logical thinkers, the importance of the subject matter or the concreteness, imagery, and familiarity of the content should make no difference, but it does. We are more logical when the content is familiar or high in imagery. When the subject matter is important to us or affects our beliefs, values, and preconceptions, we become less logical. The subject matter influences our ability to judge the validity of a syllogism.

***Logic alone in isolation from inner ways of knowing is an uncertain guide to truth.*** Like statistics, the reasoning abilities can be used to come to almost any conclusion by taking into consideration only the evidence that agrees with the values that the conscious personality seeks to justify. Starting from the same basic premises or body of evidence, highly rational minds can use logic to arrive at diametrically opposed conclusions. For instance, beginning with the same foundational Constitution premises the nine Supreme Court Justices of the United States interpret its language using logical reasoning of a high order to reach opposite conclusions that justify personally-held social values ("Capital punishment is constitutional" vs. "Capital punishment is unconstitutional"). Christians will derive a set of premises from the same inexorable text – the Bible – and use deductive reasoning to arrive at very different theological doctrines and dogmas (e.g., free will vs. predestination; salvation through good works vs. salvation via grace) "Different minds starting from an unquestionable text, can use logical means to come different conclusions" (Hunt, 1982, p. 132). Moreover, the validity of a syllogism's conclusion does not depend on the truth of its premises. Even false premises can lead to a valid conclusion. Consider: "'God is Love," "Love is blind," "Ray Charles is blind," Therefore, Ray Charles is God." Because the underlying logic is correct, the conclusion is valid.

***Logic is a tool of thought, not a principle characteristic of thought.*** Like most tools, formal logic is an imperfect method that works most effectively in certain situations (e.g., mass production of goods, certain kinds of scientific measurements, balance a checkbook, solve an algebra problem, play chess or bridge, do a scientific experiment), but not for all situations. Logic and reason alone does not work as an overall approach to life or in the solving of problems that involve *subjective* rather than objective calculations or measurements. The true-or-false kind of world that logic constructs cannot reveal the truth value of non-dual knowing, embrace the Absolute Reality affirmed by Mahayana Buddhism, or know the ineffable, unspeakable Void known in ultimate states of consciousness (White, 1972, Wilber, 1977, chaps. 2 and 3). Logic requires total consistency in the applications of the "rules" of logic and total certainty about the information that is available in the present. It relies upon the observations available to the physical senses, and is limited what is known in the present in order to deduce information that is not immediately available. If the information it is based upon is incorrect, then its conclusions will be suspect. At an

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intellectual level, we rarely ever have *all* the facts. Moreover, other comprehensions may be available to the reasoning mind that are not accepted for one reason or another.

### **The Reasoning Mind: Its Nature, Purpose, and Function**

***The reasoning mind is an important, necessary, and effective portion of the inner, transpersonal self.***

The conscious reasoning mind is that marvelous blossoming of intelligence which surfaced in the course of the development of species consciousness to meet the demands of living in the physical environment in a more or less direct fashion, help us cope with its challenges, and assess its requirements in order to facilitate the survival of the species. We have a conscious mind for a purpose, in other words. The conscious mind's selective focus and limited capacity is a vital part of its character so that it will not be overwhelmed with a mass of details and stimuli that would otherwise overwhelm it. The forgetfulness of memory is quite necessary if the exquisite, precise and concentrated focus of the conscious mind is to be maintained, and not result in a "blooming, buzzing confusion" (William James's phrase) of blended past and present experiences. Because of its connections to the body -- causing the body to react in certain ways -- and with the brain with its characteristic temporal sequencing of neurological events, the conscious mind's focused and selective attention is automatically and unavoidably directed in quite specific directions. Perceiving from a vast array of physical stimuli of only those stimuli that can be recognized, accepted, and organized in neurological and perceptual terms, it is the conscious mind's highly focused selectivity and unique, necessary relationship to the physical environment that makes it an indispensable and effective tool for day-to-day living and for physical survival. The conscious reasoning mind then is not to be belittled, ignored, or overlooked in one's pursuit of knowledge of transcendental realities, nor is its reasoned knowledge to be held "inferior," in opposition to, or dissociated from the comprehensions provided by one's emotions and intuitions. The reasoning mind is to be acknowledged and recognized as an important, necessary, effective portion of the inner psyche -- our scientific advances and modern technologies being but one of its results -- a spectacular development in the history of species consciousness that is of great significance, drawing as it does upon the powers of the body and inner self to act effectively in the physical world, enabling us to utilize our free will, and survive in ways that would not be possible without it.

***The conscious mind often is placed in an adversarial relationship with emotions, intuitions, and other sources of "unofficial" knowledge.*** Mainstream psychologists tend to pit the conscious mind - especially its logical reasoning dimension - in opposition to the emotions and the intuitions. This adversarial relationship narrows the mind's capacity for knowing to its analytical, critical reasoning, logical qualities alone, while not recognizing the source of these qualities in the inner portions of the personality. It is a cliché, but the heart does indeed have reasons that the mind knows not of. Emotional knowledge or highly intuitive inner information (hunches, inspiration, precognitive or clairvoyant information) that is available to the conscious mind becomes shoved aside, disregarded, overlooked, ignored, or denied because such information is not supposed to exist (i.e., all information comes through the senses). Or if it does exist, such knowledge and comprehension is considered to be illegitimate or invalid and ought not be recognized or accepted into awareness (i.e., the conscious mind should not deal with such "nonsense"). The reasoning mind under the influence and direction of the comprehending ego-self often finds it difficult to deal with or accept as valid psychological experience or comprehensions that comes from *psi*, intuition, or dreams, for example -- knowledge that is not sensory-based, that confounds its "laws" of cause-and-effect patterning of events, and that it may consider an unknown threat to its power, position, survival, or reason for existence. The reasoning mind thus becomes cut off "in its own mind" from those spontaneous processes which are its source, and is expected to perform alone, isolated from other portions of the human personality that could provide aid, support, help, and resources that can be used for its own benefit and the achievement of the personality's own conscious goals and aims.

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***A cooperative relationship exists between the conscious and subconscious.*** From a transpersonal perspective, the conscious mind *is* meant to be conscious, but consciousness is *more than* what is conscious. The conscious reasoning mind is *a part of*, not a part from, the so-called “unconscious” portions of the human personality. We think without knowing consciously how we do so. The conscious mind is a part of the inner portions of the psyche, and draws its vitality, strength, energy, power, and ability to act directly from those deep, inner sources of creativity. “The conscious mind is a vehicle for the expression of the soul in corporeal terms” (Roberts, 1974, p. 80). The conscious mind is not cut off from intuitional comprehension or isolated from the fountain of its being, unless through training the egoic portion of the personality has become too rigid and limits its perception of inner data, or does not accept intuitional experience because it does not fit into the framework of reality formed by its conscious beliefs. In such instances, the conscious personality limits not only the intellect's abilities, but its own potentialities, and its effectiveness within the physical environment.

***The imagination is an important ally of the intellect.*** It is only when the reasoning mind forgets that it is the result of incredibly rich interactions and give-and-takes between so-called conscious and unconscious portions of the personality that it can become short-sighted, limited in the practical use of its abilities, and limiting the scope of the conscious mind. The mind's powers are far greater than those assigned to rational thought alone. The reasoning mind is but one of many vehicles for organizing data. There are many other sources of information that are available to the conscious mind than found through the intellect alone. The intellect's information represents only the tip of the iceberg, so to speak, with the greater body knowledge encoded and stored in subliminal regions and subconscious sources within which the intellect itself is spontaneously couched and supported. The reasoning mind does not have to go it alone in carrying out its job of assisting the physical organism survive in the physical environment. Not everything has to be reasoned out in order to be understood, for there are other, inner ways of knowing that can include other realities within its scope of awareness, if it is flexible enough to accept them. Imagination, for instance, is an important ally of the reasoning mind. The word “imagination,” however, does not appear in the index of most books of critical thinking (e.g., Halpern, 2006). Yet every act of reasoning involves an act of imagination which, like logic, deals with what is not physically present but is implied, perceiving relationships not evident to our physical senses alone, and bringing the intellect information that it can receive in no other way. Any act of decision-making involves an act of imagination as probable courses of action are envisioned, possible consequences imagined and emotionally weighed, and judgments made based on a limited amount of current information at any given time. Piaget and Aristotle have not had the final say about the final form that our reasoning processes can take, for who can say that stages of intellectual development do not exist beyond formal operations (Gowan, 1974, 1980)?

***The reasoning mind is equipped to be aware of and accept intuitional comprehensions.*** The conscious mind can go where the ego is too afraid to tread. It is natively equipped to delve into the subconscious areas of the personality if it is sufficiently flexible and willing to accept intuitions and psychological experience from the other wider and deeper horizons of the whole self.. Like the traveler who carries a camera into a foreign country to take pictures of what is there, the personality in certain states of dissociation can take the conscious mind during its journeys into inner psychic realms to make snapshots of what it sees and carry back as memories into normal waking consciousness. The conscious mind is innately and naturally capable of looking into both the exterior, physical environment *and* the interior, nonphysical psychic environment. The answers to the question of life's personal meaning are not hidden from view of the conscious mind. It is not in the nature of the conscious mind to hinder and impede our progress and understanding, but to aid it. The source of such impeding action or difficulties must be sought elsewhere. The conscious mind holds in ready access the data, aid, information, and knowledge we require for effective day-to-day living that complements other sources of knowledge the personality does possess. Just as every dream does not have to be remembered in order for it to do its work, not everything has to be reasoned out in order for problems to be solved. There are other bodies of knowledge

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and information available to the conscious mind besides that which comes through reasoning upon which life, the growth and maintenance of the physical body, its health and stability depends. That inner knowledge *can* be relied upon (Clark, 1973; Hart, Nelson, & Puhakka, 2000; Palmer, 1998; Vaughan, 1979). Only inner data is made available that the conscious mind asks for or feels is necessary (“Knock and it shall be open to you; seek and you shall find”), unless its conscious beliefs stand in the way.

***The reasoning mind has the ideas and beliefs of the conscious personality to contend with.*** Conscious beliefs influence those subconscious processes that create conscious experience (Roberts, 1974). Conscious belief systems can serve either as facilitating channels or as inhibiting obstacles to the access of data, aid, information, and knowledge that inner portions of our personality can provide (Frank, 1977). The conscious mind must rely upon those cognitions for an accurate representation of the physical environment and human cultural world. Limited conscious beliefs create a prejudiced perception of the world that can cause a barrier to the surfacing into conscious awareness of necessary information or knowledge that the conscious mind holds in ready access. Any information that the conscious mind requires will be made available unless its own conscious beliefs cause a barrier. It is not the conscious mind, in other words, that is the cause of our species-wide or individual problems, nor the subconscious portions of the personality. It is instead the individual's consciously available, though psychologically invisible, beliefs about the nature of self, body, world, time, and others that impede the flow of energy and effective action. We have only to be aware of the contents of our own conscious mind (Ellis, 1987). The conscious mind is capable of being developed, expanded and learning through experience. The vitality and awareness, flexibility and possibilities inherent within the conscious mind can be deepened and strengthened, for example, through attentional training and the cultivation of concentration (Vaughan & Walsh, 1998). The scope of awareness of the conscious mind can be expanded through a change of beliefs. The mind's conscious beliefs can change, in other words, to bring about a change in conscious experience. Just as the intellect does not contain one's identity, so also one's thoughts and beliefs, feelings and emotions do not contain one's identity. The self *has* thoughts and beliefs, feelings and emotions -- which can be changed -- while the self remains secure in its own identity (see Assagioli, 1965/1993, pp. 22-23, 116-125). Given the power of conscious beliefs to create personal experience, it is beneficial to understand how ideas and beliefs organize and give meaning to personal experience in the work-a-day world of everyday life.

### **Perception and Knowledge are Organized through Ideas**

Cognitive psychology provides abundant evidence that our perceptions of the world, self, and others are organized and given meaning through the ideas and beliefs of the conscious mind -- a process called “top-down processing”) (Matlin, 2005, pp. 25-26). What we perceive of the world is strongly influenced by those ideas and beliefs and often only those perceptions that serve to give support and validity to these ideas are recognized, acknowledged, and accepted. Consider, for example, people's belief that their perceptions are faithful renderings of an objective world -- a belief called “naïve realism.” Because people have been conditioned to believe that the physical senses reveal an “objective” external world -- that we “see” actual physical objects -- they tend to take their constructed, subjective understandings to be accurate representations of an objective world as it “really” is. It is not only ordinary individuals who perceive the physical environment and natural world through the lens of this belief of naïve realism, though. Sensory-grounded mainstream psychology itself is susceptible to this belief. The information that is presented in general psychology textbooks, for example, is not regarded as a function of a subjectively perceived world by individual psychologists but strictly a function of objective perception of an objective world. “as it really is” by detached and disinterested observers.

***Example: Experimental psychology.*** The experimental method used in psychological science is one example of how perceptions of psychologists are organized through ideas. Experimental designs and the control, manipulation, and measurement of variables place constraints and limitation upon the phenomena

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being investigated. Experiments are explicitly and intentionally “designed” and structured to test hypotheses *a priori*. Theories are built and observations are made to fit constricted cause-and-effect schemes, inducing a conscious focusing along certain limited lines to be aware of certain characteristics within certain conditions, and grouping perceptions and comprehensions in a narrow fashion. The deck is “stacked” so to speak toward or against specific outcomes, forcing the phenomenon being investigated to only display a certain face to the researcher. Experimental research is thus programmed *by design* to receive only information that fits into preconceived classification systems, semantic categories, scientific theories and hypotheses, and experimental designs. The classifications, categories, theories, hypotheses, and laboratory requirements structure the researcher's experience and behavior to such an extent that alternate methods of investigating a phenomenon seems not only untrustworthy, but completely impossible. Focusing attention on certain superficial similarities, researchers perceive information that fits into preconceived patterns established by their prior knowledge so that what does not seem to fit the pattern is not concentrated upon and is overlooked (Rokeach, 1960). Researchers end up perceiving patterns that conform to their beliefs. The patterns they perceive, however, are actually ones they themselves have transposed upon the event, making them blind to many larger dimensions of experience and behavior and preventing them from understanding the phenomena as it “really” is. The more controlled an experiment, the less information can the phenomena spontaneously reveal about itself. This is why field observations are such a rich source of information and hypotheses about the nature and limits of a phenomenon.

Researchers are bound to find the "facts" they are looking for because their perception quite naturally leads them to ignore the larger arrangements that do not “work” within the chosen experimental framework. Facts are proven “true” by the simple process of excluding anything else that seems contradictory. These facts, theories, and methods generally carry the weight of strong validity within their own framework and convincingly work only as long as one stays within the framework and accepts it and generates questions that such frameworks automatically entail. Scientists are left with “workable” facts that help them manipulate within that framework (e.g. laboratory setting), but that do not apply when they when they try to venture outside that context (e.g., field setting). Insisting that any facts that are discovered “fit in” with already known facts, research psychologists are left with the unenviable situation of being unable to discover new facts that would lead them to greater knowledge. How can we hope to discover any “new” facts if we are always insisting that what we see fit in or correspond with the old facts that we already know? In the meantime, while we may learn certain so-called facts, we are led to the wrong kinds of questions and to questions incompletely asked because the so-called facts stand in our way.

**Example: Comparative psychology.** The study of human and animal psychology from an evolutionary perspective is a second example of how perceptions are organized through ideas, and how “what we see is not nature, but nature exposed to our method of questioning” (W. Heisenberg, quoted in Gowan, 1980, p. iv). Because the human species has divorced itself from nature to such an extent, evolutionary psychology is simply not able to understand the nature of many nonhuman species of consciousness, and ends up interpreting animal behavior according to quite conventional beliefs that are usually applied to human behavior. Human perceptual and cognitive processes, while splendid and unique, cause us to organize and interpret our sensations through ideas and to acknowledge only those perceptions that serve to give those ideas validity. When evolutionary psychologists view the animal kingdom, they focus their attention upon the similarities that are woven through their perceptions of human and non-human animal behavior, which are then filtered through their own specialized theories and beliefs, schemata and semantic categories, interests and purposes (e.g., random genetic mutation, natural selection, etc.) and tend to see in animal behavior only what they are programmed or conditioned to see (e.g., Gaulin & McBurney, 2001). Focusing attention upon certain superficial similarities in behavior, they are programmed to perceive information that fits into preconceived patterns established by their prior knowledge -- to be aware of certain characteristics within certain conditions -- so that what is dissimilar

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or contradictory becomes psychologically invisible to them. Facts are proven by excluding what does not agree.

Upon this grouping of perceptions, evolutionary psychology concludes that human and non-human animals then follow a particular kind of pattern in their behavior. They perceive in animal behavior a pattern, model, prototype, or schema of animal behavior that conforms to their beliefs. The pattern that they perceive, however, is one that they themselves have instead transposed upon the behavior they perceive, making them blind to many larger dimensions of animals' behavior, and preventing them from understanding animal behavior as it really is. Studying the behavior of male and female animals, for example, evolutionary psychologists look for patterns of jealousy, aggressiveness, territoriality, passivity, mothering instincts, submission and domination, or whatever, that often have no part in the natural life of either our own species or that of animals. The written and verbalized classifications and categories scientists use to separate one species from another in terms of their perceptual qualities (i.e., their physiology, social tendencies, behavioral habits, etc.) may serve as handy reference points but they in no real way tell us anything about the actual, natural experience of those various living creatures we refer to as "other species." Such classifications set up artificial, exterior divisions between human and nonhuman species where there may, in fact, be none. Human and nonhuman thoughts and feelings have a reality to the individual animal that transcends all such classifications. The particular specialties of interest of individual scientists (e.g., mating preferences, aggression, gender sexuality differences, family conflict, kinship in social behavior) make them further blind to any larger dimensions of animal behavior that may exist. They then use such distorted data to further define the nature of animals' behavior, further limiting their understanding of other species. As a consequence, there are emotional interactions among animals that completely escape their notice.

When a psychologist examines animals' behavior within the confines of the laboratory, he or she is not observing the basic behavior patterns that such creatures would show in their natural state, and so data becomes more distorted, limiting understanding even further. Whereas travel patterns, weather conditions, migration, and the balance of resources must be taken into account to explain animals' behavior in their natural habitats, only a distorted picture of natural behavior can be obtained in the laboratory situation because of its relatively isolated environment. Cages bound the animals in. All areas of animal behavior become altered to accommodate the artificial laboratory circumstances as much as possible, including feeding, sleeping, and sexual activity. To some extent the animals become conditioned to the laboratory situation. When psychologists study animal behavior in the laboratory they do not take these facts into account, and mistakenly speak as if the observed animal behavior is the indication of some prime or basic consequence of the experimental treatment that the individual animal has been subjected to. Actually we cannot expect to find anything more than the current adaptation of that animal -- an adaptation that is superimposed upon the animal's natural reactions.

### **Ways of Transpersonal Knowing**

#### **Spiritual Intelligence**

Intelligence can be of many different types (Gardner, 1999; Sternberg, 1999). The kind of intelligence that transpersonal psychology examines may be called "spiritual" intelligence (Ronel, 2008). It represents a way of knowing oneself, the world, and others that integrates conscious and subconscious channels of awareness, reason and intuition, religious feelings and a spiritual way of life. It is a kind of knowing that develops over time, involves the whole person, and has biological significance for the health of body and mind. Cognitive development does not have to be completed (e.g., Piagetian formal operations) before the development of spiritual intelligence can begin. Spiritual intelligence has many aspects (e.g., faith, humility, forgiveness, gratitude, ego strength and flexibility, ability to regulate emotions, moral conduct, love) that are developmental in nature. Spiritual intelligence as a personality

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"trait" rather than as an alternate "state" of consciousness will usually involve some form of sincere, disciplined, spiritual practice for transforming one's consciousness that facilitate its manifestation in one's daily life over time. Growth and development of spiritual intelligence involves the understanding of certain ideas and the practicing of certain techniques that opens up new possibilities of experience, understanding, and judgment that not only enhance evolution of the individual but also the species as well.

### **Unmediated (Direct) Knowledge**

***Unmediated (direct) knowing defined.*** When transpersonal psychologists discuss human thinking they often include the study of a kind of knowing that is not usually examined in mainstream general psychology textbooks. The knowledge of human thinking that is presented in general psychology textbooks is based for the most part on what can be called "indirect" experience -- that is, experience and behavior constructed by and filtered through abstract classification schemes, concepts and categories, verbal terms and physical instruments -- as in reading a book; looking through a microscope; classifying objects into categories; imaging the brain using PET, fMRI, EEG; conducting surveys and questionnaires; applying behavioral observation checklists; obtaining verbal self-reports. Such experience is mediated by the physical senses and other recording devices or symbolic coding systems (e.g., language) and is not direct. The thinking that transpersonal psychologists address refers to what can be called "direct" or unmediated knowing -- for example, as occurs in dreams, intuitional comprehensions, psi functioning, body awareness, creative inspiration, psychedelia, episodes of mystical and cosmic consciousness, Being-cognition, peak experiences, trance states, flow, silence, mindfulness and concentration meditation, breath work, emotional feelings. The type of experience transpersonal psychology uses as data occurs from *within* human consciousness itself and is thus direct, unmediated by cause-and-effect or logical thinking, the physical senses, words, or time. Its language is always symbolic, sometimes imagistic, and often emotional in tone. It is commonly known under the name of "intuition" (Vaughan, 1979).

The intuitions are not bound by the so-called laws of logic, and cause-and-effect. They do not take time as you know it into consideration, therefore they are not bound by continuity or limited to communication of words or even thoughts strung out one after another. The intuitions are able to accept conceptual reality to some degree. They can feel the content and validity of a concept, where the brain itself may fall short. (Roberts, 1997c, p. 16)

The intuitions are not to be considered "above" the intellect, for both have their own specific purpose and function, validity and significance, and are intended for different purposes -- the intellect to collect information from the physical environment, the intuitions to collect information from the inner psychic environment about those situations and conditions that affect the conscious personality. Of course, pure forms of meditated and unmediated knowledge rarely exist. The difference between the two sorts of knowing should be thought of as existing along a continuum, with any particular type of knowledge possessing more or less of the characteristics of each.

***Distinguishing mediated and unmediated knowing*** The knowledge of transpersonal psychology (which obviously includes mediated knowing) is a kind of knowing in which imagery and verbal terms may not be able to express or convey the insight and understanding obtained from a transpersonal event, such as a peak experience.

What is a flower? Science [to answer this question would]...actively count the kinds, examine the flowers themselves, rip them apart, tear petal from petal so that nothing escaped examination and scrutiny....[study] the details, the particulars, and [end] up with a very limited investigation of nature....Very useful but secondhand. It's obvious that all the accumulated facts about roses do not and cannot add up to the direct sense encounter of one person with one rose, or approach the

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intersection of person with flower that happens when we see, smell, touch, and feel a rose. That experience itself cannot be translated directly into the data we “know” about the factual rose. I am not here denying the facts-about-the-rose, only saying that direct knowledge must come first and that the facts will have little meaning without the encounter. (Roberts, 1978, pp. 116-117)

The difference between mediated and unmediated knowledge is illustrated in the following example. Suppose a person were 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.

### **Being-Cognition**

***Deficiency-cognition and Being-cognition defined.*** According to Maslow (1968), our ordinary way of knowing is motivated by and based upon deficiency needs (i.e., physiological, safety, belongingness, self-esteem, desire to know and understand). Knowledge derived from actions that satisfy deficiency-based needs is valued primarily by the ego-self who can use it to solve problems so that future deficiency needs may be satisfied. This knowledge deals largely with the topmost surface of reality and experience and the sensory properties of things. It constitutes the generalized knowledge frameworks (i.e., schema) that we use to classify, categorize, and stereotype the actions and events, people and things that populate our world. It is the kind of knowing that the ego-self uses to explain, control, and predict reactions the behavior of others. Maslow called this need-based way of knowing: Deficiency-cognition (or D-cognition). B-cognition, on the other hand, is not motivated on the basis of satisfying ego-directed deficiency needs, but is conferred by transpersonal experiences during which consciousness expands beyond its usual boundaries to yield intuitional comprehensions into the nature of reality.

***Distinguishing D-cognition and B-cognition.*** To clarify the distinction between D-cognition and B-cognition, consider how a physical being, such as a cow, would be perceived and understood under these two ways of knowing. D-cognition of the cow, for example, would tend to perceive the cow as an object, like any other object such as a rock, a star, or a table. D-cognition of the cow include knowing that the cow is a member of the class of animals we call mammals, which can be slaughtered and consumed as mere foodstuff, and can therefore be used to alleviate the nutritional deficiency we experience as hunger. B-cognition of that same cow, on the other hand, would come to know it as a living being unlike any other cow in creation, a being that is intrinsically valid and significant and meaningful, quite apart from any use to which she or he might be put.

A vital, conscious portion of the universe [that], simply by *being*, fits into the universe and into universal purposes in a way 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. (Roberts, 1997a, pp. 147-148)

B-cognition does not seek to get anything out of, or do anything to, the thing that it knows. B-cognition would not analyze the cow, but would see it whole, as a perfect unity-identity-whole grasped in data from which nothing is missing and to which nothing needs to be added. In short, through B-cognition one would come to know this particular cow in its being. B-cognition is cognition of being.

***Characteristics of cognition in generalized peak experiences.*** Maslow (1968, chaps. 6-8) describes peak experiences as ecstatic mystical experiences that are not planned, or brought about by design. They just happen. Peak experiences, although infrequent, are not abnormal, but are healthy experiences and have

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nothing whatsoever to do with hallucinations or delusion. Peak experiences are signs of self-actualization and the achievement of a strong yet flexible ego-self and represent what Maslow believed to be humanity's best moments. **Figure 6-1** presents the characteristics of cognition found in the generalized peak experience that were derived by Maslow (1968, p. 71) in his analysis of from about 80 personal interviews and written responses of 190 college freshmen in response to the following prompt:

I would like you to think of the most wonderful experience or experiences of your life; happiest moments, ecstatic moments, moments of rapture, perhaps from being in love, or from listening to music or suddenly 'being hit' by a book or a painting, or from some great creative moment. First list these. And then try to tell me how you feel in such acute moments, how you feel *differently* from the way you feel at other times, how you are at the moment a different person in some ways.

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Insert Figure 6-1 here

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The knowing that occurs during a transpersonal event, such as a peak experience, is of a unique kind, an end in itself, which brings a self-forgetful and egoless knowledge of the perceived object as it is in and of itself, in its essence and in its unique individuality. It is a kind of knowing when the usual distinction between mind and emotion is dissolved so that feeling and knowing becomes one. The conscious mind with its logical, reasoning intellect and emotions and intuitions together make up the miraculous unity of the psyche (Vaughan, 1989).

### **Cosmic Consciousness**

***Cosmic consciousness defined.*** Richard Maurice Bucke, M.D. (b. 1837- d.1902) was a nineteenth century Canadian physician, a former medical superintendent of the asylum for the insane in London and in Canada, who had a mystical experience when he was 35 years old. Twenty years later in 1901, Bucke wrote about his experience in the classic investigation of the transpersonal experience called *Cosmic Consciousness* (Bucke, 1901/1969). According to Bucke, cosmic consciousness is a type of awareness that has evolved in human beings over millions of years that followed the emergence of simple consciousness in non-human animals and then self-consciousness (stimulated by the development of language) in humans. Whereas simple consciousness and self-consciousness are universal or nearly universal in humans, cosmic consciousness is believed to be a very rare form awareness that occurs in only one in every million human beings.

***Cosmic consciousness distinguished from self-consciousness.*** Cosmic consciousness was considered by Bucke to be a "new faculty" acquired only by the best of the race, in individuals of good intellect, high moral quality, and superior physique at the height of their maturity, mostly of the male sex, usually around the ages of 30-40 years of age. Speaking in the politically correct language of his day, Bucke describes the preconditions for cosmic consciousness to occur.

In order that a man may enter into Cosmic Consciousness he must belong...to the top layer of the world of Self-Consciousness. Not that he need have an extraordinary intellect...though he must not be deficient in this respect, either. He must have a good physique, good health, but above all he must have an exalted moral nature, strong sympathies, a warm heart, courage, strong and earnest religious feelings. All these being granted, and the man having reached the age necessary to bring him to the top of the self-conscious mental stratum, some day he enters Cosmic Consciousness. (Bucke, 1901/1969, p. 72)

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Bucke hypothesized that just as the kind of consciousness called Self Consciousness was once a rare phenomenon in the species until it became eventually universal among all its members, so too with Cosmic Consciousness.

The presumption seems to be that the new sense will become more and more common and show itself earlier in life, until after many generations it will appear in each normal individual at the age of puberty or even earlier; then go on becoming still more universal, and appearing at a still earlier age, until, after many thousands of generations, it shows itself immediately after infancy in nearly every member of the race. (Bucke, 1901/1969, p. 66)

***Characteristics of cognition in generalized cosmic consciousness experiences.*** Using his own experience of Cosmic Consciousness as a baseline condition, Bucke used a case study method approach to identify the predisposing factors for cosmic consciousness and its characteristics as it had manifested in religious figures such as Moses, Isaiah, Gautama the Buddha, Mohammed, Jesus the Christ, and St. Paul; philosophers such as Socrates, Plotinus, and Spinoza; literary figures such as Dante, Blake, and Whitman; scientists such as Francis Bacon; mathematicians such as Pascal; mystics such as Swedenborg, and other individuals. Robert May (1991) in his book, *Cosmic Consciousness Revisited*, identifies ten additional cases of cosmic consciousness in living individuals, including transpersonal psychologist Jean Houston, mystic Bernadette Roberts, New Age writer David Spangler, spiritual adept Da Free John, Swami Muktananda, and Jungian analyst Robert Johnson. Tracing the origins and development of western spiritual psychology from Bucke's classic study of the evolution of cosmic consciousness, May (1991) considers transpersonal psychology to be a transitional paradigm and forerunner of what he calls "sacred psychology" - the next great step in the future evolution of human spiritual and psychological evolution. What cognitions occur during an experience of cosmic consciousness? **Figure 6-2** presents characteristic cognitions of cosmic consciousness identified by Bucke (1901/1969).

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Insert Figure 6-2 here

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***Characteristic "triggers" of blissful and ecstatic experiences.*** It is interesting to compare the antecedent stimuli that act as so-called "triggers" of spontaneous religious-mystical experience of *bliss* reported by Coxhead (1985) based on the self-reports of over 3,000 questionnaire respondents and the "triggers" of ecstatic experience reported by Marghanita Laski (1961). Laski (1961) in her study of *ecstasy* "found that the triggers that set off transcendent ecstasy in people from all walks of life include natural scenery, sexual love, child-birth, movement, religion, art, scientific or poetic knowledge, creative work, introspection and beauty" (Murphy, 1969, p. 25). Coxhead (1985, p. 16) indicated the following antecedent stimuli as "triggers" of blissful experiences (in descending order of magnitude)

- Depression, despair
- Prayer, meditation
- Natural beauty
- Participation in religious worship
- Literature, drama, film
- Illness
- Music
- Crisis in personal relations
- The death of others
- Sacred places
- Visual arts

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- Creative work
- Silence, solitude
- The prospect of death
- Drugs: anesthetics
- Relaxation
- Physical activity
- Childbirth
- Happiness
- Drugs: Psychedelics
- Sexual relations

Obviously, experiencing these “triggers” is not a sufficient cause for having an ecstatic or a blissful religious-mystical experience, since most people experience one or more of these triggers without having such experiences. The real motivating force for such experiences must be found not in the physical environment but within conditions of the inner psyche.

### **Knowledge of Being**

*Epistemic character of transpersonal experience is central.* What is important for this discussion of transpersonal knowing in the examples of Maslow’s peak experiences and Bucke’s cosmic consciousness is the epistemic dimension of the experience and the validity of the knowledge claims made on behalf of the experiential dimensions of these transpersonal and spiritual phenomena. Besides being an emotional experience (e.g., of awe, wonder, love, humility, sense of mystery, fear, joy, ecstasy, etc.) toward this cognized reality and its revealed aspects, in other words, a transpersonal event is also an intellectual, cognitive experience. The centrality of knowledge in cosmic consciousness is clearly emphasized by Bucke (1901/1969) in the following paragraph:

The passage from self to cosmic consciousness... seems to be a phenomenon strictly parallel to the passage from simple to self consciousness.... There are two chief elements: (a) Added consciousness; (b) Added faculty. ...When a person who was self conscious only, enters into cosmic consciousness—(a) He knows without learning (from the mere fact of illumination) certain things, as, for instance: (1) that the universe is not a dead machine but a living presence; (2) that in its essence and tendency it is infinitely good; (3) that individual existence is continuous beyond what is called death. At the same time: (b) He takes on enormously greater capacity both for learning and initiating. (pp. 75-76)

Ferrer (2002) 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 (1991), former President of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology, 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 part of a larger reality of which the individual is a part. (p. 182)

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***Being-values characterize reality itself.*** The Being-values that are apprehended as belonging to reality during acts of B-cognition, Maslow (1970) calls “true values” because perception and cognition are not distorted by deficiency needs. Being-values are absolutely true. And because human beings are a part of the reality that they perceive, Being-values are also grounded in the essence of human nature itself. As Maslow (1970) put it:

The statement, ‘The fully human person in certain moments perceives the unity of the cosmos, fuses with it, and rests in it, completely satisfied for the moment in his yearning for one-ness,’ is very likely synonymous, at a ‘higher level of magnification,’ with the statement, ‘This is a fully human person.’ (Maslow, 1970, p. 95)

The Being-Values that are revealed to characterize reality during a transpersonal event, such as a peak experience, are also similar to the values and cognitions revealed in various descriptions people provide about other transpersonal experiences, for instance, during psychotherapeutic LSD sessions with terminally-ill cancer patients (Grof, 2000, pp. 257-265) or during a near-death episode (Ring & Valarino, 1998). The knowledge gained through Being-cognition and cosmic consciousness is not the knowledge of “the world of outward things” (William James's phrase), but knowledge of *being* itself. Abraham Maslow referred to this cognitive (or epistemic) dimension of a transpersonal experience as “Being-Cognition” (or B-cognition). B-cognition provides us *knowledge of being* (see Maslow, 1968, Part III; Maslow, 1970, Appendix G; Maslow, 1971, Part VI). **Figure 6-3** lists the attributes of Being or aspects of Reality that, according to Abraham Maslow (1970, pp. 92-94), are revealed to the perceiver during a transpersonal event, such as a peak experience.

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Insert Figure 6-3 here

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***Knowledge of being is denied by mainstream psychology.*** Mainstream psychology views the existence of “Being-Cognition” and “Cosmic Consciousness” with skepticism. Even if such a faculty were to exist, mainstream psychologists doubt that it could provide us with “knowledge of being.” While transpersonal psychology may be theoretically fascinating and creatively valid, it is seen by mainstream psychologist as dealing essentially with “non-information” that does not contain any statements about any kind of scientifically valid, hard-bed reality (see, for example, Ellis & Yeager, 1989; Neher, 1990). The claims of Maslow and Bucke and others that the attributes of Being or that the true nature of Reality is revealed to the perceiver during a peak, cosmic, spiritual, or transpersonal experience runs directly counter to the nature of cognition as mainstream psychology understands it and is regarded as scientific error as far as orthodox Western psychology is concerned (Gray, 1991; Radner & Radner, 1982; Tart, 1975/1992, chap. 2).

### **The Generalized Empirical Method of Transpersonal Knowing**

Without the perceptual apparatus to detect a given stimulus, nothing is perceived. Without the conceptual apparatus to investigate a given possibility, nothing is understood. Transpersonal psychology, like all sciences, is based upon data of experience, but the type of experience that transpersonal psychology investigates is different in important respects from the data of experience of the physical sciences inasmuch as the datum does not exist in any physical location, takes up no physical space, and can be perceived by no physical senses (i.e., the data of consciousness). Transpersonal psychology, like all sciences, employs what can be called a generalized empirical method (Lonergan, 1957; Tart, 2001; Wilber, 1990). Transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber (1990), following the common view that empirical science is concerned with publicly verifiable laws and falsifiable predictions, urges that the empirical method, at least in its essential features, should be applicable to the data of consciousness (ideas, images,

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concepts, beliefs, impulses, expectations, fears, desires, and so forth) no less than to the data of sense. It is a method of inquiry that does not rest on the narrow empiricism of mediated sensory experience but on a broad empiricism (“*empiricus*”) of direct experience of the nature of human consciousness by which physical and nonphysical reality is inevitably apprehended. Wilber (1990) identifies three essential steps of what can be called a “*generalized empirical method*” (Longeran, 1957, pp. 243-244). It requires (a) an “instrumental injunction” to produce the experience, (b) a “direct apprehension” of data disclosed by the injunction, and (c) the “communal confirmation” (or rejection) of what is disclosed. Transpersonal psychologist Jorge Ferrer (2002) refers to this grounding of knowledge claims about the attributes of Being in intersubjective experience as the “inner empiricism” of direct experience.

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. (p. 42).

**Step 1. Instrumental injunction.** The first essential feature of Wilber’s (1990) generalized empirical method refers to the set of instructions or procedures, practices, exercises, activities, techniques, methods, and actions necessary to produce a direct experience or apprehension of Being. Instrumental injunctions are always in the form of a conditional “If...then” statement: “If you want to *know* this, then you must *do* this.” For instance, if you want to see a cell, then you must look through a microscope. If you want to know Spanish, then 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, then you must practice meditation. 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 have a direct experience, insight, or illumination. Learning to read brings us into a world of experience, understanding, and reflection 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.

What the founders of the major world religions originally gave to their disciples was not a series of dogmatic beliefs but a series of practices, procedures, methods, or prescriptions: If you want to *know* the Source of Being, you must *do* this. For the believers of Jesus, this took the form: “If you wish to enter the kingdom of heaven, be as little children,” “If anyone loves me, he will keep my commandments,” and so forth. For the followers of Moses, this took the form: “If you want to know God, you must pray, keep holy the Sabbath, and obey the Ten Commandments.” For the devotees of Buddha, took the form: “Follow the Eightfold Path, or the Middle Way,” “If you want to know your true nature, practice meditation.” For the disciples of Patanjali, this took the form of: “If you want to achieve self-realization, master the eight limbs of Yoga.” For the supporters of Mohamed, this took the form: “Follow the Koran and surrender your will to Allah, and you shall enter Paradise.” These directions were aimed to reproduce and repeat in each adherent the spiritual experiences, insight, and knowledge of the founder. Transpersonal psychologist Roger Walsh’s (1999) book, *Essential Spirituality: The Seven Central Practices to Awaken Heart and Mind*, is filled with simple, powerful exercises aimed to produce a direct experience or apprehension of the Source of Being in those willing to devote the time and effort to their practice.

**Step 2. Direct apprehension.** A second key step of Wilber’s (1990) *generalized empirical method* refers to the insight, experience, illumination, data, or cognitive content that is disclosed, revealed, unveiled, divulged, evoked, elicited, or made known by the action and performance of the “instrumental

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injunction.” The injunction leads to a direct disclosing of data in consciousness, and these data of consciousness are a crucial basis and foundation 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, 1902/1936, p. 507). 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, Ramana Maharshi) provide excellent descriptive accounts of individual illumination, enlightenment, and direct apprehension of insights during mystical states of consciousness.

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). 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) (Miller & C’de Baca, 2001, chap. 10). Spontaneous direct apprehensions of the Being, such as peak experiences, 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 (e.g., Yogananda, 1946/1974).

**Step 3. Communal confirmation (or rejection).** The third key step of Wilber’s *generalized empirical method* refers to the checking of the “direct apprehension” (i.e., the insight, experience, illumination, data, evidence that is disclosed by performance of the injunction) with other conscious subjects 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 different conscious subjects. 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)

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” to detect a given inner stimulus or develop the necessary conceptual apparatus to investigate a given possibility, then we are justified in disregarding that person’s opinions as to communal proof. Just as someone who has not examined the *psi* literature first-hand is inadequate to form a reasonable judgment about it, so also someone who refuses to learn Christian meditation cannot be allowed to vote on the truth of the Holy Spirit.

**Transpersonal knowledge like ordinary scientific knowledge is “public,” valid, and practical.** Some may object that spiritual knowledge is basically private and that verbal reports of such knowledge are not subject to verification. Wilber (1990) argues that spiritual knowledge is no more “private” and incommunicable than mathematical knowledge (e.g., 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

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*transmission* of Buddha's enlightenment all the way down to present-day Buddhist masters). Transpersonal knowledge is a public, sharable, and intersubjective knowledge; otherwise it could not be trained or communicated in the first place. If phenomenological accounts or self-reports of subjective experience are to be regarded as suspect by their very nature, then none could be used as legitimate data in psychological experiments, clinical practice, courts of law, or ordinary conversations in daily life. People do lie, but they also tell the truth.

**Protocol analysis: Verbal reports as data.** 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 (Ericsson & Simon, 1984). 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 and the conditions under which self-reports do provide legitimate data). 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. For instance, 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 telescopes have yet spotted the psyche or soul. 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 spiritual experience (or the interior conventions of mathematical deduction) and who decide whether the direct apprehension is true or not.

### Approaches to Religious Knowledge -- Transpersonal and Traditional

General psychology textbooks rarely discuss the topic of religion and yet the species' spiritual nature is one of its most defining characteristics. What distinguishes transpersonal psychology from other scientific approaches to the study of spiritual or religious experiences? How is one to regard the validity and legitimacy of religious knowledge as codified in the various world religions? The question of transpersonal psychology's relation to religion is an important one given humanity's nature as a religious creature.

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, p. 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, 1975/1992). As such, transpersonal psychology recognizes that each religion will have quite different visions and versions of the greater multidimensional framework of existence within which one's daily life is couched and supported. Each vision of basic reality are legitimate reflections of its limited understanding as it interprets that basic reality through its own unique set of culturally- and temporally-conditioned doctrines, myths, symbols, and rituals. If we view religions from the perspective of "spiritual psychologies," then the religious images, concepts, and symbols of what William James (1902/1936) 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

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simply objective representations of an already out there now real “God” totally separate and isolated from Its/His/Her creations. When approaching religions as “spiritual psychologies,” transpersonal psychologists keep in mind what philosopher-theologian John Hick (1999) calls the “critical realist principle” -- “there are realities external to us, but. . . 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” (p. 41).

***Changing concepts of God as reflections of the evolution of human consciousness.*** Unlike traditional approaches to religion that view God concepts as mere intellectual containers for religious sentiments, 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 *psychological* evolution of our collective species. Christianity, for instance, set forth the initial precepts upon which Western Civilization was built and Islam remains a vital force in shaping cultures and societies in the Middle East. Seemingly outside of the self, our species’ constructed images, symbols, and concepts of God are thought to be symbols of intuitive insight, sometimes in distorted form, that are intended to give conscious direction to species evolution by acting as stimulators of development and evolution toward “higher” stages of development that arise from the deeper dimensions of our species’ nature to lead the species into its greatest areas of fulfillment. (Assagioli, 1991; Jung, 1964; Roberts, 1977a, 1979b, 1981b). Changing concepts of God have gone hand-in-hand with the development of our consciousness as a species.

***Distinguishing between a religion’s exoteric (surface) structure and esoteric (deep) structure.*** Unlike the focus of inquiry that characterizes traditional research approaches in what has traditionally been defined as the “psychology of religion,” transpersonal psychology is less concerned with the “surface structure” of religion (i.e., its outer “exoteric,” formal dogmatic aspects) and more concerned with its “deep structure” (i.e., its inner “esoteric,” mystical experiential aspects) (Schuon, 1984). The deep structure of the world’s recognized religions may be viewed as the deeper *source* of formal religion’s doctrines and dogmas, rituals and practices and the origin of that natural *religious* feeling that gives each individual being the optimism, joy, and ever-abundant energy to grow, that encourages curiosity and creativity, and that 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 and to feel that although one’s own personality may be imperfect it is acceptable. Transpersonal psychologists prefer to call transpersonal phenomena “spiritual experiences” instead of “religious experiences” in order to emphasize the clear distinction between transpersonal psychology and organized religion and its surface and deeper structural aspects (see, for example, Grof, 2000, pp. 210-211). The term “religious experience” includes transpersonal experience; but there are certain types of religious experiences that do not meet the criteria for being transpersonal (Anthony, Ecker, and Wilber, 1987).

It is transpersonal psychology’s public recognition and acknowledgement of the intrinsic validity and significance of organized religion’s deeper structural aspects (i.e., spiritual experiences and transformative 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, secular, 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. While the objective approach to the study of religion’s surface structure is an entirely valuable and legitimate enterprise, this particular approach to the study of religion is a relatively narrow one, bringing 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 *experiential and cognitive dimensions* of spiritual experiences and the

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greater “withinness” out of which all old (and new) religions spring. “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” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 7).

***Hypothesis of a Transpersonal Self – Psychology’s nearest corollary to the soul.*** By extending itself to the knowledge that can only come from subjectively tasting the rich, vital dimension and inside esoteric depth of spiritual experiences and behaviors, transpersonal psychology affirms that a critical realist, religious interpretation (i.e., an authentic expression of transcendent reality clothed in the particular form provided by a religious faith) is no less legitimate than a non-realist, non-religious interpretation (i.e., the entire experience is self-induced hallucination and not in any sense an intuitive revelation of a real transcendent actuality). Hence the use of the term “soul” and “spirit” in the writings of transpersonal psychologists (e.g., Jung, Assagioli, Cortright). It is important to recognize, psychologically speaking, that such concepts and terms refer not only to that portion of our greater, larger identity that is directly linked to the conscious personality, but also to the subconscious continuation of that conscious “I” with wider, deeper unconscious processes beyond the margins of normal waking consciousness -- called the “transmarginal field” by William James (1902/1936) and “subliminal consciousness” by F. W. H Myers (1889-1895/1976, 1903/1961). The term “soul” is used to refer to an inner, transpersonal self (beyond ego) – a permanent center of identity -- that exists at “deeper” or “higher” levels of the subconscious – a subconscious region or layer of the psyche that Assagioli (1988/1991) refers to as the “superconscious.” Such concepts and terms are designed to arouse the deepest levels of the psyche and in a manner that encourages the unfolding of profoundly creative aspects of our being.

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 . . . that soul has substance, is of divine nature and therefore immortal; that there is a power within it that builds 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 spiritual world from which the soul receives knowledge of spiritual things whose origins cannot be discovered in this visible world. (Jung, 1934/1960, pp. 341, 344)

Drawing upon laboratory and non-experimental studies of many different psychological phenomena that have their origin in inner psychic processes beyond the threshold of normal waking consciousness -- sleep and dreams, hypnotism and trance states, hysterical neuroses and multiple personality, automatisms of writing and speaking, conversion experiences and mystical ecstasy, inspirations of genius and psi functioning-- transpersonal psychology begins with the hypothesis that we possess an inner, transpersonal (beyond ego) self of extraordinary creativity, organization, and meaning -- psychology’s nearest corollary to the soul (Assagioli, 1965/1992; Firman & Gila, 2002; Hardy, 1987; Myers, 1903/1961; Roberts, 1972, 1974; Vaughan, 1986). 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, 1902/1936, p. 502).

Transpersonal psychologists call this “abiding psychical entity” the transpersonal self. Although Buddhist-oriented transpersonal psychologists may argue against the existence of an inner, transpersonal self or noumenal “I” (as distinguished from the phenomenal “I” of the conscious, egoic personality), many transpersonal psychologists find it a useful hypothetical construct to explain clinical observations

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and experimental data (Assagioli, 1973/1992, 1988/1991; Grof, 1985; Hardy, 1987; Hillman, 1975; Myers, 1889-1895/1976; Vaughan, 1986, chapter 3; Wilber, 1979, Chapter 9).

Concepts of the transpersonal self will vary depending upon what aspects are emphasized and considered to be important. Some theories may stress the interdependence of individual minds (as in Jung's collective unconscious), others emphasize humanity's interconnection with Nature and all other species (Kowalski, 1991, Randour, 2000), while still others highlight the availability of extrasensory information (Tart, 1997). 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 or "soul" 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.

Awareness of this inner self, our greater identity, is an important goal or purpose of an individual's life. The hypothesis of a multidimensional, inner self is not meant to be an esoteric theory with little practical meaning in our daily life, in other words. 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). By an act of Being-cognition (Maslow, 1968, 1971) or 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 an ultimate multidimensional spirit, universal force, Dynamic Ground (or whatever term you use to describe Nature's source) that is directed and focused within each individual and is more intimate than breath.

***The dynamic Ground of the transpersonal self.*** The transpersonal self, without the whole self's Source, would not last a moment. Drawing upon modern consciousness research and the wisdom literature of premodern spiritual traditions, transpersonal psychologists examine those exceptional human experiences and behaviors that appear to represent our unconscious knowledge of some greater source or basic reality out of which our individual, personal existence and the natural physical world constantly springs and in which both self and world are always couched, connected and rooted. This is no impersonal Source since its energy gives rise to persons. In certain terms, it is the force that forms the flesh, bone, and sinew of one's physical body and the identity of the conscious "I" in that it is responsible for the energy that gives vitality to one's unique personality (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 inner, transpersonal self – *your* transpersonal self -- is a part. Transcending all dimensions of actuality, consciousness, and reality, while still being a part of each, it is 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, and in the data from the research of non-ordinary states of consciousness to be the supreme Ground of Being that provides the creative ingredients from which we form the most intimate portions of our private reality (Grof, 2000; Hixon, 1989; Huxley, 1944/1970; Otto, 1923/1950; Schuon, 1984; H. Smith, 1991; Underhill, 1911/1961; Wilber, 1977).

***Transpersonal psychology is theologically neutral.*** For Christians "God" is the natural appellation for the basic reality or Dynamic Ground, whereas for others it may be "Allah" or "Yahweh" or 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

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transpersonal self into God or God into the transpersonal self. It seeks psychic truths, not theological ones. Transpersonal psychology is theologically neutral and neither builds up nor tears down any particular formal religion or practice.

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)

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, 1975/1992). 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, 1988/1991, p. 16).

***Religious-spiritual-transpersonal experiences as alternate states of knowledge.*** Transpersonal psychologists tend to view experiences of “mystical union,” “enlightenment,” “nirvana”, and related experiences as natural and beneficial nonordinary, alternate states of consciousness that may be subject to state-dependent learning effects. From a transpersonal perspective these and other alternate states of consciousness (ASC) – for example, trance states, ultradian rhythms, daydreaming, sleeping, drug states, meditation -- gives us hints that there are other ways of receiving other kinds of knowledge, and different ways of putting information together into alternate organization of experience and patterns of comprehension than occurs in normal waking consciousness (NWC). Each state of consciousness is itself a container that shapes the information it receives. In each ASC, inner and outer reality appears organized in another fashion with different rules applying, especially in the dream state. In ASCs, we gain access to a different state of knowledge, a different mode of organization of knowledge, like our waking knowledge of art, music, philosophy, science, math, and agriculture, but at a different level of consciousness. One type of knowledge or ASC is not better than another, but simply a different method of organizing experience and comprehending alternate realities that are just as valid and significant as the physically-tuned reality of our normal waking, verbal, linear consciousness. In line with the Jamesian transmissive theory of cerebral action, the brain is a type of “receiving station” capable of tuning into different frequencies of events, providing us access to these different systems of knowledge with their corresponding alternate organizations of emotionally-related associations and patterns of experience (James, 1898/1956). When we put aside accepted modes of perception and enter into an ASC, we tune into different states and systems of knowledge that may be psychologically invisible to us in the NWC.

The information, images, and ideas that arise in an ASC may appear to be chaotic to our educated and prejudiced normal waking evaluation of the events, with no apparent meaning or inner order. Of necessity, if our conscious “I” is to assimilate the experience, the inner data must take on the shape that our verbally-structured thought of normal waking consciousness can recognize and understand. Images in ASC are translated into the form of words and into the familiar images of normal waking life, as we try to squeeze and push, organize and tailor the spontaneous, emotionally-associated images and ideas that occur in these ASC into the accepted patterns of NWC with its ordered time sequences, verbalized constructs, preconceived ideas and beliefs, and logical reasoning processes -- even though these alternate modes of experience and knowledge arise from a different order of being, from another frame of reference. Beneath the verbally structured translations of NWC, however, is a comprehension of a different type that is known to the inner, transpersonal self. The task of transpersonal psychology is to

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help the conscious “I” become flexible enough to expand its scope of awareness so that it can become intellectually aware of this inner data conveyed by the transpersonal self.

### III. The Transpersonal Nature of Language

#### Ways of Ordinary Speaking

Language as studied by linguists has three major divisions: phonology (or the sounds of a language, its syllables), syntax (or the order of words, its grammar and “proper” sentence structure), and semantics (or the meaning of words).

Language is the necessary and sufficient condition for entrance into the human world. . . . If the chimpanzee has the potential for language, but not its reality, then the function of speech in its essence is not an organic function at all, but a function of the mind and spirit. . . . Language is the being of man carried to self-awareness -- the overture to transcendence. . . . Thanks to it, the natural world becomes the emergent human reality, consonant with the power that brought it into being. (Gusdorf, 1965, pp. 4-10)

#### Phonology – Sound and Breath

***The energy of sound and breath underlies all language.*** Human language is a psychological capacity and potentiality composed of a certain number of sounds related to anatomical structures and physiological functions. "Throughout the world, people speak between 2,500 and 3,000 different languages" (Matlin, 2005, p 299). Different languages use sounds in their own peculiar manners with their own rhythms, one language emphasizing what another language ignores. Speaking requires the use of one's breath or what Hindu religions call “prana.” The sound itself, even without being a part of a recognizable word, carries a meaning. A person, who may suddenly find himself or herself singing “gibberish” when they are alone, will find the sounds they emit capable of conveying or eliciting emotions. Each sound can present a sound equivalent of an emotion or an object. Each letter in a language's alphabet has a sound associated with it. In the English language, there are words that sound like the object or action they represent called "onomatopoeia" (e.g., “hush,” “bell,” “bang,” “the humming bee,” “the whizzing arrow,” the buzzing saw”). We know that sounds can physically affect the body at the molecular level (Gaynor, 1999; Marman, 1997; Tomatis, 1991). There are not only psychological reactions to the sounds and pauses of speech, but also chemical reactions by the body that express one's emotional states. In ancient Egypt, sounds were used to harmonize body and mind (“RAH,” “BAH,” “THO”). Thought being translated into inner sound affects the body Buddhists know this when they chant “AUM” and Hindus chant their mantras. “Sound thus creates meaning, and the energy of sound underlies our language” (Frawley, 1994, p. 37). .

***Silence as the ground out of which sound and meaning emerge and become figural.*** Language is meaningful precisely because of the rhythms of the silence and the breath upon which it rides. Silence is the ground out of which sound emerges. The meaning of a conversation, in these terms, emerges as a “figure” out of a “ground” of silence just as a visual figure emerges out of a perceptual ground. It is the pauses, the silence between the words, the words that are not spoken, and the implied elements of language that are as important to the creation of meaning as what is verbally expressed. What is meant and understood depends on the silence out of which it arises, for not all silences are the same (e.g., the respectful silence, the frightened silence, the “pregnant pause”). There are situations in Western Apache culture, for instance, where “it is right to give up on words” (Pollio, 1982, cp. 138). Silence does not necessarily mean assent. Silence may be in response to unpredictability or uncertainty in social situations where we do not know what to say because we do not know what is expected.

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**Phonology (sound) and semantics (sense).** The words of a language have both meaning and a sound quality. The relationship between phonology (sound) and semantics (meaning) is not rigid and inflexible, nor is it always direct or a one-to-one relationship one with the other. Identical sound patterns (e.g., “hair” and “hare”) can mean entirely different things. The same sounds in different languages can mean different things (e.g., Chinese “go” does not mean English “go”). Different sounds in the same language can mean the same things (e.g., synonyms such as “car” and “automobile”). Words are sound-symbols that have agreed-upon meanings. Human beings can, by agreement, make any sound-symbol stand for anything. We have learned to associate these sound-symbols to certain visual cues we perceive in the environment. We have trained ourselves to react to these visual and auditory cues which trigger particular kinds of thoughts and interpretations about what it is we perceive. Language must follow perception, but the sound structure beneath does not. Repeat the sounds of a word over and over (e.g., “book, “book,” ..... ) and the culturally conditioned meaning disappears, so the sound once again becomes free of its arbitrarily imposed meaning. Phonology and semantics -- sound and sense -- while related are not the same thing, and there must always be a gap between the sound of a word and its meaning.

### Language Production

**The unconscious nature of language production.** Language production (speaking) is largely a subconscious affair. We begin speaking a sentence without knowing exactly how we are going to end it, while knowing at the same time when we begin the sentence that by the time we finish the sentence that it will make sense. We do not know how it is that we pick the precise word out of the staggering pyramid of symbols that is our vocabulary store to express a given thought (50,000 words for most adults by some estimates). At a conscious level we do not know the multiple and diverse physical mechanisms that permit us to talk, or know the history of the words we speak, even though we can speak the words quite well without that intellectual knowledge. That kind of “body knowledge” is not necessary at the conscious level. For that matter we do not know how we walk or think and yet are able to perform these functions quite well without involvement of the conscious mind. At one time we had to learn how to talk, but now this unconscious activity is taken care of “by itself.” automatically and effortlessly by so-called non-conscious processes. All of this applies to language-based activities of reading and writing as well.

**The linear nature of language.** Language production (speaking and writing) is partially a function of physical time, and the result of a linear thought pattern in which words are strung out in boxcar-like fashion with one letter following another to make a word and one word trailing along behind another to make a sentence. Because language production must occur within a time structure, speaking and writing is limited in the amount of information that can be conveyed at any one time. If one has much to say, one cannot say it all at once. In those terms, language is not given to the communication of simultaneous experience as, say, a photograph or painting would be capable of doing. The constraints of attentional and working memory capacity (e.g.,  $7 \pm 2$  meaningful chunks of information) further structures and limits the communication of meaning at any one time, in that working memory must keep in short-term storage what is said at the beginning of a sentence until the sentence is concluded in order to know whether it is a question being asked or a declarative statement being made (Baddeley, 1999, chap. 3).

**Distinguishing language and speech .** Speaking differs from language in several important ways, and while they are related in many different ways, they are not the same thing (Saussure, 1916/1959). Obviously, people were speaking to one another before abstract language formally came into being. Speaking is living, ongoing behavior and language is a useful abstraction derived from an analysis of the ongoing flow of speech (Pollio, 1982, chap. 6). The abstraction known as the English language is influenced by different factors than those affecting American speaking (Giglioli, 1972). Unlike language, speaking face-to-face always occurs in a *living* context in which the listener is confronted with the person

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of the speaker, with his or her gestures and facial expressions, smiles and frowns, pace, rhythms, pauses, emphasizes, tone of voice, and accent that *add* to the meaning of the spoken word -- all dimensions of experience not easily conveyed through the printed word contained in a letter or in a book or dictionary. Speaking is a much more spontaneous affair; whereas writing and reading are more reflective. Some books are written that are meant only to be read, and never to be spoken aloud. Speaking always involves some sort of relationship between the listener and the speaker, a relationship not always accounted for in the writing or reading of a novel, for example. Who the speaker and the listener are and what they know, and the situation in which the person is speaking must be taken into account, if the human experience of speaking is to be understood (Gusdorf, 1953/1965, chap. 5). "To speak in a shared world is to speak differently than in a world of strangers" (Pollio, 1982, p. 134).

***Speaking is an action in the world that brings about a special way of relating to the world, self and others.*** Speaking is done to do more than simply communicate information. Speaking is done to affect the world in a direct, vivid, immediate way. We speak words to greet, request, command, persuade, amuse, entertain, question, threaten, fill the silence, ease loneliness, and express emotions, particularly with the use of so-called "taboo" words. (Fowler, 1974). The act of speaking can indicate one's degree of familiarity with the listener and the social class of the speaker, as in the use of the word "vous" in the French language for speaking with a person in authority or to a stranger, and the use of "tu" when speaking to a friend (Giglioli, 1972). Speaking within a given language brings about a special way of relating to the world. Each language brings into existence its own unique world. The way a sentence is phrased not only expresses an idea but may bring that idea uniquely into existence for the first time. The use of a special word in a new context can bring about a new way of dealing with a problem. Speaking poetically about a situation, for instance, may reveal it in a new and transformed way. Language and speaking, then, are not incidental to thinking or creating. Language and speaking create a world as much as they are created by the world they have created.

Language is not simply a representation of a pre-given world, but has a hand in the creation and construction of that world. . . . Language is not a clear window through which we innocently look at a given world. . . . Language helps to create my world, and, as Wittgenstein would put it, the limits of my language are the limits of my world. (Wilber, 1998, pp. 124-125)

Speaking can bring a world into being ("I love you"), preserve it or destroy it, explore it or record it, reveal it or hide it no less than any other human act.

### **Language Comprehension**

***Language shapes rather than mirrors thought and perception.*** Cognitive psychology has clarified and elaborated upon the precise ways in which language in some ways *determines* the way we think and in other ways simply *influences what* we think. The "linguistic relativity hypothesis" states that language shapes rather than mirrors reality (Whorf, 1956). In its strong version, it states that any and all translation of another language is impossible (as in a poem, for instance). In its weak version, translation is only approximate. Poetry in one language is very difficult to translate into another language while keeping the full meaning of the poem intact, for instance. One can imagine what happens to the meaning of a word in a particular book (e.g., the Bible) when it is translated from Arabic to Greek to Latin to German to English. When we do translate words from one language to another, the translation is often imperfect and imprecise, because the meaning of most words can only be fully understandable one's own particular cultural/linguistic point of view. To know the meaning of a word is to know and live in the culture from which that word comes (e.g., "Schlemiel").

Whenever a book is translated, it is almost impossible, of course, to say the same thing in the same way. Such a book will always be expressed through those invisible national characteristics

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that are so intimately involved with language – and obviously, were that not so, no book could be understood by someone of a foreign language. There are bound to be distortions, but the distortions themselves are meaningful. (Roberts, 1986a, p. 149)

The specific language that is used to convey or transmit a given thought not only changes and alters the meaning of what is communicated but also facilitates its communication in a form the listener or reader can understand. To speak a language is to make the world it expresses one's own.

Language is not a simple mirror of thinking but often controls what is or is not thinkable by the person who speaks the language. Any word immediately implies a specification, a definition, and in many cases even a particular thought (Wilber, 1977, pp. 74-75). The concepts and categories of a language, the differentiations and specifications it makes, do not simply reflect or mirror the world that is perceived and spoken about. To a certain degree, language constrains and shapes what is "thinkable" and perceived by people speaking that language. Language affects how we see or understand the world. How I *talk* about something makes a difference to how I will *think* about it and how I will *perceive* it. "Doublespeak" is language designed to alter our perception of reality and influence our thinking (Lutz, 1981). Tax increase becomes "revenue enhancement," lies become "inoperative statements," civilian deaths become "collateral damage," invasions of a country become "preemptive incursions," torture becomes "aggressive interrogation techniques." How we come to response to a particular action or understand a particular idea is strongly colored by the words we use to talk about it. The power of language to influence thought makes vocabulary building a crucial part of education. To expand language is to expand the ability to think. Even among chimpanzees, language training enhances the ability to think abstractly and to reason by analogy (Tomasello & Call, 1997).

***Thought and perception are structured through verbal patterns.*** Thought is verbally structured to such an extent that it is often difficult to think about things for which we have no words. Verbally-structured thought leads us to think automatically along certain channels because of the single-line linear thought pattern that language promotes (e.g., the word, "result" in a sentence automatically leads one to inferences about "cause and effect"). Thought automatically becomes translated into the language with which one is familiar, falling into prefabricated forms. An individual who is bilingual (i.e., speaks two languages) understands quite well -- better perhaps than a monolingual individual who speaks only one language -- how thought is structured through verbal patterns. To English-speaking bilinguals whose native language is other than English (e.g., Japanese or Chinese), it seems obvious that one thinks differently in different languages. Bilingual individuals report that they tend to think a thought first in their native language and then make a translation of that thought into the second language before they can speak their original thought in that second language.

To some extent, perception of the physical environment is also verbally structured inasmuch as words and concepts come between (or "mediates") one's direct experience of the world, acting as filters that influence what is perceived and what is overlooked and ignored in personal and collective experience. Perception and cognition become programmed into highly specialized, tightly organized verbal patterns that tend to limit experience of self, others, and the natural world. Words function not only to define what an object is, but also what it is not. As transpersonal scholar Ken Wilber (1977) put it: "Language is dualistic or relational, and any affirmation or denial can have meaning only in relation to its own opposite" (p. 66). The more precisely a word is defined, the less meaning it can contain. Language's implied specifications, delineations, and definitions structure the visual perception of objects, causing the perceiver to focus upon certain aspects, say, of a "rock," while ignoring other aspects. It soon becomes a generalized rock that is no different from any others.

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***A practical exercise for the reader: Breaking the automatic patterning and structuring of thought and perception by language.*** The conditioned patterning and structuring of thought and perception by language can make it difficult to express emotions in a manner that escapes the tyranny of verbally-structured thought or free oneself from language's automatic structuring of perception. Transpersonal writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1979a) describes an exercise that can help break up the automatic patterning and structuring of thought and perception by language that can make it so difficult to get in touch with the emotions one's feel in a direct, immediate, and spontaneous way "when words get in the way." The following exercise provides the reader an experience of what it feels like to encounter an object from a fresh, clear perspective independent of the conditioned perception that often clouds one's perception of the world. The exercise teaches the reader a technique for freeing one's perception of objects and one's expression of emotion from their familiar verbal "containers," so that the world can be perceived and thought about in new, clearer, and more individual ways.

For an exercise, look about your environment. Make up new, different "words" for the objects that you see about you. Pick up any object, for example. Hold it for a few seconds, feel its texture, look at its color, and spontaneously give it a new name by uttering the sounds that come into your mind. See how the sounds bring out certain aspects of the object that you may not have noticed before.... To get in direct contact with your own feelings as they are, again make up your own spontaneous sounds sometimes. Your emotions often cannot be expressed clearly in terms of language, and such *unpatterning* can allow them to flow freely ( p. 480).

***The gap between thought and language.*** While language and thought are allied, they are not the same and there must always be a gap between thought and its expression. One may hear oneself speak words, for instance, and feel the many different muscle movements in the throat as the lips and tongue move to articulate their sounds. One may recognize the appropriateness of the words as a more or less approximate expression of one's ideas, but the individual also realize that the words spoken are not the thought or the emotion that one is attempting to convey. The words are not one's thought or emotions, and there must always be an opening between language and the reality that it seeks to convey. One's thoughts and feelings are no more contained in the phonemes and sounds of the words that are spoken than is the information one reads in this book *contained* in the black marks on the white page the reader now perceives. The black marks and alphabet, the phonemes and morphemes, the words we hear or see are merely auditory and visual cues and symbols with agreed-upon meanings that we once upon a time learned how to interpret. If one does not know how to read or speak Chinese, for instance, then those particular phonemes will sound as gibberish and characters appear meaningless. Being unfamiliar with the language, we would not know where to put boundaries between the words.

The printed and spoken word, then, does not contain the thought or emotion it seeks to convey because the thoughts, the feelings, and the words are not the same thing. Words are always a symbol for something else (a sensation, an image, a feeling, a sound, an action). The names are not the objects, but the symbols for them. Nor does the origin and source of meaning reside in the context in which words are spoken or written, for some meaning transcends the context in which it was originally spoken or written ("Thou shalt not kill," "Love one another"). If the information we read or hear is not literally contained in the alphabet or characters, sound or words or context, then where is that information? It is in the self. As someone once put it: "Words do not have meaning, people have meaning." Sometimes words do not fit the thought that the person is trying to convey and fail completely to capture the meaning he or she attempting to express. Moreover, there are some ideas and feelings for which words do not exist. It is quite common, for example, for there to be certain experiences, feelings, or state-of-affairs for which a particular language has no words. In those cases, so-called "foreign" words may be imported into the language in order to convey the desired meaning (e.g., "faux pas," "déjà vu," "gauche," "queue," "fiasco"). Words do not contain thought; words transmit thought that resides within the self.

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*The inherent difficulties of verbally-structured thought for understanding the subjective framework of the inner psyche.* Speaking and writing are the most practical of arts, dealing as they do with a physical world of things, distinguishing one thing from another thing by giving it a name.

To name is to call into existence, to draw out from nothingness. That which is not named cannot exist in any possible way. . . . The power of a name is indicated by the fact that it gives *identity* to a thing. . . . To know the name is to have power over the thing. . . . Man interposes a network of words between the world and himself and thereby becomes the master of the world. (Gusdorf, 1965, pp. 7, 8, 12, 38 )

However useful language may be in helping us manipulate in the physical environment, nevertheless when applied to subjective experience, words and definitions serve to limit rather than express a given experience. The words themselves may create divisions in experience that do not exist in experience. Wake-a-day imagination and emotions give rise to experiences that conflict with the basic assumptions upon which daily language is based, for logical thought is woven into language. Language, like logic, deals with cause -and-effect thinking, a linear sequence of time for its framework, and step-upon-step syntactic structures in sentence construction. The everyday language of "the world of outward things" makes unreal the subjective framework within which thoughts, dreams, emotions, and imagination exist, because such experiences do not fit the facts of language. Cause-and-effect thinking and logical concepts and categories perfectly well-suited for "the world of outward things" (William James's phrase) pose inherent difficulties and creates distortions when it comes to describing a dream or a mystical experience that take up no physical location and where physical time sequences and single-line delineations of thought do not apply. Dream experience, for example, presupposes the existence of a type of experience that is not dependent upon physical time or space (for who can measure the time it takes to walk down a dream road?) and presupposes the existence of a kind of perception that is not dependent upon the physical senses. The ability to dream presupposes a subjective framework of free expression that is more direct and less mediated by verbal concepts, which is why it is often difficult to remember dreams in a verbal fashion.

### Ways of Transpersonal Speaking

There is nothing that will force the conscious "I" to enlarge the scope of its awareness so that easy access of communication with the subconscious portions of the personality can occur. Alternate states of consciousness -- whether it be in daydreaming, nightly dreams, hypnosis, psychedelic states, peak experiences, cosmic consciousness, mystical states, meditation, or physical exercise -- do allow the conscious personality, however, to become intellectually aware of many experiences which may not have been within its scope of awareness or which it resisted in the past. By allowing into its awareness such experiences and permitting itself the flexibility with which it can accept and assimilate intuitional comprehensions from the inner, transpersonal self, the waking personality can learn to expand its self-image to a much larger extent than is usual. Such a development aids in keeping the channels open between the conscious and subconscious, and would allow the conscious personality to communicate with deeper layers of the whole self, as well as permit those "unknown" portions of the Self to communicate with the conscious personality. Such communication to some extent changes the conscious "I" as well as add its energies to other aspects of the personality, as the examples of transpersonal speaking -- transcendent inner voices and channeling -- examined in this chapter. demonstrate. The hope and possibility is that by acquiring facility in such communication that the efficiency of overall behavior and feelings of oneness with the self will be increased. The particular interest of transpersonal psychologists is that these abilities of human personality be understood and investigated, for the history of channeling and transcendent inner voice phenomena clearly demonstrates that they are not unnatural occurrences. There is much here to be studied about human personality and human knowing. We cannot understand

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transpersonal knowing and speaking or cultivate them in ourselves, though, unless we understand something about the characteristics of consciousness as it operates in certain stages of dissociation.

### **Spectrum of Dissociation**

The psychological concept and process known as "dissociation" describes a relatively common form of personality action, which actually forms a continuum or spectrum of consciousness that ranges from the pathological through the normal to the exceptional or transpersonal (Braun, 1988; Cardeña, 1994; Edge, 2001; Krippner, 1997; White, 1997).

Dissociation is an inherent capability that can be used for human growth or detriment. Dissociating from one aspect of self to assist the exploration of another, with the intention of integrating what has been experienced into the overall self-concept, can be developmentally advantageous. However, dissociation from our own inner fountain of energy, intelligence, creativity, and wisdom, coupled with dissociation from constituents of our mental and physical nature, may lead to pathologies of the self. (Edge, 2001, p. 54).

In these terms, non-pathological dissociation involves a warm, flexible, expansive detachment from the worries and concerns of the ego with daily matters. It can involve, paradoxically, either the narrowing or expansion of awareness such that significant elements of one's experience are either excluded or included into awareness. Daily exercise, vacation trips to unfamiliar places, a brisk walk in nature, self-hypnotic trance can all initiate a state of dissociation that can open channels of communication between the subconscious, conscious, and add energy. Essentially, it involves letting go of personality defenses and inhibitions and one's preoccupation with the daily concerns of the work-a-day world and directing the focus of attention inward, rather than outward. The rule here is merely a change of focus.

Everyone has had the experience of selective listening, "driving on autopilot," becoming "spaced out," or displaying calmness in speech and behavior while being criticized. These are typical, ordinary occurrences of dissociation in everyday life. States of dissociation may be actively sought through the use of techniques such as fervent praying, playing with the Ouija board, ritual, sensory deprivation, fasting, marathon running, meditation, creative visualization, breathing techniques, Hatha yoga exercise, drumming and chanting, and even dancing. Any activity that induces an altered state of consciousness can produce a certain stage of non-pathological dissociation (Grof, 1985; Hastings, 1991; Maslow, 1971; Myers, 1889-1895/1976; Roberts, 1970; T. Roberts, 2001). At some indescribable point, a certain state of dissociation is achieved, and the psyche opens up into levels of being, reality, experience, or understanding usually unavailable to ego-directed awareness. Because most people do not understand their own inner reality or have been taught to mistrust themselves, revelatory material must then erupt *as if* it came from an outside source if it is to be accepted or even perceived at all. It may personify itself in order to get its message across, dramatizing itself through the creativity of the percipient's beliefs and personality (Liestner, 1996).

### **Transcendent Inner Voices**

Sometimes communication between the conscious "I" and the subconscious occurs through the spontaneous expression of what are called "transcendent inner voices" (Liestner, 1996). Socrates reportedly heard an inner voice he called his *daimon* that would advise him. Ancient Egyptians and Greeks consulted with oracles who heard transcendent inner voices for guidance. God spoke to the Jewish prophets, Jesus, and Mohamed in the form of a transcendent inner voice, and His Holy Spirit is said to have inspired the writers of the New Testament by a similar means. Christian mystics also heard inner voices of saints, angels, and other beings with whom they would converse and who inspired, guided, and

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comforted them. "For at least two thousand years, inner voices have been valued as a source of creative inspiration, divine guidance, and intuitive knowledge" (Liester, 1996, p. 2).

***Characteristics of transcendent inner voices.*** The DSM-IV would classify such inner voices as hallucinations -- "A sensory perception that has the compelling sense of reality of a true perception but that occurs without external stimulation of the sensory organs (APA, 1994, p. 767). The DSM-IV recognizes that not all hallucinations are signs of psychopathology and that distinctions need to be made between the auditory hallucinations of a paranoid schizophrenic, the inner voice of private conscience, the revelations heard by Muhammad, and the inspired musings received by Beethoven. Like stages of dissociation, perceptual experiences exist on a spectrum or continuum ranging from pathological and regressive hallucinations, to pseudo-hallucinations, and illusions, through veridical sensory perceptions, to perceptions of the imagination and intuitions, to transpersonal, transcendent revelations (Liester, 1996). Transcendent inner voices characteristically occur in the absence of organic and functional pathology. Liester (1996) presents several characteristics of transcendent inner voices.

1. Trans-Ego. "The voices are experienced as originating from an external source [and] speak of themselves in the first person, while addressing the individual who hears them in the second person" (p. 8)
2. Trans-Time. The transcendent inner voices are experienced as being eternal in their nature and content whereby "the perceived divisions or partitions in time are transcended, resulting in the collapse of past, present, and future into the 'eternal now' described by the mystics" (p. 10).
3. Trans-Space. The transcendent inner voices "are described as a thought which is different from one's usual thoughts...[or] experienced as a thought which seems to originate from someone else's mind" (p. 11)
4. Positive Personal and Social Effects and Consequences. The arts, the sciences, social and political movements, religious and philosophical traditions have all benefited from the messages conveyed by inner voices. "Respected leaders who have listen to and benefited from inner voices include Mohandas Gandhi, Emanuel Swedenborg, Carl Jung, Martin Luther King, Jr., Paramahansa Yogananda, Black Elk, George Washington Carver, Winston Churchill, M. Scott Peck, General George Patton, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, Rudyard Kipling, and Krishnamurti" (p. 2).
5. Negative Effects. "The experience of hearing voices is not universally pleasant. Confusion, anxiety, fear, or doubt may occur when individuals hear transcendent voice...[and] has led some individuals to doubt their own sanity. . . .Transcendent inner voices don't always tell us when we want to hear and our responses may include resistance, denial, or outright rejection of what these voices offer. . . .Another problem is the condemnation that comes from others who deny the reality of these experiences" (p. 19)

***Distinguishing transcendent from pathological inner voice phenomena.*** Pathological inner voices take the form of auditory hallucinations (from the word, *hallucinatio*, meaning "a wandering of the mind") that accompany mental or physical illnesses such as schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorders, infections, endocrine abnormalities, nervous system diseases, diseases of the ear, systemic diseases, medication reactions, drug intoxication states, drug withdrawal states, vitamin deficiencies, respiratory disorders, and food, sleep or sensory deprivation. "The effects of hallucinated voices are typically negative, cause trouble sleeping, mental confusion, poor judgment, emotional distress, loneliness, sexual dysfunction, thought blocking, paranoia, delusions, occupational difficulties, catatonia, self-mutilation and suicide, negative interpersonal functioning, and violent acts" (Liester, 1996, p. 21).

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Many distinguishing features highlight the differences between pathological and transcendent inner voice. First, hallucinations tend to be judgmental, critical, and condemning. Transcendent inner voices, on the other hand, tend to be supportive. Second, hallucinations have a reality only in the mind of the individual who hears them. But, transcendent inner voices may offer truths with a validity which can extend beyond the limitations of the ego. Third, hallucinations generally interfere with personal, interpersonal, and societal functioning. Transcendent inner voices, in contrast, generally lead to benefits at each of these same levels. Fourth, transcendent inner voices usually seep in complete sentences or long discourses, which is not true of hallucinations. Finally, hallucinations appear to result from brain malfunctions whereas transcendent inner voices apparently do not. (Liester, 1996, p. 22)

***Cultivating transcendent inner voices.*** Transcendent inner voices can occur either spontaneously or be cultivated. "The cultivation of transcendent inner voices requires two conditions: (1) receptive awareness and (2) inner silence" (Liester, 1996, p. 23). On this view, the cultivation of transcendent inner voices requires something similar to training in meditation in which conscious thinking is put in the "neutral" or "idle" mode, and one becomes receptively (as opposed to actively) open to what simply appears to conscious awareness, not trying and without effort. Silence prevails as one re-focuses the direction of attention away from the physical world of the outer senses to the inner psychic realities using one's "inner senses." Thought is suspended and the mental chatter quieted. In quietness, we begin to hear that "still, small voice within." The same relaxation, meditative, self-hypnotic, creative visualization techniques used to invoke the "voice within" can also be used to tap into those intuitive and creative processes that give us access to information of personal spiritual meaning found in instances of Being-cognition, cosmic consciousness, and mystical experience. Many people during a peak experience, for example, report having what may be called "inner voice" experiences. The failure of the conscious "I" to listen to the inner voice of the subconscious is the cause of many difficulties experienced by the waking personality. The cultivation of transcendent inner voices, then, requires a personality that is both intelligent and intuitional, well balanced, healthy, and strong, and that allows itself the spontaneity necessary, and the inner freedom so that such communication can take place.

### **Channeling**

Sometimes the information that resides within the subjective framework of the transpersonal self is given expression in a variation of the transcendent inner voice phenomenon called automatic speaking or automatic writing. In such phenomena, the inner voice is externalized in the form of speech or writing. Often, but certainly not in all cases, the individual has little or no conscious awareness or memory of producing what is spoken or written, and with little overt intentional involvement in their production. In the phenomenon called "channeling" the person goes into a dissociated state of consciousness and conveys messages from what he or she perceives to be an ostensibly discarnate spirit or personality (Hastings, 1991; Klimo, 1987; Steiger, 1973). Channeling can occur via the Ouija board (Hunt, 1985), automatic writing (Myers, 1889-1895/1976), or automatic typing (Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975/1996). It can occur via an Inner Voice (Heery, 1989). It can occur via trance speaking (Roberts, 1970).

***Why is channeling an important topic of study in psychology?*** Channeling is an important topic of study in psychology for several reasons. Channeling is a prevalent, wide-spread phenomenon that occurs across cultures. It has a long history in the evolution of the species and has played an important role in the development of human civilizations. The Oracles at Delphi in Greece, for instance, were channelers. Channeling has played a role in virtually every spiritual tradition (Judeo-Christian, Islam, and Buddhism) and in the production of most religious texts of the world's major religions. It ostensibly presents information about the nature of basic reality as it exists (trans) beyond the personal ego and "outside" of (within or behind) three-dimensional material reality. William James and C. G. Jung ardently

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investigated channeling and so-called “occult” phenomena such as mediumship, telepathy, and possession. Arthur Hastings (1991), former President of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology, states:

Regardless of the validity of the claims of supernatural agency, the fact remains that mentally healthy individuals experience these phenomena. Moreover, a large number of these messages contain meaningful information and exhibit knowledge and talents of which the channeler is completely unaware. Whatever one’s view of the origin of the messages, the phenomenon itself merits serious consideration. (p. 1).

According to one scholarly review of channeling, “channeling should be treated as an expanded type of information-processing capacity potentially available to us all” (Klimo, 1987, p. 342). The phenomenon of channeling provides a provocative demonstration of personality action and of the communication that is possible between the conscious personality and those vast areas beneath the personal subconscious.

***Channeling is not a multiple personality disorder (MPD).*** . Channeling is often confused with multiple personality disorder (MPD). Research indicates, however, that they are two very different phenomenon, which fall along a continuum of what are called “dissociative” processes (Hughes & Melville, 1990; Hughes, 1992). For instance in a study conducted by Hughes (1992), the Dissociative Disorders Interview Schedule (DDIS) and the Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES) was administered to ten trance channelers with varying years of experience and 20 individuals previously diagnosed with multiple personality disorder (MPD). These psychodynamic assessments revealed significant differences between trance channels and individuals diagnosed with MPD on a variety of dimensions related to normal psychological functioning, including the presence of psychogenic amnesia, depersonalization disorders, major depressive episodes, borderline personality disorders, substance abuse, sleepwalking, physical and sexual abuse in childhood (Hughes, 1992). Compared with individuals diagnosed with MPD, trance channelers report a higher number of supernatural experiences and consider their experiences as an activity believed to promote personal growth and development. Through the experience of an alternate state of consciousness, channelers report the attainment of a spiritual connection to something larger than themselves. Compared to individuals diagnosed with MPD, trance channelers demonstrate more complete control over the “switching process” from one personality to another. Individuals with MPD exhibit a number of secondary schizophrenic-like symptoms (e.g., saying or doing things one cannot remember, missing periods of time, “coming to” in an unfamiliar place, amnesia for large parts of childhood, auditory hallucinations, speaking of oneself in the first-person plural, and feeling there is another person inside of one’s body). These associated features of MPD are largely absent in trance channelers.

### **The Problem of Seth's Origin: A Study of Trance Possession**

***The outer history of the channeling phenomenon known as the Seth Materials.*** One of the major assumptions of the transpersonal orientation is the acknowledgement that human beings have impulses toward transcendental realities and states of awareness (Sutich, 1972). The fact that such an impulse exists and that its object is not illusory is dramatically illustrated in the provocative demonstration of personality action collectively called *The Seth Materials*. Here we have a mass of writings consisting of complex, discursive, internally consistent, and highly rational narratives, produced by a woman named Jane Roberts in an animated, trance state of consciousness (with characteristic dissociation, amnesia, and *excursus* of the ego) while speaking for an entity that calls himself “Seth.” Seth, who always claimed independent and discarnate status, emerged initially through the auspices of the Ouija board in December 1963 and continued to speak through Jane Roberts until her death of rheumatoid arthritis in September 1984. Jane as Seth dictated in a clear and sensible, cogent and articulate manner a wealth of information on multiple and diverse topics, including: after-death environments, aggression, altered states of consciousness, ancient civilizations, animal behavior, art, beliefs, the Bible, birth and birth defects, cells,

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children, Christ, consciousness, creativity, Darwin, death, disease, dreams, drugs, ego, emotion, energy, Entities, evolution, families, fanaticism, free will, Freud, genes, ghosts, God, good and evil, guilt, Hebrews, health, history, hypnosis, humanity as a species, idealism, identity, illness, imagination, impulses, inner senses, William James, Jung, killing, language, life, love, LSD, matter, mind, molecules, multidimensional reality, nature, out-of-body experiences, paranoia, human personality, physical body, physics, precognition, probabilities, psyche, reasoning, reincarnation, religion, Jane Roberts, schizophrenia, science, Self, Seth, the Seth material, sexuality, sleep, society, soul, human species, survival of body death, symbols, telepathy, time, trance, unconscious, Universe, the “unknown” reality, and violence, among other subject matter.

The dictated material could be laid aside sometimes for weeks and months and then resumed without difficulty or review, with no period of fumbling and no declension in quality, never with a contradiction or inconsistency, never out of character and rarely with revision. A complete record of what occurred during the Seth/Jane Roberts trance-speaking sessions has been recorded by her husband, Roberts Butts, and other first-hand witnesses (Butts, 1986, 1997; Roberts, 1966, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977a, 1977b, 1978, 1979a, 1979b, 1981a, 1981b, 1982; 1986a, 1986b, 1986c; 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; 2004a, 2004b; 2005a, 2005b; 2006a, 2006b; Watkins, 1980, 1981, 2001). This public record is presented with sufficient noteworthy candor to offer the research psychologist or psychology student excellent evidential material and a good outer history of the case. The original transcripts of all trance sessions and supporting documents are on file in the Sterling Memorial Archives at Yale University and available to anyone interested in pursuing further study of the 21-year history of the Seth phenomena.

***The challenge of the Seth Material for mainstream psychology.*** The challenge for mainstream psychology is to explain how Jane Roberts could suddenly possess and exhibit an ability to compose artistic, biological, educational, historical, political, philosophical, scientific, psychological, theological, and sociological treatises of a very high order of sophistication and intellectual integrity with no previous study or instruction, and where the causative factors that psychologists are accustomed to look for in cases of multiple personality disorder cannot be found (Hughes, 1992). There is no trace of abnormal tendencies or coercion, no evidence of excessive emotionalism or superiority complex, no hatred or prejudices, no vulgarity or tantrums, no compulsive ideation or obsessive acting out in response to stress or fatigue. Jane as Seth could also apparently manifest clairvoyant and telepathic abilities. Reaching into the minds of strangers present and improvising on life themes intimately related to them, Jane as Seth would demonstrate penetrating psychological insight that pinpointed an individual’s character, abilities, and liabilities as only a most accomplished depth psychologist could (see for example, Roberts, 1974, pp. 122-132; 1999a, pp. 341-347; 2003a, 2003b). Logically, either Seth is a subconscious production of Jane Roberts’s own psyche or Seth is who he says he is – an “energy personality essence” no longer focused in physical reality. On either hypothesis, as Dr. Walter Prince concluded in his landmark study of the precedent-setting Patience Worth phenomena of 1913-1938: “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 some cause operating through, but not originating in, the subconscious mind must be acknowledged” (Prince, 1926, p. 8).

***What makes the Seth Material transpersonal?*** The Seth phenomenon evidently rises from dimensions of psychological activity beyond (trans) the ego of Jane Roberts. The Seth personality ostensibly draws its energy and derives its power to act from unconscious sources that are arguably transpersonal in nature.

First, the *Seth Material* supports key underlying principles that define a transpersonal approach. Both transpersonal psychology and Jane Roberts (a) emphasize the role of consciousness in the creation of personal and physical reality, (b) accept the existence of an inner-ordered spiritual Reality that can be directly known through a broad range of focuses of consciousness, (c) stress the availability of superior

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knowledge and exceptional capabilities, the interdependence of individual minds, and humanity's connection with nature and all other forms of life, (d) reinforce the uniqueness of individual being while also emphasizing the source of that separateness in the unity of all Being, and (e) encourage the unfolding of those deeply creative aspects of our existence by integrating spirituality and psychology in an approach to health.

Second, the *Seth Material* like transpersonal psychology itself calls attention to possibilities of identity and existence beyond those currently acknowledged or recognized by egoistic psychoanalytic theory, positivistic behavior theory, reductionistic biological theory, mechanistic cognitive theory, or agnostic humanistic theory. The *Seth Material* like transpersonal psychology examines those experiences and behaviors in which the individual's sense of identity extends into, through, and beyond (trans) personal ego boundaries to encompass greater aspects of biological, affective, and cognitive functioning within a larger metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological framework. Both the *Seth Material* and "transpersonal psychology studies how the spiritual is expressed in and through the personal, as well as the transcendence of self....Our true identity is more than a psychological ego or self but is a spiritual being" (Cortright, 1997, pp. 10, 230).

Third, the *Seth Material* like both humanistic psychology and transpersonal psychology is an approach that views human beings as innately good, well-intentioned creatures alive in a meaningful universe. Neither transpersonal psychology nor the *Seth Material* deny the confusions and distortions, fears and guilt, pain and suffering, and subjective terrors that can arise in human experience. Yet neither do they regard these experiences as the most basic aspect of human existence. These aspects of our being are viewed instead as regrettable instances of human ignorance and misinterpretations that serve to hide us from the existence of the subliminal, spiritual aspect of ourselves that psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli (1966/1993) called the "Transpersonal Self," which whispers even now in the hidden recesses of each person's experience.

Fourth, the perennial philosophy (Huxley, 1944/1970) acknowledges that transpersonal experiences represent our conscious knowledge that some greater, cosmic Source exists in which the individual's daily life is always couched, supported, and sustained. The *Seth Material* confirms the basic validity of that notion. According to writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts:

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)

Each individual will naturally have different visions and versions of those hidden dimensions and deeper realities as we interpret their existence through our unique experiences and abilities. The *Seth Material* can assist modern transpersonal psychology in its task of articulating that connection and its cosmic meaning.

Fifth, some transpersonal psychologists may insist that shadowy phenomena such as out-of-body experiences, telepathy, and reincarnation memories discussed in the *Seth Material* are "extrapersonal" and not a part of the proper subject matter of transpersonal psychology. Such arbitrary distinctions and boundaries, however, do not exist when the personality is considered under its true multidimensional aspects.

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Academic psychologists consider the personality as composed of the conscious self, the subconscious, and, if they are half way thinking, the unconscious. But many of them cut the unconscious out altogether. In other words, they do not consider that human personality is multidimensional and until you understand the multidimensional reality of personality you will not have any psychology at all. For your personality...is multidimensional. You dwell in the universe that you can see and smell and touch but you also dwell in universes beneath and beyond and within these. (Butts, 1997c, cassette recording)

### ***What original contributions does the Seth Material make toward a psychology for the 21st century?***

One original contribution of the *Seth Material* toward a psychology for the 21st century is its outline of a unifying theoretical framework that clarifies and elaborates upon notions of consciousness found in the long and ancient heritage of panpsychism (mind-in-matter), Western idealistic philosophy, and Eastern religious systems (Quincey, 2002). According to Seth/Jane Roberts (1997b), “the basic firm groundwork of the 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” ( p. 312). Human *and* nonhuman animals possess a rich, vital dimension of inside psychological depth that traditional psychological science, because of its own definitions, cannot perceive. “*All energy contains consciousness*. That one sentence is basically scientific heresy, and in many circles it is religious heresy as well. A recognition of that simple statement would indeed change your world” (Roberts, 1986a, p. 11).

A second original contribution of the *Seth Material* to the development of a psychology for the 21st century is the bridge that it provides connecting mainstream psychological thought with transpersonal concepts and theories. From a cognitive perspective, for example, the *Seth Material* presents an empirically verifiable theoretical framework concerning the role of beliefs in the creation of personal reality, physical health, and psychological well-being. From a psychodynamic perspective, the reality of subconscious regions of personality affirmed in the *Seth Material* is corroborated by modern psychodynamic theory and contemporary altered state of consciousness research. From a humanistic perspective, the practical exercises and experiments dealing with expansion of consciousness presented in the *Seth Material* can be effectively used to open areas of human transformative capacity that have been closed thus far to psychologists interested in the “farther reaches of human nature.” The systematic study of the trance writings of Jane Roberts concerning the transpersonal nature of human personality has the potential of offering the field of transpersonal psychology the opportunity of initiating its own further development, truly making it a “‘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). Jane as Seth states that “Jane Roberts’s experience to some extent hints at the multidimensional nature of the human psyche and gives clues as to the abilities that lie within each individual. These are part of your racial heritage. They give notice of psychic bridges connecting the known and ‘unknown’ realities in which you dwell” (Roberts, 1977a, pp. 22-23).

A third original contribution of the *Seth Material* toward a psychology for the 21st century is the presentation of innovative research hypotheses in search of a graduate student. Consider, for example, the topic of dreams and dreaming.

Why has no one suspected that dream locations...have not only a psychological reality, but a definite actuality (Roberts, 1998a, p. 254)?... Just because your attention is no longer focused upon such realities, this does not mean that they do not continue to exist... Dreams, or the dream universe, exists even while you are awake, and you only become aware of certain portions of it...while you sleep (Roberts, 1998a, p. 188)... Dreams are a *continuing* process, whether or not the ego wakes or sleeps, and whether or not it has, or retains, any knowledge of the dreaming. (Roberts, 1999a, pp. 26-27)

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Or consider question of consciousness's relationship to the physical organism, the scientific truth of psi functioning, and the implications of both these matters on the conduct of psychotherapy.

Psychologists, academically speaking, do not realize that consciousness can leave the body and so they leave aside all questions along those lines. They do not realize that telepathy operates constantly and so when they consider family problems they do not realize that telepathically, the family is a unit and that each member is constantly picking up, receiving, and reacting to suggestions telepathically given to it by other members of the family. (Butts, 1997, cassette recording)

Or consider the provocative hypothesis that "telepathy is the basis for [our] languages, without which their symbolism would be meaningless" (Roberts, 1972, p. 20). It is not the sound of the words or the language learning process alone that is responsible for people being able to understand one another through language. The psi functioning of telepathy supports the communication processes.

***What confidence can be placed in Seth/Jane Roberts's claims about the multidimensional nature of human personality and basic reality?*** The allegedly paranormal source of Seth/Jane Robert's knowledge does not automatically invalidate its claims. Regardless of its source, the material provides intelligent, sane, and illuminating data. Unless the material is carefully studied and its ideas are clearly understood, then there is no logical reason to accept anything that is said by Seth/Jane Roberts. Ultimately it is unimportant one way or the other if Seth's independent existence be accepted or rejected. The concern and interest is with the material that Seth/Jane Roberts has presented. The evidence of the writings themselves is difficult to deny, not all of it of the nebulous sort and some of it quite definite. Physicist Norman Friedman, for instance, concluded "after studying this material in depth, I realized that Seth's ideas pertaining to physics originated from an intelligence with both a knowledge of science and a clear message about the nature of reality and human experience (Friedman, 1997, p. xi). . . . If Seth is a deception by Roberts, it is a remarkable one, for it would require a grasp of science and philosophy that would be extremely unusual considering her background as a poet and novelist. On the other hand, if the Seth material originated at some unknown level of Roberts's unconscious mind, then that level must be a repository of knowledge far beyond our normal awareness" (Friedman, 1994, p. 17). Transpersonal psychologist Arthur Hastings, an authority on channeling, put the matter this way regarding Jane Roberts's honesty, integrity, and intelligence and the confidence that she placed in the claims presented by this "entity" who calls himself Seth:

Jane explored many possible explanations for the nature of Seth. She did not believe he was a secondary personality or part of the subconscious, nor did she want to refer to him as a spirit. She speculated that he might be a personification of the superconscious part of her self, a kind of psychological structure that enabled her to tune into revelational knowledge. She also allowed that he might have an independent existence as another entity. . . . Her honesty in facing this puzzle indicates both integrity and intelligence (Hastings, 1991, p. 73).

On the other hand, the sort of personality which is required to produce the *Seth Material* is to be disregarded in this matter of evaluating and judging upon the confidence that can be placed in the theoretical material itself. The question concerning confidence in Seth/Jane Roberts' claims is a separate question from the matter of proving the fact of Seth's own existence. The question of whether or not Seth exists as he claims he does as "an intelligent personality no longer bound by your physical laws" (Roberts, 1998b, 134) is irrelevant to one's assessment of the validity and significance of the theoretical material presented in his name by Jane Roberts. The situation here is similar to trying to persuade mainstream psychologists of the scientific truth of psi functioning -- those who say Seth does not exist will never get proof they want, for their imagination will not permit them to recognize, acknowledge, or accept the concept of any reality but their own. In the end, adequate scientific proof for the claims of Seth/Jane

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Roberts will require the enlargement of consciousness on the part of psychological science, open-mindedness on the part of mainstream psychologists, and a willingness to meet reality half-way. Those who do not want to accept evidence for the validity and significance of Seth/Jane Roberts' claims will never accept even the strongest evidence that can be provided.

The fact of the matter is that human personality is an exceedingly complex psychological system (Assagioli, 1965/1993; Beahrs, 1982; Braude, 1995; Ellenberger, 1970; Ferrucci, 1982; Groesbeck, 1985; Grof & Grof, 1989; Hilgard, 1986; Hillman, 1975; Thigpen & Cleckley, 1957; Rowan, 1990, 1993; Taylor, 1984). While mainstream psychologists have begun to glimpse the complications of the human brain, they have scarcely begun to glimpse the complicated realities of the subconscious mind. The 21-year history of the Seth/Jane Roberts phenomenon documents the fact that human personality is capable of greater knowledge, potentiality, and scope than generally supposed. From the transpersonal viewpoint of Seth/Jane Roberts, modern-day psychological science cannot begin to have a true psychology unless the living self is seen in a greater context, with greater motives, purposes and meanings than mainstream psychology now assigns to it. While the *Seth Material* -- dealing as it does with the themes of "multidimensional reality of personality," "telepathy," "reincarnation memories," and "dream locations" -- may sound quite esoteric, it refers to a highly practical set of ideas, and in certain terms we are dealing with the very nature of creativity itself. Exceptional human experiences and transformative behaviors, such as the Seth phenomenon, 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; Fischer, 2006; Valle & Halling, 1989).

### III. The Transpersonal Nature of Creativity

#### Transpersonal Thought and Language as Creative Acts

##### Transcendence as a Creative Act

***Transcendence as opening up and going beyond.*** Abraham H. Maslow, co-founder of modern humanistic and transpersonal psychology, identified 35 overlapping meanings of the word "transcendence" when writing about the "Psychology of Being," later to be called "Transpersonal Psychology" (Maslow, 1969, 1971, chapter 21). Each of Maslow's 35 themes or definitions of transcendence reflected a particular nuanced personality characteristic of "transcending self-actualizers" and provided him the empirical basis for his "Theory Z," which subsequently suggested to him the possibility of a psychology "beyond self-actualization" (Maslow, 1971, chap. 22). Maslow (1971) assembled his 32 varieties of transcendence into a summary definition:

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. (p. 279)

"Transcendence" encompassed both an *expansion* or *opening up* (in the sense of enhancement or improving upon existing capabilities) and an *exceeding* or *going beyond* (in the sense of surpassing existing capabilities) what is ordinarily given or presented in one's usual experience of body, self, time, world, and others.

***"Exotic" abilities and "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 or mental gifts that are not generally considered miraculous by those who possess them, and represent an enhancement of

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more ordinary abilities. “Cosmogenic” abilities and powers, on the other hand, “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).

### **Creativity as a Transcendent Act**

***Creativity as an expansion of normal capacity.*** Two types of extensions of normal creative capacity can be distinguished with regard to instances of “transcendent” knowing and speaking: (a) an *expansion* of normal capacity and (b) a *surpassing* normal capacity. In simple *expansion* of normal capacity, the primary creative impulse is constrained and limited by the individual’s past learning and memory and value judgments, by the external criteria of a problem, or by the requirements of practical common sense that are imposed by the creator during the process of creation. “Transcendent” knowing and speaking in this sense is *immanent* and refers to the traditional academic notion of creativity as a rational-semantic factor of the intellect that occurs within a problem-solving context and which is tied to practical concerns (Boden, 1999; Guilford, 1967; Mayer, 1999; Mednick, 1962; Sternberg & Ben-Zeev, 2001). In this species of creativity,

1. Questions of adequacy, safety, dependability, and workability constrain the expansions of creative capacity that are acceptable.
2. In the common parlance of contemporary cognitive psychology, creative solutions not only must be novel, but also useful.
3. 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. The new knowledge, in other words, is always tied to already existing knowledge.
4. Creative transformations are tied to the past history or environment of the creative problem solver, which become the sole possible sources of knowledge and information.
5. 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.

***Creativity as surpassing normal capacity.*** Another species of creativity also exists. “Transcendent” knowing and speaking in the sense of *exceeding, rising above, or going beyond* normal capacity means that

1. Transcendence implies truly “alternate” frames of reference and experience that is different than the framework of perception and cognition ordinarily operative during ego-self directed awareness and waking work-a-day concerns. In this context, dreams and other alternate focuses of consciousness are viewed as important sources of truly inspired thinking.
2. 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 and limited assumptions, and beyond the boundaries of established fact. *If everything has to relate to what is already known, then how can anything truly new be discovered?*
3. Transcendence is always connected to life’s meaning. Seeming coincidences suddenly become personally 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.

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The primary creative impulse toward originality that underlies “transcendence” in the sense of *surpassing* 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 an existing situation.
- Break up or leap over boundaries and go beyond limitations.
- Open up new areas of expression not before noticed or believed possible.
- Display possibilities of awareness and achievement that might have otherwise gone unknown.
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As J. R. R. Tolkien (1977) proclaimed 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). Such is the creative nature of Being.

***Difference between immanent (expansive) and transcendent (surpassing) creativity.*** One way to understand the difference between what occurs during the immanent *expansion* of normal capacity and what happens during the transcendent *surpassing* of normal capacity is to recall the experience of flying as a passenger in an airplane. It is as if, rather than remaining earth-bound and limited to simply extending normal capacity from a baseline of normal waking consciousness and usual ability functioning, instead you were to move up and above by airplane over the earth, where perceptual objects, cognitive beliefs, and ground-level perspectives of the world no longer apply. Everything remains as it is, yet changes in some crucial way, when seen from the altered focus and direction of this bird’s-eye point of view. An entirely new frame of reference with its own “perspective” is involved. The perceptual field is organized in a different manner so that *everything* is different, yet somehow remains the same. The *same* world gives rise to a whole different body of data, with its own hypotheses and evidences depending upon one’s worldview and frame of reference (immanent vs. transcendent). Like trying to understand that the world is round while maintaining a deep-seated conviction that the world is flat, the challenge is to figure out how to correlate point-for-point the transcended and immanent worldviews and thus connect both the known and “unknown” regions of the psyche in which we dwell. Like faith and reason, religion and science, one is not meant as an alternative to the other; it is quite possible to have both. As Seth/Jane Roberts (1998b) put it:

It is indeed within the ability of the human personality to become aware of other realities while keeping contact with physical reality. Manipulation in the physical universe is of course a necessity, but there are ways by which the human individual can become aware of other quite valid realities, and still maintain balance and control within his own *more usual* field of activity. (p. 143)

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**Active investigation and exploration of transpersonal ways of knowing, speaking, and creating is required.** Experiential exercises are important because they give psychological roots to transpersonal concepts. They help the individual make the connection between the immanent world view of his or her psychological ego whose responsibility is with the relationship between the self and the physical environment and the transcendent world view of the inner, transpersonal self or identity that maintains the foundations and balance of the whole self and who must express itself through its ego structure in order to manipulate within that physical, material world. Altered state of consciousness research (e.g., mystical experiences, dreams, drug experiences, trance states, meditation) has alerted people to the fact that there *are* other dimensions of mind, life, and consciousness, other bodies of knowledge, other lands of the psyche beyond logical intelligence and rational consciousness. Most individuals are unaware of what lies “beyond the fringe” of ordinary waking consciousness 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 the psyche may be frightening, considered to be alien or “not-self” and dangerous, perhaps even signs of mental disturbances and thus are automatically shut out. Such communications from the more marginal, subliminal realms of consciousness are then permitted only during sleep, in dreams or in instances of creative inspiration.

It is true that the psyche – one’s own psyche – is a vast, uncharted territory, an “ocean with many shores” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 133). The idea to remember, however, is that it is not a finished, ready-made, completed “already-out-there-now-real” thing, waiting for the person to discover it. Rather the conscious mind is a phenomenon that is itself developing and expanding. The conscious mind learns through the person’s experience. Each individual does not exist apart from his or her own psyche or apart from basic reality but *within* it (Roberts, 1979b). Each personality is a part of what it is. In every journey that is taken within one’s Self, the conscious personality is the *traveler*, but the *environment* through which one travels, and the *vehicle* by which one travels. As pilgrims of the mind, each individual creates every experience, every event, and every symbol that is encountered along the way. Though others have gone before, the exploration of that inner psychic realm is a personal and unique experience. It is a new, unmapped world for every individual because each person carries his or her own necessary baggage of beliefs and ideas, private symbols, purposes and intents that makes the experience unique. Each person’s description of that inner landscape will be different because it will be automatically colored and filtered by each person’s individual focus from which inner events will be viewed. There is no “right” or “wrong” experience. The seemingly objective nature of the events we may encounter as a pilgrim of the mind originate in the reflections of one’s own psyche, overlaying it with one’s own symbols and images resulting from the interplay of one’s state of mind, personal beliefs and expectations, fears and desires, purposes and intents. Do not mistake the symbol for the reality, the map for the territory, the menu for the meal. Understand what it is that one is doing. This is an active investigation and exploration, not a passive withdrawal or fearful retreat from waking life (May, 1986). The same resources that serve so well in daily life -- an intelligent, reasoning, and conscious mind; a strong and confident and flexible personality; discipline balanced with spontaneity -- are needed to study the inner environments of alternate states of consciousness that form part of the subject matter and inform the nature and character of transpersonal knowing, speaking, and creating.

### **Dream Construction as a Problem-Solving Device**

**Problem-solving as an important function of dream construction** Mainstream psychology often considers the activity of problem solving to be the prototype of human thinking (Halpern, 2003). Human thinking appears to display the intellect’s best abilities and most excellent qualities of the reasoning mind when it is solving a waking-life problem (Lovett, 2002). When dreams are discussed as a method or procedure for the purpose of solving a given problem, it is often done within the context of creative process, such as “incubation” (e.g., Perkins, 2001). Transpersonal psychology also considers this

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problem-solving function of dreams extremely important. Indeed, dream construction "represents one of the main ways in which problem-solving is dealt with by the personality" (Roberts, 1998b, p. 226). Why is this so? In dreams, the sleeping personality is provided a unique opportunity to explore possible solutions to many problems in waking-life existence ahead of time, so to speak, and manipulate situations within the dream reality, acting out various possible solutions without having to immediately experience the consequences of the problem-solution in a physical way. This sort of problem-solving activity occurs often in the waking state when the conscious personality explores possible outcomes of present or future decisions first in his or her imagination before actually handling them or carrying out the contemplated course of action in waking-life experience.

***Dream construction is a useful and practical method for handling waking-life problems.*** Seeking solutions in the dream state or in periods of dissociation is actually a very useful and practical method for handling waking-life problems. The dreams of sleep and the imaginative abilities of the waking state provide a larger framework within which the creative abilities are allowed to operate and actions more adequately expressed with greater freedom, with much more subconscious information of superior quality that is available to the whole inner personality, than is normally accessible to the waking ego or to the reasoning mind alone, and that can be used effectively through suggestion for the purpose of solving a given problem. Transpersonal writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1998b) offers the following advice for using dream situations to deal more effectively with waking-life problems.

[The] most effective method of procedure. . . is to form the problem concisely, and then to feed it to the subconscious before the personality enters the dreaming state. This requires on the ego's part an excellent ability to perceive correctly the elements of the physical situation, to express it in terms that the subconscious can understand, and to deliver the message properly. The subconscious will then break the physical data given to it down into its psychic components, translate it into symbols; and the inner self, at the request of the subconscious, will then focus all of the energies at its command to deliver the most acceptable solution, taking the *entire* needs of the whole self into consideration. The solution therefore may not necessarily be accepted completely as the best solution by the ego. The ego is aware of the physical situation only in its relationship to itself. It is not aware of the *internal* situation. The solution however must be made in relation to the *total* conditions. It is extremely important then that the ego correctly interprets the physical situation, for this is the information that it will give to the [subconscious]. (p. 227)

***Waking experience and the physical environment becomes colored and formed by dream solutions.*** The subsequent implementation and application of solutions to waking problems worked out in the dream state is one example of how waking-life experience of the conscious personality and features of the physical environment become colored and influenced by the actuality of dreams and by the dreamer's existence in dream reality

As the personality is changed by any experience or any action, so it is changed by its own dreams. . . . As a personality is molded by his exterior circumstances, so is he also molded by the dreams that he creates, and which help to form his interior or psychic environment. . . . The personality creates its dreams; the dreams are then experienced. The experience is indelibly recorded, and then changes the personality. . . in the same manner that any experience would" (Roberts, 1998b, p. 164).

In this and other ways, dream elements become interwoven into the fabric of daily life as the waking personality attempts to solve a given problem through the construction of his or her dreams, and then applies various the various obtained solutions and answers in waking life.

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***The dreaming subconscious relies upon the conscious mind for an accurate assessment of the problem situation.*** It is important to highlight in the above account the vital role that the personality's intelligence and conscious reasoning mind play in the effective use of dreams as a problem-solving device. It is the information that a lucid and perceptive reasoning mind selectively collects in an honest and discriminating fashion from the physical environment that will ultimately determine whether the dreamt-of problem-solution will in the end be successful for any given problem, for it is this information which is to be presented to the subconscious for analysis. If the conscious personality is overly rigid in its approach to the problem situation, then the reasoning mind's abilities become inhibited, the problem will not be seen in its total light, various elements and conditions of the physical environment will not be recognized or acknowledged, necessary and vital information will not be collected, and the problem becomes distorted out of all context. This distorted picture of the physical situation and of the elements and conditions of the waking-life problem with which the conscious personality will eventually have to deal is then presented to the subconscious mind. While *some* solutions may be delivered to the conscious personality upon awakening, they will be less than ideal even under best conditions.

***Dreaming and the healthy personality.*** If the conscious "I" is in general too rigid, then the freedom of action necessary to work out various problem solutions will not be permitted or adequately expressed even the dream state, and an attempt will be made to censor the dream upon awakening. When the use of dream construction as a problem-solving method fails, then the whole self will find other ways to address the problem, perhaps by translating the problem into some physical illness or into an undesirable psychological condition with which the conscious personality would then have to deal in a more direct, immediate, physical and public fashion. The relationship between dreaming and health is highlighted by transpersonal writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1998b) in the following way:

The stability of the personality depends in some degree upon the effectiveness with which it handles and manipulates these dream situations. It is realized that the personality manipulates within the physical universe, but the fact is not generally accepted that similar manipulations must be made within this dream universe. (p. 167).

This connection between dream actions and the balanced personality is overlooked by mainstream psychology. By highlighting the many ways in which dreams can be used with deliberation as a problem-solving device (e.g., control the direction of activity within dreams) to effect a definite change for the better in the personality involved, transpersonal psychology serves as a bridge connecting transpersonal spirit and psychological science (Ashley, 1990; Barasch, 2000; Faraday, 1972; Gackenbach & Bosveld, 1989; Gackenbach & LaBerge, 1988; Garfield, 1974, 1991; LaBerge, 1985; LaBerge & Rheingold, 1990).

### **IV. Do Transpersonal Knowing, Speaking, and Creating Reveal the Existence of Actual Transcendent Realities?**

What is transpersonal psychology's stance toward the character of the knowledge that is disclosed during acts of religious-spiritual-transpersonal knowing, speaking, and creating? Why should anyone give credence to such "knowledge" if there is no possibility that such psychological experiences or intuitional comprehensions make known the existence of actual transcendental realities? Is there some objective, single, stable, continuous, enduring transcendent world to be found that can be known in the same reliable and valid way by anyone who is adequately prepared to take a really good look? Can transcendental reality be known in the same way as physical reality is known -- by taking a sufficiently good look with an adequately trained eye at what is already out there now and real? Or is the received wisdom about how we perceive and know the material, physical world fundamentally mistaken to begin with and provides a false model for understanding how transcendental realities are to be perceived and known? What is the

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epistemic status of the knowledge gained by way of transpersonal knowing, speaking, and creating? Is it real, true, and good or is it delusional, false, and poor?

While regarding religious-spiritual-transpersonal experience as basically psychologically legitimate and valid occurrences, transpersonal psychologists differ in their judgments about whether such phenomenon do in fact actually provide direct knowledge about the objective existence of "extra-mental" transcendental realities (i.e., actualities that exist independent of the perceiver). 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 (Friedman, 2002; Jung, 1935, 1968, 1992; Nelson, 1990). On this view, nothing is to be said because nothing can be known. 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 both the validity and legitimacy of spiritual experiences as states of knowledge, or to the nature of the basic reality that makes a particular mystical or spiritual experience possible in the first place. On this view, to assert the validity of transpersonal experiences without acknowledging the existence of the referent to which these experiences refer results in the artificial shrinking of what constitutes basic reality that satisfy neither the intellect nor the soul.

Some transpersonal scholars will insist that true knowledge of transcendental realities can be obtained by looking for what is constant or invariant across all mystical experiences (Huxley, 1944/1970), while others will require communal verification that an experience matches or conforms to those of others before the veracity of a mystical experience is accepted (Wilber, 1990). Both these perspectives present challenges, for if mysticism is "an ocean with many shores" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 133), then why should we expect all mystical experiences of transcendent realities to be similar or the same?

### **Immanent Naïve Realism**

*The senses: Empirical knowledge.* Naïve realism is the belief that our visual and bodily senses reveal to us an external world as it really is – that we "see" actual physical objects - or as one general psychology textbook defines it: "people's tendency to take their constructed, subjective realities to be faithful renderings of an objective world" (Smith et al., 2003, p. 13). Philosopher James L. Christian (1973) provides us with this definition of naïve realism: "The uncritical acceptance of one's sense data as representing accurately the real world; a sort of 'blind faith' in what one's senses seem to tell him" (p. 183). If the dominant source of information about us and our environment is gained through specialized sense receptors developed to perform this function, then what is wrong with believing that one's sense data accurately represents the real world? If the fundamental source of all knowledge is our physical senses as mainstream psychology maintains, then what is the difficulty with building an "empirical" science on the belief that the most secure facts, the best hypotheses, and truest knowledge are to be acquired by our physical senses alone? What is the problem with believing what one's senses tell us?

Our senses present us with a serious credibility problem. Is there any way we can be sure that they are 'telling us the truth' about the two [external and inner] worlds they represent? Can we *believe* what our senses seem to tell us? At this point in our inquiry, the answer must be a reluctant no. Our senses do not give us a 'true picture' of the real world; they give us an 'operational picture.' In fact, we can begin to construct an accurate picture of reality only after meticulous correction to the sense data which our senses transmit to us (to 'us' -- that is, to our minds). We now know that there are numerous inherent 'deception' and 'translations' in the data-transmission processes of the senses. Unfortunately, most of us never get around to making adequate corrections. We remain *naïve realists*. (Christian, 1973, pp. 182-183)

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***The problem with naive realism .*** Given the transduction processes of sensation and the top-down processing of perception, it is important to recognize, psychologically speaking, that there will never be 100% correspondence between the external object of perception and its mental representation in experience. Even eyewitness accounts of the "same" physical event will often differ from one another and contain errors (e.g., more than half of all cases of mistaken convictions are due to mistakes in eyewitness testimony (Wells & Olson, 2003)). "Naïve realism" ignores the fact that the knower (the individual personality, self, subject, theorist) *always* brings something to the perceptual enterprise. Every individual has his or her own cultural contexts and social backgrounds, psychological traits and characteristics, neurological structures and dynamics, developmental history, and so forth that shape, direct, and influence not only what he or she will see, but *can* see of that supposedly objective "already out there now real" world (Noe & Thompson, 2002). Personal or private thoughts "exist within a vast background of cultural practices and languages and meanings and contexts, without which [we] could form virtually no individual thoughts at all" and influence perception (Wilber, 1997, p. 103). We can know nothing directly, but only our own experience that is transmitted through and so "colored" by the central nervous system and the brain. Given what cognitive psychology' has discovered about how sensation, perception, and cognitive processes operate, we now recognize that there will never be 100% correspondence between the external object of perception and its representation in perception. The knower (the individual personality, self, subject, theorist) always brings something to the knowledge enterprise. As William James (1890/1950) correctly understood our knowledge of self, world, and others is constantly being transformed by the very characteristics of thought itself (i.e., consciousness is personal, constantly changing, sensibly continuous, selective, and purposive). Always being a part of some person, information is changed automatically through the mediumship of each individual who perceives it, maintains it in memory, and passes it on to others through language

There is *something out there*, of course, to observe. Our sense apparatus and conceptual structures, however, determine what physical form that something will take and what meaning it will have for the perceiver (Goldstein, 2002; Soderquist, 2002). What that "something" is will be colored to some extent or another by the sense apparatus that the perceiver happens to have operative at the time and the viewpoint or field of reference from which that "something" is perceived by the perceiver. Creation and perception are therefore far more intimately connected than most people recognize or acknowledge. Modern physical theory tells us that the physical environment is made up of invisible patterns of energy. These patterns are "plastic," in that while they exist "in themselves" (Kant's phrase), our physical senses perceive these patterns in their own ways, and impose a highly specialized pattern upon the available field of energy. The "same" stimulus (e.g., a rock) is something far different to a human, an elephant, a dog, a bat, a praying mantis, a snake, and fish who perceive it. There *is* a physical world composed of stuff that *is* real in itself, apart from any mind's perception or conception of it. The perceiver is composed of that same "stuff" (i.e., atoms and molecules). The physical world rises up before our eyes, while our eyes are a part of the world that they see. And if the known world is not simply statically pre-given, then neither is the knowing self. In certain terms, it is correct to say that the perceiver does not see what *does* exist, but like all other individuals he or she perceives a reality that he or she has created. Each reality is completely unique for every individual, then, and by focusing upon similarities and ignoring the vast differences that exist among the individual realities which are created, and by other means, the appearance of cohesiveness is maintained and similarities in one's expression of it are found with the expressions composed by others (Roberts, 1998b).

***Immanent naïve realism in a sensory-based psychology.*** Naïve realism is the firm and basic foundation upon which mainstream empirical psychology builds its knowledge of human mental processes and behavior. Mainstream psychological science is based on "the eye of flesh, by which we perceive the external world of space, time, and objects" (Wilber, 1990, p. 3) . It declares itself to be "empirical" in the traditional sense of that word -- based in physical sensations and anchored to the raw data provided by our sensory systems. In this sense, empirical psychology follows a "sensationist" doctrine of perception of

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John Locke: (a) we can perceive only by means of our physical sense organs, (b) the mind can have no power to perceive except through the brain's sensory systems, and (c) there can be no perception without sensation. Mainstream psychology ordinarily does not regard its own knowledge of human experience and behavior as a function of a subjectively perceived world, but strictly a function of objective perception of an objective reality. Mainstream scientific psychology usually does not recognize that its "definition of the situation" varies by culture, personal history, or current motivational state, but rather imagines it to be independent of and uninfluenced by such factors. It does not acknowledge the fact that it actively constructs its knowledge of the objective world, or accept that its "knowledge" and "facts" are subjective realities. Mainstream experimental psychologists do not see their knowledge as personal constructions. They take their knowledge constructions not to be constructed, subjective realities, but directly received, objective realities – faithful renderings of the objective world.

The fact that mainstream psychology for all of the various and often strident critiques, remains confidently positivistic seems to be beyond dispute. The literature generally taken to be authoritative is experiment; quantitative (i.e., statistical); based on replicable, standard procedures; and confined to summaries of the average tendencies of data. To the extent that theories are developed at all, these end to be either mere redescriptions of the data or metaphorical translations of the experimental setting. (Robinson, 1993, p. 638).

Naïve realism is the ontological and epistemological view of scientific materialism and scientism that most transpersonal psychologists reject to one extent or another – the belief that valid knowledge can only be obtained by separating oneself from the object of study (objectivity), that the self is nothing more than another object in the material world (materialism), that only the sensory-empirical is real (positivism), and that truth depends on the correspondence or accurate match between the representation that I have in my head "in here" and that single, simple, pre-given objective empirical world of nature "out there" (representationalism). If one's internal representation is not an analog match for what one's physical senses perceive or the reality measured by scientific instruments, then one's internal representation must be wrong.

### **Transcendent Naïve Realism**

Many modern interpreters of Eastern religions and spiritual psychologies adopt a version of "transcendent" naïve realism and assert that the transcendental realities apprehended in certain mystical states do actually exist "independent" of the participant, and that the nature of these realities can be logically ascertained (a) by abstracting what appears constant or invariant across all experiences (Huxley, 1944/1970) or (b) empirically and experimentally verified and validated through personal practice and experience and intersubjective verification or refutation (Wilber, 1990).

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)

Descriptions of the epistemic content of transpersonal or spiritual experiences are not expected to be identical, of course, given the dependency of verbal reports on one's language community, the historical time period, cultural and social norms, and the personality, education, and past conditioning of the individual who has undergone its transformative power. A case in point can be found in Lex Hixon's (1989) book *Coming Home: The Experience of Enlightenment in Sacred Traditions* that describes the epistemic content of "enlightenment" expressed in language shaped by Eastern and Western cultural frames of reference. The diversity of linguistic forms reflected in the writings of sages such as

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Heidegger, Krishnamurti, Ramakrishna of Bengel, Ramana Maharshi, Plotinus, the Jewish Hasidic Masters, St. Paul, and Sufi Bawa Muhaiyaddeena is suggestive of how diverse cultural and religious perspectives can be interpreted as expressing one all-embracing intellectual and spiritual transpersonal vision that Aldous Huxley (1944/1970, p. vii) called the "Perennial Philosophy" -- "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, 1944/1970, p. vii).

### **Ontological Neutrality**

**What is ontological neutrality?** Ontological neutrality is the perspective or viewpoint that states: "Since nothing can be known about basic reality or whether it even exists, then nothing can or should be said." Ontological neutrality argues that we should remain neutral regarding the metaphysical reality of transcendent actualities. We should instead restrict our study simply to the transpersonal experiences themselves that people have and not concern ourselves with "philosophical problems" about whether there is some kind of knowable basic reality. Any problem that can be subjected to the generalized empirical method and is based upon knowledge gained by human experience (not merely sense experience), cannot be thought of as "philosophy," and therefore this is the way we should proceed in our search after truth. Transpersonal scholars who argue for "ontological neutrality" believe that *a priori* assumptions about the nature of so-called "objective" transcendental realities that appear to be disclosed during an episode of peak experience or cosmic consciousness or that is revealed through acts of Being-cognition or vision-logic actually set up barriers to a more pluralistic understanding of spiritual knowledge. Assuming the existence of a single, pre-given basic spiritual reality can potentially lead to a failure to "honor the diversity of ways in which the sense of the sacred can be cultivated, honored, and lived." It can impede the recognition that "spiritual traditions cultivate, enact, and express, in interaction with a dynamic and indeterminate spiritual power, potentially overlapping but independent spiritual ultimates" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 4). Cognitive commitment to a form of what may be termed a "transcendent naive realism" has the potential of reducing one's cognitive flexibility and openness to new experiences necessary for proposing more adequate theories about the nature of transpersonal events and the human psyche that expresses them. While the metaphysical assumptions that underlie the Perennial Philosophy (Huxley, 1944/1970) and the Great Chain of Being (Wilber, 1977), for instance, may be valid, they may also only be partial truths, and must maintain the status of only working hypotheses in the field. "Their validity should be researched and assessed rather than presupposed" (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993b, p. 202).

**Ontological neutrality in transpersonal psychology.** Transpersonal psychologist and scholar Friedman (2002) recommends a Neo-Kantian agnostic epistemology regarding spiritual or mystical claims of the extrasensory status of metaphysical realities.

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. (p. 183)

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C. G. Jung likewise declared himself agnostic on this issue of whether there is some kind of knowledge ultimate reality. 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) states 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. . . . 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. . . . 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 (pp. 36, 45).

Nelson (1990) proposes that any awareness, perception or state that is experienced be understood in terms of three dimensions: (a) the “mind body psychotechnologies” that serve as the “setting” and triggering mechanisms that produced them (e.g., breathwork, psychedelics, self-hypnosis, meditation, etc.), (b) the personality characteristics of the participant that forms the background “set” of the experience, and the phenomenological self-report that provides the picture of the attributes and qualities of the experience itself.

[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. (Nelson, 1990, p. 44-45)

***The consequences of ontological neutrality for transpersonal psychology.*** While ontological neutrality appears to be a reasonable and logical position to take regarding the question of whether or not transcendental experiences reveal actual transcendental realities, affirming ontological neutrality in theory has several practical consequences for the field of transpersonal psychology.

***Validates mainstream psychology's dismissal of transpersonal actualities.*** It is interesting to compare the two different approaches of mainstream psychology and transpersonal psychology regarding the issue of ontological neutrality in terms of their stance toward the subject matter they study. Mainstream psychology, for instance, does not declare ontological neutrality regarding the existence of a physical environment that it believes provides the context for waking experience and behavior. Why should transpersonal psychology do so regarding the existence of a multidimensional reality in which religious-spiritual-transpersonal experiences and behavior are reported to occur? If mainstream psychology had declared that the nature of the physical environment is ultimately unknowable because of the problems of naive realism, then it would have had to limit itself to the study of people's waking experiences of an

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uncertain "something I know not what" and progress in the field would certainly have been halted long ago. Mistaken or not, mainstream sensory-based psychology has found it more parsimonious and productive to simply grant the existence of an apparent objective material environment that is perceived by the physical senses and study its effects upon experience and behavior within that frame of reference. It has decided to follow the position of naïve realism in this regard regarding the existence of the physical environment. On the other hand, mainstream psychology takes the position of ontological neutrality toward the existence of transcendental realities that may lie behind and beyond the physical framework that they accept, because it does not take up physical space and cannot be perceived using the physical senses or its extensions. Since nothing can be known of these realms or realities using the eye of flesh, then nothing can or should be said. If mainstream psychology insists on remaining neutral regarding the ontological reference of religious-spiritual- transpersonal experience, then should not also transpersonal psychology, especially if it wanted to be regarded as a science in the same light as mainstream psychology? Unfortunately, mainstream psychology takes the position to its extreme and declares that what lies outside the sensory-empirical framework is deemed not to exist at all. People who claim to experience what does not exist or claim to know what cannot be known are to be regarded as "crazy" or "delusional." This has been one consequence of remaining neutral regarding the ontological reference of religious-spiritual-transpersonal experiences on the part of both mainstream and transpersonal psychology. If transpersonal psychology is uncertain about the validity and legitimacy of the epistemic content of transcendental experiences, then why should mainstream psychology not be less so?

***Confines spirituality to the subjective world of the individual.*** A second consequence of the principle of ontological neutrality is the limitation that it places on our understanding of spirituality. By confining spirituality to the subjective world of the individual, the epistemic content of religious-spiritual-transpersonal experiences become reduced, limited, and narrowed to only one pole of the phenomenon (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, egocentrism, 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 & Vaughan, 1993a, p. 3). 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. . . . [To argue otherwise, is to overlook the] trans-human sources of spiritual creativity" (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 124-126). As William James (1902/1936) put the matter:

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

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excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal... God is real since he produces real effects. (pp. 506-507)

***Perpetuates the Cartesian split between subject and event.*** A third consequence of affirming ontological neutrality in theory, and limiting knowledge of basic reality solely to those individual inner experiences of that "unknown" reality appears to perpetuate the Cartesian split between a subject "having" an experience of a separate spiritual "event," with only one element of this dichotomy being granted existence or possessing epistemic content (Ferrer, 2002). Once this subject-object 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. or against someone else's experience of that same pre-given world through the process of consensual validation. . This pre-given world is presumed to exist in an "already out there now real" fashion, separate from and independent of human cognition, with some definable features that can be determined and agreed upon by taking a really good look by an adequately trained eye (Lonergan, 1957, p. 251) . We are back to the problems of the correspondence theory of truth that befalls naive realism. It is the subject-object split, however, that is the cause of greatest concern here. For as modern physical theory shows there are no real physical divisions between the perceiver and the thing seemingly perceived, both being made of the same constituent elements, differing only in molecular density. Environments do not exist as objective things separate from the subjects who give them form and meaning, except in abstract thought. The subject and the spiritual event are a part of the same action, each changing the other. In many ways, the thing perceived is an *extension* of the perceiver. What appears to be an objective event is simply an effect of the perceiver attempting to stand outside of the action of his or her own act of perception.

***The ever-actual integrity of basic reality is denied.*** A fourth consequence of affirming the principle of ontological neutrality is its susceptibility to being taken to extremes. According to transpersonal scholar Ken Wilber (1998), one disaster of the cultural philosophy known as "postmodernism" was to take the initial insight that every action or event has an intra- subjective, interpretive, linguistically constructed component to an extreme and conclude that there is no objectively true basic reality, and that only different perceptual constructions and linguistic interpretations exist. It completely denied any actuality to the objective features of being and made them completely interpretative. There is nothing out there, only our intra-subjective interpretations. Independent facts do not exist, only interpretations do. Science is not knowledge of the world, but merely an interpretation of the world. Mystical experience is not knowledge of transcendent reality, but merely an interpretation of transcendent reality. Different interpretations of the world and all interpretations of transcendent reality are equally good, equally valid ways of making sense of the world and of basic reality. One interpretation is no better and no more binding than another. The fact that all perceptions of the objective world have an interpretive component, however, does *not* do away with the objective world, but simply fixes its place within its appropriate semantic (interpretive) domain. As Wilber puts it: "A soul can experience God, no matter what words we use for 'soul,' 'experience,' and 'God' (Wilber, quoted in Walsh & Vaughan, 1993a, p. 259). Theoretical physicist and theologian John Polkinghorne (1998), makes the same point when he states:

What we know of entities must conform to their nature and there is a necessary veiled character to our encounter. ... Yet that encounter is a real meeting with something other than human thought, an exploration of what is and not just of what we choose to say. The concepts we are considering cannot do the work that is needed to be done unless they have that ontological reference. (p. 45)

Action cannot be divorced from philosophy. Is it possible to assume that transpersonal or spiritual experiences present legitimate and valid knowledge without also presupposing something about

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legitimacy and validity of the reality that make such experiences or events possible? As soon as one makes a statement of fact concerning a mystical experience, it would seem that one automatically also makes some cognitive or ontological commitment to a particular worldview or notion about basic reality and about the self whose subjectivity gives that statement 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 or maybe a third of the story. We cannot escape from metaphysics.

### **Ontological Alignment**

Transpersonal scholars such as Ferrer (2002) and Polkinghorne (1998) would regard the call for “ontological neutrality” and the imposition of a neo-Kantian agnostic epistemology upon the field of transpersonal psychology as an extreme cautionary position, and would call for a re-alignment of the ontological referent back into the equation of human consciousness. Such a move re-affirms the basic principle of phenomenological psychology that every experience is constituted by two related foci -- what is experienced (noema) and that to which what is experienced refers (noesis) -- that are inextricably interconnected and aligned together (Ihde, 1979; Keen, 1975; Zaner, 1970). There is always a correlation between myself as experiencer (noesis) and something which is present as experienced (noema). There is always that which is experienced. The particular shape or form that “what” which is experienced takes, as experienced, is determined by “how” it is experienced in some way. Phenomenologically speaking, consciousness always has an object, in other words, and all experience implies something that is experienced. As Ihde (1979) put it: “Every experiencing has its reference or direction toward what is experienced, and contrarily, every experienced phenomenon refers to or reflects a mode of experiencing to which it is present” (pp. 42-43). There are apparent exceptions to this correlation of what is experienced with its mode of being experienced in those so-called “higher” causal states of consciousness described by Eastern religions in which “consciousness without an object” is believed to occur (Wilber, 1977; Merrell-Wolff, 1973). Yet even in those instances, 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. The object of mystical experience is not illusory, in other words.

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)

We cannot escape from metaphysics. Transpersonal scholars who argue against ontological neutrality believe that humanity does not need to remain ignorant of its spiritual heritage, or deny the metaphysical import of spiritual knowledge, or stay silent about the ontological implications of the phenomenology of mystical events. Unless one believes that (a) there is no epistemic validity to transpersonal or spiritual experiences, (b) there is no valid cognitive content to the act of cognition that occurs in transpersonal experiences, and (c) there is no transpersonal knowing, then one cannot side-step the issue that transpersonal experiences may reveal valid and legitimate aspects of basic reality. 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 of significance and importance” (p. 300). Or as Bolle

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(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)

### Participatory Spirituality

Not all transpersonal scholars subscribe to either a "universalist vision of a common core of spirituality" and the transcendent naïve realism that it implies or to a position of ontological neutrality regarding the ever-actual integrity of basic spiritual reality (Ferrer, 2002, p. 3). “What is called a transpersonal experience is better understood as the participation of an individual in a transpersonal event” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 126). Yes, there is *something out there*, but it is not pre-given. The features of that “something” are plastic and malleable, dynamic and creative and participatory. 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.

All human knowledge of the world is in some sense determined by subjective principles; 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 [holds] 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. (Tarnas, 1991, pp. 433-434)

There are no closed systems, in other words. We are always a part of any reality that we 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” (Roberts, 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.

Giving up this dualism [between a subject “having” an experience of a separate spiritual “event”] calls us to move beyond objectivism and subjectivism toward the recognition of the simultaneously interpretive and immediate nature of human knowledge. . . . Each spiritual shore is independent and needs to be reached by its appropriate raft. . . . No pre-given ultimate reality exists, and . . . different spiritual realities can be enacted through intentional or spontaneous creative participation in an indeterminate spiritual power or Mystery. . . . Different mystical traditions enact and disclose different spiritual universes. (Ferrer, 2002, pp. 142, 148, 151)

### Noetic Pluralism

***Instrumental injunctions serve as interior conventions that limit spiritual experience.*** The requirement of transpersonal psychology's generalized empirical method that knowledge gained in a mystical experience is to be considered valid only if other individuals adequately trained in the injunction confirm it represents an attempt to limit, order, and stratify religious-spiritual-transpersonal experiences. The “instrumental injunction” to make one's inner experience and “direct apprehensions” conform to preconceived packaging and “communal verification” -- a requirement that some transpersonal scholars insist is required for "valid data accumulation in any realm" (Wilber, 1990, p. 44) -- can become interior conventions that, like outer ones of mainstream sensory-based psychology, force the individual seeker to conform to the generally accepted ideas of what it means to be “enlightened” and may very well hide other real transcendental actualities that the seeker then does not perceive.

At one time the teachings of Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammed represented initial original visions and individual interpretations of basic reality expressed in terms that the people at that time and place could understand. When the founders of the major world religions (Jesus, Buddha, Moses, Muhammad) gave

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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).

Understandably, after having heard the teachings of Jesus, Buddha, or Mohammed, each disciple would begin to clothe his or her own private visions of basic reality (or God, Spiritual Intelligence, or whatever other term one cares to use for the vitality of the Kosmos) -- as he or she experienced it - in the guise of the ideas, concepts, and images embodied in the teachings of the founders. The disciples would no longer insist 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 were told what to expect, individual experiences of new disciples became 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 became lost. If one’s inner experience did not conform, then it would be called “mistaken,” and one would be considered an outcast or at worst a heretic. And who wants that given the consequences of banishment, excommunication, or worse, burning at the stake? Guided tours of transcendent reality in which disciples are told to follow certain injunctions in order to experience the “same” thing now served to rigidly limit transpersonal experience and transformative behavior rather than express it.

***Mystical experience is an "ocean with many shores."*** Mystical consciousness is “an ocean with many shores” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 133). 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 (1902/1936) called “the higher part of the universe” (p. 507) are quite legitimate, real, and valid even though they may be regarded as “mistaken” because they do not conform with the mystical experiences of official religious dogma. Why should an individual be forced to interpret his or her 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 the individual be concerned or worried if his or her private interpretations of transcendent realities do not agree with others? Each religious experience reveals a separate spiritual reality. There are as many spiritual realities as there are individuals who experience them -- an epistemological position that William James referred to as “noetic pluralism” (Taylor, 1996b, p. 134).

In certain terms, spiritual 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 present a picture of a very real environment that others could but do not perceive because of temperament, educational training, past experience, or cultural conditioning. If an individual expects photographs of his or her own exterior physical world to be diverse according to where the person goes, why should the individual expect or require all of the “pictures” of interior transcendent realities to look alike?

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### Aspect Psychology

The principle of parsimony and Occam's razor notwithstanding, basic reality is more complicated than psychologists dream either possible or reasonable. Transcendent reality is cohesive, but it is more varied and diverse than transpersonal psychology knows even now, according to writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1998a, 1998b). Jane Roberts's Aspect Psychology is an original theory of human personality and multidimensional reality that expands upon William James's notion of noetic pluralism which posits the existence of "a basic creative undifferentiated reality -- an ever present field of latent activity -- that springs into being as consciousness encounters it, and patterns it according to its own perceptive focus" (Roberts, 1975, p. 180). On this view, there is a basic reality that exists independently of the perceiver and of which the perceiver is a part.-- just as material, physical reality is a valid and significant plane or field of existence within which we as physical organisms exist. The ever-actual integrity of physical reality and the natural world cannot be denied. As physical mindful beings, the aspect of basic reality that an individual can perceive is determined by (a) the sensory or perceptual apparatus with which basic reality is perceived, (b) the field, dimension, system, or plane within which basic reality is perceived, and (c) the perspective or frame of reference from which basic reality is perceived. The portion of the physical body that an individual can perceive is determined largely not by the given, so-called real object itself, but because of the senses with which the perceiver perceives it, the field of reality within which it exists, and the perspective of the individual perceiver. Things and actions are perceived as realities according to the nature of the perceiver, not according to the nature of a given object or event. The nature of the body is largely determined by those who perceive it, for it is different things in reality, and not one thing. Putting these statements together, we see that

An individual will perceive basic reality, in the main, only from his own reference point, and through his outer sense apparatus. His perception of basic reality in one way does not change the nature of that reality or of that action, as it exists independently of his field of reference. However, the very distortions that occur in his attempt to perceive this reality results in a new reality. What he perceives then is legitimate, for his very perception of it is the basis for its existence. Any individual reacts to a reality as he perceives it to be, and he perceives it to be since he has himself created it from basic reality. (Roberts, 1998b, p. 43)

To clarify this complicated point let us take as an example, a reality that everybody has and intimately experiences on a day-to-day basis -- the human body.

***The senses with which the thing or action is perceived.*** To a creature who can only perceive a physical organism's thermal energy but not its physical matter, the body would appear quite differently than it does to us. The body would be perceived differently, according to the perceptual system which viewed it. The portion of the body that an individual can perceive is determined by the senses with which the perceiver perceives it. Using these senses it is possible to perceive the human body in entirely different fashions -- visually, kinesthetically, olfactorily, gustatorily, auditorily. The body can be perceived as a visual stimulus with shape and size and color. The body can be experienced kinesthetically as possessing weight and mass. The body can be experienced as having a particular odor and taste. The body has its reality within all of these sensory systems simultaneously. Which of these outer senses provides the one "true" perception of the body?

***The fields of reality within which the thing or action is perceived.*** The body exists in an entirely different fashion within the context or "settings" of other fields of actualities other than the material one. The body exists chemically, electrically, thermally, and magnetically. It exists as electromagnetic waves, radio waves, as sound and light simultaneously. The aspect of the physical body that an individual can

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perceive is determined by the fields within the body exists when it is perceived. Which field, plane, system, or reality in which the physical body simultaneously exists— chemical, electric, material – provides the "correct" perception of the body?

***The perspective from which the thing or action is perceived.*** It is possible to perceive the human body not only in entirely different fashions using different sensory modalities, within the context or settings of different fields or planes of actuality, but also from different perspectives. The perceiver's spatial viewpoint and field of reference will at all times color to some extent or another the nature of the object or event he or she perceives. An individual will perceive basic reality in the main only through the perceptual apparatus he or she happens to have operative at the time, and only from his or her own frame of reference point or perspective. Reality is perceived differently according to the perspective which viewed it (e.g., top, bottom, left, sideways, inside, outside, front, back, etc.). Which of the different perspectives that can be taken toward the human body is the "right" one?

***"Objective" true basic reality.*** What does exist -- the "objective" true reality of an object or event, such as the physical body -- would not necessarily be completely the object or event as it appears to the visual system, or as it appears to the auditory system, and so forth. It would not be that which is *constant* or identical or invariant across the senses with which the perceiver perceives it. It would be the sum of the realities of all the senses. True reality would not necessarily be the reality of the object or event (e.g., the body), as it appears within the physical system, electrical system, chemical, or electromagnetic system. Nor would it be that which appears identical to all the systems. It would be the sum of the realities of all the systems. The "objective" reality of an object or event (e.g., the body) is not necessarily that which appears from various perspectives. It would not be that which is constant within the various appearances of the object or event from various perspectives. It would be the sum of the realities of all the perspectives. It is not a question of the body having certain properties, being real to one sensory system, or in one system of reality, or to one perspective and therefore necessarily *unreal* to another, in other words. True reality is more the perception of the whole picture of reality, or the sum of all reality as seen by the various senses, within the various systems or fields of reality, from the different perspectives considered in totality (Roberts, 1998b). A reality, to some true extent, *remains as it is, unchanged* even though the perceiver, because of his or her perceptual apparatus, may perceive it in a limited or distorted fashion. An individual's perception of basic reality in one way does not change the nature of that reality or of that action, as it exists independently of his physical senses or frame-field of reference.

### **Doee Transcendent Experience Reveal Actual Transcendent Realities?**

Do transcendent experiences disclose actual transcendental realities? This question builds upon and extends the discussion of the Marian apparitions at Medjugorje presented in chapter 3 on the topic of transpersonal sensation and perception and the issue of whether the Marian apparitions are solely the product of the psyche of the six percipients or is some actual transcendental reality producing them. The answer to the question is complicated, and can appear contradictory because in certain term transcendental realities both are and are not revealed by transcendent experiences. The intellect and reasoning mind wants its answer presented in precise, rational black-and-white, true-or-false terms, and this requirement can make an understanding of such a response extremely difficult to intuit. The contradiction is only apparent, however. The valid and legitimate reality that is formed *for* the perceiver by his or her perception of a basically independent, alternate reality (the "yes" part of the answer) becomes clothed in the garb of highly distorted, very limited images and ideas of the conventional religious and cultural beliefs of the times (the "no" part of the answer). Like a round peg trying to fit into a square hole, the transduction of an inner order of events from one frame of reference to another alters it to some extent, distorting its content, resulting in the transformation of a basic reality that is squeezed out of shape to some degree as one order of events is superimposed over another, by the very action of perception itself.

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Putting the statements of naive realism, ontological neutrality, ontological alignment, participatory spirituality, noetic pluralism, and aspect psychology together, we see that (a) reflecting a mode of transcendent experiencing, transcendent experiences do disclose actual transcendental realities, but (b) as representations of transcendent reality, they are distortions. As discussed in chapter 3, perceiving is an action that must, because of the nature of action, to some extent distort the object of perception. For instance, physically speaking, stimulus energy is transduced or changed by the physical senses into a form of energy that the nervous system can handle, and the nervous system itself is changed by the act of handling the stimulus energies it has perceived. In the same way, the attempt to perceive basic reality is an action that creates a distortion of that reality creating in fact a new reality. In this distortion, there occurs the creation of a new reality. A new reality is formed as a result of the distortion itself. *That* is what is perceived.

It is important to recognize that the "distortion is not falsehood. It is merely an interpretation of reality, colored or seen through a state of limited perception" (Roberts, 1997c, p. 335). The distortion is creative and is formed by (a) the characteristic ways in which an individual person or focus of consciousness views and perceives a particular field of reality, (b) the particular type of action which the person is more likely to perceive, and (c) the pattern of perception itself that is shaped by the perceptual apparatus and the "top-down" processing that the individual perceiver happens to have operative at the time. What is perceived is legitimate, valid, and real, for the very action of perceiving it is the basis for its existence. The perceiver reacts to basic reality as he or she perceives it to be, in other words. He perceives it to be because he has himself created it from basic reality.

Every individual perceives the perceptual reality that he or she has created, and cannot see one another's. That perceptual reality does not exist independently of his or her perception of it or of the space-time frame of reference from which the perceiver experiences it. The perceiver does not see what does exist, in other words, but does see "what is experienced, as experienced" shaped by the characteristic perception patterns of the personal consciousness of the perceiver (Ihde, 1979, p. 43). The nature, type, extent, and scope of the characteristic perception patterns of each form of consciousness create the unique and personal differences which for the perceiver gives transcendent reality its peculiar and individual nature that may or may not depart drastically from the perceptions of others. Each perceptual reality is completely unique for every individual, and through thought, word and deed, he or she attempts to communicate the nature of his or her perception of basic reality to other people. Individuals tend to agree upon their perceptions, which attain and maintain the appearance of cohesiveness to a large extent (a) because individuals focus upon similarities and ignore the vast differences that exist among their perceptions, and (b) because of the functioning of psi (e.g., telepathic communication) at the subconscious level (Roberts, 1998b).

### V. Conclusion

Ways of ordinary knowing or cognition provide an important means by which we obtain information about the world, self, and others. Transpersonal psychology honors the kind of knowledge that these forms of knowing provide and adds to their impressive achievement the realizations that other, less well-known ways of knowing provide that may be overlooked by mainstream psychology but that are always available and operative just beneath the stream of normal waking consciousness to enrich experience of daily life. These additional ways of inner knowing -- spiritual intelligence, direct knowing, being-cognition, cosmic consciousness, generalized empirical method, spiritual psychology -- expand upon and extend the knowledge obtained by means of reasoning and logic, problem-solving and decision making, concept formation and hypothesis testing in order to provide a more complete understanding of the world, self, and others. These additional forms of inner knowing provide not only experiential insight into the nature of being itself but also complement other manifestations of intuitional comprehensions that are

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expressed by the various forms of transpersonal speaking -- transcendental inner voices and trance channeling-- which bring conceptual and intellectual comprehensions not otherwise available to a sensory-based psychology. Transpersonal psychology draws attention to the fact that such purely subjective experiences discussed in this chapter -- peak experiences, cosmic consciousness, mysticism, being-cognition, transcendental inner voices, trance channeling, dream construction -- that exist only within a psychological framework and that have no objective physical existence "out there" in the physical environment that is governed by physical laws of time and space, nevertheless, do produce definite changes in that physical environment, within one's physical body, and in other people through the personality who experiences them and acts upon that inner knowing and intuitive insights that such subjective events provide. These changes are not caused by a physical event such as an environmental stimulus, a past experience, natural selection, or biological inheritance, but by purely subjective events which have no objective physical reality in the physical universe. Mainstream psychology must get over the belief that physical laws and physical events are the only basis for determining what is real and what is not, if it is ever to expand its scope of awareness of these other ways of inner, transpersonal knowing. Dream construction as a means of handling waking experience problems is neither unusual nor anomalous, but one of the fundamental means by which problems are solved by the personality.

Transpersonal psychology in its approach to knowing is a truly *integral* psychology in that it systematically attempts to include and integrate the enduring insights and comprehensions of premodern religion, modern psychological science, and constructive postmodern philosophy in its investigation of human knowing, speaking, and creating. Cosmic consciousness, mystical experience, being-cognition, transcendental inner voices, trance channeling, and problem-solving dream construction provide transpersonal psychology the necessary empirical springboard to propose original theories and concepts of human knowing, speaking, and creating that integrate Western and Eastern perspectives and concepts of identity and consciousness. Transpersonal psychology seeks to expand the boundaries of "I" consciousness, improve the reasoning mind's communication with subconscious portions of the whole self's identity, and help the overall personality integrate the intuitional comprehensions provided by such transpersonal ways of knowing into everyday life.

In its determination to answer the question of whether transcendent experiences reveal actual transcendent realities, transpersonal psychology is not trying to escape either science or metaphysics. One is not meant as any alternative to the other; it is quite possible to have both. Neither is transpersonal psychology in its study of world religions as spiritual psychologies or use of terms such as "soul" and "spirit" to describe the inner, transpersonal self seeking to deify humans or humanize God. Its intent is much more humble, more personal, and more specific than that. Its intent is to encourage mainstream psychology to examine the age-old notion of the soul in an unprejudiced way and to test its empirical justification in experience and to keep spirituality in connection with the rest of science. A transpersonal orientation to the psyche -- its human expression of knowing and speaking and creating - is psychologically sound because it reinforces our species uniqueness in the universe while also emphasizing the source of that separateness in the unity of that inconceivable interaction between Being and being. Such an orientation is compatible with the enduring truths of many of the world's honored and respected spiritual traditions as well as with certain conventional strands of psychological thought ( e.g., positive psychology, humanistic psychology) 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.

Ways of transpersonal knowing -- reflected in episodes of peak experiences, cosmic consciousness, transcendent inner voices, and trance channeling -- point to qualities of thinking, intelligence, and consciousness that may not be fully addressed in contemporary general psychology textbooks. By expanding upon limited conceptions of human knowing, speaking, and creating, Transpersonal psychology brings into awareness those other sources of inspiration and knowledge that are natively

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available to the individual. Once the individual is made intellectually aware of these other available but psychologically invisible ways of inner knowing, then the person can take practical advantage of many of channels of inner information that may have been previously overlooked. By expanding upon narrow conceptions of human knowing, speaking, and creating, which overlook the existence of the inner, transpersonal self, then individuals are reconnected once again with the source of their own creativity. Transpersonal psychology bridges transpersonal spirit and psychological science by calling attention to human personality's multidimensional nature, so that mainstream psychology will have a better understanding of and appreciation for the ways of transpersonal knowing, speaking, and creating that lie within each individual.

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**Figure 6-1**  
**Characteristics of *Cognition* During Generalized Peak Experiences**  
(Maslow, 1968, Chapter 6)

In a peak experience....

- “Physical objects tend to be seen as a whole, as a complete unit, detached from its relationship to other objects, from possible usefulness, from expediency, and from its function. It is seen as if it were all there was in the universe, as if it were all of Being, synonymous with the universe” (p. 74).
- “What is perceived is exclusively and fully attended to, in total and complete focused attention, absorption, and fascination. In such attention, the figure becomes *all* figure and the ground, in effect, disappears, or at least is not importantly perceived, as if the figure is isolated for the time being from all else, as if the world were forgotten, as if the perceived object had become for the moment the whole of Being;.... to become so absorbed and “poured into” the object that the self disappears; we may even speak of identification of the perceiver and the perceived, a fusion of what was two into a new and larger whole, a super-ordinate unit” (pp. 74, 79).
- “Nature is looked upon more readily as if it were there in itself and for itself, and not simply as if it were a human playground put there for human purposes. The individual can more easily refrain from projecting human purposes upon what is perceived, can see it in its own Being (as an end-in-itself), rather than as something to be used, or as something to be afraid of, or to be reacted to in some other human way, making human-irrelevance more possible, enabling the individual thereby to see more truly the nature of the object in itself” (p. 76).
- “Perception is made richer in repeated, fascinated, and experiencing in a way that makes us like it more, permitting us to see more and more of it in various senses” (p. 77).
- “Perception is relatively ego-transcending, self-forgetful, egoless, unmotivated, impersonal, desireless, unselfish, not *needing*, detached, object-centered rather than ego-centered; the perceptual experience is organized around the object as a centering point rather than being based upon the ego” (p. 79)
- “The experience is felt as a self-validating, self-justifying moment which carries its own intrinsic value with it. It is only experienced as good and desirable, and is never experienced as evil or undesirable. The experience is intrinsically valid, perfect, complete and needs nothing else, sufficient to itself, felt as being intrinsically necessary and inevitable” (pp. 79, 81).
- “There is a very characteristic disorientation in time and space, in which the person is outside of time and space subjectively, making it impossible to judge how much time has passed, not only does time pass with a frightening rapidity that it may pass as if it were a minute but also a minute may be so intensely lived it may feel like a day or year. It is as if the individual had, in a way, some place in another world in which time simultaneously stood still and moved with great rapidity” (p. 81)
- “Awareness and thinking is more passive and receptive than active, a kind of “choiceless awareness,” “desireless awareness”, “free floating attention” that is undemanding rather than demanding, contemplative rather than forceful, humble before the experience, non-interfering, receiving rather than taking, selfless rather than egocentric, patient rather than impatient, gazing rather than looking, surrendering and submitting to the experience” (pp. 86-87)
- “The emotional reaction has a special flavor of wonder, of awe, of reverence, of humility and surrender before the experience as before something great ... The word sacred is occasionally used to describe the person’s reaction to it; it may have a certain poignancy and piercing quality which may bring either tears or laughter or both....in part an aspect of the profound sense of humility, smallness, unworthiness before the enormity of the experience” (pp. 81, 87-88).

### Figure 6-1 (continued)

#### Characteristics of *Cognition* During Generalized Peak Experiences

(Maslow, 1968, Chapter 6)

In a peak experience....

- “Particularly of the mystic experience or the religious experience or philosophical experience, the whole of the world is seen as a unity, as a single rich live entity. In other of the peak experiences, most particularly the love experience and the aesthetic experience, one small part of the world is perceived as if it were for the moment all of the world. The perception is of unity” (p. 88).
- “There is simultaneously the ability to abstract without giving up concreteness and the ability to be concrete without giving up abstractness, a perception of all aspects and attributes of the object simultaneously or in quick succession without automatically abstracting, naming, placing, comparing, relating to something else, this being able to see more aspects of the many-sidedness of the uniqueness and individuality of the object perceived, be it a person or a painting” (pp. 89-91).
- “Many dichotomies, polarities, and conflicts are fused, transcended or resolved; the more the simultaneous existence and perception of inconsistencies, of oppositions, and of flat contradictions are tolerated” (pp. 92-93).
- “There is a complete, loving, uncondemning, compassionate and perhaps amused acceptance of the world and of the person, however bad he or she may look at more normal moments (pp. 92-93).
- “Perception tends strongly to be idiographic and non-classificatory. The object perceived, whether a person or the world or a tree or work of art, tends to be seen as a unique instance, and as the only member of its class. We perceive the person without abstracting, perceiving all his or her attributes simultaneously and as necessary to each other. This willingness to see all aspects of the object means a greater validity of perception” (p. 94).
- “There is a complete, though momentary, loss of fear, anxiety, inhibition, defense and control, a giving up of renunciation, delay, and restraint. The fear of disintegration and dissolution, the fear of being overwhelmed by the ‘instincts,’ the fear of death and of insanity, the fear of giving in to unbridled pleasure and emotion, all tend to disappear or go in abeyance for the time being” (p. 94).
- “The person tends to become more integrated, more individual, more spontaneous, more expressive, more easy and effortless, more courageous, more powerful, etc. As the essential Being of the world is perceived by the person, so also does he or she concurrently come closer to his or her own Being (to his or her own perfection, of being more perfectly himself or herself). As he or she becomes more unified, he or she tends to be able to see more unity in the world” (p. 95).
- “There is a fusion of ego, id, super-ego and ego-ideal, of conscious, preconscious and unconscious, of primary and secondary processes, a synthesizing of pleasure principle with reality principle, a healthy regression without fear in the service of the greatest maturity, a true integration of the person at *all* levels” (p. 96).
- “The person can change her view of herself in a healthy direction, change her view of other people and her relations with them in many ways, change more or less permanently her view of the world, or at least aspects or parts of it; release her for greater creativity, spontaneity, expressiveness, idiosyncrasy; she remembers the experience as a very important and desirable happening and desires to repeat it; the person is more apt to feel that life in general is worth while, since beauty, excitement, honesty, play, goodness, truth and meaningfulness have been demonstrated to her to exist” (p. 101)

**Figure 6-2**  
**Characteristics of Cognition During Generalized Cosmic Consciousness**  
(Bucke, 1901/1969; Dean, 1975)

- A. **A SUBJECTIVE LIGHT.** “The person, suddenly, without warning, has a sense of being immersed in a flame, or rose-colored cloud, or perhaps rather a sense that the mind is itself filled with such a cloud of haze” (p. 72).
- B. **A MORAL ELEVATION.** “At the same instant he is, as it were, bathed in an emotion of joy, assurance, triumph, ‘salvation.’ The last word is not strictly correct if taken in its ordinary sense, for the feeling, when fully developed, is not that a particular act of salvation is effected, but that no special ‘salvation’ is needed, the scheme upon which the world is built being itself sufficient” (p. 73).
- C. **AN INTELLECTUAL ILLUMINATION.** “Simultaneously or instantly following the above sense and emotional experiences there comes to the person an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe. Like a flash there is presented to his consciousness a clear conception (vision) in outline of the meaning and drift of the universe. He does not come to believe merely; but he sees and knows that the cosmos, which to the self conscious mind seems made up of dead matter, is in fact far otherwise – is in its very truth a living presence....He sees that the life which is in man is eternal, as all life is eternal; that the soul of man is as immortal as God is; that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all; that the foundation principle of the world is what we call love, and that the happiness of every individual is in the long run absolutely certain....Especially does he obtain such a conception of THE WHOLE...as dwarfs all conception, imagination, or speculation” (pp. 73-74).
- D. **A SENSE OF IMMORTALITY.** “Along with moral elevation and intellectual illumination comes what must be called, for want of a better term, a sense of immortality. This is not an intellectual conviction, such as comes with the solution to a problem, nor is it an experience such as learning something unknown before. It is far more simple and elementary, and could better be compared to that certainty of distinct individuality, possessed by each one, which comes with and belongs to self consciousness” (p. 74).
- E. **A LOSS OF THE FEAR OF DEATH.** “With illumination the fear of death which haunts so many men and women at times all their lives falls off like an old cloak – not, however, as a result of reasoning 0 it simply vanishes” (p. 74).
- F. **A LOSS OF THE SENSE OF SIN.** “The same may be said of the sense of sin. It is not that the person escapes from sin; but he no longer sees that there is any sin in the world from which to escape” (p. 74).
- G. **THE SUDDEN, INSTANTANEOUS QUALITY OF THE WAKENING.** “The instantaneousness of the illumination is one of its most striking features. It can be compared with nothing so well as with a dazzling flash of lightening in a dark night, bringing the landscape which had been hidden into clear view” (p. 75).
- H. **CHARISMATIC CHANGE IN THE PERSONALITY.** “A charismatic change occurs in personality – an inner and outer radiance, as though charged with some divinity inspired power, a magnetic force that attracts and inspires others with unshakable loyalty and faith” (Dean, p. 11).
- I. **DEVELOPMENT OF PSYCHIC GIFTS.** “There is a sudden or gradual development of extraordinary psychic gifts such as extrasensory perception, psychic healing, and so forth” (Dean, p. 11)

**Figure 6-3**

**Being-Values Perceived As Characteristics of Reality in Transpersonal Experiences**

(Maslow, 1970, pp. 92-94)

“The following may be seen either as a list of the described attributes of reality when perceived in peak experiences, or as a list of the irreducible, intrinsic values of this reality” (Maslow, 1970, p. 91)

1. **Truth:** honesty; reality; (nakedness; simplicity; richness; essentiality; oughtness; beauty; pure; clean and unaltered completeness).
2. **Goodness:** (rightness; desirability; oughtness; justice; benevolence; honesty); we love it, are attracted to it, approve of it).
3. **Beauty:** (rightness; form; aliveness; simplicity; richness; wholeness; perfection; completion; uniqueness; honesty).
4. **Wholeness:** (unity; integration; tendency to oneness; interconnectedness; simplicity; organization; structure; order; not dissociated; synergy; homonomous and integrative tendencies).
- 4a. **Dichotomy-transcendence:** (acceptance, resolution, integration, or transcendence of dichotomies, polarities, opposites, contradictions); synergy (i.e., transformation of oppositions into unities, of antagonists into collaborating or mutually enhancing partners).
5. **Aliveness:** (process; not-deadness; dynamic; eternal; flowing; self-perpetuating; spontaneity; self-moving energy; self-forming; self-regulation; full-functioning; changing and yet remaining the same; expressing itself; never-ending).
6. **Uniqueness:** (idiosyncrasy; individuality; singularity; non-comparability; its defining characteristics; novelty; quale; suchness; nothing else like it).
7. **Perfection:** (nothing superfluous; nothing lacking; everything in its right place; unimprovable; just-rightness; just-so-ness; suitability; justice; completeness; nothing beyond; oughtness).
- 7a. **Necessity:** (inevitability; it must be *just* that way; not changed in any slightest way; and it is good that it is that way).
8. **Completion:** (ending; finality; justice; it's finished; no more changing of the Gestalt; fulfillment; *finis* and *telos*; nothing missing or lacking; totality; fulfillment of destiny; cessation; climax; consummation; closure; death before rebirth; cessation and completion of growth and development; total gratification with no more gratification possible; no striving; no movement toward any goal because already there; not pointing to anything beyond itself).
9. **Justice:** (fairness; oughtness; suitability; architectonic quality; necessity; inevitability; disinterestedness; non-partiality).
- 9a. **Order:** (lawfulness; rightness; rhythm; regularity; symmetry; structure; nothing superfluous; perfectly arranged).
10. **Simplicity:** (honesty; nakedness; purity; essentiality; succinctness; [mathematical] elegance; abstract; unmistakability; essential skeletal structure; the heart of the matter; bluntness; only that which is necessary; without ornament, nothing extra or superfluous).
11. **Richness:** (totality; differentiation; complexity; intricacy; nothing missing or hidden; all there; “non-importance,” i.e., everything is equally important; nothing is unimportant; everything left the way it is, without improving, simplifying, abstracting, rearranging; comprehensiveness).
12. **Effortlessness:** (ease; lack of strain, striving, or difficulty; grace; perfect and beautiful functioning).
13. **Playfulness:** (fun; joy; amusement; gaiety; humor; exuberance; effortlessness).
14. **Self-sufficiency:** (autonomy; independence; not needing anything other than itself in order to be itself; self-determining; environment-transcendence; separateness; living by its own laws; identity).

“The descriptive B-values, seen as aspects of reality, should be distinguished from the attitudes or emotions of the B-cognizer *toward* this cognized reality and its attributes, e.g., awe, love, adoration, worship, humility, feeling of smallness plus godlikeness, reverence, approval of, agreement with, wonder, sense of mystery, gratitude, devotion, dedication, identification with, belonging to, fusion with, surprise and incredulousness, fear, joy, rapture, bliss, ecstasy, etc.” (Maslow, 1970, p. 94)