

# Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

## Chapter 8 TRANSPERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Chapter Outline

#### I. The Nature and Conditions of Transpersonal Human Development

- A. Human Development Across the Lifespan
  - 1. What is developmental psychology?
  - 2. Three assumptions of all stage models of development in psychology.
  - 3. Within general stages of development, unique and personal development occurs.
  - 4. Stages of development beyond the conventional.
  
- B. Transpersonal Development
  - 1. Distinguishing transpersonal and traditional mainstream approaches.
    - a. Spiritual dimension included.
    - b. Integral whole person approach employed.
    - c. Foundational role of consciousness emphasized.
    - d. Questions of value, meaning, and purpose pertinent.
    - e. Impulses toward self transcendence beyond ego recognized.
    - f. Importance of experiential learning acknowledged.
    - g. Implications of a transpersonal approach to human development.
  - 2. The role of the transpersonal psyche in human development
    - a. The stability of the Transpersonal Self.
    - b. A motive force behind all "ideal" patterns of individual development.
  - 3. Symbols of transformation and transpersonal development
    - a. Mystical experiences of direct knowing without symbolization.
    - b. Symbols stand for inner realities and the changing characteristics of consciousness in various states.
    - c. Classic metaphors of transformation
  
- i. Awakening from the dream of "reality."
- ii. Waking up.

#### II. Transpersonally-Oriented Theories in Developmental Psychology

- A. Erik Erikson's Theory of Personal Identity Development.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

1. The self that one is is ever changing, while one's sense of identity is retained.
2. Teenage intimacy as a matter of self-definition.
3. The wisdom of youth and the joy of old age.
4. We live in the body of our beliefs.

B. Frances Vaughan's Theory of Transpersonal Identity development.

1. Self-concept
  - a. The importance of beliefs in the development of self-identity.
  - b. Different forms of self-identity studied in contemporary psychology.
  - c. How does one's self-identity change?
  - d. Circle diagram illustrating relationship among various forms of self-identity.
2. The bodily and emotional self.
  - a. Identification, differentiation, transcendence, and integration.
3. Egoic self-consciousness.
  - a. Identification, differentiation, transcendence, and integration.
4. Shift from egoic self-consciousness to existential identity.
  - a. Existential identity.
  - b. Becoming a fully-functioning existential self.
5. Shift from existential identity to transpersonal awareness.
  - a. Being a fully-functioning existential self.
  - b. Moving from awareness of independence to interdependence
  - c. Integration of the Shadow
  - d. Sense of self expands.
6. Approaching the Transpersonal Self
  - a. Differentiation, transcendence, and integration.
  - b. Spiritual development "beyond ego" does not require surrender, loss or annihilation of the ego.
  - c. Contacting one's Transpersonal Self.
  - d. The Transpersonal Self
  - e. Transpersonal Self-awareness and egoic self-consciousness compared.
7. Shift from Transpersonal Awareness to No Self.
  - a. Consciousness without an object.
  - b. The nature and conditions of "no self."

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

- C. Ken Wilber's developmental model of consciousness
  - 1. Differentiation, identification, and integration.
  - 2. Basic structures of consciousness.
  - 3. The developmental lines.
  - 4. Pre/trans fallacy.
  - 5. Critique of hierarchical models of development
    - a. Hierarchical models are value-ladened.
    - b. Hierarchical models stratify reality.
    - c. Hierarchical models blind us to other realizations and realities.
  
- D. Michael Washburn's spiral-dynamic model of ego development
  - 1. Distinguishing Washburn's spiral-dynamic model and Wilber's structural-hierarchical model of human development.
  
- E. Roberto Assagioli's psychosynthesis model of personality development
  - 1. Stages of transpersonal development.
  - 2. Personal psychosynthesis
    - a. Knowledge of one's personality
      - i. Personality is capable of producing many ego structures across the lifespan.
    - b. Control of its elements
  - 3. Transpersonal psychosynthesis.
    - a. Realization of one's true Self - the discovery or creation of a unifying center.
    - b. Psychosynthesis: the formation or reconstruction of the personality around the new center.
  
- i. The superconscious realms are in constant renewal.
  - 4. Psychosynthesis is capable of being scientifically tested and verified.

# Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

## III. Spiritual Development

### A. Key Ideas that Define a Transpersonal Approach to Spiritual Development

1. Impulses toward spiritual development are continuous in every person.
2. Full awareness of impulses toward spiritual development is not necessarily present at any given time.
3. To develop spiritually practice spirituality.
4. Every individual has the right to choose his or her own spiritual path.

### B. Spiritual Development as Human Development

1. Spiritual development as a psychological concern.
2. Spiritual development within a non-theological context.
3. Does spirituality unfold in stages?
  - a. No
  - b. Yes
4. Relationship between psychological and spiritual development.

### C. Childhood Spirituality

1. Is there childhood spirituality?
  - a. No
  - b. Yes
2. Conceptual and methodological problems with research into religious experiences of children.
3. Childhood spiritual experiences are a relatively common phenomenon.
4. The transpersonal nature of childhood.

## IV. Dying, Death and Near-Death

### A. Death Awareness

1. Death and dying as important a part of the lifespan as birth and living
2. The pioneering work of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross.
3. Transpersonal approach to the care of the dying.
  - a. Death awareness can enhance life awareness.
  - b. Personal and transpersonal transformation through death awareness.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

- B. Fear of Death
  - 1. The fear of death and its origins.
  - 2. Fear of death and alternate states of consciousness.
  - 3. Techniques for reducing the fear the death.
  
- C. Death with Dignity and the Appropriate Death
  - 1. Important considerations in a death with dignity and an appropriate death.
  - 2. Religious feeling as a biological spirituality beyond social conformity and convention.
  - 3. Important secular variables in an "appropriate death."
  
- D. Death and Near-Death
  - 1. The transformative effects of near-death experiences.
  - 2. "Core" characteristics of near-death experiences.
  - 3. Cross-cultural variability in death and near-death experiences.
  - 4. The "death" experience.
  - 5. Integral, multi-factorial approach is required.
  
- E. Consciousness and Survival
  - 1. What Americans believe.
  - 2. Scientific study of the possibility of psychic life beyond biological death.

# Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

## Chapter 8

### TRANSPERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

#### Learning Objectives

1. Define *developmental psychology* and describe the different lines or aspects of the developmental process that it studies.
2. Describe the three main assumptions of all stage models of human development in psychology.
3. Explain why the concept of *stages* is useful for describing developmental change and how every individual instance of that general developmental pattern is unique.
4. Explain why post-conventional developmental patterns and stages of development are called *transpersonal*.
5. Identify six ways in which a transpersonal approach to human development differs from other more traditional mainstream approaches.
6. Discuss the implications of the transpersonal approach for understanding the nature and conditions of human development.
7. Evaluate the two-fold thesis that "Evolution is finished" and "Human nature cannot change."
8. Discuss the relationship between developmental change and personal identity.
9. Describe the role and function of the inner Transpersonal Self in the developmental change process.
10. Discuss how personalized developmental patterns that point to individual ideal developments are present within the more general patterns and stages of development.
11. Explain why transpersonal states known as mysticism are often called "ineffable."
12. Describe the role and function of symbolism in representing inner realities and the changing characteristics of consciousness in various states.
13. Describe how the mystic's pure knowing and pure feeling can be translated into normal conscious terms that the reasoning mind can understand.
14. Identify three classic metaphors of self-transformation and describe the developmental change process implied by each.
15. Explain why the waking state is a suboptimal state of awareness from which we need to "awaken."
16. Describe two ways by which a person might awaken from the dream of "reality."
17. Describe the nature of identity as it unfolds during psychosocial states of development throughout the lifespan, according to Erik Erikson.
18. Explain why teenage intimacy is often a matter of self-definition, particularly for males.
19. Describe how the current concepts held by modern American society lead individuals to fear old age from the time of youth.
20. Discuss the role of beliefs in the unfolding of developmental changes throughout the lifespan, especially in bringing about those conditions a person may experience in old age.
21. Discuss the role that beliefs and expectation play in the development of one's self-concept.
22. Distinguish the different forms of self-identity focused upon by the various contemporary perspectives of psychology.
23. Name the four-fold process identified by Vaughan through which changes in self-concept occur.
24. Draw a circle diagram depicted by Vaughan to illustrate the relationship among the body self, emotional self, mental egoic self, existential self, Transpersonal Self, and Absolute Spirit.
25. Explain how the bodily and emotional self develops through the four-fold process of identification, differentiation, transcendence, and integration, according to Vaughan's theory.
26. Explain how egoic self-consciousness develops through the four-fold process of identification, differentiation, transcendence, and integration, according to Vaughan's theory.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

27. Describe what occurs during the shift from egoic self-consciousness to existential identity, according to Vaughan.
28. Tell what the individual must be willing to do in order to discover his or her existential identity.
29. Describe the two-fold process of "moving away from the false self" and "moving toward the real self" that occurs when individuals are striving to become a "full-functioning" existential self.
30. Describe what occurs during the shift from existential identity to transpersonal awareness, according to Vaughan.
31. Describe what it is like to be a fully-functioning existential self.
32. Describe the process of moving from awareness of independence to interdependence that occurs in the shift from existential identity to transpersonal awareness and identify its likely cause.
33. Explain why healthy personality development requires that the split between the egoic self-consciousness and personal shadow be healed in the shift from existential identity to transpersonal awareness.
34. Explain how transpersonal awareness develops through the processes of differentiation, transcendence, and integration.
35. Explain why personality development "beyond ego" does not require the loss of ego.
36. Carry out a practical exercise that is designed to foster contact with the Transpersonal Self and write about what happens when one performs in the way suggested.
37. Define the Transpersonal Self.
38. Compare the characteristics and qualities of experience of ordinary egoic self-consciousness and Transpersonal Self-consciousness.
39. Explain why egoic and transpersonal aspects of personality are needed to live a whole and integrated life.
40. Describe the sense of self-identity, the Tao, that is talked about in Buddhism -- consciousness without an object, the No Self.
41. Describe how human consciousness develops or unfolds through the three-fold process of differentiation, identification, and integration, according to Ken Wilber.
42. Outline the nine basic structures of consciousness development postulated by Ken Wilber.
43. Define the Great Chain of Being.
44. Explain how Wilber's concept of *developmental lines* accounts for the fact that overall development of most aspects or dimensions of human personality functioning tend to show no linear or sequential development whatsoever.
45. Define the *pre/trans fallacy* that is proposed by Wilber and explain why it is important.
46. Evaluate and judge the value of hierarchical models of human development.
47. Describe how Michael Washburn's spiral-dynamic model differs from Ken Wilber's structural-hierarchical model of human development.
48. State the direction and task of personality development, according to Roberto Assagioli's theory of *Psychosynthesis*.
49. Identify the four stages of transpersonal development identified by Assagioli.
50. Discuss the process that must be undertaken in order "know thyself," according to *Psychosynthesis*.
51. Describe the goal of personal psychosynthesis, according to Assagioli.
52. Describe what occurs during the first stage of psychosynthesis: Knowledge of one's personality.
53. Describe what occurs during the second stage of psychosynthesis: Control of various elements of the personality.
54. Describe what occurs during the third stage of psychosynthesis: Realization of one's true Self and the discovery or creation of a unifying center.
55. Describe what occurs during the fourth stage of psychosynthesis: The formation or reconstruction of the personality around the new center.
56. Discuss Assagioli's view that the superconscious realms are in constant renewal.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

57. List the methods and techniques employed in *Psychosynthesis* to evoke direct experience and inner realizations that may be later subject to a comprehensive program of research and application.
58. Explain how impulses toward spiritual development are continuous in every person.
59. Explain why full awareness of impulses toward spiritual development is not necessarily present at any given time in any given individual.
60. Explain how the realization of spiritual development is essentially dependent on direct practice and on conditions suitable to the individual.
61. Evaluate whether every individual has the right to choose his [or her] own spiritual path.
62. Describe how spiritual development is a psychological concern and an appropriate topic of study for developmental psychology.
63. Explain how the use of terms such as "inner self," "Higher Self," "true self," "real Self," "transpersonal Self," "Spirit," "soul," and so forth, can lead to distortions in one's understanding of spirituality and spiritual development, according to Daniel Helminiak.
64. Evaluate and judge the value of a completely non-theological account of spiritual development.
65. Defend Helminiak's hypothesis that spiritual development does not unfold independently along its own separate developmental line, but occurs as a part of the whole person -- intellectual, emotional, physical, social or relational.
66. Using the five most common definitions of *spirituality* identified by Wilber, answer the question: "Does spirituality itself unfold in stages?"
67. Discuss the hypothesis that spirituality is a separate line of development that unfolds independently of other aspects, lines, or streams of psychological development (e.g., cognitive, moral, affective, social).
68. Discuss the controversial issue: "Is there childhood spirituality?"
69. Explain why childhood spirituality is thought to be limited only to rare and exceptional cases of peak experiences by mainstream developmental psychology.
70. Discuss the conceptual and methodological problems with research into religious experiences among children.
71. Identify three empirical research studies that indicate that the occurrence of childhood spiritual experiences are a relatively more common phenomenon than previously thought.
72. Identify three lines of evidence that suggests that the *tabula rasa* conception of childhood which assumes that the infant comes into life a vacant vessel to be filled by experience is mistaken.
73. Explain why death and dying are important topics of study in transpersonal psychology.
74. Name the six stages of dying identified by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross.
75. Describe the transpersonal approach to the care of the dying.
76. Explain how awareness of the inevitability of one's death can enhance a person's awareness of day-to-day living.
77. Discuss the themes echoed in both *Ikiru* and in the live psychotherapy with the dying client described by Weimer & Lu (1987).
78. Discuss positive effect of the film *Ikiru* on the death anxiety and attitudes toward death of audiences who watch the film.
79. Identify and discuss the three attitudes that human cultures tend to take toward death.
80. Explain how ego-dissolution may be at the root of humanity's fear of death.
81. Discuss the "alternate state" hypothesis proposed by Garfield (1975) in light of his research findings.
82. Propose at least three techniques that may be used to decrease one's fear of death and explain their rationale.
83. Define the terms *death with dignity* and *appropriate death*.
84. Describe the most important considerations in the capacity to die an appropriate death.
85. Explain how religious feeling can exist outside of the context of formal exoteric religion.
86. Identify two important secular variables in an appropriate death.



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

87. Describe the transformative effects on personality development of near-death experiences (NDEs).
88. Identify the "core" characteristics of NDEs.
89. Discuss the variability that has been observed in death and near-death experiences across cultures.
90. Identify and discuss seven cross-cultural similarities in both Tibetan and Euro-American NDEs that may reveal some fundamental properties of death.
91. Identify two information sources that provide a description of the "death" experience.
92. Explain why an integral, multi-factorial approach is required in order to obtain a comprehensive, accurate, and meaningful understanding of death and near-death experiences across cultures.
93. Summarize the results of the 1981 poll conducted by the Gallup organization concerning American's belief in life after death, reincarnation, and the possibility that life after death will be proved scientifically.
94. List the main types of data suggestive of the continuation of personality after death.
95. Briefly summarize the history of psychic research and experimental parapsychology from 1882 to the present.
96. Describe the role that American philosopher and psychologist played in the history of psychical research.
97. Describe the role that transpersonal psychology plays in contemporary explorations of the hypothesis that human personality survives the death of the physical body.

# Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

## Chapter 8 Summary

This chapter examines human development across the lifespan in light of the theories and concepts of transpersonal psychology. Developmental psychology is the field of psychology that studies human development from birth to death. Human development is often understood in terms of general stages of development within which personal development occurs. Transpersonal psychology studies stages of development beyond the conventional levels that point to possibilities of growth customarily overlooked in general psychology textbooks. Transpersonal development includes a spiritual dimension in human personality functioning, employs a whole person approach, emphasizes the role that awareness plays in development and the importance of questions of value, meaning, and purpose. Transpersonal psychology recognizes the existence of inherent impulses toward transcendence that bring into being capacities and abilities ordinarily overlooked by mainstream developmental psychology.

Several theories are examined in this chapter that outline the unfolding of transpersonal capacities and abilities beyond conventional stages of development. Erik Erikson's theory of personal identity development highlights the role that self-concepts and beliefs play in the unfolding of unexplored creative capacities across the lifespan and the expansive and flexible nature of human personality. France Vaughn's theory of identity formation beyond personal egoic identity draws attention to the existence of an inner, Transpersonal Self that represents a person's striving for unity and balance, equilibrium and stability, cohesion and integration of all the various portions of the self. Ken Wilber's developmental model of consciousness elucidates post-conventional stages of human development identified in ancient mystical traditions. Michael Washburn's spiral-dynamic model of ego development highlights the supportive nature of those inner dynamic, subconscious regions of the psyche from which impulses toward "higher" qualities of character and states of being spring. Roberto Assagioli's psychosynthesis model of personality development focuses on promoting the harmonious inner recognition by the conscious "I" of the existence of a Transpersonal Self that heals the fundamental duality between the outer and inner selves so that the whole self is put in a position to begin a truly fulfilling existence.

Key ideas that define a transpersonal approach to spiritual development are identified and discussed: (a) impulses toward spiritual development are continuous in every person, (b) full awareness toward spiritual development is not necessarily present at any given time, (c) to develop spiritually practice spirituality, and (d) every individual has the right to choose his or her own spiritual path. Spiritual development is examined as a form of human development and as a psychological concern outside of theological context. Depending on what definition of spiritual development is used, spirituality may or may not be understood to unfold in a stage-life fashion. The relationship between spiritual development and psychological development is examined (e.g., can there be psychological development without spiritual development, and vice versa?). The question of childhood spirituality is examined. Children have a spiritual life that is similar to and different from that of adults in many regards. Research into religious experiences of children are subject to special conceptual and methodological problems. Childhood spiritual experiences are a relatively common phenomena and point to the transpersonal nature of childhood.

Transpersonal psychology has a special interest understanding the nature death and dying given its central importance in the life cycle of the human being. The pioneering work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross has opened the door to a transpersonal approach to care of the dying. The awareness of one's death can not only enhance one's appreciation for living, but also provides an opportunity for personal and transpersonal transformation. The fear of death is an important obstacle to spiritual development. The more familiar that a person can become with alternate states of consciousness in which ego dominance becomes relaxed and a free flow of energies between conscious and subconscious portions of the personality occurs, the less likely that the fear of one's death will impeded further growth in spiritual development. Meditation, visualization, lucid dreaming, out-of-body experiences, and other states of dissociation can help the

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

individual become familiar with death-like conditions so he or she does not fear them. The concepts of death with dignity and appropriate death are examined in light of a transpersonal approach to care of the dying. The role of religion and religious feelings in promoting an appropriate death are highlighted as well as other secular variables. Transpersonal psychology looks for evidence of the soul's operation in life and finds evocative data in the phenomenon of near-death experiences (NDEs). NDEs have a life-transforming effect on most individuals who undergo them. The "core" characteristics of near-death experiences show some variability across cultures and variables known to influence the content and structure of NDEs are examined. The "death" experience itself has been described in some detail in the Tibetan book of the dead and in some channeled "spirit" writings. Death experiences and NDEs cannot be understood from a single standpoint alone, and thus an integral, multi-factorial approach is required if a comprehensive, accurate, and meaningful understanding of the last stages of living and the beginning stages of dying are to be obtained. Most Americans believe in life after death. One task of transpersonal psychology is to examine the data suggestive of the survival of human personality, follow these facts and remain open to all avenues of fruitful speculation and intuitive possibilities so that psychology's greatest understanding of who and what we are will be achieved in the coming century.

# Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

## Chapter 8 TRANSPERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

### I. The Nature and Conditions of Transpersonal Human Development

#### Human Development Across the Lifespan

**What is developmental psychology?** Most textbooks in general psychology have an entire chapter devoted to human development across the lifespan. Developmental psychology is the study of age-related changes in physical, cognitive, emotional, moral and social functioning of the human personality across the lifespan from birth to death. Theories of physical development and cognitive development (Piaget & Inhelder, 1948/1956; Vygotsky, 1986), psychosocial and emotional development (Ainsworth, Blehar, Walters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969, 1973; Erikson, 1963, 1968; Harlow, 1971; Kagan, 1984; Kagan & Moss, 1962; Levinson, 1978), and moral development (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1981, 1984 ) offer differing views of (a) the stability or changefulness of the developmental process, (b) the relative influence of biology or genetics (nature) and culture or environment (nurture) on development, (c) the active or passive role of the individual in his or her own development, and (d) the continuous or discontinuous nature of the growth process. Genetic and environmental factors are viewed as key influences that shape the course of all aspects of human development across the lifespan.

**Three assumptions of all stage models of development in psychology.** The lifespan of the whole human being is typically dissected into bits-and-pieces or parts that can be more easily analyzed. These components into which the life of an individual is divided are referred to as "stages of development" -- prenatal, infancy, childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood, and old age. These portions of the lifespan are not arbitrary. They are categorized based upon perceived differences or changes observed to occur across time between one category and another. Stage theories are a popular way of understanding changes in human nature. Whether we are talking about behavior change in cognition (Piagetian's theory of cognitive development), morality (Kohlberg's and Gilligan's stage theories of moral development), sexuality (Freud's psychosexual stages of development), or personality (Erikson's stage theory of psychosocial development), a "stage" theory is often used to organize and make sense of observations. All stage theories make three assumptions about conditions and nature of human development. First, development and growth proceeds in a sequence of continuous, chronologically-ordered steps or phases that cannot be rearranged. Second, although not all individuals go through the sequence at the same rate, individual must move through each step or phase in their fixed order and cannot skip, bypass, or leap over one stage to the next. Third, behaviors at one stage, phase, or period are perceived to be qualitatively different, not just quantitatively more of the same, from behaviors that appear at earlier pre- or later post-stages. All people, in other words, are believed to go through the same stages in the same order. Environmental factors, such as culture, may speed up or slow down development in particular areas (e.g., physical, motor, moral, cognitive, social, spiritual), but the order of the stages is believed to be invariant. An individual cannot enter a later stage without going through an earlier one. Changes from one stage to the next may be gradual or abrupt, and the tasks or challenges of some stages may met successfully (oral psychosexual stage) while others may remain to be resolved (psychosocial basic trust), but development appears to proceed in an orderly sequence that depends on the maturation of the mind-body organism as it forms and interacts with its environment.

**Within general stages of development, unique and personal development occurs.** Change in physical, cognitive, emotional, moral and social development is spontaneously ever-occurring and reoccurring. Developmental change may involve not only growth. Developmental change may also involve a complete disorientation to make way for a different, perhaps, newer orientation (e.g., moving from a preoperational to a concrete operational stage of cognitive development). The change is always gradual, however, and in certain terms continuous. Were it not so, we could say "Now this is the moment I am this, and now this is

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

the moment I am that." Actually there is only a change of form that occurs in such instances with one form fading into another form while one's core identity remains intact. The concept of developmental stages is itself intimately wrapped up with one's perception of time, difference, and implied change from one form to another as a result of one's apparent continuity and duration through time -- past, present and future. The important point to remember about all stage theories of development is that even though general, abstract patterns and stages of development can be discerned in the aggregate and for the species as a whole, nevertheless each and every individual instance of that general developmental pattern is unique.

***Stages of development beyond the conventional.*** Developmental psychology often does not address stages of development *beyond* conventional cognition, emotion, morality, motivation, or identity. Those scholars who do present concepts and theories that address post-conventional levels of development -- for example, Abraham Maslow's (1971) Being-cognition and metamotivation, Lawrence Kolberg's (1981, 1984) postconventional morality, Ken Wilber's (1977, 1980) subtle and causal spectrum of consciousness, John Curtis Gowan's (1974, 1975) syntactic mode of cognition and psychedelic stage of development beyond formal operations, and Walsh & Shapiro's (1983) and Miller & Cook-Greuter's (1984) compendium of growth-oriented theories offering a comprehensive view of the interconnection and integration of different dimensions of human development beyond self-actualization -- all recognize that mature adulthood does not represent the full possibilities of psychological growth and development of which individuals and the species are capable. These further reaches of human development manifest themselves ordinarily in exceptional experiences and behavior that can be called *transpersonal* because they take us beyond the developmental limits set upon us by convention and habit, family upbringing and formal schooling, social norms and cultural conditioning. Many of the unfortunate conditions that are less than ideal in our world today are the result of the developmental limits that the human cultural world has set upon its individuals (Walsh, 1984).

If we harbor undreamed-of possibilities, if normality is actually frozen development, and if much of our individual, social, and global distress reflects this frustrated development, the next question is obvious. How can we overcome these blocks and foster individual and collective maturation? (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993, p.111).

### Transpersonal Human Development

***Distinguishing transpersonal and traditional mainstream approaches to human development.***

Transpersonal psychology adds to the approach taken by most mainstream perspectives of human development in several ways.

- First, transpersonal psychology includes the *spiritual* dimension of personality functioning into its account of human development. Spirituality is an essential aspect of human life and is biologically pertinent, affecting the physical and psychological health of the body and mind. Humans are by nature spiritual creatures; it is an aspect of human psychology that is most often overlooked in traditional theories of human development.
- Second, transpersonal psychology places an emphasis on the balanced and integrated development of the *whole person*, in his or her physical, emotional, cognitive, social and spiritual aspects -- conscious and subconscious. Human development cannot be understood from a biological or environmental standpoint alone; genetic and environmental factors are not the only influences that shape the course of human development across the lifespan. The person himself or herself is a third variable influencing the course of his or her own development. From a transpersonal perspective, the human personality is far more open to other sorts of stimuli other than physical data alone (e.g., dreams,

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

imaginings, memories of various kinds, ideals, intents, subconscious telepathic communication) from inner psychic sources of information that are not, strictly speaking, caused by either heredity or environment.

- Third, the various models and metaphors of transpersonal development presented by Assagioli (1988), Helminiak (1987), Metzger (1980, 1986), Vaughan (1985), Washburn (1995), Wilber (1979, 1980, 1981b, 1983a, 1999a), and others all recognize the elemental and foundational role of *consciousness* as a key but frequently overlooked factor -- in addition to genetic and environmental influences -- that energizes and directs human development in all of its aspects throughout the lifespan. A variety of bodymind conditions of consciousness influence the course of human development -- normal or ordinary and altered or nonordinary -- that provide an important context and process through which the transcendent expresses itself in human development.
- Fourth, questions of *value, meaning, and purpose* (or what Maslow called "metaneeds") that underlie healthy psychosocial development are addressed by transpersonal psychology. The subjective life of the developing personality is not value-neutral.
- Fifth, by attending to innate impulses toward *self transcendence beyond ego*, transpersonal psychology takes a more expansive and inclusive view of development in its creative and transformative aspects than does mainstream psychology, drawing attention to the large organized patterns of "exceptional" activity that supports human development and that often escapes the notice of traditional developmental psychology (Miller & Cook-Greuter, 1994). Although the possibility of the human personality's survival of physical death and subsequent incarnation in another body with all memories and experiences surviving intact is regarded as a logical and empirical impossibility as far as orthodox developmental psychology is concerned, for example, some transpersonal scholars regard it as a fruitful hypothesis worthy of further investigation. The scientific work of Ian Stevenson (1997a) and Stanislav Grof (1985) and the clinical work of Weiss (1988) and Wooler (1987) suggests that a knowledge of reincarnational influences can shed valuable light on the nature of an individual's character, abilities, and liabilities that emerge and develop across the lifespan.
- Sixth, because of its focus on balanced and integrated whole-person development, transpersonal psychology emphasizes *experiential learning* so that intellectual awareness and abstract understanding of spiritual consciousness can be given immediate, direct, and vivid psychological roots. Experiential and intellectual learning go hand-in-hand in transpersonal development. Body-based, intuitive, imagistic, and creativity-enhancing techniques and practices (e.g., mindfulness/concentration meditation, self-hypnotic states of consciousness, lucid dreaming, active imagination, creative visualization) may be used to help the individual become filled with and refreshed by new information and revelations that emerge in alternate states of awareness. The received illuminations and insights are translated and assimilated into one's normal frame of reference so that these new comprehensions become retained and available to the individual for personal development.

***Implications of a transpersonal approach to human development.*** If the transpersonally-grounded hypotheses that consciousness forms the genes (and not the other way around) is correct, that free will and telepathy operate, that people are motivated by metaneeds and being-values, and individuals possess an inner Transpersonal Self upon whom one can rely for guidance and inspiration, then we receive a new understanding of the role of human agency in lifespan development, and of the unsuspected purpose and meaning of those seemingly "coincidental" encounters that form certain cornerstones in each person's life, and which set up as strong probabilities certain constellation of events that serve as avenues for fulfillment of body, mind, and spirit in each person's life. Deep down, though our private purpose for



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

living may not be consciously known or clearly apprehended as we move through the various seasons of our lives, deep down we know that our experiences matter, that there is meaning to our lives -- no matter how obscured by grief or doubt, anger or frustration, feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness that may cloud our perceptions. Throughout all physical and psychological changes we may experience in the course of our personal lifetime, we are sustained and couched by a transpersonal psyche that exists within a greater framework of events which connects each and every one of us, not only with one another, but also with larger generalized patterns and stages of development that also bind us all, because each of us is indeed a part of nature and of nature's source.

### **The Role of the Transpersonal Psyche in Human Development**

***The stability of the inner transpersonal psyche.*** It has been said that "Human nature cannot change" or that "Evolution is finished." Such ideas and beliefs about human development are highly erroneous. Nothing can be static, and believe it or not, nothing is. Human nature is not a finished product, but the sort of consciousness meant to change, develop, and grow. Like the world and the species of which he or she is a part, each individual is in a state of becoming (Allport, 1955/1969). When we were born, we were filled with an innate knowledge that we came into this world to learn and grow. We took it for granted, when we were children, that we were in a process of learning and growing, no matter what happened to us. We knew that we were in a state of becoming -- not becoming more perfect, but becoming more perfectly ourselves. We intuitively realized that our being was immersed in and *a part of* the process of growth and change. Physically, our identity changes even as the atoms and molecules that compose the cells and organs that make up our bodies change. Throughout those physical changes, though, we recognize some part of ourselves as remaining the same. We call that part of us that seemingly appears the same as our *identity*. "This is me" and "I am myself" we say. Yet, even that statement does not mean the same thing when spoken by a child, an adolescent, a young adult and an old adult. Though personal memories are retained that give individual identity a sense of continuity over time, even that identity changes and those memories colored by the various differences in what "This is me" and "I am myself" come to mean at various stages of development across the lifespan. If we identify with our body alone, then that portion of our identity will always change, for the body is part and parcel of a constantly changing physical framework. If we identify with our conscious "I," then that portion of our identity too will always change as its conception of itself constantly changes according to its age and social and cultural environments. The one stability is the inner, Transpersonal Self that is behind all physical constructions of the body and all ego constructions of the outer personality.

***A motive force behind all "ideal" patterns of individual development.*** Within general developmental patterns and stages of development are personalized patterns that point to ideal developments present in each individual -- natural inclinations toward growth and fulfillment against which individuals judge their acts and accomplishments. It is the inner Transpersonal Self that nudges the individual toward his or her own particular, idiosyncratic "ideal" pattern of growth. These inner patterns of ideal personal development to which each individual is connected are not rigid, but flexible enough to take advantage of changing environments, situations, and circumstances. In other words, while the lines or streams of development (cognitive, affective, moral, social, spiritual) present a pattern that is definite enough to give us the recognizable kind of stages that mainstream developmental psychologists accept, the overall pattern or stages are variable enough to allow for literally infinite variations. As transpersonal writer and channel Jane Roberts (1979d) put it: "You are *ever becoming* yourself. . . . Biologically, mentally, and spiritually you are marked as apart from all others, and no cloak of conventionality can ever hide that unutterable uniqueness. You cannot help but be yourself, then" (p. 108). One's transpersonal psyche, the part of oneself that the conscious "I" does not yet recognize, is aware of those personalized developmental patterns and stages of development. One's transpersonal psyche is aware of the certain leanings and inclinations, hidden abilities and characteristics, and probable lines of development that are contained

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

within each person and present in one's very biological structure. These are triggered into activity (or not) by exterior stimuli according to each individual's private purposes and intents. A person may be personally gifted in the area of mathematics or athletics, for example, and yet his or her inclination and intent may lead him or her in another, different direction. Every individual is gifted in a variety of ways, and everyone has abilities that are unknown to the consciously-oriented portions of the self. Which abilities, talents, powers, or gifts become actualized and manifested in one's life depends upon the necessary triggering mechanisms of desire, belief, purpose and intent. The same applies to spiritual development. Spiritual experience and knowledge is potentially available to all, but is attained only through desire and through intent. Without the triggering desire on the part of the conscious "I", the transformational experience will not occur and knowledge will not develop.

### **Symbols of Transformation and Transpersonal Development**

***Mystical experiences of direct knowing without symbolization.*** What is the transformational experience of transpersonal development like? The experience of liberation, enlightenment, and mysticism are very difficult to describe in words. Such transpersonal experiences of pure knowing and pure feeling are often called "ineffable" because they occur without the necessity for symbols or representations that would aid in their interpretation and communication. As awareness becomes less and less physically oriented in such further transpersonal regions of consciousness, the need for mental representations such as words and images falls away, being by-products of the original experience (Roberts, 1972, chap. 18). In such higher stages of consciousness, the mystic feels direct experience in which inner realizations and realities that have been perceived through direct knowing are instantly felt and known without the use of meditating symbolization. In Buddhist literature, such experiences of consciousness without symbols are interpreted as states of nonbeing. The idea of form is so important to a such a symbol-oriented species as our own that when form and symbol vanish, we deduce that being itself has vanished as well!

But in higher states of consciousness, the symbols are no longer necessary, and creativity take place completely without their use. . . . In this stage of consciousness the soul finds itself alone with its own feelings, stripped of symbolism and representations, and begins to perceive the gigantic reality of its own knowing. . . . Without symbols to come between it and experience, it perfects itself in a kind of value fulfillment that you presently cannot understand except symbolically. . . . Now these efforts go on whether you wake or sleep. (Roberts, 1972, pp. 304-305)

***Symbols stand for inner realities and the changing characteristics of consciousness in various states.*** Symbols and metaphors can have such a powerful effect upon the reasoning mind -- which usually depends so heavily upon the outer physical senses for its information -- because symbols are the language of the subconscious. Symbolization is the non-verbal language which the unconscious uses, for example, to speak to our conscious mind in dreams, art, poetry, and meditation about nonordinary realities of the transpersonal psyche and the central mysteries of human life that can never be expressed adequately through language and that have not been perceived through the instant cognition and comprehension of the mystic. Symbols serve as physical-like signposts signaling changes or transformation in states of feeling and levels of consciousness (Roberts, 1972, chap. 18). The various symbols of transformation, not only express a particular state of emotion and represent a particular type of transformation, but also stand for inner reality and indicate the state of awareness within it. The various kinds of symbols of transformation are indicators of the characteristics that consciousness takes and the different directions in which it focuses in different states of consciousness. At different stages of development, consciousness works with different kinds of symbols. Each symbol stands for a different inner reality, in other words. The symbols that emerge at various stages of changes and transformation of consciousness appear differently. The variety and fluidity of symbols indicate the variety and fluidity of kinds of self-transformation possible. Their changing guises represent and are indicators of the infinite variation of



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

feelings of which we, as a species and as individuals, are capable. A symbol's changing guise also serves as a bridge connecting and linking one state of consciousness with another, one element or condition of our psyche with another, one semantic domain with another. If we could recognize that even the physical objects we see "out there" in the physical world are not only themselves, but also symbols -- symbols that we bring with us into our dreams and other states of consciousness to represent of waking perception, feeling, and thoughts -- it would be easier for us to understand the great unity between waking and dreaming symbols, and symbols' active, dynamic nature and ability to work on us and within us without our conscious recognition whether we wake or sleep.

***Symbols of transformation.*** Given that transpersonal states such as mysticism are relatively rare and difficult to translate into terms that verbally-structured thought can understand, symbols and metaphors are used that provide handy visual and conceptual aids that stand for or represent the mystic's inner realizations and transcendental realities that cannot be perceived by normal physically-oriented waking consciousness. There are numerous symbols and metaphors that have been carried through across the centuries in various stories, parables, allegories, myths, legends, folktales, and the religious literature of the world's wisdom traditions and that attempt to translate into normal conscious terms what such transpersonal states of consciousness are like (Metzner, 1980). For example, one popular metaphor that has been used to help people understand those states of consciousness that occur after death is the metamorphosis of caterpillar into butterfly ("What the caterpillar believes is the end of its life, the butterfly knows is but its beginning"). Such metaphors have the power not only to convey information about these kinds of inner transformations, but to also inspire and bring about inner understanding and the process of psychospiritual transformation itself.

***Classical metaphors of transformation.*** Metzner (1980) identified ten classical metaphors of self-transformation that highlight the many different ways in which the transformation experience and the fluid, dynamic process of personal transpersonal development can be understood to occur. Whether we theorize that human transformation is an instance of conversion, discovery of the sacred, mysticism, stage of a mystical path, rebirth, metanoia, spiritual development, transition, evolution, metamorphosis, or transmutation of elements, the following symbols, metaphors, and images can help us understand that the experience is like. It matters not whether the process of self-transformation is abrupt or gradual, temporary or lasting, externally induced or internally induced, brought about through intention or by grace, openly manifested or invisible to others, progressive or regressive or digressive. The nature and value of a transformative experience can be expressed by one or several of the following symbols and metaphors:

- From Dream-Sleep to Awakening
- From Illusion to Realization
- From Darkness to Enlightenment
- From Imprisonment to Liberation
- From Fragmentation to Wholeness
- From Separation to Oneness
- From Being on a Journey to Arriving at the Destination
- From Being in Exile to coming home
- From Seed to Flowering Tree
- From Death to Rebirth

Each of these symbols or metaphors can serve as a releasing agent, helping the individual tune into different kinds of transformation of consciousness, setting loose that which has been fixed, and lowering barriers that serve to impede the free flow of energy and communication between the conscious and subconscious.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

**Awakening from the dream of "reality."** Consider, for example, the metaphor "Awakening from the Dream of 'Reality'" as one illustration of the import of symbols for better understanding the nature of psychological transformation (Metzner, 1986, chap. 2). This metaphor presents human transformation as similar to the process of awakening from a dream -- in this case, the dream is waking reality and "our birth...but a sleep and a forgetting" (Wordsworth). According to Zen philosopher D. T. Suzuki

What is awakened in the Zen experience is not a 'new' experience but an 'old' one, which has been dormant since our loss of 'innocence'. . . . The awakening is really the rediscovery or the excavation of a long-lost treasure. . . .the finding ourselves back in our original abode where we lived even before our birth. (quoted in Metzner, 1986, p. 27)

"We are such stuff as dreams are made on..." (Shakespeare). In these terms, our ordinary waking state of consciousness is like a waking dream from which we awaken into the new dawn of a transformed consciousness whereby we see things as they really are. Like Buddha, we become an "Awakened One." We live in the work-a-day world in a waking trance into which we have been hypnotized by our habitual social and cultural conditioning and need to "wake up" (Tart, 1986). Our usual state of consciousness is said to be clouded, deluded, dreamlike, or entranced.

Fully developed mystics state unequivocally that our usual state of consciousness is not only suboptimal, it is dreamlike and illusory. They assert that whether we know it or not, without mental training we are prisoners of our own minds, totally and unwittingly trapped by a continuous inner fantasy-dialog which creates an all-consuming illusory distortion of perception and reality (maya or samsara).. . . This condition is said to go unrecognized until we begin to subject our perceptual-cognitive processes to rigorous scrutiny such as meditation. Thus, the 'normal' person is seen as 'asleep' or 'dreaming.' When the 'dream' is especially painful or disruptive, it becomes a nightmare and is recognized as psychopathology, but since the vast majority of the population 'dreams,' the true state of affairs goes unrecognized. When the individual permanently disidentifies from or eradicates this dream he is said to have awakened and can now recognize the true nature of both his former state and that of the population. This awakening or enlightenment is the aim of the consciousness disciplines. (Walsh & Shapiro, 1983, p. 43)

Like living a scene out of the popular movie classic *The Matrix*, we may think we are awake, but we are actually asleep. And at times, it may even be difficult to tell the difference.

Once upon a time, I, Chuang Tzu, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly, and was unconscious of my individuality as a man. Suddenly, I awoke, and there I lay, myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man.

We assume without questioning that the waking state in which we spend most of our lives is the "real" consciousness. Yet we are sleepwalkers "running on automatic" (Ouspensky, 1931, 1957) and our waking consciousness is built upon and sustained by other daydreaming states.

**Waking up.** Suppose one is indeed asleep while only seemingly appearing to be awake. If one's waking life were a dream and is highly symbolic, then what do the objects that one perceives around oneself represent? What do the other people that one encounters in one's day-to-day living at home and work represent? Now imagine that one is awakening into a different kind of wakefulness. Into what kind of wakefulness does one emerge? How are we to awaken ourselves? In order to become awakened to the

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

elements of one's consciousness and the inner psychic realms that have been previously ignored, overlooked, or denied, one needs to engage in a systematic and sustained effort to self-observe, self-remember, and expand our awareness through such techniques as yoga and meditation. "The transformation of consciousness described metaphorically as an awakening can take two different forms: rising beyond or detaching from body consciousness [ascetic and monastic devotional traditions], or changing and sensitizing body consciousness itself [Tantric, Taoist, Zen Buddhism tradition]" (Metzner, 1986, p. 25). In the latter case, experiencing sense data as fully as one can not only tones the bodymind, but also brings all of one's perceptions together so that awareness opens more fully.

To be truly awake in Gurdjieff's sense, to be able to use all your abilities and intelligence to realistically assess situations you are in and act as adaptively as possible in light of your genuine, unique values, requires that you not be caught in any identity state, particularly one that interferes with your perception of reality. Something must be developed in consciousness that remains outside the identifications and mechanical actions and experiences of the moment (Tart, 1986, p. 129)

In order to awaken one must liberate one's intellect so that its powers are not limited by concepts it has been taught are true. Another way to awaken from the dream of waking "reality" is to become more lucid during periods of sleep dreaming (Gackenbach & Bosveld, 1989). "By waking in your dreams, you can waken to life" (LaBerge & Rheingold, 1990, p. 15).

### II. Transpersonally-Oriented Models in Developmental Psychology

How do we educate for transcendence and mature thought in adulthood? The theories of human development presented in this chapter suggest that the journey from conventional development to transpersonal development involves at least five components:

Seeing through the limitations of convention and recognizing further developmental potentials; undertaking a practice capable of realizing those potentials; experiencing for oneself the flashes of illumination that transform future potentials into present realities; extending flashes of illumination into abiding light; and bringing that light into the world for the benefit of all. Undertaking this process is regarded by the great wisdom traditions [Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, Moslem, Jewish] as the highest goal and greatest good of human existence. (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993, p. 114)

#### Erik Erikson's Theory of Personal Identity Development

Erik Erikson (1902-1994) is not ordinarily considered to be a transpersonal developmental psychologist. An important key idea that pervades his work as a developmental theorist that has transpersonal implications, however, is his concept of identity. As Robert Frager and James Fadiman (2005) said in their classic personality textbook *Personality and Personal Growth*: "Erikson smuggled the concept of the human spirit into psychoanalytic theory" (p. 195).

***The self that one is is ever changing, while one's sense of identity is retained.*** Erikson recognized the every person possesses a feeling that he or she has an internal core that provides a sense of continuity throughout the hours, days, and years of our lives that remains our "true self" despite all the outward changes and varying roles we experience. Consider the fact that the atoms and molecules that compose every cell of the body change every moment, and the cells themselves that come together to provide structure to the organs of the body die constantly only to be replaced by other cells, yet throughout all these changes atoms, molecules, and cells nevertheless retain their recognizable form and their identity remains intact. "So is your own identity secure in the midst of all these births and deaths of which your

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

conscious self is unaware" (Roberts, 1974, p. 144). Erikson recognized that we move in and out of different ego identities during the various stages of psychosocial development. The conscious "I" that we are is ever changing and never static. The received wisdom is that ego identity begins to form during the very first year of life as a result of the interaction between environment and genetics. As the physical body ages from infancy to childhood, one's sense of identity is shaped by society, culture, and those significant others in one's life (maternal persons, parental persons, basic family, neighborhood, school) (Erikson, 1982). As one lived through the challenges and tasks of the first four psychosexual stages during this portion of one's lifespan -- dealing with feelings of trust or mistrust, autonomy or shame and doubt, initiative or guilt, industry or inferiority -- one's sense of identity did not include adulthood and old age nor did one deal with feelings of generativity or stagnation and integrity or despair in ordinary terms. One's sense of identity changed physically through the years as one's body grew and developed. As one addressed the issues at each psychosocial stage of development, one moved in and out of different ego identities while at the same time maintaining an identity of oneself. One's self remained secure in its own identity. This sense of identity that began to form during the very first year of life was reinforced when one learned to respond to one's own name. The sense of identity continued to grow throughout childhood as one became more than one was before, adding on to oneself through experience.

***Teenage intimacy as a matter of self-definition.*** For Erikson, one's sense of identity becomes temporarily shaken during adolescence when sudden changes in one's body's physical appearance and the pressures from society to choose a mate and prepare for a vocation challenge the identity formed through childhood. Society provides numerous resources to aid the individual meet the challenge of these new pressures, including the clothing we wear [by trying out different clothes, you can try out different identities], the role models with whom we identify [people who embody ready-made identities that we can copy or imitate], and ideologies [you are what you believe in, care about, and are committed to]. Peer groups and outgroups, models of leadership, and partners in friendship and sex, cooperation and competition are other social forces believed to color and shape the nature of the identity that is eventually chosen and attained. In our choices, we create ourselves. "Because the development of identity precedes intimacy as a psychosexual situation, the nature of the identity attained strongly affects the kind of intimacy possible" (Pollio, 1982, p. 276). If the person brings no firm identity to his or her relationship with others, then the sense of intimacy is easily broken. In such cases, the adolescent's fear of a lasting attachment to another person may be the result of his or her fear of losing freedom or individuality which was just recently formed. In these terms, teenage intimacy becomes more a matter of self-definition than of love, especially for males. It is as if the teenager were saying: "I lose myself in you so as to find me. My love becomes one more way in which I try to discover myself." Adolescent love allows the individual to take his or her sense of self-worth from another for a time, and momentarily at least, allow the other's belief in his or her goodness and potential to supercede the teenager's own belief in lack of worth. In the other's eyes, one sees what one can be; in the other's love, one senses one's own potential.

***The wisdom of youth and the joy of old age.*** Eric Erikson, in his own old age, and in partnership with his wife, Joan, expanded his view of life and described how the transpersonal wisdom of the elderly is born (Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1986). Erikson notes how the current concepts held by modern American society lead individuals to fear old age from the time of youth. In American culture, for instance, to be young is to be alert, aware, and flexible whereas to be old is to be dull, confused, and rigid. The stereotypes presented in the media reflect such beliefs. Ideas of retirement are another example that imply that at a specific age, those hard-won attributes of maturity will begin to vanish and powers will begin to fail. These ideas are usually accepted by the young and old alike, in spite of the fact that a substantial body of research indicates that creative and productive *can* continue well into one's eighties and nineties depending on the profession (artist, scientist, philosopher, politician, judge, pope, and so on) (Lehman, 1953). In Western, culture, at least, young adulthood is seen to be the crowning glory of life and viewed as a blessed time of physical strength, psychological vitality, and reproductive success, whereas old age is viewed as the opposite – a time of physical weakness and decay, spiritual deterioration

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

and failure, in which senility, disease, and infirmity seems a natural, inevitable end to life. Individuals who accept such beliefs interpret the changes they see in their own physical image as dim vestiges of better selves. Having acquiesced to the negative, distorted (and often psychologically invisible) concepts about old age held by the society, they no longer trust the integrity of their bodies, fear the disappearance of their reasoning faculties, and feel that their very existence in time has betrayed them. A gradual conditioning of the body and mind begins, and the results of such beliefs and expectations are automatically reaped.

***We live in the body of our beliefs.*** One's beliefs about age can affect one's body and all of its capacities. Living within the body of one's beliefs, they can increase one's vision and hearing or diminish it, or any sense function. Beliefs about the loss of hearing in old age can condition the body to use the faculty less and less, unconsciously transfer attention to other senses and repress the minute manipulations necessary for hearing, until the actual physical deterioration does indeed follow. A young man may find it difficult to believe that old people are capable of exuberant sexual activity, if he holds the conflicting beliefs that sex is good but old age is bad. If a young woman believes that her desirability decreases with the passage of each day (while telling herself consciously that age does not matter), she will feel and act less attractive when this belief holds sway no matter what the objective facts of the situation may be. Many who follow negative and distorted beliefs about old age try to hide them from themselves, desperately trying to remain young. Pretending to ignore their age, they act young, hiding their own beliefs about age, negating all emotions connected with aging. Believing youth is the ideal, they struggle for it. Denying the integrity of their experience in time, they act young because they fear their age, desperately attempting to be young. Wisdom can and does grow with age *if one believes that it does*. Self-understanding can and does bring a peace of mind not known earlier, *if one believes that it does*. The physical senses are much more appreciative of all stimuli in old age, *if one believes that they do*. Old age can be a highly creative part of living, *if one believes that it is*. These beliefs will likewise tend to bring about those conditions in one's experience of old age, just as the negative beliefs do in the opposite direction. The Eriksons remind us that physically, our bodies must follow the nature into which we were born. In the context of that physical nature, both youth and old age have a place, play a role, and are highly important. Age does not automatically make one less a person. The experiences one encounters when one is 53 or 65 or 78 are as necessary and important as those experiences in our teens, or in our twenties, or when we are thirty-something. Later adulthood and old age are as valid and significant stages of development as adolescence and young adulthood. Those different experiences and our changing image are all a necessary part of our reality in time and are intended to teach us important biological and spiritual lessons. Life experiences are dependent upon their duration in time and wisdom grows as a result of the mind reflecting upon its experiences.

### **Frances Vaughan's Theory of Transpersonal Identity Development**

***The importance of beliefs in the development of self-identity.*** Frances Vaughan, a practicing transpersonal psychotherapist and past president of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology outlines a theory of how transpersonal identity develops over time (Vaughan, 1985). According to Vaughan, the primary element of human personality is our notion of who we are -- our self-concept. Our ideas, beliefs, and expectations about who and what we think we are are the key to understanding why we think, feel and act the way we do. "Everything we do can be seen as an expression of who and what we think we are" (Vaughan, 1985, p. 25). Our subjective experience of ourselves proceeds from our beliefs and expectations about who we think we are and what we think we are capable of doing. Our experience of ourselves is defined by our self-concept. Our beliefs about ourselves can limit or expand us. Change one's ideas and expectations about the nature of self and one changes one's experience of oneself.



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

**Different forms of self-identity studied in contemporary psychology.** Various contemporary perspectives of psychology focus on different aspects of human personality and different forms of self-identity. Psychoanalysis focuses on the emotions and the emotional self. Behaviorism focuses on the body and the physical self. Cognitive psychology focuses on the mind and the mental self. Humanistic psychology focuses on the existential self. Transpersonal psychology integrates the physical, emotional, mental, and existential self-sense together and brings into view a transpersonal self that transcends and includes them all. Human self-consciousness is truly unique, but only one of many other existing kinds of self-consciousness in the world, self-consciousnesses that have emerged within frameworks of experience and existence entirely different and alien to our own.

**How does one's self-identity change?** Can one's self-identity evolve and change or is it fixed? If it can change, how does it do so? Vaughan (1985, chapter 2) states that it changes and develops through a four-fold process of *identification*, *differentiation*, *transcendence*, and *integration*. **Figure 8-1** presents a circle diagram illustrating the relationship among the various forms of personal identity that develop over time.

---

Insert Figure 8-1 here

---

### The Bodily and Emotional Self

**Identification.** The first rudimentary form of identity that we have in this physical life occurs when we were a baby. In infancy, our sense of self is largely grounded in our physical body. We *identify* with our body as an infant. It is "me." The self is wherever the body is. If my body is hungry, then I am hungry. If my body is thirsty, then I am thirsty. There really is no separation between me and my body when I identify with it. I do not have a body. I am my body at this stage of personality development. If I bite my hand, I bite myself. Although we understand later that the body is actually both a part *of* and a part *from* the environment while being made of the same "stuff" as it were of the physical world, at this stage of personality (self) development, we are learning to *differentiate* what is me from what is not me, the self from the not-self.

**Differentiation.** While at first we may not have a separate sense of self from the world of people, objects, and events that surround us because our identification is so large that we identify with even the world itself, that identification gradually pulls back upon itself. We begin to distinguish my arm from the side of the crib on which it lays which is soon regarded as "not-me." Through this process of differentiation, we learn that although I am my body, my body is not the blanket, the room, my mother or father, or the mobile that hangs over my crib. The notions of "me" and "not-me" become firmly distinguished, discriminated, and differentiated. There comes a point in the life of every developing infant when the ego or conscious "I" emerges from that dynamic ground of being from which all consciousness comes. At that point, there becomes established the separation of the self who perceives (and therefore judges and values) from the object which is perceived and evaluated.

**Transcendence.** Once sufficient differentiations are made, the infant's identification with the environment and its objects becomes *transcended*. From this point onward, the world of things becomes something that I can act upon. The world becomes something "out there." My self becomes something "in here." The world and I are two separate things. I become an agent that can now actively act on the world and exert some influence of it. Out of this necessary alienation, comes the emergence of self-responsibility and of an individual personality which sees itself as unique and separate, able to examine the consequences of its actions, however naively, and see itself for the first time as different from others.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

**Integration.** At this stage of personality development, my awareness, identify, and personality is exclusively identified and *integrated* with the body and all of its needs. The basic issue is survival of the body. If my body survives, then so will I. Along with the body comes a host of emotions that the infant must encounter and deal with as well. As a consequence of his or her identification with the body, its needs, and emotions, the infant personality feels no separation from them. The infant does not have need and emotions; the infant is his or her needs and emotions. They drive the infant who is unable to tell them apart since they arise together in his or her experience. Motivation and emotion are twin sisters energizing the body and directing behavior. It is not until the infant is able to verbally label each as such-and such that distinguishing between them can occur. This "way of knowing" does not occur until the infant begins to acquire language and the "verbal ego-mind" emerges.

### Egoic Self-Consciousness

**Identification.** At this point, though, the infant is *identified* with its body (or physical self) and with its emotions (or emotional self). After about one one-half to two years old, the infant becomes a child. The child begins to speak and learn a language.

**Differentiation.** Once the child learns to attach a verbal label to his or her body and to each of the various emotions, the child begins the process of *differentiating* from his or her body and emotions. Like the world and environmental objects, the body and emotions with its wishes and desires also become separated from the child's sense of self as the he or she now identifies with the verbally-oriented conscious mind alone.

**Transcendence.** The body and emotions now become something that is *transcended* and acted upon using the child's own developing mental structures as tools. The child does not have to release his or her bowels immediately, but can wait and hold them until he can get to the bathroom. Whereas as an infant, immediate gratification was the order of the day, delayed gratification now occurs and is expected. Needs and desires become differentiated and some are gratified while other are not, some now and others later. As the child begins to gain more and more control over bodily functions, the sense of identification with it subsides, until the child is no longer *is* his or her body but *has* a body. This sense of dis-identification with the body and emotions (i.e., I am not my body, I have a body; I am not my emotions, I have emotions) increases with the development of language. There is corresponding identification of the child with his or her developing conscious mind with the help of language. This evolving intelligent, verbally-structured consciousness of childhood brings with it memory and the capacity to recall past joys and pains and the initial realization of mortal death (Armstrong, 1984; Coles, 1990; Piechowski, 2001). Initially, the child has a difficulty in separating the remembered image from the moment in the present. With the emergence and development of imagination, however, the child with his embodied self-sense would now react not only to objective present situations, but to imaginary ones as well. With the growth of imagination, we see also a developing ability to anticipate the behavior of objects, events, animals, and other people.

**Integration.** Egoic self-consciousness consists of an essential identification with the entire constellation of ideas, beliefs, thoughts, and concepts that a person has about themselves. It consists of all related images, fantasies, memories, sub-personalities, motivations, and other identifications that go into who I *think* I am as a person. I am everything I think I am. If I am asked "who are you?" I may respond: "I am 21 years old, female, Protestant, white, and poor." Each one of these trait-words is a concept that describes who and what I am. When I identify with such a variety of concepts, which are nothing more than thoughts, then I become identified essentially with the contents of my mind and with the thoughts about who and what I am. I do not have thoughts, I am my thoughts. If I *think* I am bad, then I *am* bad. If I *think* that it is wrong to feel anger and I feel anger, then I *am* wrong. My identity becomes located in my mind which our culture conditions us to think exists within my brain. My thoughts are my own and I do

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

not know the thoughts of others unless they communicate them to me through words. This exclusive identification with one's thoughts soon creates the impression of a self that is separate and isolated from others. We are each alone wrapped up in the thoughts that occur within one's head. Since one's identification with the world and environment dissolved long ago, one's ability to relate to a world perceived as separate and unattached becomes strained. The world becomes viewed as alien and disconnected from the egoic verbal mind, an adversary that would otherwise overwhelm or obliterate the self if not controlled and directed.

### **Shift from Egoic Self-Consciousness to Existential Identity**

***The existential self.*** In order to transcend the limitations of the verbally-oriented egoic identity that characterizes human personality from childhood to young adulthood, one must become willing to confront the existential realities of fear, anxiety, shame, guilt, suffering, freedom, aloneness, and death. One is born alone and dies alone. There is no escape from this condition of isolation for the self who perceives the universe and everyone else as “not-self” and “other.” “Hell is other people” (Sartre). The ego is faced with the threat of nonexistence, and it must not deceive itself. The separate self is eventually overcome by death. Everyone must die; everything gained must eventually be relinquished. Nothing lasts; everything changes. Eventually I must confront the threat of my own extinction. The sense of identify that emerges to confront these existential realities is called the "existential self." For Vaughan, the emergence of this existential dimension to human personality provides a springboard for further personality development beyond the existential self. The existential self throws off all social expectation and social roles in an attempt to uncover the authentic and real personality that lies beneath the masks that have developed over the years. As the personality over the years became entangled in habits of impressing others, lying to oneself or to others, distorting one's perceptions to fit one's beliefs and ideas that one has about who one is or wants to be seen by others, the person loses touch with the self behind the mask or persona. The personality at this stage of identity development no longer wants to play games, but to be "real."

***Becoming a fully-functioning person existential self -- Moving away from the false self.*** In certain terms, individuals in this stage of personality development are striving to become what Carl Roger's called "full-functioning" individuals - "to be the self which one truly is" (Rogers, 1951, 1961). First, there is a gradual moving away from the self that one is not (the false self), a dismantling of the facades and the masks, as strategies of self-concealment are relinquished, anger and remorse at oneself surface and are expressed. The desire for authenticity and integrity pushes the person to let go of the hypocrisies and phoniness that have come to characterize their personality. They stop doing things just because they think others think they *ought* to do it. They stop living other people's designs on their life and begin living their own again. The wishes and desires that locked people into patterns of behavior and were *thought* to be one's own (e.g., desire to earn a parent's love, need to achieve fame or wealth or power) are discovered to have been unthinkingly accepted from one's society and culture. These "artificial" selves are discovered to be the selves that others thought we ought to be, not the selves we wanted to be. The realization that trying harder to please others only brought less satisfaction and personal value fulfillment moves them, perhaps for the first time, to give up always trying to please others, and begin trying to please themselves.

***Becoming a fully-functioning existential self - Moving toward the real self.*** As the personality moves from one mode of being to another, there is a gradual moving toward the self one really is. There is an opening up of perception and awareness of the world as masks are removed, for while a mask may keep others from seeing you, it also makes it harder for you to see others and may be all you can see of yourself. Defenses begin to be dropped and the emergent existential self comes out into the open. The personality begins to allow himself or herself to feel their emotions, not to fear them. As they learn to trust the integrity of their experience, the existential self gets in touch with one's feelings again. The more aspects of experience that the self opens up to the more of itself it discovers, the more the authentic self



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

comes into focus. The personality begins to trust their emotions and impulses more and more. Choices become easier to make because one trusts one's impulses to do this or that. Being more open to experience means that perception of "reality" becomes more accurate because the personality is no longer crippled by defensiveness. With increased openness to experience, come the realization that one is always a part of any reality one experiences and that one's beliefs and ideas play a key role in the creation of experienced personal reality. This realization brings a sense of responsibility and freedom.

### **Shift from Existential Identity to Transpersonal Awareness**

***Being a fully-functioning existential self.*** In the shift from existential identity to transpersonal awareness, abandon themselves to life which they experience with drama, zest, and creative excitement. They come to understand that one makes one's own integrity, and to trust one's own judgment and internal standards of excellence more than external authorities. One recognizes that life necessitates the intrusion of surprising events and that when one "goes with the flow" one achieves a more harmonious outcome. They live in the moment, or if they cannot do that, then they live one day at a time. They realize that perfection as a goal does not exist. Perfection implies a state beyond growth, development, and creativity and no such state exists. They learn to strive not to become more perfect, but more perfectly themselves. Being self-directed, they have a strong sense of their own autonomy and take responsibility for their own choices and the consequences of those choices. They do not use others or blame them if things go wrong. They perceive in others the same worth that they see in themselves. They value others and appreciate them for what they are, not what they expect them to be.

***Moving from awareness of independence to interdependence.*** In the shift from existential identity to transpersonal awareness, the personality begins to question the assumption of the self as a truly independent, separate, and self-contained entity in an isolated, disconnected, detached and meaningless world. Boundaries begin to dissolve as the personality moves from a sense of egoic and existential independence to a fully-functioning interdependence at all levels -- body and environment, mind and body, self and others. Body, mind, and self are perceived to be one part of an open living system existing within a larger ecosystem, interdependent and embedded in the totality of all that is. This expansion of point of view is a consequence of the openness of experience, trust in one's impulses and emotions, and willingness to see one's life as a part of a process and the world in terms of relationships and patterns of interaction, rather than as individual egoic selves living in existential isolation, independently of each other.

***Integration of the shadow.*** In the shift from existential identity to transpersonal awareness of an inner center of self-consciousness, healthy personality development requires that the split between the egoic self-consciousness and personal shadow be healed. "When the sense of separate self is transcended and no boundaries are seen, there is neither shadow nor fear" (Vaughan, 1985, p. 51). In Jungian psychology, the *shadow* consists of those so-called "instincts" and impulses that civilized humanity attributes to its "animal" nature, similar to the Freudian concept of the id. The Shadow is responsible for the emergence into conscious awareness of thoughts, feelings, images, and behavioral impulses considered to be socially reprehensible. Such thoughts, feelings, and actions, are usually automatically repressed by the ego back into the personal subconscious or hidden from public view behind the social mask of the "Persona" – the front we put on for other people and the role we play in response to the demands of social convention and tradition. As an archetype within the collective unconscious, the Shadow is the origin of Catholicism's conception of original sin and the complex of images, ideas, feelings, and actions that compose individual notions of a "sinful" self (Hall & Lindsey, 1978, pp. 123-124). When the Shadow is projected outward, it becomes the devil or enemy. Devils, demons, and evil spirits are all symbols of the archetype of the Shadow. If we mistake the symbol for the reality, then we come to believe that devils and demons have an objective existence. Devils and demons have always represented portions of humanity's own psychological reality – portions of the psyche that to some extent we as a species have not assimilated,

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

but in a dissociative kind of expression, project instead outward from ourselves. By so doing, we separate and isolate ourselves from the responsibility of being held accountable for our acts that are considered debasing and cruel by imagining the existence of other forces – devils, demons, evil spirits – that “made me do it” or “commanded me to perform them.” A fully-functioning existential self-identity requires that this integration and assimilation of the subconscious portion of one's egoic identity occurs if the Transpersonal Self is to be approached with any success. Transpersonal psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli (1965/1976) considers this an importance part of the personal psychosynthesis process that precedes transpersonal psychosynthesis.

***The sense of self expands.*** As the personality moves away from the egoic self-consciousness of adolescence and young adulthood and toward the existential self that strives to become genuine and authentic in one's dealings with oneself, others, and the world, especially in its encounter with experiences of guilt, suffering, and death, the sense of self expands. As one's shadow is recognized, acknowledged, and accepted as a part of one's identity without being all that one is, the sense of self expands further. As boundaries become viewed as permeable rather than rigid, as one views oneself as a part of an open living system of participatory relationships instead of as a separate, detached, disinterested observer, transpersonal identity begins to appear. Typically, the inner quest that begins as a search for meaning on the existential level leads eventually to dis-identification from ego and to an uncovering of transpersonal identity.

### Approaching the Transpersonal Self

***Differentiation.*** Transpersonal identity involves not a lessening of self, but an extension of self so that self-awareness can include not only self but "other-self" or "not-self" experience. According to Vaughan, this particular extension of self to include other-self experience is initiated through a process of *dis-identification* from egoic ideas, beliefs, and self-concepts of oneself as a separate, isolated, independent entity in a universe full of other separate, isolated, independent entities. "Only when one has succeeded in observing thoughts, emotions, and sensations as contents of consciousness and seeing that one has them but is not identical with them, can one begin to know the Self (Vaughan, 1985, p. 41). It is through this process of "dis-identification" that there emerges a more encompassing self-sense that Vaughan describes as the "Transpersonal Self." Roberto Assagioli (1965/1976), transpersonal psychiatrist and founder of the school of Psychosynthesis, describes an exercise designed to dis-identify or separate oneself from what one observes (sensation, emotions, desires, and thoughts). This exercise is presented in **Figure 8-2**.

---

Insert Figure 8-2 here

---

What remains after separating one's self-identity from the thoughts, feelings, and sensations of one's egoic personality is a sense of oneself as a center of pure self-consciousness capable of observing, harnessing, directing all of one's psychological processes and the energies of one's physical body. When one has practiced the exercise in dis-identification several times over a period of time, individual becomes more aware of how one creates one's own experiences through one's thoughts, feelings, and sensations, learns how to take responsibility for them, and exercises more freedom in choosing among them. The exercise does not create the Transpersonal Self, but uncovers it. The Transpersonal Self-sense that is uncovered and revealed through the dis-identification exercise is manifested in and through the personal, yet transcends it.

***Transcendence.*** The shift in self-sense that occurs as one moves away from an existentially-focused identity and toward a transpersonally-focused identity occurs as a result of a *dis-identification* with former identifications and a *transcendence* of them. Those previous identifications are not lost, but subsumed

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

into a larger, more complex self-concept. The process of dis-identifying with the body and emotions is a transcendence of body and emotions, not a denial of them. The process of dis-identifying with the ego and its persona is not a rejection of the ego, but a transcendence of it into a more inclusive integration of persona (or the mask we present to the world) and the shadow (the repressed self image that one fears one might become), egoic self-image and body awareness so that one is fully open to one's experience as an embodied mind living a mortal, physical life seeking value-fulfillment in an interconnected reality. When a shift from egoic to existential to transpersonal identity occurs, the qualities of character and value fulfillment that come to characterize the human personality and its self-sense change to reflect the shift in knowledge, understanding, and experience.

Personality changes occurring at this [transpersonal] level tend to be away from positions of arrogance, judgment, and condemnation, toward humility, compassion, and forgiveness; from denial and repression to acceptance and integration of thoughts, feelings, and physical limitations; from defensiveness to openness; from fear to love; from victim to creator; from adversary to friend; from independence to interdependence; from a partial mechanistic worldview to a holistic organismic perspective; from isolated individualism to interrelated systems theory; from existential despair to transpersonal healing. (Vaughan, 1985, p. 43)

**Integration.** To extend Vaughan's conception of ego transcendence, the ego is not inferior to other portions of the self, nor is the ego of a lower quality than the inner transpersonal self or soul (Roberts, 1972). The ego, *your* ego, directs your behavior in the physical world and your awareness of physical stimuli, and makes possible the clear brilliance and exquisite focus of normal waking consciousness. The ego is not something that needs to be overthrown in order to reach the inner self. In fact, to do so can create imbalance and psychopathology in the personality (Engler, 1983; M. Epstein, 1992). The ordinary ego, in other words, should not be thought of as something separate from the inner self (or soul). Traditional psychoanalytic personality theories may make distinctions, for instance, between ego, id, and superego, but such distinctions are made only in an effort to explain the many facets of the human personality. The outer ego is a portion of the inner Transpersonal Self and has emerged from that source. The ego cannot really be separated from the rest of the psyche because the life of the ego takes place within (not apart from) the framework of the Transpersonal Self's greater existence. The psyche's greater existence cannot be separated from the intimate knowledge of the ego whose clear and exquisite focus in one small area of reality creates a given kind of experience that is valid, real, and necessary to the life of the physical body. The conscious "I" exists within the psyche, not outside of it. The ego may be one segment of our larger identity and may focus in only one of many dimensions of reality -- the physical, material, corporeal -- but it is still nevertheless composed of the same universal energy and vitality that composes the Transpersonal Self (or soul) and all of consciousness. The ego is supported, sustained, and filled with the universal energy that is its source, so it can hardly be inferior to what composes it or to the reality of which it is a part.

**Spiritual development as "surrender" of the ego.** "Surrendering" or annihilation of the ego, nonattachment or the death and cessation of desire, and the denial of the body or the transformation of its physical energies into more subtle elements are common themes or prescriptions in the mystical literature that must occur as prerequisites for achieving enlightenment and liberation, or to reach the upper stages and level of spiritual development. The putting into practice of these well-intentioned recommendations in the pursuit of spiritual development, however, are not without their consequence, for

in all such cases the clear spiritual and biological integrity of the individual suffers, and the precious immediacy of your moments is largely lost. Earth life is seen as murky, a dim translation of greater existence, rather than portrayed as the unique, creative, living experience that it should be. The body becomes disoriented, sabotaged. The clear lines of communication between spirit

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

and body become cluttered. Individually and *en masse*, diseases and conditions result that are meant to lead you to other realizations. (Roberts, 1981a, p. 60).

For this reason, it is important to clarify which sort of "ego" it is that must be surrendered, if one is not to experience untoward consequences for personal development. One version of the surrendered ego pertains to the image that one holds of oneself, one's persona, social mask that one projects to others. Another version of the ego to be surrendered may refer to one's conscious, reasoning, discursive mind with its proclivity for verbally-structured thought. Still another version of the ego that is to be transcended or surrendered is our identity as an isolated, individualistic, narcissistic self. In all cases, spiritual development involves a "going beyond" or *trans-ego* development to a broader self-sense. Transcending or surrendering the ego does not, however, mean the extinction or annihilation of the ego, however it is defined. One needs an ego of some sort to deal with the ups-and-downs of daily life. It means rather, or can mean, the development from one ego stage to a higher stages or an expansion of the existing ego so that it can include more of its own experience and reality at other levels of its being. The person permits himself or herself "not to displace the ego, but more, to enable yourself to look within and past the ego" (Roberts, 1997c, p. 59).

***Personality development "beyond ego" does not require the loss of ego.*** Personality development "beyond ego" then is not loss of ego, but a recognition that it is not the entire house of cards, so to speak, or the entire kettle of fish. Unfortunately, through social and cultural conditioning, the individual ego has become "muscle-bound," a tyrant that does not want to admit the existence of any dimensions of reality other than those with which it is familiar and comfortable and accepts. Separating itself from the more intuitive portions of its overall identity, it becomes isolated, afraid, and held in a kind of spiritual rigidity that limits its understanding of the nature of reality. This is not the ego's intrinsic nature, however. The ego is far more resilient, curious, creative, and eager to learn than generally supposed by most personality theorists. It is quite capable of allowing freedom to the inner Transpersonal Self's intuitions and creative impulses so that some knowledge of its own greater dimensions can indeed be communicated to this most physically oriented portion of the personality. The shifts from egoic self-consciousness to existential identity to transpersonal awakening then does not ignore, overlook, or deny the personal ego. Clinical psychologist Steven Hedlin simply put it: "You have to be somebody before you can be nobody."

Too often people try to lose their 'ego,' or sense of self, before they have actually worked through their own personal psychological material, and established a healthy sense of self – one which enables them to live effectively in the world....This 'trap' amounts to a 'disrespect, discounting, or denigration' of the ego itself, and erroneously assumes that the normal concerns of the ego – such as being able to function well in the world – have nothing to do with the 'quest for oneness.' This amounts to... 'premature disidentification' with ego functions such as identity, security, and self-esteem. (Hedlin, quoted in Fields, Taylor, Weyler, & Ingrasci, 1984, p. 11)

As the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama once observed: "You need an ego to get the bus." The term "transpersonal," in other words, means literally "beyond the personal" but does not deny, overlook, or ignore the personal or the validity and significance of individuality. The need to address the interests of the ego is one reason why the transpersonal psychotherapeutic system of *Psychosynthesis* developed by psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli (1965/1976) has both a personal psychosynthesis *and* a transpersonal psychosynthesis component. The "transpersonal" can be distinguished from the "transcendent" in that the former term refers to the transcendental as manifested in and through the person, and is concerned with experiences and aspirations that lead people to seek knowledge of those greater, "unknown" transcendent portions of their own identity and the healing potentials contained within.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

**Contacting one's Transpersonal Self.** The inner, self-conscious Transpersonal Self is discovered by turning the focus of awareness inward. great religions of the world point us in that direction. In Christianity: "The Kingdom of God is within." In Buddhism: "Look within, thou art Buddha." In Yoga, "God dwells within you as you." In Hinduism: "Atman (individual consciousness) and Brahman (universal consciousness) are one." When the individual is aware of the existence of the higher and deeper, inner Transpersonal Self, his or she can consciously draw upon its greater energy, understanding, and strength through the use of waking or hypnotic suggestion, creative visualization, active imagination, meditation, dream work, and other methods. The individual's belief and expectation helps awaken, harness, and direct those inherently available energies from these other "unconscious" portions of their being into the field of consciousness of their daily life. **Figure 8-3** provides an imagination exercise to help the individual make contact with his or her Transpersonal Self (Vaughan, 1985, pp. 55-57).

---

Insert Figure 8-3 here

---

It is through contact with one's own Transpersonal Self that the person receives his or her "higher" intuitions and inspirations -- artistic, philosophic, scientific, ethical, and transpersonal. Contact with the Transpersonal Self may occur suddenly or gradually, spontaneously or deliberately. Such contact always reveals to the individual a sense of those portions of his or her own identity that exist outside time and that provide a bridge to other visions and versions of one's own greater identity even beyond the Transpersonal Self itself.

***The Transpersonal Self.*** The Transpersonal Self can be understood to represent our core inner identity that follows us throughout our development in life. Every morning that we wake up, we feel that we are basically the same person who we were the day before. We may feel that we are fundamentally the same person that we were last week, last month, last year, and as far back as we can remember. Something within us seems to be untouched by time across the years, despite changes in our physical body. Physically our body is not the same it was a year ago, and to the degree we identify ourselves with our body we can say that our identity has changed. Our sensations and memories, and thoughts have also changed with the passage of time, and to the degree that we identify with those, we can say our identity has changed. Yet although all these things about us have changed -- our physical appearance, our feelings, our thoughts, our sensations, our problems, our concerns, our immediate experience -- and continue to change in some respects moment-by-moment, there still remains a part of us that has not changed. Something feels the same, and that we recognize as ourselves across the years. *That* is the Transpersonal Self. That deep inward sense of I-ness is not any of those things that have changed and can change without substantially affecting that inner identity. That inner Self is *beyond* the personal "I" and conscious ego which makes up our outer identity and personality, while also being *within* and *behind* it, *beneath* and *above* it, apart *from* and everlastingly a part *of* it at the same time.

***Transpersonal Self-awareness and egoic self-consciousness compared.*** Your Transpersonal Self has given birth to the self that you recognize as your usual conscious self, alive within the changing seasons, existing within the physical frameworks of space and time, transfixed in the present moment with focused awareness. The personal, conscious outer ego that you know as yourself is that portion of the Transpersonal Self focused in physical reality, physically attuned through the physical senses to a physical world of which it is part and to which it contributes, oriented to the demands of physical existence in a way that the Transpersonal Self alone is not and could not be. It is our usual conscious egotistically aware self -- alert to the moment, sensing light and dark, embodied by a mortal frame - that is supported, energized, couched by our Transpersonal Self and with which our conscious ego is always in direct and instant contact. The inner, creative, self-conscious Transpersonal Self looks into inner reality -- that psychological dimensions of awareness from which our conscious egoic self emerged -- just as our



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

usual conscious "egoic" self looks outward. It is as if human personality is Janus-faced -- possessing an inner identity that looks inward using inner senses toward inner reality and an outer identity that looks outward using outer senses toward outer reality. Comparing our ordinary egoic self-consciousness and Transpersonal Self-consciousness can be instrumental in clarifying the nature of both aspects of our identity (Ferruci, 1982, chap. 12).

- In our ordinary "egoic" identity state, we are constantly occupied with trying to reach a state of completeness, perfection, fulfillment. It is a state of continual *busyness*. The experience of one's Transpersonal Self is a bridge to the next state of identity development which is one of no-self, of pure being, beyond busyness.
- Our ordinary personality is characterized by *multiplicity* in roles, beliefs, feelings, moods, and behaviors that are sometimes in conflict with one another. At the transpersonal level the multiplicity of ego states gives way to unity. You become one self with different aspects that are intimately connected, operating together to form a whole, much as the body does with all its different cells and organs operating as one.
- Our ordinary egoic personality lives in *physical time* where we perceive that nothing is permanently reliable or permanently satisfying. At the transpersonal level, a sense of clock time fades out or becomes suspended because we are totally absorbed in psychological time and the spacious present where there is only timelessness -- no past or future, only the eternal Present moment of NOW.
- Whereas our ordinary egoic personality perceives a world of objects, events, and people in *separateness* from ourselves, the Transpersonal Self perceives a world of interconnected fields or relationships among parts that are not only uniquely themselves but also a part of everything else.
- People who are in contact with their Transpersonal Self are less interested and concerned about the *what* of events than the *how* of events, more concerned with quality than *quantity*, enjoying playing rather than *winning* the game, the journey than the destination, what they are doing than what they can get out of it with which the egoic-oriented personality is more concerned.
- Living at the level of egoic self-consciousness, *scarcity* rules as there is not enough of anything to go around for everyone, leading to a sense of urgency and competition. The Transpersonal Self, instead, exists in a world where sharing is the norm and the more we share the more we get, the more we give the more we receive.
- The ordinary egoic self is characterized by an *unfulfillment* of needs that always cries out to be satisfied, whereas the Transpersonal Self is characterized by service and giving without strings attached.
- At the level of egoic personality we try to *control* our lives, while at the level of the Transpersonal Self control gives way to acquiescence, trust, letting go, release, surrender to what life brings us knowing that in the larger scheme of the universe and pattern of events, whatever comes is what is needed for the personality to grow, develop, and realize the whole self.

In all of this it is important to remember that one portion of the whole self is not better or worse than the other. Both aspects -- egoic and transpersonal -- are needed to live a whole and integrated life. The ego is necessary to deal competently in the physical world of time and space and manipulate in that outer world. The Transpersonal Self is necessary to deal competently in the psychological world beyond time and space and manipulate in that inner world. The Transpersonal Self needs the egoic self as the egoic self

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

needs the Transpersonal Self to straddle both inner and outer realities. Being two sides of the same coin, one is a reflection of the other at different levels of reality (physical and psychological). Just as the butterfly is not better than the caterpillar, the roots of a tree not better than its leaves, the bloom of a flower not better than its stem, the view from the mountaintop not better than the view from the valley, both are good. They are just different. They coexist -- one within and one without -- spontaneously while unfolding over time. The Transpersonal Self learns from the ego and the ego, hopefully, learns to learn from the Transpersonal Self.

### **Shift from Transpersonal Awareness to No Self**

***Consciousness without an object.*** Vaughan (1985) states that "the transpersonal self...serves as a bridge between existential self-consciousness and transcendental unity consciousness where no separate self-sense remains" (p. 44). It is a state of identity in which the conscious "I" dis-identifies from even the Transpersonal Self, the "witness" of the contents and stream of consciousness. Not only are the content of consciousness not identified with, but also the "observer" of those contents. In such a state, the personality is said to experience itself as an emptiness or pure awareness to which no traits, no attributes, no characteristics can be given. The individual enters a transpersonal (beyond ego) state of consciousness in which all mental symbols and images of the contents of awareness fade away, become indistinct, distant, less and less necessary, and finally disappear altogether. Stripped of all symbolism and representations, the Transpersonal Self or soul finds itself left alone with its own feelings and feels direct experience. The Self is no longer identified with anything, not even itself. In this particular state of consciousness, the Self is detached, disinterested, desireless. There is nothing to identify with. There is only awareness. Period. This is the sense of self-identity, the Tao, that is talked about in Buddhism--consciousness without an object (Merrell-Wolff, 1973). In the Buddhist literature, this experience of consciousness without an object, without symbols, is sometimes interpreted as a state of nonbeing. However, this is a natural enough mistake since we are so symbol-oriented as a species that it is difficult to conceive of anything as existing to an individual who is not aware of it and that exists without a form of we can be aware -- like trying to prove the existence of the physical bed upon which one is sleep to a dreaming self who for all practical purposes is not aware of its existence and could not perceive it even if it did (except perhaps in a so-call out-of-body experience).

***The nature and conditions of No Self.*** Logically speaking, the self can only perceive itself as itself when it is capable of viewing itself as an object. This requires the self -- which is in essence not a thing but instead an action -- to stand off from itself, to step outside of action, in order to differentiate and separate itself out as an object to be viewed from everything else in the universe which it is not. Because identity is a part of action and basically inseparable from action, and because the self's act of trying to step outside of action is itself an action, the attempt is ultimately doomed to failure. When this dualism between subject and object is transcended, however, one's self is no longer separated conceptually or experientially from the whole. The self is no longer identifiable as any "thing." Just as the eye cannot see itself, the Self cannot perceive itself as an object separate from itself to be seen. There is only the seeing. Such a "no Self" cannot be known as an object. It can only be experienced. And that's all that can be said about it. As soon as I name myself, I objectify myself with a verbal label and become an object to myself, existing now as a concept in my mind. The Self as subject cannot be named or even known without turning itself into an object. One must go beyond even this identification, this objectification, to the state of consciousness where the Self knows itself as nothing and where it can no longer be called Self. There is no real self, no higher self, no self at all. Only awareness rising moment by moment. As Lao Tsu (Feng & English, 1972, p. 1), cryptically put the matter:

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.  
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.  
The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

The named is the mother of ten thousand things.  
Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.  
Ever desiring, one can see the manifestations.  
The two spring from the same source but differ in name; this appears as darkness.  
Darkness within darkness.  
The gate to all mystery.

### Ken Wilber's Structural-Hierarchical Model of Consciousness Development

Ken Wilber is one of the most prolific writers on transpersonally-related topics, especially topics related to human development (Wilber, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1981a, 1981b, 1983a, 1983b, 2000a, 2000b). His model of transpersonal development -- the spectrum of consciousness -- integrates, builds upon, and extends mainstream contemporary theories of human development to include states "beyond" Piagetian formal operations and Maslowian self-actualization (Wilber, 1975, 1977). One key book that outlines his theory of human development is *Transformation of Consciousness: Conventional and Contemplative Perspectives on Development* (Wilber, Engler, & Brown, 1986). **Figure 8-4** depicts what Wilber refers to as the basic structures of consciousness -- "the fundamental building blocks of awareness, things like sensations, images, impulses, concepts, and so on" -- and their corresponding transition points (or "fulcrums") whereby development can proceed in either a healthy direction or unhealthy "pathological" direction depending upon how the individual meets the various life tasks that must be addressed at each particular stage (Wilber, 1991, p. 185).

---

Insert Figure 8-4 here

---

***Differentiation, identification, integration.*** Transpersonal scholar Ken Wilber (1991) describes how human consciousness or awareness develops or unfolds through a three-fold process of differentiation, identification, and integration:

Growth and development occur through a series of stages or levels, from the least developed and least integrated to the most developed and most integrated. . . . At each stage or level of development, the self is faced with certain tasks. How it negotiates those tasks determines whether it winds up relatively healthy or relatively disturbed. . . . At each stage of development, the self starts out identifying with that stage, and it must accomplish the tasks appropriate to that stage, whether learning toilet training or learning language. But in order for development to continue, the self has to let go of that stage, or disidentify with it, in order to make room for the new and higher stage. In other words, it has to *differentiate* from the lower stage, *identify* with the higher stage, and then *integrate* the higher with the lower. . . . If anything goes persistently wrong [with this task of differentiation and then integration]. . . , then you get a specific and characteristic pathology [that can be treated by different psychotherapies that have been specifically developed to take care of them]. (p. 183)

***Basic structures of consciousness.*** Although there are many different types and levels of development, Wilber derives his transpersonal model of development on what has been called the "Great Chain of Being" -- the unfolding emergent hierarchical sequence into existence of matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit -- and elaborates upon this evolutionary scheme by distinguishing nine basic levels, stages, or structures of consciousness development (in ascending order): sensoriphysical (matter), phantasmic-emotional (body), representation (mind<sup>1</sup>), rule/role (mind<sup>2</sup>), formal-reflexive (mind<sup>3</sup>), existential or vision-logic (bodymind) psychic (soul<sup>1</sup>), subtle (soul<sup>2</sup>), causal (spirit<sup>1</sup>), absolute (spirit<sup>2</sup>). "At each stage



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

you can become attached or fixated to the experiences of that stage . . . and this causes various developmental arrests and pathologies at that level. And there are. . . specific treatments for each" (Wilber, 1991, p. 196). Each of these nine stages or levels of consciousness growth and development are described in more detail below.

**Stage 1 -- Sensoriophysical.** This first stage or structure of awareness occurs during infancy, and "include(s) the material components of the body plus sensation and perception. . . . [and] what Piaget called sensorimotor intelligence" (Wilber, 1991, p. 185). The infant is perceived not to be able to distinguish itself from its environment; that is, it cannot yet tell the difference between subject and object, between self and notself. The primary life task at this stage is to learn these differentiations and to distinguish one's body from one's surroundings (e.g., where one's arm stops and the crib begins). If the infant fails to do so, according to Wilber (1991), "its ego boundaries remain completely permeable and diffuse. . . . There is a hallucinatory blurring of boundaries between inside and outside, between dream and reality . . . one of the defining characteristics of psychoses. . . . [which] leads to autism and symbiotic psychosis . . . . The only treatments that seem to really work are pharmacological or custodial" (pp. 189-190).

**Stage 2 -- Phantasmic-emotional.** This second level emerges in the life of the developing infant around the age of seven months and continues to develop during the first three years of life. It is the time when mental images form and signals the birth of imagination. The infant develops the ability to analogically represent in interior mental space objects that exist in exterior physical space. "Images represent a thing by looking like that thing. . . . The image of a tree, for example, looks more or less like a real tree" (Wilber, 1991, p. 185). The infant also becomes more and more aware of the power behind his or her emotions, sexual urges, impulses, and other energies of the body variously called bioenergy, *prana*, *élan vital*. A third development at this stage, in line with Wilber's three-fold operator of development -- differentiation, identification, and integration -- the primary life task at this second stage is "separation-individuation," that is, for the developing infant to break its exclusive identification with the material world at large (e.g., its mother, the physical environment, surrounding objects), differentiate its body from that physical world, and then identify and integrate its emergent self-sense with that body as a distinct, separate, and individual bodyself that is in the world but not of it. If the infant fails to "separate and individuate,"

then the boundaries of the self remain vague, fluid, confused. The world seems to 'emotionally flood' the self . . . [which] is very volatile and unstable. This is the so-called borderline syndromes. . . . [and] related. . . narcissistic disorders, where the self, precisely because it has not fully differentiated itself from the world, treats the world like its oyster and people as mere extensions of itself. Completely self-centered, in other words, since world and self are the same . . . [In terms of appropriate therapies], 'structure-building techniques' . . . . build structures. . . build boundaries, ego boundaries. They help the person differentiate self and other, by basically. . . showing the person, that what happens to the other does not necessarily happen to the self. You can disagree with your mother, for example, and it won't kill you. . . . In the borderline conditions, the problem is *not* that a strong ego barrier is repressing some emotion or drive; the problem is that there isn't a strong ego barrier or boundary in the first place. . . . At this level, the self just isn't strong enough to forcefully repress anything. (pp. 190-191)

**Stage 3 - Representational mind.** This stage emerges in the life of the developing infant around age two and continues into childhood to around seven years of age. Piaget refers to this stage as the stage of preoperational thinking in which one sees the development of the ability to manipulate first symbols (which emerge between two and four years of age), and then concepts (which emerge between the age of four and seven years of age), and then language itself develops. What is the difference between the ability to represent objects, people, and events as a symbol versus a concept?

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

A symbol represents a thing but doesn't look like that thing, which is a much harder and higher task [than representing a thing as an analog image]. For example, the word "Fido" [is a symbol that] represents your dog, but doesn't look like the real dog at all, and so it's harder to hold in mind. That's why words emerge only after images. . . . A concept represents a *class* of things. The concept of 'dog' means all possible dogs, not just Fido. A harder task still. A symbol demotes, a concept connotes. (p. 185).

It is at this stage that the child dis-identifies with his or her body and its associated sensations, emotions, and impulses, and identifies with its newly emergent, stable mental or egoic self with a name, a verbally-oriented identity, and vocabulary by which communication can take place to others who are not-self. The child cannot, however, take the perspective of another and is strongly egocentric in thinking and typically narcissistic in attitude and behavior. The child's moral sense up to this time remains preconventional being based entirely as it is on bodily pleasures (rewards) and pains (punishment). The sequential nature of language and further development of imagination brings with it a stronger awareness of time and the representations of memories of yesterday and dreams of tomorrow. Verbally-structured thought, supported by imagination, and the sensations, emotions, and impulses of the present, now become capable of engendering an experience of regret and guilt over past deeds, and worry and anxiety over future ones. In order to protect the comprehending ego from the discomfort of these newly emergent feelings, the defense mechanism of repression first comes into operation to repress and thoughts, emotions, or impulses that cause anxiety and worry, particularly sex and aggression. A dynamically repressed portion of the self or personality becomes formed that Freud called the "personal subconscious" and that Jung called "the shadow." In this way, we form phantoms of ourselves in our minds -- the good I and the bad me -- that do battle with each other and impede the flow of energy within the self.

At level three the mental-egoic self emerges, assisted by language, and learns to differentiate itself from the body. But if that *differentiation* goes too far, the result is *dissociation*, repression. The ego doesn't transcend the body, it alienates it, casts it out. But that only means that aspects of the body and its wishes remain as the shadow, painfully sabotaging the ego in the form of neurotic conflict. . . . Treatment for the neuroses means contacting the shadow and reintegrating it. . . . These treatments are called 'uncovering techniques,' because they attempt to uncover the shadow, bringing it to the surface, and then reintegrate it. . . . To do so, the repression barrier, created by language and sustained by anxiety and guilt, has to be lifted or relaxed. . . . Whatever the technique [e.g., free association without censorship], the goal is essentially the same: befriend and reown the shadow. (Wilber, 1991, p. 192).

The development of verbally-constructed thought prepares the child for the next stage of development (i.e., the rule/role mind).

**Stage 4 - Rule/role mind.** Stage four occurs from age seven to around age eleven and envelops the Piagetian cognitive stage of concrete operations. "[Wilber] call(s) it rule/role, because it is the first structure that can perform rule-dominated thinking, like multiplication or division, and it is the first structure that can take the role of other [persons], or actually assume a perspective different from one's own" (Wilber, 1991, p. 186). It represents a very literal-minded kind of thinking that understands sensory experience by manipulating (or operating on) it in a concrete, tangible, material way.

The child, in other words, increasingly inhabits a world of roles and of rules. His or her behavior is governed by scripts, by linguistic rules that govern behavior and roles. . . . The child's moral sense shifts from preconventional to conventional modes -- it goes from self-centric to sociocentric. . . . The rules and roles the young child learns are for all purposes set in concrete. The child accepts these rules and roles in an unquestioning fashion [i.e., the conformist stage]. . . . The child at this stage takes so many things literally and concretely, and if these mistaken beliefs [and

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

untrue, contradictory, or misleading myths we got from our parents, society, and culture] persist in adulthood, you have script pathology. . . . Treatment here -- particularly the treatment known as cognitive therapy -- tries to uproot these myths and expose them to the light of reason and evidence. (Wilber, 1991, pp. 192-193)

**Stage 5 -- Formal-reflexive.** Stage 5 signals the emergence of the reasoning mind and Piagetian formal operations and the entry into postconventional morality that occurs between the ages of 11-15. The mind of the developing adolescent is now able to introspect, reflect upon, question, and independently judge the rules, roles, scripts, norms, and beliefs of others. The person is capable of separating his or her beliefs into those that he or she accepts and those that he or she rejects. The ability to engage in metacognition also develops during this stage.

This is the first structure that can not only think but think about thinking. It is thus highly introspective ['Who am I?' becomes for the first time a burning issue], and it is capable of hypothetical reasoning, or testing propositions against evidence. . . and is responsible for the burgeoning self-consciousness and wild idealism of that [adolescent] period. . . [The person] is no longer bound to conformist social norms. . . but rather judges actions according to more universal standards -- what is right, or fair, not just for my group, but for persons at large. . . If there are problems here, the person develops what Erikson called an *identity crisis*. And the only treatment for that is more introspection. . . . The therapist here. . . helps them ferret out for themselves just who they are, who they want to be, the type of person they can be. . . It's looking for an appropriate self, small s, not the absolute S, big S. (Wilber, 1991, pp. 186, 193-194)

**Stage 6 -- Existential or vision-logic.** This integrative structure of developing consciousness functions to incorporate, associate, integrate, correlate, unite and join mind and body into a "higher-order" union of two intertwining, intermingling processes. It is the stage beyond formal operations -- the stage of synthesizing creativity and the creative individual (Gowan, 1975). The result is a more highly integrated personality in which "mind and body are both experiences of an integrated self" (Jane Loevinger, quoted in Wilber, 1991, p. 194). This integrated mind-body self-sense Wilber calls "the centaur." Beliefs related to so-called existential issues pertaining to the realities of mortality, death, pain, suffering, guilt, meaning and purpose, while present at other stages, become figural here -- "Everyone must die; everything gained must eventually be relinquished;" "Nothing lasts; everything changes;" "The separate self is eventually overcome by death;" "One is born alone and dies alone."

Problems at the centaur level are existential problems, problems inherent in manifest existence itself, like mortality, finitude, integrity, authenticity, meaning in life. . . dominate. And therapies that address these concerns are the humanistic therapies. (Wilber, 1991, p. 194)

**Stage 7 - Psychic.** If psychological growth continues, the individual enters "the beginning stages of transpersonal, spiritual, contemplative development" (Wilber, 1991, p. 186). It is the stage characterizing what one educational psychologist calls the "psychedelic" individual (Gowan, 1974) who now *begins* to enter one's own path toward the transpersonal. It may include the development of psychic abilities (e.g., telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, out-of-body experiences, emergence of reincarnational memories, etc.) but it does not necessarily have to. Wilber states that there is reason to believe that these exceptional experiences are possible for individuals who have significantly integrated within themselves the capacities of the inner psyche that were emergent in the previous stages of psychological development. These experiences may also accompany high levels of transpersonal, post-conventional development referenced in the spiritual psychologies of world religions (Tart, 1975, pp. 150-151). These "extraordinary" or "charismatic" phenomena, however are not essential factors to spiritual development. One could be gifted with psi abilities and still behave in petty self-serving ways characteristic of Kohlberg's pre-conventional stage of moral development. Not all lines of development (cognitive,

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

interpersonal, moral, spiritual, psychic, and so forth) proceed at the same rate. The ego or conscious "I" at this stage of consciousness development is beginning to become more flexible, expansive, less constrictive so that it is able to contain more of its own experience, more of its own inner reality, into its understanding of itself, more of what Wilber (1991) calls "the wider spiritual and transcendental dimensions of existence" (p. 195).

You might experience flashes of so-called cosmic consciousness, you might develop certain psychic capacities, you might develop a keen and penetrating intuition. But mostly you simply realize that your own awareness is not confined to the individual bodymind. You begin to intuit that your own awareness somehow goes beyond, or survives, the individual organism. You start to be able to merely witness the events of the individual bodymind, because you are no longer exclusively identified with them or bound to them, and so you develop a measure of equanimity. You are *starting* to contact or intuit your transcendental soul, the Witness. (Wilber, 1991, p. 195)

Meditation is an example of a psychotherapeutic technique that can be used not to displace the ego but enable and permit the personality to look within and past the ego and "to suspend mental-egoic activity in general and thus allow transegoic or transpersonal awareness to develop, leading eventually to the discovery of the Witness or the Self" (Wilber, 1991, p. 197).

When you practice meditation, one of the first things you realize is that your mind -- and your life, for that matter -- is dominated by largely subconscious verbal chatter. You are always talking to yourself. . . In any case, initial meditation experiences are like being at the movies. . . You are looking at [thoughts, images, fantasies, notions, ideas concepts] impartially and without judgment. You just watch them go by, the same as you watch clouds float by in the sky. . . If you judge your thoughts, if you get caught up in them, then you can't transcend them. You can't find higher or subtler dimensions of your own being. So you sit in meditation, and you simply 'witness' what is going on in your mind. . . And what happens is. . . you start to become free of their unconscious influence. . . you are not using them to look at the world. . . You become free of the separate-self sense that depended on them. . . You start to become free of the ego. This is the psychic level, the initial spiritual dimensions, where the conventional ego 'dies' and higher structures of awareness are 'resurrected.' Your sense of identity naturally begins to expand and embrace the cosmos, or all of nature. . . 'cosmic consciousness,' as R. M. Bucke called it. . . This is the beginning of transcendence, of finding your way back home. . . You realize that you are one with the fabric of the universe, eternally. Your fear of death begins to subside, and you actually begin to feel. . . the transcendental nature of your own being. Feelings of gratitude and devotion arise in you. . . You realize you simply have to do whatever you can to help all sentient beings, and for the precise reason. . . that you realize that we all share the same nondual Self or Spirit or Absolute Mind. (Wilber, 1994, p. 44)

**Stage 8 - Subtle.** As the individual continues to grow, develop, and evolve into further transpersonal levels, "attention is progressively freed from the outer world of the external environment and the inner world of the bodymind, [and] awareness starts to transcend the subject/object duality altogether" (Wilber, 1991, p. 195). It is a result of what Gowan (1980) refers to as "discontinuous, emergent, and integrative. . . operations of increasing order" (p. 39). Here the individual experiences a state of illumination and enlightenment beyond simply communing with transcendental entities or a personal God, but recognizing a basic *union* with those entities. "Consciousness itself starts to become luminous, light-filled, numinous, and it seems to directly touch, even unite with, divinity itself. . . the inner Light of the illuminated and intuitive mind [reveals] the illusory world of duality. . . as it is in reality -- namely, as nothing but a manifestation of Spirit itself. The outer world starts to look divine, the inner world starts to look divine" (Wilber, 1991, pp. 195-196).

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

As your identity begins to transcend the isolated and individual bodymind, you start to intuit that there is a Ground of Being or genuine Divinity, beyond ego. . .mystic god figures or rationalistic scientism. . . which at the subtle level is often experienced. . . [as] very concrete experiences of profound Light, of either a Being of Light, or just of extreme clarity and brilliance of awareness. . . You are starting to see the hidden or esoteric dimension, the dimension outside the ordinary cosmos, the dimension that transcends nature. . . This is what scholars have called the 'numinous' nature of subtle spirit. Numinous and luminous. . . You can also experience this level as a discovery of your own higher self, your soul, the Holy Spirit. (Wilber, 1994, pp. 44-45)

**Stage 9 - Causal.** This structure of consciousness moves the individual into the further reaches of identity possible -- "the supreme identity, the identity of your awareness and the universe at large -- not just the *physical* universe, but the multidimensioned, divine universe" (Wilber, 1991, p. 195).

The process is complete, the soul or pure Witness dissolves in its source, and the *union* with God gives way to an *identity* with Godhead, or the unmanifest Ground of all being. . . . You have realized your fundamental identity with. . . the Nature of all natures and the Being of all beings. . . Since Spirit is the suchness or condition of all things . . . it is even nothing special. . . Individuals who reach this level are often depicted as very ordinary people, nothing special about them. (Wilber, 1991, p. 196)

At this state, Wilber insists that we do not experience a mere union with the transcendent, but experience an actual, direct, immediate, and vivid *identity* with spirit -- "the pure unmanifest source of all the other and lower levels" (Wilber, 1991, p. 187).

If you continue simply witnessing. . . . you enter a profound state of non-manifestation. . . . It becomes perfectly obvious that you are absolutely one with this Fullness, which transcends all worlds and all planes and all time and all history. You are perfectly full, and therefore you are perfectly empty. . . The soul, or separate-self sense disappears, and God or separate Deity form disappears, because both -- soul and God -- collapse into Godhead. Both soul and God disappear into the supreme identity. You experience a profound release, you realize the highest summit of your own being, which is radically one with Godhead. (pp. 45-46)

**Ultimate nondual level.** The nondual level is not a developmental level in itself but is the context or ground out of which all previous levels spring and emerge and in which they are forever supported and couched.

In the previous causal level, you are so absorbed in the unmanifest dimension that you don't even notice the manifest world. You are discovering Emptiness, and so you ignore Form. But at the ultimate or nondual level, you integrate the two. You see that Emptiness appears or manifests itself as Form, and that Form has as its essence Emptiness. . . In other words, what appears as hard or solid objects 'out there' are really transparent and translucent manifestations of the Divine . . . This nondual 'state' is not itself another experience. It is simply the opening or clearing in which all experiences arise and fall. . . . You are not the one who experiences [the opening or clearing]; you are the clearing, the opening, the emptiness, in which any experience comes and goes, like reflections on the mirror. (Wilber, 1994, p. 46)

**The developmental lines.** Each of the nine basic structures, levels, or stages of consciousness identified by Wilber represent an invariant pattern through which most aspects or dimensions of human personality functioning proceed -- cognition, creativity, ego, emotionality, gender-identity, language, moral, needs, psychosexuality, psychosociality, self-identify, spirituality, and so forth. Wilber calls these aspects,



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

dimensions, or attributes of personality action that evolve, develop, or mature over time in a stage-like manner "developmental lines (or streams) (Wilber, 1999a, p. 2).

These lines are 'relatively independent.' which means that, for the most part, they can develop independently of each other, at different rates, with a different dynamic, and on a different time schedule. A person can be very advanced in some lines [e.g., cognitive], medium in others [e.g., interpersonal, affective], low in still others [e.g., moral, spiritual] -- all at the same time. Thus, overall development -- the sum total of all these different lines -- shows no linear or sequential development whatsoever. . . . Each developmental line itself tends to unfold in a sequential, holarchical fashion: higher stages in each line tend to build upon or incorporate the earlier stages, no stages can be skipped, and the stages emerge in an order that cannot be altered by environmental conditioning or social reinforcement. (Wilber, 1999a, p. 3)

***Pre/trans fallacy.*** Ken Wilber is credited with clarifying a traditional confusion between two structures of consciousness that on the surface appear similar because they can be described in similar verbal terms as an instance of "subject and object are one," but which are actually two very different kinds of experiences related to feelings of oneness with the universe. One kind of union occurs in infancy during Stage 1 (Sensoriphysical) and the other kind of union occurs developmentally much later during Stage 8 (Subtle). The union the infant feels with its mother and with the physical world that surrounds it in Stage 1 of consciousness development is a kind of undifferentiated subject/object fusion that occurs *prior* to the developmental task of self-differentiation that happens at the next level of stage 2 (Phantasmic-emotional). The union the mystic feels with the universe in Stage 8 of consciousness development is a kind of *post*-differentiated subject/object union that occurs quite a while after initial self-differentiation has occurred. The two kinds of fusion/union experiences are very different in origin and structure although both may be described using similar words (i.e., "an oceanic, undifferentiated state of consciousness.") The pre/trans fallacy consists of mistaking one kind of unity experience for the other, and assuming that the *pre*-ego infantile fusion state is a progressive prototype of the *trans*-ego mystical union state or that the mystical *trans*-ego union state is a regression of some sort back to the infantile *pre*-ego fusion state. Wilber (1991) describes the pre/trans fallacy in the following way:

People tend to confuse the "pre" states with the "trans" states because they superficially look alike. Once you have equated the infantile fusion state -- which is prepersonal -- with the mystical union -- which is transpersonal -- then one of two things happens. You either elevate that infantile state to a mystical union it does not possess, or you negate all genuine mysticism by claiming it is nothing but a regression to infantile narcissism and oceanic adualism. Jung and the Romantic movement in general do the first -- they elevate pre-egoic and prerational states to transegoic and transrational glory. They're 'elevationists.' And Freud and his followers do just the opposite: they reduce all transrational, transegoic, genuinely mystical states to prerational, pre-egoic, infantile states. They're 'reductionists.' (p. 189)

There is no transcendence of subject/object duality in infancy because that duality has not yet occurred developmentally and so there is no duality to transcend in the first place. The separated, differentiated ego or subject has not emerged yet and so there is nothing to integrate. The mystical state of unity consciousness brings together two separate things -- a subject-ego and an object-world -- into a higher integration that includes matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit and all those stages and levels that preceded it. Wilber (1991) states: "Just because the infant can't tell the difference between subject and object, theorists think that state is some sort of mystical union. It's nothing of the sort. . . . Genuine mysticism does exist, and there's precisely nothing infantile about it at all" (pp. 188-189).

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

### Critique of Hierarchical Models of Development

***Hierarchical models are value-laden.*** Wilber has been criticized for portraying evolution in general, and human development in particular, in hierarchical terms that can be misinterpreted such that different levels are perceived to be "higher" or better, or more real, more effective, or more "spiritual" than "lower" levels that unfold earlier in time (Rothberg, 1986; Rothberg & Kelly, 1998). One criticism, for example, of broad hierarchical models of human development such as Wilber's is that

their hierarchical structure leads to the potential of devaluing and even oppression of societies or groups ranked as 'lower.' This also includes 'lower levels' of the psyche, such as the body, the emotions, and sexuality. These models typically value urban, the intellectual, and the masculine. They devalue the tribal and rural, the physical, and the feminine. (Frager, 1989, p. 300)

Ken Wilber denies that his developmental scheme or those of more than 100 other researchers of human development that he draws upon and integrates into his unified field theory of human development

are the rigid, linear, clunk-and-grind models portrayed by. . . critics. Development is not a linear ladder but a fluid and flowing affair, with spirals, swirls, streams, and waves, and what appears to be an almost infinite number of multiple modalities. There appear to be as many different dimensions or modalities of consciousness as there are different situations in life (i.e., endless). (Wilber, 1999b, p. 109)

The varieties of the nature of consciousness that Wilber talks about here would also seem to be reflected in the fantastic variety of physical life we see about us. The inner reality of consciousness would seem to be as infinite as the exterior reality of the physical universe. Modern psychology has come to recognize the incredible complexity of the human brain and body. Human mind and consciousness are even more unbelievably complex.

***Hierarchical models stratify reality.*** While Wilber's stage theory may not be rigid or linear, it *is* nevertheless hierarchical. Wilber (1999) states: "This not to say that all. . . developmental lines are only hierarchical; many of their features are not. But crucial aspects of all of them appear to be hierarchical in important ways" (p. 3). Elsewhere Wilber (1999) qualifies this statement:

This does not mean that all, or even most, of the important aspects of development are hierarchical. In my system, each basic structure or wave actually consists of both hierarchy (or increasing holistic capacity) and heterarchy (or nonhierarchical interaction among mutually equivalent elements). Thus holarchy, as I use the term, includes a balance of both hierarchy (equivalently ranked levels) and heterarchy (mutually lined dimensions). (p. 4)

The hierarchical nature of human development reflects the nature of reality as he sees it -- an all-encompassing worldview and metaphysics expressed in what has been variously called the "perennial philosophy" and "the "Great Chain of Being," (Huxley, 1970; Lovejoy, 1936/1964; Schumacher, 1977; Smith, 1976).

Reality is composed of various levels of existence -- levels of being and of knowing -- ranging from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit. Each senior dimension transcends but includes its junior -- a conception of wholes within wholes within wholes indefinitely, reaching from dirt to Divinity. (Wilber, 1999a, p. 1)

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

In Wilber's transpersonal model of development, each level, stage or "holon" -- a "whole/part" in which every part is a part of a greater whole, and every whole a part of a still larger whole -- is ranked as lower or higher according to its "holistic capacity [to represent] an increase in wholeness and integrative capacity over its predecessors" (Wittine, 1995, p. 238). As one book reviewer understands his model,

[Wilber]...asserts we cannot have wholeness without hierarchy, defined simply as a ranking of holons according to their holistic capacity. Each holon, or level, in a hierarchy, represents an increase in wholeness and integrative capacity over its predecessors. Evolution takes place as new holons emerge hierarchically. In each hierarchy, or series of increasing whole/part, each emergent holon (the 'senior,' let us say) negates the particularity and exclusivity of its junior, but embraces the junior's pattern and includes it in a larger pattern distinguished by the senior's own laws of being. . . . When the "senior" holon" emerges, it is one step further in the unfolding of the organism's inherent pattern. (Wittine, 1995, p. 238)

As Wilber (1991) puts it: "Higher development always means the possibility of higher or more universal integration" (p. 194).

***Hierarchical concepts blind us to other realizations and realities.*** Although a hierarchical framework for understanding certain transpersonal phenomenon such as religious visions have proven useful in judging the authenticity and legitimacy of certain religious expressions by assigning them a "higher" or "lower" place in the hierarchy of the spiritual cartography mapped out by "hierarchical structural analysis" (Lane, 1983; Wilber, 1977; Wilber, Engler, & Brown, 1986), it is important to avoid "the typically reductionistic conclusions and limited frameworks" associated with some hierarchical ontologies (Rothberg, 1986, p. 1). All hierarchical frameworks that hypothesize a progression occurring as one moves from one level to the next may simply be a distortion of perception based on limited ideas of "one personhood, consecutive time, and limited versions of the soul" (Roberts, 1977a, p. 78). The concepts of all such hierarchical frameworks can make us opaque to other understandings of development. They can blind us to stratas of consciousness of which our symbol-oriented awareness cannot perceive or comprehend except in oh-so-human terms, and that may seem so much more progressed and developed than our own, yet of which we are a part and that are as much here and now as the present physical self. Transpersonal writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts presents an evocative floral metaphor to describe the limitations of hierarchies that are grounded in and unfold within a linear time, cause-and-effect framework.

There are red, yellow, and violet flowers. One is not more progressed than the others, but each is different. . . . The petal of the flower, for example, is not more developed than the root. An ant on the ground may see that the petal is way above the root and stem, but ants are too wise to think that the petal must be better than the root. . . . Now: Consciousness flowers out in all directions. All directions taken by the flower of consciousness are good. The flower knows it is alive in the bulb, but it takes 'time' for the bulb to let the stem and leaves and flower emerge. The flower is not better than the bulb. It is not even more progressed than the bulb. It is the bulb in one of its manifestations. So, in your terms, it may seem as if there are progressions, or consecutive steps in development, in which more mature comprehensive selves will emerge. You are a part of those selves now, as the petals are of the bulb. Only in your system is that time period meaningful. . . . In basic terms, [the bulb and flower] exist at once. In your terms, however, it is as if the flower-to-be, from its 'future' calls back to the bulb and tells it how to make the flower. Memory operates backwards and forward in time. The flower -- calling back to the bulb, urging it 'ahead' and reminding it of its (probable future) development -- is like a future self in your terms, or a more highly advanced self, who has the answers and can indeed be quite practically relied upon. (Roberts, 1977a, pp. 78-80)



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

### Michael Washburn's Spiral-Dynamic Model of Ego Development

Michael Washburn's (1995) book, *The Ego and the Dynamic Ground: A Transpersonal Theory of Human Development*, integrates Freudian psychoanalytic and Jungian analytical psychodynamic theories with writings from Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. The resultant transpersonal theory of human development charts the course of human development from the earliest stages of ego emergence to the "highest" stages of ego transcendence. Washburn's theory proposes an alternative spiral-dynamic paradigm to Ken Wilber's structural-hierarchical paradigm of human development (Washburn, 2003).

***Distinguishing Washburn's spiral-dynamic model and Wilber's structural-hierarchical model of human development.*** Instead of viewing human development as movement through a progressive series of increasingly more differentiated-and-inclusive hierarchical stages, Washburn proposes a spiral movement that is played out between the ego and its ultimate source - the Dynamic Ground - in which the same "dynamic potentials" -- instead of inherently different potentials as asserted in Ken Wilber's structural-hierarchical model -- are given expression at each prepersonal, personal, and transpersonal stage of personality development. According to Washburn (1995),

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

Washburn views human development during the first half of life as moving in a direction away from the Dynamic Ground (from prepersonal, pre-egoic stage to personal, egoic stage). Development during the second half of life spirals back to the Ground on the way to a higher union with the Ground (from personal, egoic stage to transpersonal, transegoic stage) - a development whose aim is whole-psyche integration. Washburn's spiral-dynamic perspective attempts to integrate key Freudian and Jungian ideas within a developmental framework that acknowledges both the biological roots and "higher" or "deeper" spiritual potentialities of the psyche documented in the writings of Eastern and Western wisdom traditions.

### Roberto Assagioli's Psychosynthesis Model of Transpersonal Development

***Stages of transpersonal development.*** According to the psychosynthesis model of transpersonal development created by Roberto Assagioli (1965/1973; 1988/1991), the direction of personality development is the harmonious inner recognition by the conscious "I" of the higher inner Self of which it is a part and the realization that the outer ego-self and the inner transpersonal-self are one. The task is to heal the fundamental duality between the outer and inner selves. All levels of the personality must recognize the transpersonal Higher Self. The transpersonal self must become the immediate, conscious self. This unity will put the individual in a position to begin a truly fulfilling existence. The stages for the attainment of this goal are to be consciously realized and experienced with the conscious ego-I highly involved. The intuitive, transpersonal portion of the Self needs to have the full cooperation of the rational intellect of the conscious self, if transpersonal development is to proceed harmoniously. Enlightenment cannot be simply foisted or imposed upon an unwilling, recalcitrant, resistant, and inflexible ego. The intellect of the conscious "I" has to appreciate its dependence upon the intuitional wisdom of the inner self and is not to be left by the wayside. The conscious "I" with its reasoning intellect and the Higher Self

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

with its intuitional wisdom are meant to challenge and develop each other through the following stages identified by Assagioli (1965/1973, p. 21-31):

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

### Personal Psychosynthesis

**Knowledge of one's personality.** The first stage of *Psychosynthesis* is to discover the many different elements of our personality. In order to “know thyself,” we must know more than the changing contents of our waking stream of consciousness. We must undertake an inner journey within our own subconscious regions. “To explore the unknown reality you must venture within your own psyche, travel inward through invisible roads as you journey outward on physical ones” (Roberts, 1979b, p. 350). There is only one way to know one's transpersonal personality – by studying and exploring your own ordinary personality and then going *beyond* it to it further reaches. “An extensive exploration of the vast regions of our unconscious must...be undertaken” (Assagioli, 1965/1973, p. 21). This means communicating with one's "lower" subconscious mind employing psychological methods designed to facilitate such communication -- meditation, active imagination, guided fantasy, drawing, pendulum method, automatic writing, self-hypnosis, dream diaries, music, and so forth -- to discover the personal beliefs that influence those unconscious processes that create one's personally experienced reality, the fears and desires that motivate the person, and the conflicts that paralyze one's decision-making and waste one's energies. This meaning also opening channels of communication with the region of the higher unconscious where the transpersonal, Higher Self resides. In this way the individual will discover unknown abilities, higher potentialities, and latent psychic energies which seek to express themselves but are blocked or repressed through lack of understanding, prejudice, or fear. “If we wish to consciously encourage our growth we need to investigate our lower unconscious. Otherwise, it may be the source of trouble, storing repressed energy, controlling our actions, and robbing us of our freedom” (Ferrucci, 1982, p. 43).

**Personality is capable of producing many ego structures across the lifespan.** Myers's (1889-1895/1976) conception of the subliminal consciousness as being composed of innumerable discrete regions containing a plurality of selves and Jung's (1934/1960) conception of “complexes” supports Assagioli's (1965/1973, pp. 74-77) postulation of the existence of “subpersonalities” within the subconscious portions of the self. For example,

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

According to transpersonal writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1999a), the personality is capable of producing numerous ego structures, depending upon the life-context of the organism.

The personality, even as you know it, is never static, always changing, and even the ego is not the same from one day to the next. The child's ego is not the adult's ego. As a rule you perceive the similarity, and overlook the differences of psychological patterns of this sort. The ego is not the

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

most powerful or the most knowledgeable portion of the self. It is simply a well-specialized portion of the personality, well equipped to operate under certain circumstances...It is a great mistake to imagine that the human being has but one ego.... The ego represents merely any given pattern of characteristics, psychological characteristics that happen to be dominant at any given time. If any kind of a thorough investigation were to be carried on, it would become apparent that during one lifetime any given individual will display several, sometimes quite different, egos at various times, each one quite honestly seeing itself as the permanent I. (pp. 21-22)

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

The most effective method by which [we take possession of the various elements of the personality and acquire control over them] is that of dis-identification...based on the following psychological principle: *We are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate and control everything from which we dis-identify ourselves.* (Assagioli, 1965/1973, p. 22)

This requires understanding that one is not one's thoughts. The thought and the thinker are two different entities. You are the self that has thoughts. One can change one's thoughts without changing oneself. This insight is brought about through the process of dis-identification that is also a part of Frances Vaughan's (1985) model of transpersonal development. By taking on the objective attitude of an observer or witness to one's own psychological experiences and contents of consciousness, a detached and disinterested "psychological distance" is achieved that permits one a degree of freedom and control over potentially harmful subconscious images or complexes in order to mindfully consider their origins, their nature, and their effects, and then harmlessly release or use them for constructive purposes.

### **Transpersonal Psychosynthesis**

***Realization of one's true Self - the discovery or creation of a unifying center.*** After the various elements of the personality have been acknowledged, recognized, and accepted -- a magnificent and tremendous undertaking and a long and arduous task that is neither easy nor simple -- "what has to be achieved is to expand the personal consciousness into that of the Self; to unite the lower with the higher Self" (Assagioli, 1965/1973, p. 24). This is the third stage of *Psychosynthesis*. This means that the inner, Transpersonal Self be allowed to express itself through the immediate, ego-directed self.

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

***Psychosynthesis: the formation or reconstruction of the personality around the new center.*** "When the unifying center has been found or created, we are in a position to build around it a new personality – coherent, organized, and unified. This is the fourth stage of *Psychosynthesis*. Once an inner ideal model of the self has been formed that is both realistic and authentic in line with the natural development of the given individual and therefore capable of realization, then the actual construction of the new personality

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

begins. This is the actual *psychosynthesis*” (Assagioli, 1965/1973, p. 26). According to Assagioli (pp. 28-29), the carrying out of this inner program of psychosynthesis involves

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

***The superconscious realms are in constant renewal.*** The pursuit of any given inner ideal model or “ideal picture” of oneself that one intends to become, actually changes the conscious self into a new knowing self, which inevitably calls forth a new goal or ideal model of ourselves. Each variation upon the model or ideal self is a new revelation, bringing about change and further development in the previous “known” personality. The transpersonal psyche is so richly creative that it constantly presents us with an endless bank of potentials and alternate models of the self. “The adage ‘Know thyself’ presupposes a model of the self that is stationary. For knowing the self at any given time actually changes the self into a new knowing self, which must again be known and thus changed” (Roberts, 1976, p. 95). The recognition of the ideal self by the immediate self is a creative mutation that instantly brings further ideal models into play, automatically creating new versions of excellence for the known self. Moreover, the ever-changing model is the energy behind its own variations. Through its interactions with the known self, the model is eternally replenished as the known self reconstructs itself around the new center. Just as there is no single stable, permanent state of “enlightenment” or “liberation,” the Transpersonal Self is no unchanging, constant, unmoved mover who moves, “a timeless essence...perceived as unchangeable, silent, pure being” (Ferrucci, 1982, p. 131). Assagioli’s view that the superconscious realms are in constant renewal implies that the transpersonal self is itself a dynamic, alive, vital, growing and developing portion of our identity. It learns from the experiences of its outer conscious egoic self just as the personal egoic self changes, learns, grows, and develops from its own experiences and projections.

***Psychosynthesis is capable of being scientifically tested and verified.*** Assagioli (1965/1973, 1973/1992, 1988/1991) believed that his model of the person, especially in relation to transpersonal areas of the psyche, was capable of being scientifically tested and verified according to empirical method, broadly defined to include *experience*. The transpersonal, Higher self is known to exist because it is experienced, and it influences the thoughts, images, sensation, emotions, and behaviors of the conscious “I.” All one has to do is to create the conditions for having the experience. The starting point is the *direct, existential experience of psychosynthesis*, unhampered by preconceived notions. It proceeds to a *description of the data* yielded. There follows the implementation of *experiments* on the various stages of psychosynthesis using both psychological methods and spiritual methods -- catharsis, critical analysis, self-identification, dis-identification, development of will, training and use of imagination, visualization, auditory evocation, imaginative evocation of other sensations, ideal models, symbol utilization, use of intuition, evoking serenity, music, transmutation and sublimation of sexual energies, and so forth (Assagioli, 1965/1973, part two; 1988/1991, pp. 171-171). Hypnosis is an experimental research method of particular value for instituting certain stages of dissociation (or dis-identification) such that the nature and conditions of the superconscious realms may be efficiently and effectively investigated.

### III. Spiritual Development

**Impulses toward spiritual development are continuous in every person.** One key idea that defines a transpersonal approach to spiritual development is that humanity is by nature a *spiritual* creature. Every human being comes into existence with inner ideals and spiritual values that seek fulfillment, and is

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

endowed with impulses to fulfill or actualize those ideals and values (what Abraham Maslow called “self-actualization”). Every individual is born into physical life to seek the greatest possible fulfillment and extension of its own abilities and interior system of “Being-values” (Maslow’s phrase) in a way that benefits not only the individual, but also helps the species to fulfill those particular qualities that are characteristic of it. Maslow (1968) considered this *inner directedness* toward “ultimate” or ideal states of health, self-expression, and value-fulfillment “instinctoid” – innate and biologically necessary in order to achieve physical health and growth and psychological vitality, peace, and joy. When unimpeded by negative conditioning, suggestion, or belief, these *transpersonal* impulses toward ideal states engender in the individual a sense of safety, assurance, and an expectation that needs will be satisfied, abilities actualized, and desires fulfilled. Such impulses are evident in the existence of heroic themes and ideals that pervade human cultural life, in excellent performance in any area of endeavor, and at those times when the individual suddenly feels at peace with oneself and one’s world, instinctively a part of events of which one usually considers oneself apart, unexpectedly happy and content with one’s daily life, or spontaneously experience an action in which one seems to go beyond one’s self. Such “peak experiences” are natural, biologically pertinent, and a part of our evolutionary heritage as a species (Maslow, 1964). In other terms, it can be said that “an intrinsic dynamism toward . . . transcendent realities is constitutive of the human” (Helminiak, 1987, p. xii). This innate, inherent self-transcending dynamism of the human psyche is open to theistic and religious interpretation but it does not necessitate a theistic or religious interpretation.

**Full awareness of impulses toward spiritual development is not necessarily present at any given time.** Negative expectations and beliefs, fears and doubts, when multiplied and hardened, can begin to diminish the individual’s awareness of his or her natural impulses toward spiritual development or what Maslow (1971) referred to as the “farther reaches of human nature.” Intrusions of a creative and spiritual nature (e.g., unusual sensations, ideas, memories, mental images, bodily feelings, and impulses) that originate from other dimensions of actuality may be initially frightening to the individual, considered to be alien or “not-self” and dangerous, perhaps even signs of mental disturbances and thus may be automatically shut out. Transpersonal impulses toward spiritual states of being and knowing continue to operate beneath the surface of conscious awareness whether the person is aware of them or not, but the individual is no longer able to perceive his or her own greater fulfillment, uniqueness, or integrity and thus becomes blind to other attributes with which he or she is naturally gifted and to which the impulses are intended to lead. Communications from these marginal, subliminal realms of consciousness are then permitted to emerge into conscious awareness only during sleep, in dreams, or in instances of creative inspiration. “An increased sensitivity to the urge of that drive [toward authentic self-transcendence] is an indicator of increased spiritual maturity and a determinative of possible further spiritual development” (Helminiak, 1987, p. 35).

**To develop spiritually practice spirituality.** The realization of spiritual development is essentially dependent on direct practice and on conditions suitable to the individual. What is often needed to allow impulses toward ideal states of spiritual development to *consciously* emerge in daily life is not only a belief in their existence and an intense desire and expectation of their occurrence, but also a disciplined openness that permits their emergence. Belief and desire alone may not be enough to regain contact with ignored, overlooked, or denied impulses. Engaging in a disciplined spiritual practice for a sufficient amount of time is often required to “open what is closed,” “balance what is unbalanced,” and “reveal what is hidden” in order to generate enough experiential data to counteract an individual’s limited ideas of the nature of the psyche and its greater world, and to make it easier for the egotistically-oriented portions of the self to accept the possible existence of other streams of perception and consciousness (Kornfield, 1993). As this occurs, the individual’s ideas of his or her own private reality become changed and understanding of the spiritual elements of the self becomes expanded. The limitations and blocks to one’s natural, spontaneous impulses toward spiritual realizations and “ideal” development may then become removed. Once the individual acknowledges the existence of such impulses and learns to trust them, the



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

person will quite naturally be led to explore their meaning and move in the direction of their ideal development. Spiritual development for some people begins only at that critical turning point in one's life when "one has found out for oneself that one has to decide for oneself what one is to make of oneself" (Lonergan, 1972, p. 121)

**Every individual has the right to choose his [or her] own spiritual path.** Transpersonal psychology recognizes the value-laden character of existence and the significant importance of individual differences, free will, choice, and responsibility for one's choices. Actions, events, and circumstances that are worthwhile, desirable, and significant for one person may be meaningless to another because of individual differences in temperament, inclination, curiosity, training, education, past experience, and desire for knowledge. Individuals can choose among courses of action precisely because they are uniquely suited to sense what course of action will lead to their own probable development and fulfillment. In the creative field of probable actions and events, there is always more than one way to discover the vital reality of our impulses toward ultimate or ideal states, and become acquainted with those deeply creative aspects of one's own being. According to transpersonal scholar Ken Wilber (1999a),

Authentic spirituality is not about translating the world differently, but about transforming your consciousness. It is about the growth of consciousness and interior transformations, and what you can do to foster them in yourself, thus contributing to a world-centric, global, spiritual consciousness in yourself and others. (p. 10)

### **Spiritual Development as Human Development**

***Spiritual development as a psychological concern.*** From the point of view of transpersonal psychology, "spiritual development is nothing other than human development viewed (or conceived) from a particular perspective" (Helminiak, 1987, p. xii). Humanity is by nature a spiritual creature impelled by "an intrinsic principle of authentic self-transcendence, the dynamic human *spirit*" (Helminiak, 1987, p. 35). As such, transpersonal psychology, especially as represented by and expressed through its phenomenological tradition and perspective, is the field within psychology that appropriately deals with the spiritual dimension of human personality functioning, including our capacity for understanding, self-determination, and creativity. Koch (1981), Woolfolk & Richardson (1984) and others have argued for such a broadened view of psychology. As a psychological concern, the psychological perspective taken toward spirituality and its development would necessarily have to expand upon the traditional positivist, mechanistic, materialistic perspective of mainstream psychology and be based upon different philosophical foundations, ontologically and epistemologically. Questions of value and meaning and authenticity, questions traditionally bracketed from discussion by mainstream psychology, come to the foreground of attention in a transpersonally-oriented approach to spiritual development. If one accepts within the human psyche the existence of an intrinsic self-transcending principle that directs the person toward what Plato called "the True, the Good, and the Beautiful," then the implication is that the goal and aim of that impulse is not illusory or non-existence. If it is affirmed that an intrinsic dynamic impulse toward transcendent realities is constitutive of being human, then this affirmation opens transpersonal psychology (and developmental psychology itself) to those further questions of the truth, meaning, and value of basic reality that basically transcends three-dimensional space and time, and of which the human personality is a part, and that must be addressed if one is to have a truly adequate human psychology that can call itself the "logos" of the human psyche (Allport, 1955/1969, p. 98). It does so through the use of suggestive phrases such as "inner self," "Higher Self," "true self," "real Self," "transpersonal Self," "Spirit," "soul," and so forth. The use of such terms, however, can themselves lead to distortions of our understanding of spirituality and spiritual development. As pastoral counselor Daniel Helminiak (1987) notes:



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

It is clear that all metaphorical talk of 'inner' selves and 'higher' selves and 'deeper' selves is inherently inaccurate and misleading . . . . There are not really two selves. There is only one; but it is neither the 'Self' nor the 'self.' There is really no 'inner' self -- and no 'outer' self; no 'higher' self and no 'lower' self. Each individual, every person is simply one human reality, one self. If there is within the human an intrinsic principle of self-transcendence, this is not to say there is another 'self' within. It is simply to posit one factor among others as also necessary to explain the complex human reality and human experiences . . . .The 'true self' or the 'higher self' is merely oneself when one is acting authentically, for authenticity entails fidelity to the self-transcending dynamism of the human spirit. (pp. 31-32).

***Spiritual development within a non-theological context.*** Transpersonal psychology deals with questions of spiritual development that have traditionally been dealt with by priests, rabbis, and theologians, apart from theological considerations. Unfortunately, historically speaking, theologians have refused to grant the "soul" or "Spirit" any psychological properties or characteristics, while mainstream developmental psychologists have refused to grant the soul or Spirit any existence at all. The assumption on the part of transpersonal psychologists of strictly human factors to explain spiritual development is an acknowledgement that a completely non-theological account of spiritual development can be put forward. Non-theistic religions such as Buddhism, after all present a rigorously empirical account of spiritual development that is grounded in and can be verified through practical experience. It should come as no surprise then that a field of psychology -- transpersonal psychology -- would concern itself precisely with such phenomenon as spirituality and its unfolding across the human lifespan. The school of *Psychosynthesis* developed by transpersonal psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli, for instance, is concerned not with the theological proclamations, dogmas, or creeds formulated by institutionalized religions regarding the nature of religious or spiritual experiences, but with the experiences themselves. "Psychosynthesis does not aim nor attempt to give a metaphysical nor a theological explanation of the great Mystery -- it leads to the door, but stops there" (Assagioli, 1965/1973, pp. 6-7).

Transpersonal psychology explains the process of spiritual development, defines its stages, describes its structures and processes, and defines its operating principles. While insisting on an intrinsic impulse toward ultimate and ideal states of development, it does not necessarily deny theological accounts of spiritual development or invalidate them. It simply separates itself from such considerations, while in some sense expanding upon them. Obviously, the transcendent impulse toward ultimate and ideal states of being and knowing, a key idea in transpersonal psychology for understanding spiritual development can be conceived in both theistic and non-theistic terms. Transpersonal psychology accounts for that transcendent impulse in non-theological terms, abstains from theological presuppositions or speculations for the most part, and speaks of spirituality, spiritual development, and authentic self-transcendence simply as a human reality that needs to be given a psychological account. In these terms, "spirituality," the "dynamism of the human spirit" (Lonergan, 1957, 1972) and the "principle of authentic self-transcendence" (Helminiak, 1987, p. 35) is a human reality with no necessary theistic connotations or denotations or necessary connection to a particular religious faith or practice (although there may subsequently be in its developmental unfolding). "Acknowledgement of God adds only a further dimension of meaning to the already present psychological account, and does not invalidate it or change it" (Helminiak, 1987, p. 102).

***Does spirituality itself unfold in stages?*** Does spirituality itself unfold in stages? Since there are no consistent or generally accepted definition of the terms "spirituality" or "spiritual development" in the psychological literature (see for example, Aldridge, 1993 for a review of the multiple and often enigmatic definitions given for "spiritual healing"), the answer to this question depends on what one means by the word "spirituality" (Wilber, 2000b, Chap. 10). Pastoral counselor Daniel Helminiak (1987) defines "spiritual development" as "the ongoing integration that results in the self-responsible subject from openness to an intrinsic principle of authentic self-transcendence" (p. 41). The self-responsible person, in

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

these terms, is guided by the four-fold "transcendental precepts" -- "Be attentive; Be intelligent; Be reasonable; Be responsible" (Lonergan, 1972, pp. 20, 302). In these terms, spiritual development does not unfold independently along its own separate line of psychological or stream of personality development, but can occur as a transpersonal or post-conventional part of the development of each and every developmental line. Spirituality, according to Helminiak's (1987) definition, informs the whole person and all of one's psychological life -- intellectual, emotional, physical, social or relational. "The spiritual is not one aspect among others but rather names a particular way of viewing human life as a whole" (Helminiak, 1987, p. 10). Wilber, on the other hand, (1999a) identifies five of the most common definitions for the term "spirituality:"

1. Spirituality involves the highest levels of any of the developmental lines.
2. Spirituality is the sum total of the highest levels of the developmental lines.
3. Spirituality is itself a separate developmental line.
4. Spirituality is an attitude (such as openness or love) that you can have at whatever stage you are.
5. Spirituality basically involves peak experiences, not stages. (p. 4)

Whether spirituality itself is conceived to unfold in stages will depend on which of the five definitions of "spirituality" is used to define spirituality.

**No.** If spirituality is defined as (2) "overall spiritual development," *or* as (4) "an attitude (such as openness or love) that you can have at whatever stage you are," *or* as (5) involving "peak experiences," then the answer is "No, spirituality follows no set sequence or developmental path at all" (Wilber, 1999a, pp. 4-9). This is because overall development, attitudes, and peak experiences do not in themselves show stage-like qualities of development. The emergence of post-conventional (and thus "spiritual" or transpersonal) aspects of personality development normally proceed at different rates for different individuals along different developmental lines, and no "spiritual" development may necessarily occur overall across all developmental lines. Some aspects of personality functioning, in other words, may progress spiritually while other aspects may become stuck or fixated at particular stages. Thus, it would make little sense to say that the overall personality has developed spiritually, although some aspects of personality functioning may have. Attitudes such as love, altruism, empathy, lovingkindness, and so forth are not fully present at all of the levels of development and are themselves developmental lines that unfold in a stage-like manner. Peak experiences involve transient and temporary states, not traits, of personality that tend to spontaneously come and go and do not ordinarily show stage-like unfolding.

**Yes.** If spirituality is defined as (1) the "highest levels of any of the developmental lines" *or* as (3) "a separate developmental line" however, then the answer is "Yes." "Some aspects of spirituality undergo sequential or stage-like development . . . [but] that does not preclude regressions, spirals, temporary leaps forward, or peak experiences of any of the major states" (Wilber, 1999a, p. 6).

The conclusion: not everything that we can legitimately call 'spirituality' shows stage-like development. Nonetheless, many aspects of spirituality turn out, upon closer inspection, to involve one or more aspects that are developmental. This includes the higher reaches of the various developmental lines, as well as spirituality considered as a separate line itself. Peak experiences, however, do not show stage-like development, although both the structures that have peak experiences [e.g., psychic, subtle, causal, nondual], and the realms that are peaked into, show development if permanent realizations are acquired. (p. 9)

***Relationship between psychological and spiritual development.*** On the one hand, if spirituality is viewed as a separate line of development that unfolds independently of other aspects, lines, or streams of psychological development (e.g., cognitive, moral, affective, social), at its own rate and pace, with a different dynamic and on a different time schedule than other developmental lines, then spiritual development does not have to wait for psychological development to reach a certain point or "height" before it can begin or proceed. Spirituality, in these terms, "occurs alongside of, not on top of,

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

psychological development" (Wilber, 1999a, p. 9). On the other hand, if psychological development itself is viewed as proceeding in a stage-like fashion from pre-conventional and pre-personal, through conventional and personal, to post-conventional and transpersonal levels of development, then "the psychological must generally be completed before the spiritual can stably emerge (simply because, as much research indicates, you can't have post-conventional without first having conventional, and so on" (Wilber, 1999a, p. 9). This is a popular view in transpersonal psychology and is given expression by Helminiak (1987).

Spiritual development . . . involves the whole person; it entails personal integrity or wholeness. Not any one or some few aspects of the person, but the development of the whole person is at stake in spiritual development . . . The intrinsic dynamism toward authentic self-transcendence. . . is part of the whole person. Thus, wholeness implies a growing self-consistency, a consistency within the whole. . . . The presupposition here is that spiritual development is not one more focus of study added to a list of other such foci -- like physical, emotional, intellectual, and more technically conceived cognitive, moral, ego, and faith development. Rather, spiritual development embraces the whole. Spiritual development is human development when the latter is conceived according to a particular set of concerns: integrity or wholeness, openness, self-responsibility, and authentic self-transcendence. So spiritual development is the ongoing integration that results in the self-responsible subject from openness to an intrinsic principle of authentic self-transcendence. . . . If spiritual development is human development, the stages of both are one and the same. (pp. 36, 95-96)

Transpersonal scholar Ken Wilber (1999a), on the other hand, notes that personality dimensions or aspects (e.g., cognition, morality, social competence, emotional maturity, etc.) develop relatively independently of one another. This means that one can be highly "spiritual" on one or two line of development (e.g., cognitively mindful and emotionally wise because of long hours spent practicing meditation), but not very spiritual on other lines of development (e.g., at conventional or pre-conventional stage of moral development).

Thus, even though, with these definitions, the spiritual comes only after the psychological in any given line, nonetheless, all sorts of spiritual developments can occur before, alongside of, or after, all sorts of psychological developments, precisely because the lines themselves are relatively independent. (Wilber, 1999a, p. 9)

### Childhood Spirituality

***Is there a childhood spirituality?*** This is a controversial issue in transpersonal psychology. On the one hand, Romantic poets such as William Blake (1757-1827) in his *Songs of Innocence* and Williams Wordsworth (1770-1827) in his *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Childhood* as well as the literatures of the world's great religions have traditionally noted the strong connection between certain qualities and attributes of childhood and a capacity for spiritual experiences (Hoffman, 1993). As Jesus is reputed to have said: "Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" and "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." Children *do* have a spiritual life (Coles, 1990). On the other hand, academic psychologists who endorse stage models of human development are skeptical about its nature. William James (1902/1936) whose classic on religious experiences focused upon adulthood did not believe a childhood spirituality was possible, conceiving of infancy as a time of "blooming buzzing confusion." C. G. Jung (1934/1960) in an essay titled "The Stages of Life" concluded that authentic and genuine spiritual experiences tend to occur only during the adult stage of life because of all the other development issues that must be encountered earlier. Maslow (1971) believed that the child cannot transcend what the child does not possess and "is innocent because he is ignorant. This is very, very different from the 'second innocence' or 'second

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

naivete, '...of the wise, self-actualizing adult who knows the whole of the D-realm, the whole of the world. . . and yet is able to rise above them" (p. 256). Gowan (1974) and other psychologists interested in development beyond formal operations tend to share the view with most stage theorists that

childhood represents a time of emerging from an undifferentiated sea of unconsciousness on the way to developing an ego which can come to grips with the demands of societal realities. Transpersonal issues become a concern only when the individual has achieved a fully matured personality and begins to experience a need to transcend the limitations of personal boundaries. (Armstrong, 1984, p. 208)

**No.** According to transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber (2000b), the answer to the question of whether there is a childhood spirituality will depend upon how the term "spirituality" is defined. If spirituality is defined as "the highest level in any [developmental] line," or as "the sum total of the highest levels in all [developmental] lines," then the answer is "no" (p. 139). Spirituality of the *adult* kind is theoretically impossible because, according to the received knowledge of developmental stage theorists, it requires by definition that the individual has already passed through or achieved trans-personal, trans-egoic, trans-rational, super-conscious, post-postconventional, and post-formal operations stages of development. While children may experience *other forms* of spirituality, the content of childhood experiences can never possess the same character as adults' transcendental experiences "simply because during infancy and childhood most development lines are preconventional and conventional" (Wilber, 2000b, p. 139). Childhood spiritual experiences, in these terms, cannot be understood to be either a property of childhood or as an essential element of the whole person during infancy or childhood stages of development. Assagioli (1965/1973, 1988/1991), for instance, conceives self-actualization (or personal psychosynthesis) as the first achievement necessary that opens up the possibility of authentic transpersonal development, and reserves the term "spiritual" to speak about that whole new avenue of development. Spiritual development in these terms requires a re-structuring of the ego and an ongoing process of identification, dis-identification, and integration resulting in a "self-actualized" personality structure -- that is, ever willing to change and adjust to circumstances, alive always to the present moment, responding as one ought in every situation, in touch with the depth's of one's self, aware of the farther possibilities of one's spiritual nature, in harmony with oneself and with all else -- not as a momentary passing experience (a "state"), but as a way of being-in-the-world, (a "trait") integrated in the structure of the personality. These are similar to Maslow's (1971, Chap. 3) description of the determinants of self-actualization and the turn from preoccupation with deficiency needs and neurotic problems to a concern for authentic self-transcendence). Moreover, any deeper psychic awareness by the pre-nate, neonate, infant or child of the dynamic ground or soul dimensions out of which conscious life emerges and which may be potentially present during prenatal or early infant life is believed to be buried and lost during subsequent ego development by a hypothetical *repression barrier* that prevents subliminal uprushes of intuitive and revelatory knowledge whether conceived as "coming down" in so-called higher and more progressed stages of development (Wilber, 2000b) or "coming up" from the dynamic ground of being whereby one regains the enlightenment and "trailing clouds of glory" (Wordsworth's phrase) of deeper psychic (or soul) realms from which consciousness is believed to spring (Washburn, 1995).

**Yes.** If spirituality is defined as "a separate line of development" then "infancy and childhood definitely have a spirituality. . . but only the lowest stages of spirituality [in which] the love is egocentric, the beliefs are narcissistic, the outlook is self-absorbed, the capacity to take the role of others (and thus genuinely care for others) is rudimentary or missing altogether" (Wilber, 2000b, p. 139). The only credible view of childhood spiritual experiences from the standpoint of mainstream developmental theory is to see them as lower-level "spiritual" peak experiences ("peak experiences of the psychic, subtle, causal, or nondual realm interpreted through an archaic, magic, mythic, or rational outlook" (Wilber, 2000b, p. 141). Hoffman (1994) lists nine categories of spiritual peak experiences adduced from phenomenological

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

interviews with adults about "the most memorable peak experiences of childhood through the age of thirteen" (p. 52)

- Uplifting experiences in places of scenic grandeur.
- Inspiring encounters with nature in one's own backyard.
- Near-death or crisis episodes.
- Peak moments during intense and personalized prayer.
- Spontaneous moments of bliss or ecstasy.
- Profound insights about self-identity, life and death, and related topics.
- Exalted experiences in formal religious settings.
- Uncanny perceptions with lasting import.
- Unforgettable dreams.

The reason childhood spirituality is thought to be limited only to rare and exceptional cases of peak experiences is because the mainstream view of spiritual development as a function of transpersonal, post-conventional stages of development (whatever development line), implies that other forms of childhood spirituality are impossible in those terms, because the child by his or her very nature must necessarily be at pre-adult stages of development (likely pre-conventional or at the most conventional states of development). Even if it is granted that level of development, not age, defines what is meant by the "adult" nature of spiritual development, it would seem to require the child to have integrated pre-personal, personal, and transpersonal stages of development in order to have an "authentic" spiritual development in these terms. Questions remain about whether the capacity for spiritual experiences in childhood is an idiosyncratic talent of only particular types of individuals (e.g., gifted individuals) and an undeveloped fantasy for most or are spiritual experiences a general capability of all individuals and a part of the character of childhood, but that only occurs in some due to a fortuitous conjunction of circumstance. Furthermore, what is the nature of the process that allows for childhood spiritual experience to occur at all? Is a top-down process (i.e., the flow of energy from spiritual reality streams downward from higher to lower stages of development) or vice versa (i.e., upward from dynamic ground to the conscious, egoic self)?

### ***Conceptual and methodological problems with research into religious experiences among children.***

Research into the spiritual lives of children is difficult to conduct for a number of reasons. First, the language abilities of the child need to be taken into account and some children simply have not developed the vocabulary necessary to clearly describe their experiences (this is not to say that adults don't also possess the vocabulary limitations necessary to express what is often considered "ineffable"). Second, are the memory limitations that constrain what can be remembered about an experience that may have happened in the distant past. Third, there is the variability introduced by various cognitive schemas through which such experiences are interpreted and given meaning by the children themselves. Fourth, the fact that most research into the spiritual lives of children is retrospective research (i.e., present self-reports of a past experience) presents its own set of problems.

It is clearly impossible to reach into a religious experience and its uniqueness by interview or survey. Research must be based on what the respondents remember and relate about their experiences, and how they themselves feel and interpret them. . . . How various individuals interpret their experiences depends on their own religious frame of reference. . . . All experiences are not remembered in the same way. It depends, for example, on the intensity of the experience and its later value for the person concerned. The content of the experiences also changes. . . . The way persons recall an experience depends on the current importance of that experience to them as well as where, and to whom, they talk about it. . . . In addition, respondents' readiness to relate their experiences is connected to their ability to express themselves verbally. Thus, inferior



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

verbal ability may limit younger respondents' answers and reduce nuances. (Tamminen, 1994, p. 64)

These potential confounds are likely the reasons why much of the research in this area has focused on spiritual experiences in late adolescence and adulthood and why there is a relative paucity of empirical research into childhood spirituality itself (see Hay, 2006, chap. 1).

***Childhood spiritual experiences are a relatively common phenomenon.*** Despite the constraints imposed by retrospective research, however, such studies do indicate that occurrence of childhood spiritual experiences are a relatively more common phenomenon than previously thought (see, Armstrong, 1984; Best, 1996; Murdock, 1978; Robinson, 1983). According to Piechowski's (2001) review of the literature, "the currently available pool of published accounts of childhood spiritual experiences numbers more than 700" (p. 3). Klingberg (1959), for instance, reported that almost 90% of the essays written on the topic "When I once thought about God" by 630 Swedish children between 9-13 years of age identified the occurrence of at least one spiritual experience that had important emotional significance for them. Elkind & Elkind (1962) found that a majority of the 144 fifth-grade students that they studied in the United States reported having had several vivid experiences of God at some time in their lives. Hoffman (1993) found that almost one-quarter of 134 adults interviewed about their childhood spiritual experiences reported initially having them around 3-4 years of age.

Tamminen (1994) reports the results of a series of self-report studies of the "experiences of God's closeness and guidance" of almost 3,000 Finnish school children and adolescents between the ages of 7 and 20 which sought to identify (a) the extent to which children and adolescents have religious experiences, (b) the environmental settings and psychological sets within which such experiences occur, and (c) whether the occurrence of religious experiences correlate with other variables such as religiousness, sex, personality, demographics (p. 61). Results indicated that experiences of God's nearness ("Have you at times felt that God is particularly close to you?") were relatively common in childhood but decreased as the child moved into adolescence. Children felt God's presence most often in stressful situations of illness or impending danger, when experiencing feelings of fear or loneliness, when they prayed, or had to make what they regarded as a difficult moral or ethical decision. The directness, vividness, immediacy, and personal significance of the set or setting of the event (e.g., encounter with death) was related to the memorability of the spiritual experience. The reported set, setting, and content of spiritual experiences in childhood and adolescence appear to reflect changes in developmental stages (e.g., movement from concrete to abstract levels of thinking, egocentric to allocentric frames of reference, conventional to postconventional morality). Clear gender differences were also found: "Girls in almost all grades experienced God's nearness and guidance more often than boys did" (Tamminen, 1994, p. 79).

We know that Maslowian-type peak experiences occur in childhood and that they can be profound enough to have a lasting impact long into later adulthood (Hoffman, 1993, 1998; Robinson, 1983). Robinson (1983) administered a questionnaire to 362 adults who reported having a significant spiritual experience that changed their lives and found that about 10% reported having the profound transcendental experience before the age of 5, 70% of respondents stating that their transformative experience occurred between 5-15 years of age, and the remaining 20% reported it as occurring after the age of 15. Based on his analysis of 362 retrospective reports of childhood spiritual experiences, Robinson (1983) concludes that remembered childhood spiritual events are legitimate, durable, and significant experiences that presents intuitive and revelatory knowledge far beyond the boundaries of child's known self that springs into existence to expand his or her conscious knowledge and experience.

Based on his intensive review of autobiographical and biographical accounts of the lives of recognized saints and mystics (e.g., Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Yogananda, Jesus, Blake, Meher Baba, Krishnamurti, Black Elk), retrospective reports obtained from adult memories of their childhood spiritual



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

experiences, and contemporaneous reports obtained from children themselves of their recent transpersonal experiences, Armstrong (1984) argues that "transpersonal experiences *can* and *do* occur in some children just as they occur in some adults. These experiences can co-exist alongside of pre-personal and personal stages of development and can be documented empirically" (pp. 208-209).

Based on his analysis of the thematic structure of phenomenological descriptions of childhood *and* adulthood spiritual experiences reported in the literature, Piechowski (2001) concludes that "the authentic power and depth of [childhood] experiences. . . demonstrate that these experiences are equal to those reported by adult experiencers. . . . [and that] the content of childhood experiences has the same character as the accounts of adults' transcendental experiences which reveal that behind our ordinary reality is a larger unseen reality" (pp. 5, 13).

These reports [and others] show that children are capable of having genuine spiritual experiences of divine presence, oneness and interrelatedness, energy pulsating in living and nonliving objects, self as not physical, a sense of continuity between life and death, and much more. The experiences occur spontaneously -- in nature or at home, in church or in the car -- and they had enduring significance for the person's whole life. The families of some of these children were religious; others were not. Childhood spiritual experiences often initiate spiritual search later in life and endow a person with strength to endure life's reverses and tragic losses. . . . While the great majority of transcendental experiences are reported to be joyous, reassuring, and blissful, nevertheless a certain number of such experiences are unsettling, even frightening, although they are usually later resolved. (Piechowski, 2001, p. 2)

Piechowski (2001) identifies three additional lines of evidence that further indicate the existence of a "religious sentiment" (Allport, 1955/1969, pp. 93-98) not only in adults and adolescents but in children as well: (a) children's recognition of instances of adult spiritual immaturity and ignorance, (b) children's awareness of their transpersonal identity and previous reincarnational lives, and (c) children's deliberate and intentional, use of practiced techniques for achieving non-ordinary states of consciousness (e.g., intense prayer, focused breathing, one-pointed attention, repetitive chanting). One would not ordinarily expect such cognitive, emotional, social, or moral maturity from a child based on Wilber's (2000a) hierarchical developmental model that limits childhood spirituality to transient, lower-level peak experiences constrained by the inadequacies of prepersonal, concrete, egocentric, and preconventional modes of thinking. Nor are such accounts of childhood spirituality predicted by Washburn's (1995) spiral model of development in which primal repression is hypothesized to cut the child off from the dynamic ground of their own being. "One of the repeated realizations in the study of children's development is how much we keep underestimating their capacities. The discovery that children are capable of having genuine spiritual experiences and that these are neither extremely rare nor exceptional instances is a case in point" (Piechowski, 2001, p. 10). From this perspective, quite legitimate, authentic, and genuine spiritual experiences do occur throughout the lifespan and which seem to disregard age differences and developmental levels and that can be described using many of the same concepts and terms ordinarily reserved for transpersonal experiences in adulthood (Armstrong, 1984; Hoffman, 1994; Piechowski, 2001).

***The transpersonal nature of childhood.*** There is a substantial amount of clinical evidence available that suggests that the child has access to transpersonal levels of development prior to birth and is far more aware of all kinds of physical events and sources of information that are not at all dependent upon its heredity and environment than is realized, including knowledge and memories acquired from previous existences in prior lifetimes (Stevenson, 1987, 1997b) and birth memories in present lifetimes (Chamberlain, 1998; Shettles & Rorvik, 1983; Verny, 1981; Wambach, 1979). The cumulative empirical record of childhood spirituality, the occurrence of birth memories and memories of prior lives, presents a picture that is very different from the *tabula rasa* conception of childhood which assumes that the infant

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

comes into life a vacant vessel to be filled by experience, an empty sponge ready to soak up knowledge, but absent any innate knowledge which may result from having experienced previous lifetimes or existences, as assumed by Eastern developmental models of the human personality. On this view, we have a history before our birth even as the earth has a history before we are born. The child is already filled and soaked with knowledge, some of which will come to the surface and be used consciously, some of which will not. Armstrong (1984) argues for the view that

children, although new to this lifetime, are old with respect to a broader developmental spectrum. In this view, certain children would qualify as having authentic transpersonal experience on the basis of having acquired access to transpersonal levels of development in the course of previous lifetimes. Such a perspective requires a re-conceptualization of human development to account for the possibility of authentic transpersonal experience in childhood. (p. 222).

Knowledge of the higher developmental stages are as much within us as our genes are within us, inherent in the structure of the brain and body and implied within its existence. The species itself has built into it all of the knowledge, information, and "data" of its spiritual nature and of "the spiritual or heavenly consciousness which is forgotten and sometimes remembered in childhood, [that] forms the basis for...authentic transpersonal experiences" (Armstrong, 1984, p. 221). According to transpersonal writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1979d)

You are each born with the conscious knowledge of what has come before. Your brain is far from an empty slate, waiting for the first imprint of experience; it is already equipped with complete 'equations,' telling you who you are and where you have come from (Roberts, 1979d, p. 187). . . . If information is thought to come to the self only through physical means, then of course heredity and environment must be seen behind all human motivation. When you realize that the personality can and does have access to other kinds of information than physical, then you must begin to wonder what effects those data have on the formation of character and individual growth (Roberts, 1981a, p. 133)

### IV. Dying, Death, and Near-Death

#### Death Awareness

***Death and dying as important a part of the lifespan as birth and living.*** Death and dying is a portion of the lifespan that is usually given little attention in conventional general psychology textbooks, yet it is a portion of the lifespan that is just as important as birth, and perhaps more so. As a rule, few of us remember our birth. Most of us, however, remember the death of a beloved family member, friend or companion animal, and anticipate our own death, if not consciously then subconsciously. Everybody dies. As someone once said: "One to a box." Our hope is that death is not something that simply happens to us, but something that we do (Levine, 1982, 1987). Death is in the natural order of things. "If you don't want to die, don't be born" (Rosenberg, 2000, p. 87). Death is not a "failure" as some evolutionary theories of survival of the fittest may imply (for is it not said that only the fit survive?), for there comes a time when the energies of the spirit can no longer renew themselves through flesh and a departure from physical life is required. Death is a part of life. Life would be impossible to sustain if death were to "take a holiday" for even one day. The world would become overpopulated into extinction otherwise.

Dying is a biological necessity, not only for the individual, but to insure the continued vitality of the species. Dying is a spiritual and psychological necessity, for after a while the exuberant, ever-renewed energies of the spirit can no longer be translated into flesh. Inherently, each individual knows that he or she must die physically *in order to survive spiritually and psychically*. The self outgrows the flesh. . . . The nature of consciousness requires new experience, challenge, and accomplishment. This is everywhere apparent in nature itself. If there were no death, you would

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

have to invent it -- for the context of *that* selfhood would be as limited as the experience of a great sculptor given but one hunk of stone. . . .Death [is] not only a natural necessity, but also an opportunity for other kinds of experience and development" (Roberts, 1981a, pp. 23-24, 39-40, 138)

In still other terms, our body's stability is dependent upon birth and death of its cells. The cells within our body die constantly to be replaced by other cells numerous times over the course of years. All skin cells, for example, are literally falling off into the earth to become the basis for other life, while constantly being replaced. The body dies many times, though we do not perceive it, our consciousness bridging the gap of those minute "deaths" that we do not recognize as such.

***The pioneering work of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross.*** Death and dying became an acceptable topic to talk about in mainstream psychology due to the pioneering work of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross (Kübler-Ross, 1969, 1975, 1997; Kübler-Ross & Warshaw, 1978). The field of *thanatology*, an interdisciplinary specialty that addresses the medical and psychological aspects of death and dying, has emerged largely because of her successful efforts to get patients and their family members, physicians and nurses, to talk about their experiences with the dying process (Sobel, 1981). Through her interviews with dying people, and asking them to be "our teachers," Kübler-Ross came to identify six overlapping stages of dying that individuals tend to go through following their first awareness of having a serious, terminal illness or life-threatening event: (a) *Shock* over the initial announcement, usually by the physician or someone one trusts, that one does indeed have a terminal illness, which then merges with (b) *Denial* of one's illness which can last a few seconds to a few months, then turns into (c) *Anger* at having to die ("Why me?"), which turns into (d) *Depression* over the fact that there is nothing to be done about what one has lost and what one is about to lose. (e) *Bargaining* is the fifth next stage whereby the person "learning that he cannot get what he wants by demanding it (in anger) now turns to asking nicely and tries to strike a bargain" by asking for another chance at life, promising to rehabilitate oneself, praying to God that if this illness may pass then everything will be different (Kimmel, 1974, p. 424). (f). *Acceptance* of the fact of that one is dying and that one is encountering the end times of one's life is the sixth and final stage, which not everyone reaches.

This attitude toward dying occurs only if the person is able to work his or her way through each of the preceding stages, most especially anger and depression. . . . Acceptance is not the same as resignation. . . . It is perhaps best captured by the attitude that 'it's my time now, and it's all right.' . . . It is a time essentially devoid of feeling. The final struggle for survival is over, and the person seems to be taking 'a final rest before the long journey.' (Pollio, 1982, p. 418)

***Transpersonal approach to the care of the dying.*** Transpersonal psychology has a special interest in the final stages of life, especially dying, death, and near-death (Augustine & Kalish, 1975; Carr, 1993; Coberly & Shapiro, 1998; Garfield, 1975; Holden & Guest, 1990; Leslie, 1976; Lu & Heming, 1987; Waldman, 1990; Weimer & Lu, 1987; Wren-Lewis, 1994). Coberly & Shapiro (1998), for instance, discuss a "transpersonal approach to care of the dying" that incorporates the insights and applications Tibetan Buddhism and transpersonal psychology to death education. The transpersonal caregiver

. . . . is an individual relatively free of ego-bound fears and preconceptions -- one who remains open-minded, compassionate, and receptive. The transpersonal caregiver provides an open, nurturing, and fertile environment to help actualize the fullest experiential and cognitive potential of the patient's dying trajectory. (Coberly & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 4, 6)

The Tibetan Buddhist tradition of death and dying not only provides a description of what purportedly happens during the stages of dying and its aftermath, but also trains the individual to be open-minded and receptive to and appreciative of the inevitability of change and impermanence in life ("Death is certain,

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

though the time of death is uncertain"), a compassionate and nonjudgmental attitude to all experiences of death and dying however they may be expressed by others. Transpersonal psychology, by drawing attention to events such as deathbed visions, out-of-body and near-death experiences, rebirth memories, apparitions of the dead, communications with the deceased by channelers, and psychotherapeutic techniques such as co-meditation, visualization, and prayer adds a further meaningful dimension to the Tibetan vision of life and death. Greater awareness of death and its potential transformations makes it easier for caregivers to enter into a genuine dialog with the dying who seek help in resolving the inner confusions and personal difficulties encountered when confronting their personal death beliefs. Open-mindedness, listening mindfully in nonjudgmental ways, perceiving the sublime and subtle energies of the mind and consciousness and the potential for experiences that are "transcendent, transpersonal, transhuman" during the dying process are all qualities of character that define the transpersonal caregiver (Maslow, 1979, p. 1261). "The awareness that humans, regardless of their individuality, share death as a common destiny nurtures empathy and compassion and opens the door to inner exploration and the transpersonal dimensions" (Coberly & Shapiro, 1998, p. 3).

Caregivers who develop both an inner understanding of their own personal death beliefs, and an awareness of phenomena that transcend the personal and lie in the realm of the transpersonal, are more likely to exhibit confidence in life and a centered presence during death and dying that comforts, grounds, and brings solace to patients, to their families, and to other caregivers. Skillful means in interacting with death and dying are derived from within by achieving self-understanding and by personally experiencing the transpersonal dimension, an awareness of the overarching unity that is present in human experience. . . . When a caregiver for a dying person can maintain an open, compassionate heart, everything that happens between the patient and caregiver can become a teaching. (Coberly & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 4, 32)

***Death awareness can enhance life awareness.*** The meaning of death is connected to the meaning of life. Death awareness can serve to enhance one's awareness of life. "Focus your attention on the link between you and your death, without remorse or sadness or worry. Focus your attention on the fact that you don't have time and let your acts flow accordingly" (Castaneda, 1972, p. 112). The idea of the facticity of death, that death is absolute and final and irreversible, and a belief that death may even represent the annihilation and extinguishing of one's consciousness forever may bring a certain sense of release and well-being for some individuals who embrace such a view (Waldman, 1990). What psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim (1980) referred to as "death anxiety" may only be relieved by a belief in an afterlife for some people (p. 4) (see Lonetto & Templer, 1986 for a review of the impact of death education on death anxiety and attitudes toward death). For other people, a conviction in life after death is not necessary to relieve an individual's deep anxiety about his or her own death or that of others. Analyst and ministerial counselor Mark Waldman (1990) in his own personal reflection on death and reconciliation with his father who was no longer living observed:

Many people who have had various mystical, near-death, and other transpersonal experiences have emerged from them with the conviction that life does, indeed, continue in some form or another. Since these reports are often popular -- they do relieve many people's anxieties, at least temporarily -- I think it is important to demonstrate that the opposite conclusion can also bring deep satisfaction, particularly if it emerges as a natural process [i.e., death is absolute and final, that nothing whatsoever exists of one's consciousness or 'self-ness' after death]. In my own case, it has heightened my appreciation of the present, for it is within this framework the present is all there is. Its brevity makes living all the more precious, and I feel a beauty and an intensity in my interactions with people and nature that I had not previously felt. (pp. 172-173)

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

**Personal and transpersonal transformation through death awareness.** There are many avenues to enhanced death awareness that have the potential to transform life awareness. It may be the meditation of one's own death, or encountering the death of others such as one's younger sister or one's older father and mother. Enhanced death awareness and its transformative effect may even occur through the reading of a book or the watching of a film, such as the 1952 Japanese masterpiece *Ikiru* created by filmmaker Akira Kuosawa.

The film depicts compassionately the story of an elderly Japanese civil servant who, near retirement, learns that he will die of cancer in six months. Faced with despair, he finally chooses a project which brings meaning to his life; namely, he pushes through the government bureaucracy a neglected plan to build a children's playground. Before he dies, he achieves the tranquility of a transpersonal level of consciousness. (Lu & Heming, 1987, p. 152)

Weimer & Lu (1987) document the similarities between the last years of one of their clients who was dying of cancer and the encounter with death presented in fictional film *Ikiru*. "Both men, with great latent strength and individuality had allowed themselves to become inundated by the polluting trivia of everyday existence. Each found deeper meaning in their lives through transforming experiences which were both active and spiritual" (Weimer & Lu, 1987, p. 134). Confronted by death, a search begins for the meaning of life for both men -- a search poignantly represented by singular song sung by the hero of *Ikiru*, Kanji Watanabe, at both the beginning of the film following the shock of his learning of his impending death from cancer and at the end of the film following his acceptance of this timeless and mysterious fate that awaits us all :

Life is so short,  
Fall in love, dear maiden,  
While your lips are still red,  
And before you are cold,  
For there will be no tomorrow.  
Life is so short,  
Fall in love dear maiden,  
While your hair is still black,  
And before your heart withers,  
For today will not come again.

As both client and film character attempted to resolve old relationship issues and important pieces of "unfinished business" with family members and others, each became better prepared to meet the new challenges that the prospect of one's own death provided. Weimer & Lu (1987, pp. 147-148) identify several themes echoed in both *Ikiru* and in the live psychotherapy with the dying client, including:

1. The transformation of consciousness and behavior of human beings when they become aware of their impending death.
2. The family issues that had been left untouched for years come to the fore only when resolutions must take place.
3. The role of the outside guide sought by each man.
4. The attempt by the organization to co-opt the significance of each man's life after his death.
5. Both men had experiences that transformed them spiritually and seems to fortify them as well as signal that they had crossed a transpersonal threshold.



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

6. Loneliness is a theme
7. Both men encounter problems in family relationships, and when first encountered are pouring their energy into their work.
8. Both men are celebrated by an outpouring of emotion by colleagues at the memorial service that could evidently not happen during life.

The power of these themes as they are represented in the fictional film *Ikiru* and their deep human validity as reflected in the life of the dying client during psychotherapy may be responsible for the demonstrated positive effect of the film on the death anxiety and attitudes toward death of audiences who watch the film. Lu & Heming (1987) report a pretest-posttest control-group design study in which 71 participants in a convenience sample recruited from an annual Transpersonal Psychology conference were nonrandomly assigned to three groups: (a) an intervention group (n = 25) who self-selected to view the film *Ikiru* and who completed two pretest questionnaires and the same two posttest questionnaires administered 4-weeks later which assessed participants' death anxiety and consistency of attitudes toward death and fear of dying (Durlak, 1972; Kurleychek, 1978), (b) a main comparison group (n = 37) who did not view the film but were administered the same pretest-posttest questionnaires as the intervention group, and (c) a control group (n = 9) who were administered only the posttest questionnaires in order to assess instrumentation effects. Results indicated that the intervention and main comparison groups were comparable at pretest on attitudes toward death or fear of dying. Pretest-posttest comparisons, however, did reveal a significant difference between groups demonstrating an effect of the fictional film *Ikiru* on death anxiety and attitudes toward death. While both intervention and main comparison groups showed a decrease in death anxiety from pretest to posttest, the decrease was more significant on the two posttest measures ( $p < .06$  and  $p < .05$ ) for the group who viewed the film *Ikiru*. The intervention group's attitude toward death became more positive and more consistent from pretest to posttest compared to all other groups. "The intervention group experienced a significant decrease in fear of death and became more consistent in their attitudes toward death, while the control group became more inconsistent" (Lu & Heming, 1987, p. 157). All posttest comparisons showed no instrumentation effects; thus, the questionnaires themselves were not responsible for the observed changes. Researchers concluded that results clearly demonstrate that "a fictional film can be successfully used in reducing death anxiety and altering attitudes toward death" (Lu & Heming, 1987, p. 158).

### **Fear of Death**

***The fear of death and its origins.*** The field of *psychothanatology* studies the individual's experience of dying and the meaning of death as shaped and colored by the collective attitudes of a culture (Kastenbaum & Aisenberg, 1972). Some cultures support death belief systems and complex rituals and rites aimed at either defying, denying, or accepting death (Pattison, 1967). Judeo-Christian cultures, for example, are oriented toward denying death ("O death, where is Thy sting?") whereas Buddhist cultures tend to have a more death-accepting orientation (Yeung, 1995). Modern agnostic Western scientific-oriented societies tend to support a death-denying belief system (Becker, 1973). Research psychologist and psychotherapist Charles Garfield (1975) observes:

In this century, and particularly in American post-industrial society, it appears that there has been a radical shift from defiance of death to a position of denial of death. This change has occurred in the context of the dissipation of traditional value systems and in the absence of spiritual fulfillment. These conditions have compelled the Westerner to confront an existential vacuum wherein he must provide purpose and meaning to a life which is often felt to be little more than an effort to continue existing. (pp. 147-148).



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

What is the origin of this death-denying fear that motivates modern life? Choron (1964) places the origin of the species' death-fear in the belief that death does indeed represent the final, ultimate, irreversible annihilation and dissolution of the egoic personality. Death is feared precisely because it represents a state of non-being in which the you that you consider yourself is snuffed out forever, one's personality being swallowed up in some nothingness in which we are blissfully unaware of ourselves as separate individuals, the integrity of our being destroyed. Paradoxically, this state or condition of death is what is known as "nirvana" in Buddhist literature -- an end-state which offers us the annihilation of one's personality in a "bliss" that destroys the integrity of one's being. As Garfield (1975) notes: This "ego dissolution which, for the Westerner, constitutes the core of death-fear may be precisely that state of consciousness so extensively discussed and highly valued by the esoteric core of Eastern religion" (p. 149).

***Fear of death and alternate states of consciousness.*** Garfield (1975) proposes an evocative altered states hypothesis drawing out the implication of the idea that "any state or condition which represents a loss of consciousness or control constitutes a threat and will likely induce extreme anxiety" (p. 148). Those individuals who are therefore familiar with such experiences of loss of consciousness and control while in the living state would be less likely to fear death:

If the fear of death is fundamentally the fear of egoic extinction, or ceasing to be, then perhaps this fear can be influenced by those ego-loss experiences described as basic to various altered states of consciousness. This suggests the possibility that individuals with considerable altered-state experience may have somehow found a means to temporarily experience their own non-being. If this is the case, they might be expected to exhibit a diminished fear of death. (p. 149)

In order to investigate the possibility that experience with consciousness alteration decreases fear of death (a.k.a. death anxiety) and to expand upon Bromberg & Schilder's (1933) original comparative study of the attitudes toward death and dying, Garfield (1975) conducted a matched-samples (ages 22-32 age, male, Caucasian) clinical interview study of the ideas and feelings on the subject of death of five groups of people that represented different American subcultures which had varying degrees of experience with altered states of consciousness -- (a) graduate students in psychology, (b) graduate students in religion, (c) psychedelic drug users (LSD-25), (d) Zen meditators, and (e) American-born practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. Each group was measured on two physiological parameters (galvanic skin response and heart rate fluctuations) in response to two verbal tasks (word association task and death fantasy exercise), and on one self-report Death Anxiety Scale (Templer, 1969). Results were summarized by Leslie (1976):

Psychedelic drug users, Zen meditators, and practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism expressed more accepting attitudes towards death than did graduate students in both psychology and religion; also. . . Zen and Tibetan Buddhists were more accepting than drug users. . . . States of altered awareness, achieved through the use of drugs or meditation, produced experiences which involve ego-dissolution and thus resemble death, and that these experiences might make death more 'knowable,' acceptable, and ultimately transcendable. (p. 128)

***Techniques for reducing the fear the death.*** Garfield (1975) found that systematic, long-term experience with altered states of consciousness such as induced by meditation and psychedelic drug use decreased an individual's fear of death. Garfield (1975) concluded:

Long-term meditation as well as other altered-state procedures may be viewed as effective tools for enhancing a participatory orientation to death and the consequent reduction of the individual's level of death-fear. . . . It is suggested that it is precisely this 'training in ego-death' which is largely responsible for the decreased level of death-fear in the altered state groups. (pp. 165-166)

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

Leslie (1976) extended Garfield's (1975) results to practitioners of Yoga: "Yoga teaches that one of the first purposes of meditation is attenuation of the fear of death" (Leslie, 1976, p. 129). Drawing upon the research done at the University of Iowa College of Medicine on near-death experiences (Noyes, 1972), Garfield (1975) recognizes that in addition to learning meditation techniques that "for some individuals realistic acceptance of death may be intimately related to transcendence experiences" (p. 171) and that "various techniques, such as hypnosis or Jungian and psychosynthetic imagery might also be therapeutically useful with the dying person" (p. 171). Writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1972) suggests another approach: If we want to know what death is like, then become aware of one's own consciousness when the main focus of attention is turned away from physical activities, as occurs in sleep and dreaming, and out-of-body experiences.

After-death experiences will not seem so alien or incomprehensible if you realize that you encounter similar situations as a normal part of your present existence. In sleep and dream states you are involved in the same dimension of existence in which you will have your after-death experiences . . . . In the dream state you operate under the same conditions, more or less, that are native to a consciousness not focused in physical reality. Many of your experiences, therefore, are precisely those you may meet after death. . . . Therefore, the best way to become acquainted with after-death reality ahead of time, so to speak, is to explore and understand the nature of your own dreaming self. . . . Experiences with projections of consciousness [in out-of-body experiences] and knowledge of the mobility of consciousness, are [also] very helpful as preparations for death. You can experience the after-death environment beforehand, so to speak, and learn the conditions that will be encountered. . . Such experiences would acquaint you far better than words with some understanding of the conditions that will be encountered. . . . (Roberts, 1972, pp. 142-143, 159-161).

In light of Seth/Jane Roberts's (1972) statement that familiarity with the mechanics of the dream state and experiences with projections of consciousness might also prove useful in learning about the conditions that will be encountered after physical death, it would seem beneficial to take the time and energy to learn how to control one's dreams while in a lucid dream state (Gackenbach & Bosveld, 1989; LaBerge & Rheinhold, 1990) and manipulate consciousness as it operates in out-of-body states (Rogo, 1993; Stack, 1988) in order to accustom oneself to the new conditions that may be encountered after death. **Figure 8-5** presents a psychosynthesis exercise titled "Right Proportions" that elicits an awareness of that greater context within which our lives are couched and supported and of the mobility that is characteristic of a consciousness that has its true existence in a dimension beyond physical time and space (Ferrucci, 1982, pp. 215-216).

### **Death with Dignity and the Appropriate Death**

**Important considerations in a death with dignity and an appropriate death.** Poet and teacher of meditation Stephen Levin (1982, 1987) discusses the importance of being open to the deep humanity of living with the fact that we all die and to use that knowledge consciously and mindfully to help us participate more fully in life as preparation for death. An appropriate death should reflect the same values that are operative in an appropriate life. This translates in a concern that each person ultimately has the opportunity to "die with dignity." Death should be something that we *do*, and not something that *happens to* us. This is what is meant by the phrase "appropriate death" (Weisman, 1972). Each person should have the opportunity to die in the way that he or she wishes. What role does a dying person's religion play in enabling him or her to die an appropriate death? This question was investigated by Augustine and Kalish (1975) who interviewed fifteen caregivers (including psychiatrists, social workers, nurses, physicians, and chaplains) about their feelings and observations of 24 dying persons under their care. Results indicated that religious convictions indeed play a role in supporting the ability of a dying person to cope with impending death.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

The major thesis. . . is that the most important considerations in the capacity to die an appropriate death are (1) open communication concerning dying between patients and intimates, (2) physical and psychic closeness in these relationships, and (3) specifically religious beliefs. A deep awareness of death, intimate verbal and non-verbal sharing, and commonly understood doctrinal beliefs, seem to bear a close phenomenological resemblance to each other. All of these relate to perceiving meaning in life and in self, which can be a transcendent religious experience. (Augustine & Kalish, 1975, p. 8)

Those who have faith in life after death find it much easier to accustom themselves to his or her impending death, although for some individuals religious convictions can make the coping process more stressful because of death-beliefs about guilt, punishment, and Hell (Augustine & Kalish, 1975, p. 2). As writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts observes: "the ideas that you have involving the nature of reality will strongly color your experiences at death, for you will interpret them in light of your beliefs, even now as you interpret daily life according to your ideas of what is possible or not possible" (p. 141).

***Religious feeling as a biological spirituality beyond social conformity and convention.*** Augustine & Kalish (1975) discovered that an accurate assessment of the role of religious feelings in the dying person's coping efforts requires a definition of religion that is not restrictive. "Nonordinary states of consciousness, an not a certain type of vocabulary [is] the criterion for judging the presence and effectiveness of the religious feelings of the patient" (pp. 9-10).

Following this approach to the understanding of religion, atheists can be very religious, and even well-meaning clergy can be unreligious. The capacity for religious feelings is the ability to experience awe, wonder, and even terror through a mind of cosmic, non-ego-centered awareness of the mysterious depths of life and reality. Since such non-ordinary levels of awareness of reality tend to reach beyond or leave behind the more or less ego-centered quality of ordinary consciousness and to see reality, life, and death in a trans-ego-centered fashion, they are particularly apt to give new meaning to the loss of ego in death. (Augustine & Kalish, 1975, p. 10).

This idea that "religious feeling" can exist outside of the context of formal exoteric religion is a creative concept that reminds us that the spirituality and religiousness of the dying patient does not have to conform to the doctrines and dogmas of a culture's traditional religious system. A person's deep intuitional comprehensions can be expressed outside of formal religious meanings. The important point here is that these comprehensions be based upon an individual's ability to be in touch with his or her own deepest feelings and death-beliefs and capacity to communicate those feelings and beliefs to those closest to the dying person. Such religious feelings may take the form of ideas expressed by writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1981b).

One of man's strongest attributes is religious feeling. It is the part of psychology most often overlooked. There is a *natural* religious knowledge with which you are born. . . It says: 'Life is a gift (and not a curse). I am a unique, worthy creature in the natural world, which everywhere surrounds me, gives me sustenance, and reminds me of the greater source from which I myself and world both emerge. My body is delightfully suited to its environment, and come to me, again, from that unknown source which shows itself through all the events of the physical world.' That feeling gives the organism the optimism, the joy, and the ever-abundant energy to grow. It encourages curiosity and creativity, and places the individual in a spiritual world and a natural one at once. Organized religions are always attempts to redefine that kind of feeling in cultural terms. They seldom succeed because they become too narrow in their concepts, too dogmatic, and the cultural structures finally overweigh the finer substance within them. The more tolerant a religion is, the closer it comes to expressing those inner truths. (pp. 74-75)

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

***Important secular variables in an "appropriate death."*** Having a confidante, such as close relatives and friends, with whom one can discuss and share one's own beliefs and fears about dying is most helpful in avoiding a sense of isolation during the dying process (Lowenthal & Haven, 1968). The importance of love in helping the dying cannot be underemphasized: "The awareness of being loved and related to, whether the giver of love was the symbolic value of a loving God, or of Christ triumphant, or of a loving friend or relative was the salient factor " (Augustine & Kalish, 1975, p. 4). Also an attitude of "open awareness" on the part of the dying person regarding the nature of his or her condition is considered a better approach to the anxiety and discomfort that naturally accompanies the dying process than an approach of "mutual pretence" in which people deny their awareness of the dying person's prognosis (pretending that "everything will be alright") (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). This principle of open awareness applies to very young children.

When given an opportunity to talk about death, either to their parents or to the staff, their anxiety levels appeared sharply reduced. When their concerns were adequately aired, the children seemed far better able to cope with the prospects of dying, even though mature comprehension of its ultimate significance might be limited in comparison to adults. (Augustine & Kalish, 1975, p. 3)

Thus, in addition to providing medical interventions aimed at alleviating the dying person's pain and discomfort, supporting the presence of loved one's who are open to discussing with the patient his or her impending death, and relating to the dying person's "religious" understanding of death, the transpersonal caregiver helps the dying person find meaning in their suffering and death. "As dying persons seek meaning, they find it best through persons who can, in essence, 'talk their language'" (Augustine & Kalish, 1975, p. 12).

### **Death and Near-Death**

***The transformative effects of near-death experiences.*** Brain death -- the cessation of electrophysiological activity -- is the conventional indicator signaling the end of human life in most Western countries. In Japan there is a popular belief that a person is made up of both heart and brain, and that a brain-dead person is not truly dead until the heart stops beating as well. As medical technology has advanced and the opportunity to intervene in the dying process and bring individuals back to life from "the brink of death" has increased in frequency, so too has the number of reports of so-called "near-death experience" (NDE) in frequency. The most interesting aspect of NDE for the living is the remarkable life-transformative effects such experience have upon those who undergo them (Flynn, 1986; Ring, 1984, 1998; Morse & Perry, 1992; Sutherland, 1995).

NDE tends to bring about lasting changes in personal values and beliefs: NDErs appreciate life more fully, experience increased feelings of self-worth, have a more compassionate regard for others and, indeed, for all life, develop a heightened ecological sensitivity, and report a decrease in purely materialistic and self-seeking values. Their religious orientation tends to change, too, and becomes more universalistic, inclusive, and spiritual in its expression. In most instances, moreover, the fear of death is completely extinguished and a deep-rooted conviction, based on their direct experience, that some form of life after death awaits us, becomes unshakable and a source of enormous comfort. In addition, many NDErs say they come to develop powers of higher sense perception, increased psychic ability and intuitive awareness, and even the gift of healing. In short, the NDE seems to unleash normally dormant aspects of the human potential for higher consciousness and to increase one's capacity to relate more sensitively to other persons and the world at large. The NDE, then, appears to promote the emergence of the type of functioning suggestive of the full human potential that is presumably the birthright of all of us. In

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

a phrase, whenever the blessings of the NDE are fused properly into one's life, the individual comes to exemplify what a highly developed person would be and act like. (Ring, 1998, p. 4)

John Wren-Lewis (1994) describes the transformative effects of his own NDE following his revival from near-death poisoning in Thailand when he was 60 years old. He says that the reason why NDErs use religious-like terminology to describe the NDE is not because of any fastidious religious commitment to a specific metaphysical faith system but because religious language come closest to describing what is in effect an ineffable experience. moreover, the newfound capacity for joy in living does not come from any particular conviction in life after death. *"It's more like a basic shift in consciousness whereby life in each moment becomes so vivid that anxiety about future survival, in the body or out of it, simply ceases to be important"* (Wren-Lewis, 1994, p. 108). The NDE "high" is not perpetual state, but exists as a sort of background framework or what he calls "consciousness-behind-the-mind" in which he drifts in and out. It is always there, however, providing a baseline state of consciousness to which he always returns, providing him a state of mystical consciousness so stable, calm, and peaceful that no transient psychedelic "high" could ever give. Preoccupation with one's personal future is no longer a focus of living. Personal preferences are experienced in a more detached way. What was previously experienced to be ugly, unpleasant, depressing, or disgusting is now found to be interesting, beautiful, and even pleasurable. Wren-Lewis (1994) hypothesizes that some sort of hyper-defensive, hyper-active survival mechanism is operative during the trance of so-called normal waking consciousness that blocks and shuts out of awareness the universal mystical consciousness characteristic of NDE "which is *already* the basis of our very existence" (p. 114). "Close encounter with death is able to break this whole spell *because the survival-mechanism gives up at this point*" (Wren-Lewis, 1994, p. 113). The task of transpersonal psychology is to shed some light on how to lift the veil of unconsciousness imposed by the hyperactive survival-mechanism so that individuals can catch a glimpse of NDE higher consciousness without having to go to the brink of death in order to do so.

**"Core" characteristics of near-death experiences.** There is no necessary causal relationship between closeness to death and having a NDE. Not everyone who has a NDE has come close to death (Gabbard, Twemlow & Jones, 1981), and while not everyone who comes close to death has a NDE, about 35-40% of people do (Ring, 1984). A person's belief and subsequent perception of his or her closeness to death and not actual closeness to death may thus be the important factor in eliciting the features of a NDE. A nation-wide survey of a representative sample of the entire American population conducted by the Gallup Organization in 1981 reported that 15% of respondents have "been on the verge of death or had a 'close call' which involved an unusual experience at that time" and that the "findings suggest that as many as eight million Americans, or about one-third of those who have been involved in near-death occurrences, may have felt the presence of some being or otherwise have had a positive, other-worldly experience" (Gallup & Proctor, 1982, p. 14). Near-death experiences (and out-of-body experiences) have also been reported to occur in the blind (Ring & Cooper, 1999).

Based on the many different reports of NDEs collected by researchers over the years, an idealized composite summary has been constructed that identifies their "core" defining features. The general prototypical NDE appears to consist of nine characteristics (Moody, 1975, pp. 21-23; Morse, 1992; Ruing, 1980, pp. 102-103):

1. A sense of being dead
2. Feeling of peace and painlessness
3. An out-of-body experience
4. Entering a dark tunnel or void
5. Encountering People of Light
6. Encountering a Being of Light
7. Life review



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

8. Rising rapidly into an other world
9. Reluctance to return.

Not everyone who has a NDE necessarily experiences all 9 characteristics, nor do all 9 characteristics occur in the same order. A life review, for example, is more common when brushes with death come suddenly and unexpectedly (e.g. accidents, falls, drowning), than during more chronic life-threatening illnesses reported by adults or in NDEs reported by children (Bush, 1983; Morse & Perry, 1990). Not all NDEs contain life reviews, and Holden & Guest (1990) report a case of life review not associated with a near-death episode. The longer that a person is thought to be dead, the greater the number of defining characteristics of a NDE are reported by the revived individual.

Ring (1979) found in a sample of 102 cases that events and places that were later in Moody's [1975] archetypal sequence were experienced by Euro-Americans in systematically decreasing frequency: feeling of peace (60%); out-of-body-experience (37%); entering a dark tunnel or void (23%); seeing the Light (16%), and entering the Light (10%). In other words, the chance of occurrence of an event or place in an NDE and the range of events or places experienced appears to be closely related to the depth of progression in the process. (Carr, 1993, p. 63).

Some people report seeing deceased relatives before the out-of-body experience, after it, within the tunnel, or in the other world. The Being of Light may be encountered either before or after the out-of-body experience, before or after the tunnel experience, and in more than one place. It is interesting to note in this context that the tunnel experience reported in many Euro-American NDEs is not described in the Tibetan book of the dead as a part of the dying experience (Epstein, 1982).

***Cross-cultural variability in death and near-death experiences.*** Cross-cultural comparisons of NDEs suggest that the content and structure of NDE do vary, but not always in systematic ways. Although Ring (1985) and Moody (1975) suggest that the 9 characteristics constitute invariant and unchanging core elements of NDEs, anthropologist Christopher Carr (1993) reports that death experiences (DEs) and near-death experiences (NDEs) do vary in content and structure both within and between cultures (see also Counts, 1983; Pasricha & Stevenson, 1986; Schorer, 1985). Systematic variations can be observed even among Euro-American NDEs.

Contemporary Euro-American NDEs vary significantly along seven different dimensions. These are: which (1) *general classes* of places and (2) *general classes* of events are experienced, (3) the *specific form* of places and events, (4) the *sequence* with which events and (5) the *sequence* with which places are experienced, (6) the *affective tone* of experiences, and (7) their *cognitive-sensory* characteristics. (Carr, 1993, p. 62)

Moody (1975) suggests that prior religious orientation does not influence the content of the NDE, but does influence how the experient interprets that content (i.e., a Buddhist might interpret a Being of Light as Buddha whereas a Christian might interpret that same Being of Light as Christ). Carr (1993) suggests variation rather than uniformity characterizes NDEs and that many different factors can influence the content and structure of a NDE including "personal circumstance of death and life history, age-gender class, subculture, culture, and pan-human psychology and neurophysiology" (p. 60). This is in agreement with the description provided by writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1972) of the death experience.

The kinds of deaths have much to do with the experience that consciousness undergoes. . . the development of the consciousness itself, and its overall characteristic method of handling experience. The ideas you have involving the nature of reality will strongly color your experiences. . . There is no *one* after-death reality, but each experience is different. Generally speaking, however, there are dimensions into which these individual experiences will fall. . .



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

Many variations in behavior emerge, each the result of individual background, knowledge, and habit. The surroundings in which the dead find themselves will often vary. . . . Thoughts and emotions form physical reality, and they form after-death experience. (pp. 141, 146, 152)

In these terms, the experience of the "dead" and dying is not the same. The conditions and situations vary.

***The "death" experience.*** As the term suggests, a near-death experience is not a complete death experience, but only a "near-death" experience. What happens at the point of actual death? What we do not know about death is far, far greater than what we do know. From the transpersonal perspective of writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1972),

The question is more easily asked than answered. Basically, there is not any particular *point* of death in those terms, even in the case of a sudden accident. . . . What the question really means to most people is these: What will happen when I am not alive in physical terms any longer? What will I feel? Will I still be myself? Will the emotions that propelled me in life continue to do so? Is there a heaven or a hell? Will I be greeted by gods or demons, enemies, or beloved one? Most of all the question means: When I am dead, will I still be who I am now, and will I remember those who are dear to me? . . . I will attempt to give you a practical answer to what you think of as this practical question. (pp. 137-138)

The Tibetan Book of the Dead describes in some detail the death and dying process and the nature of the environment in which the dead will find themselves (Evans-Wentz, 1935/1960; Sogyal, 1993). What is the source of this account of death in the Tibetan books of the dead?

The views of death presented in the books of the dead are said to derive from enlightened yogis and lamas who, through their meditative practices, remembered past lives, between-deaths, and rebirths. The information also is said to come from enlightened lamas who were reborn with a conscious stream of awareness of their past lives, deaths, and rebirths. The books of the dead were written in order to guide the religiously less-well trained person through the dying, death, and rebirth processes so that he or she might grow during them and be reincarnated with greater awareness and a better life in this world or in one of the higher planes of consciousness. A book of the dead was read to the dying and deceased person by their guru, a lama, or a brother over a period of usually 28 to 49 days (Becker, 1985, p. 15) to remind the person of their nature as human, what they were experiencing, and the means by which they might grow in consciousness. (Carr, 1993, pp. 70-71)

The trance channeled writings of Seth/Jane Roberts (1992) provides a more "Westernized" account of the general content and spatial structure of the "nonordinary reality" encountered by the dead and dying perceived in the after-life environment, the dynamics of the boundaries between the living and the dead, the general sequence of life-death-rebirth process, and its general purposes and meanings. For example, consider the following account of what occurs to the ego structure of individual personality following death:

The individual does indeed survive physical death, but there is a reorganization of psychological elements that compose the personality. . . . The ego does not *disappear*, however. It merely takes a back seat in some respects, as your own subconscious does during physical existence. . . . The survival personality has somewhat the same relationship to the ego as the dreaming personality has to it now. . . . A survival personality in many respects is psychologically much different from the individual that he was. The ego is now under the control of what may be loosely called the inner self. When communications take place between a survival personality and a personality who exists within the physical system, then this involves a reshuffling, again, on the part of the

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

survival personality, where the ego is momentarily given greater reign. There is the same sort of disorientation that the *ego* experiences within physical reality when the individual dreams. The same sort of psychological reshuffling occurs. . . When you consider that in sleep the ego is not dominant, then it should not seem strange to you that it is not dominant after death. . . After this existence the ego will not remain dormant either. It simply will not be the *dominant* psychological entity that it is during physical existence. (Roberts, 1999b, pp. 21-23)

While differing substantially in their conceptions about the nature of the self and the meaning and purpose of physical life, both the Tibetan Book of the Dead and Seth/Jane Robert's accounts suggest that "the death space is much like life in its essential functioning and meaning: it is a set of realities or states of consciousness for learning, growing, and healing through choice and integration" (Carr, 1993, p. 60). The similarities that have been noted between (1) NDEs and the death process described in the Tibetan books of the dead (e.g., C. Becker, 1985; Carr, 1993; Epstein, 1989; Moody, 1975; Sogyal, 1993) and (2) NDEs and death bed apparitions (Osis & Haraldsson, 1977/1997) suggest that reported NDEs only reflect the *initial* stages of the death experience and that there are further dimensions of experience and activity beyond the NDE itself that await the dying person. Carr (1993, Table 3) identifies seven cross-cultural similarities in both Tibetan and Euro-American NDEs that "may reveal some fundamental properties of death" (pp. 97-98)

1. Consciousness at death is similar enough to consciousness during life that the experiencer has difficulty recognizing that they have shifted realities.
2. The death space is like life in that it is in part an active classroom for learning.
3. The death process, like life, involves choice, which is the basis for both learning and the creation of personal experience.
4. One fundamental, possibly universal lesson of the death process is to accept both light and darkness from the point of view of light (e.g., life reviews in the context of love are usually experienced).
5. The initial phases of death are peaceful, in part as a result of emotional detachment. . . . In later phases of death, the emotions reappear.
6. Human desires, as distinct from and causing the emotions, manifest in later phases of death. These include desires for life, a body, having a family, and other reasons for rebirth or being "pulled back."
7. Death is initially experienced by consciousness disembodied. . . . Only as death progresses is a more subtle, immaterial body perceived. The qualities and capabilities of this body. . . resemble descriptions of the nature of "ghosts" in parapsychological literature.

"Death is not an end, but a transformation of consciousness. Nature, with its changing seasons, constantly brings you that message" (Roberts, 1981b, p. 140).

***Integral, multi-factorial approach is required.*** The individual and cross-cultural variability in DEs and NDEs proposed by Carr (1993), Roberts (1972), and others differs from the stance taken by other theorists who look to explain DEs and NDEs solely in terms of a single causal mechanism. It seems reasonable to assume that DEs and NDEs cannot be understood from a biological (Saavedra-Aguilar & Gomez-Jeria, 1989; Siegel, 1980), cultural (Zaleski, 1987), psychological (Grosso, 1983; Noyes & Kletti, 1976), or parapsychological (Ring, 1980) standpoint alone. For example, known variability in NDEs

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

cannot be explained by or reduced to cerebral anoxia and hypercarbia, disruption of oxygen transfer at the enzymatic level, limbic lobe dysfunction, phosphenes, sensory isolation, temporal lobe dysfunction, or trauma-triggered endorphin production associated with limbic lobe activation, given the facts that (a) the symptomatology of all these conditions are so inclusive that anything can be linked to them, (b) correlation does not mean causation and just because the apparent surface features of two experiences may resemble each other does not mean they are produced or caused by the same biological mechanism, and (c) NDEs have been observed to occur spontaneously while the person is under neither death-like nor stressful conditions (Groth-Marnat & Schumaker, 1989; Kelly et al., 2007, chap. 6). The *integral* perspective of transpersonal psychology recognizes that DEs and NDEs are inextricably embedded within all of these correlates that are interdependent, mutually arise and develop, jointly limit and constrain, reciprocally influence and determine one another. A multifactorial approach is required that includes and integrates our understanding of these biological, cultural, psychological, and parapsychological elements and conditions of DEs and NDEs into a systematic, broad-ranging, multidisciplinary, integrative, and visionary account that honors the truths and profound insights of all perspectives in a way that does them justice while bracketing their excesses, overstatements, and distortions (Kelly et al., 2007, chap. 6).

### Consciousness and Survival

***What the American people believe.*** The idea of survival of death is not new but is an ancient idea continuing into the present. A nationwide poll conducted in the United States, for example, by the Gallup Organization in 1981 indicated that 67% of respondents answered "Yes" to the question "Do you believe in life after death or not?" (Gallup & Proctor, 1982). Believers outnumbered nonbelievers (27%) and those with no opinion on the matter (6%) by a significant margin -- almost two to one. "Who are the skeptics? Surprisingly, the largest proportion of nay-sayers are from nonwhite, uneducated (grade school), low income groups residing in large cities of one million or more" (Osis, 1983, p. 182). Reincarnation appears to be a part of the belief system of many Americans who believe in life after death even though it is a shady topic in most Christian religions that are dominant on the country. "It appears to be firmly established in the belief systems of 23% of the population; its spread is fairly even among various levels of education, income, and race, but it is slightly more popular (27% with those who do not attend churches" (Osis, 1983, p. 182). What about the question of whether humans can interact with the "spirit world?" Obviously the question presupposes a metaphysical belief in the existence of a spiritual dimension in the first place. The 1981 Gallup poll indicated that

overall, belief in the possibility of contact with the dead is held by 'perhaps 37 million people.' But this belief in communication between worlds is very different between the strata of American society: 28% of the college educated versus 9% of those who only attended grade school, and 38% of the generation under 30 versus 12% of people over 50. The poor and those who reside in the southern, 'Bible Belt' region of America are less inclined toward belief in this matter. (Osis, 1983, p. 182)

Whether psychology or any science will be able to prove that life after death is an uncertain fact in the minds of the American people at this time. According to the 1981 Gallup poll,

one in five Americans believe that life after death will be proved scientifically. The young and those from the western states are the most optimistic about future scientific proof of an afterlife, while Baptists, Lutherans, those living in rural areas, and those with only a grade-school education tend least of all to expect such forthcoming evidence. (Osis, 1983, p. 183)

***Scientific study of the possibility of psychic life beyond biological death.*** Psychical research and experimental parapsychology has traditionally considered the following main types of data as suggestive of the continuation of personality after death: (a) apparitions of the dead, (b) communications with the

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

deceased by mediums (psychics or channelers), (c) rebirth memories, (d) near-death experiences, (e) out-of-body experiences, (f) psi phenomena (telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis), (g) poltergeists and phenomena of physical mediumship, (h) ghosts and hauntings, (i) tape recordings and phone calls from the dead, (j) physical detection of the soul and auras, (k) xenoglossy (ability to speak responsively a language not learned normally) (Becker, 1993; Braude, 2003; Ducasse, 1961; Ebon, 1977; Gauld, 1982; Griffin, 1997; Hart, 1959; Holzer, 1994; Iverson, 1992; Kastenbaum, 1984; Myers, 1903; Roll, 1982; Stevenson, 1984, 1977). Scientific interest in the question of the survival of human personality after death can be traced at least as far back as 1882 with the creation of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in England where a group scholars from the humanities and natural and physical sciences came together "to examine without prejudice or prepossession and in a scientific spirit those faculties of man, real or supposed, which appear to be inexplicable on any generally recognized hypothesis" (Fodor, 1966, p. 351; Gauld, 1968). Beginning from 1882, organized and systematic scientific study of psychic phenomena has progressed through three stages -- from survey research, to observation and field studies, and finally to laboratory studies (Douglas, 1977). From 1882-1990, surveys were conducted to assess the frequency of "apparitions" of the dead in everyday life. From 1900-1930 attempts were made to observe, classify, compare, and experimentally control and manipulate spontaneous psychic phenomena, most notably mediumship. From 1930 to the present, laboratory experiments with statistics have been predominantly conducted.

Professor of psychology at Harvard University, William James (b.1842 - d.1910) participated in the early forms this research from the very beginning. James was president of the SPR from 1894-95 and vice-president from 1890-1910. James co-founded the American branch called the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) in 1885, and openly espoused the cause of psychical research which greatly benefited both the reputation and early experimental forms of this nascent science (James, 1986). William James was responsible for the extensive investigation of the notable medium (or channel), Mrs. Lenore Piper whose mediumship was thoroughly studied for over 25 years (Salter, 1950). For 13 months, James was totally in charge of all arrangements for Mrs. Piper's séances. No hint of fraud or deception were ever found by James or others in Mrs. Piper. After almost 20 years of conducting psychic research, James acknowledged that he was no further in proving the working hypothesis of the possibility of life beyond biological death than he was at the beginning of his inquiry (McDermott, 1968). James also acknowledged that

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

Transpersonal psychology continues this hidden scientific tradition in psychology through its contemporary exploration of the hypothesis that human personality survives the death of the physical body (see, for example, Doore, 1990; Grof, 1985; Hastings, 1991; Kelly et al., 2007; Spong, 1987; Tart, 1997). **Transpersonal writer and channel Seth/Jane Roberts (1998a) describes one possible way this may occur.**

**Every effect of any kind, experienced by the human being, exists as a series of electrical signals and codes that in themselves form a pattern that is an electrical pattern. They exist within the cells, or I should more properly say that the cells form about them. These electric coded signals then form electric counterparts of complete experience, as it has been felt by any given individual. . . .The pattern is, then independent of the physical system, while residing within it. In**

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

other words, each individual from birth on forms his own counterpart from built up, individual, continuous electric signals. At physical death his personality then exists in its complete form, and of course escapes the sort of ending that it would suffer if it were an integral part of the physical system. This electrical pattern is the personality with all the experiences of its earthly time. It then can join or partake of the inner self. In other words, though the ego was adopted originally by the inner self, and was a product of physical heredity and environment, it does not die; but its existence is changed from physical reality into electrical reality. It is still individual. No individuality is lost, but it becomes a part of the inner self, and its experiences are added to the total experience of the many personalities that have composed the inner self. (p. 235). . . . The brain, because of its purpose and its close connection to camouflage manipulation does not have a primary existence within the electrical universe; although it has a secondary existence within it because of its connection to the purely electrical mind. The physical body is formed about its electrical counterpart, yet they are both intertwined in completely different dimensions. All the knowledge gained by the present ego is retained in electrical form, as is all experience so retained. The camouflage material will be discarded as a physical gestalt, as far as the individual is concerned. The matter of the physical body will simply be used in other gestalts. . . . The idea image of the physical body is, of course, retained by the individual (p. 242). . . . Each and every thought and dream and experience that any human being has had exists as an individual, distinct electrical impulse of particular, *unduplicated* intensity. It exists not only isolated for example, or detached, but it exists as a part of the electrical pattern of that personality who originally created it. It is still a part of his electrical pattern, but it does also exist independently of him (p. 243). (Note: 6/23/09, Sessions 126, 128)



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

### References

- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Walters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Aldridge, D. (1993, Fall). Is there evidence for spiritual healing? *Advances: The Journal of Mind-Body Health*, 9(4), 4-21.
- Allport, G. (1955/1969). *Becoming: Basic considerations for a psychology of personality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. (Original work published 1955)
- Armstrong, T. (1984). Transpersonal experience in childhood. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 16(2), 207-230.
- Assagioli, R. (1965/1976). *Psychosynthesis: A manual of principles and techniques*. New York: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1965)
- Assagioli, R. (1973/1992). *The act of will: A guide to self-actualization and self-realization*. New York: Arkana. (Original work published 1992)
- Assagioli, R. (1988/1991). *Transpersonal development: The dimension beyond psychosynthesis*. London: Crucible. (Original work published 1988)
- Augustine, M. J., & Kalish, R. A. (1975). Religion, transcendence, and appropriate death. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 7(1), 1-13.
- Becker, C. B. (1985). Views from Tibet: NDEs and the *Book of the Dead*. *Anabiosis*, 5(1), 3-19.
- Becker, C. B. (1993). *Paranormal experience and survival of death*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Becker, E. (1973). *The denial of death*. New York: Free Press.
- Best, R. (Ed.). (1996). *Education, spirituality and the whole child*. London: Cassell.
- Bettelheim, B. (1980). *Surviving and other essays*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss* (Vol. 1): *Attachment*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss* (Vol. 2): *Separation, anxiety and anger*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Braude, S. E. (2003). *Immortal remains: The evidence for life after death*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bromberg, W., & Schilder, P. (1933). Death and dying: A comparative study of the attitudes and mental reactions toward death and dying. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 20, 133-185.
- Bush, N. (1983). The near-death experience in children: Shades of the prisonhouse reopening. *Anabiosis*, 5, 39-47.
- Carr, C. (1993). Death and near-death: A comparison of Tibetan and Euro-American experiences. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 25(1), 59-110.
- Castaneda, C. (1972). *Journey to Ixtlan*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Chamberlain, D. (1998). *The mind of your newborn baby*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Coberly, M., & Shapiro, S. I. (1998). A transpersonal approach to care of the dying. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 30(1), 1-38.
- Coles, R. (1990). *The spiritual life of children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Counts, D. A. (1983). Near-death and out-of-body experiences in Melanesian society. *Anabiosis*, 3(2), 115-135.
- Doore, G. (Ed.). (1990). *What survives: Contemporary explorations of life after death*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher.
- Douglas, A. (1977). *Extra-sensory powers: A century of psychical research*. New York: Overlook Press.
- Ducasse, C. J. (1961). *A critical examination of the belief in life after death*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Durlak, J. A. (1972). Measurement of the fear of death. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 28, 545-554.
- Ebon, M. (1977). *The evidence for life after death*. New York: New American Library.
- Elkind, D., & Elkind, S. F. (1962). Varieties of religious experience in young adolescents. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 2, 103-111.



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

- Engler, J. (1983). Becoming somebody and nobody: Psychoanalysis and Buddhism. *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, 6, 29-72.
- Epstein, L. (1989). A comparative view of Tibetan and Western near-death experiences. In L. Epstein & R. F. Sherburne (Eds.), *Reflections of Tibetan culture* (pp. 315-328). New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Epstein, M. (1992). The varieties of egolessness. *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, 1 (3), 51-53.
- Erikson, E. (1982). *The life cycle completed*. New York: Norton.
- Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.). New York: Norton.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Erikson, E., Erikson, J., & Kivnick, H. (1986). *Vital involvement in old age*. New York: Norton.
- Evans-Wentz, W. Y. (Ed.). (1935/1960). *The Tibetan book of the dead*. London: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1935)
- Feng, G., & English, E. (Trans.). (1972). *Lao Tzu: Tao te ching*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Ferrucci, P. (1982). *What we may be: Techniques for psychological and spiritual growth through psychosynthesis*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher.
- Fields, R., Taylor, P., Weyler, R., & Ingrace, R. (Eds.). (1984). *Chop wood, carry water: A guide to finding spiritual fulfillment in everyday life*. Los Angeles: Tarcher.
- Flynn, C. (1986). *After the beyond: Human transformation and the near-death experience*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Fodor, N. (1966). *An encyclopedia of psychic science*. New York: University Books.
- Fragar, R. (1989). Transpersonal psychology: Promise and prospects. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology: Exploring the breadth of human experience* (pp. 289-309). New York: Plenum.
- Fragar, R., & Fadiman, J. (2005). *Personality and personal growth*. (6th ed.). New York: Pearson/Prentice-Hall.
- Gabbard, G. O., Twemlow, S. W., & Jones, F. C. (1981). Do "near death experiences" occur only near death? *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 169(6), 374-377.
- Gackenbach, J., & Bosveld, J. (1989). *Control your dreams*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Gallup, G., Jr., & Proctor, W. (1982). *Adventures in immortality: A look beyond the threshold of death*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Garfield, C. A. (1975). Consciousness alteration and fear of death. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 7(2), 147-175.
- Gauld, A. (1968). *Founders of psychical research*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Gauld, A. (1982). *Mediumship and survival: A century of investigations*. London: Heinemann.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1965). *Awareness of dying*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Gowan, J. C. (1974). *Development of the psychedelic individual: A psychological analysis of the psychedelic state and its attendant psychic powers*. Northridge, CA: Author.
- Gowan, J. C. (1975). *Trance, art and creativity*. Northridge, CA: Author.
- Gowan, J. C. (1980). *Operations of increasing order, and other essays on exotic factors of intellect, unusual powers & abilities, etc. (as found in psychic science)*. Westlake Village, CA: Author.
- Griffin, D. R. (1997). *Parapsychology, philosophy, and spirituality: A postmodern exploration*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Groesbeck, C. J. (1985). Carl Jung. In H. I. Kaplan & B. J. Sadock (Eds.), *Comprehensive textbook of psychiatry / IV (Vol. 1)*. (pp. 433-440). Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins.
- Grof, S. (1985). *Beyond the brain: Birth, death and transcendence in psychotherapy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Grosso, M. (1983). Jung, parapsychology, and the near-death experience. *Anabiosis*, 3, 153-161.
- Groth-Marnat, G., & Schumaker, J. F. (1989). The near-death experience: A review and critique. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 29(1), 109-133.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

- Hall, C. C., & Lindsey, G. (1978). *Theories of personality* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Hardy, J. (1987). *A psychology with a soul: Psychosynthesis in evolutionary context*. New York: Viking.
- Harlow, H. F. (1971). *Learning to love*. San Francisco: Albion.
- Hart, H. (1959). *The enigma of survival*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Hastings, A. (1991). *With the tongues of men and angels: A study of channeling*. Fort Worth, TX: Holt.
- Hay, D. (2006). *Something there: The biology of the human spirit*. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Helminiak, D. A. (1987). *Spiritual development: An interdisciplinary study*. Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press.
- Hoffman, E. (1993). *Visions of innocence: Spiritual and inspirational experiences of childhood*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Hoffman, E. (1994, Spring). Re-visioning childhood experience. *The Quest*, 7(1), 50-54.
- Hoffman, E. (1998). Peak experiences in childhood: An exploratory study. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 38, 109-120.
- Holden, J. M., & Guest, C. (1990). Life review in a non-death episode: A comparison with near-death experiences. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 22(1), 1-17.
- Holzer, H. (1994). *Life beyond: Compelling evidence for past lives and existence after death*. Chicago: Contemporary Books.
- Huxley, A. (1970). *The perennial philosophy*. New York: Harper Colophon Books.
- Iverson, J. (1992). *In search of the dead: A scientific investigation of evidence for life after death*. New York: Harper Collins.
- James, W. (1936). *The varieties of religious experience: A study of human nature*. New York: The Modern Library. (Original work published 1902)
- James, W. (1986). *The works of William James: Essays in psychical research*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1934/1960). *The structure and dynamics of the psyche: Vol. 8*. In H. Read, M. Fordham, and G. Adler (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung*. New York: Pantheon. (Original work published 1934)
- Kagan, N. & Moss, H. A. (1962). *Birth to maturity*. New York: Wiley.
- Kagan, N. (1984). *The nature of the child*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kastenbaum, R. (1984). *Is there life after death?* New York: Prentice Hall Press.
- Kastenbaum, R., & Aisenberg, R. (1972). *The psychology of death*. New York: Springer.
- Kelly, E. F., Kelly, E. W., Crabtree, A., Gauld, A., Grosso, M., & Greyson, B. (2007). *Irreducible mind: Toward a psychology for the 21st century*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield
- Kimmel, D. C. (1974). *Adulthood and aging: An interdisciplinary developmental view*. New York: Wiley.
- Klingberg, G. (1959). A study of religious experience in children from 9 to 13 years of age. *Religious Education*, 54, 211-216.
- Koch, S. (1981). The nature and limits of psychological knowledge: Lessons of a century qua 'Science.' *American Psychologist*, 36, 257-269.
- Kohlberg, L. (1981). *The philosophy of moral development: Essays on moral development (Vol. 1)*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The psychology of moral development: Essays on moral development (Vol. II)*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Kornfield, J. (1993). *A path with heart: A guide through the perils and promises of spiritual life*. New York: Bantam.
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York: Macmillan.
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1975). *Death: The final stage of growth*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1997). *The wheel of life: A memoir of living and dying*. New York: Touchstone.
- Kübler-ross, E., & Warshaw, M. (1978). *To live until we say good-bye*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

- Kurlychek, R. T. (1978). Assessment of attitudes toward death and dying: A critical review of some available methods. *Omega*, 9, 37-47.
- LaBerge, S., & Rheingold, H. (1990). *Exploring the world of lucid dreaming*. New York: Ballantine.
- Lane, D. C. (1983). The hierarchical structure of religious visions. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 15(1), 51-60.
- Lehman, H. C. (1953). *Age and achievement*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Leslie, R. C., Jr. (1976). Yoga and fear of death. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 8(2), 128-132.
- Levine, S. (1982). *Who dies? An investigation of conscious living and conscious dying*. New York: Anchor Press.
- Levine, S. (1987). *Healing into life and death*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Levinson, D. J. (1978). *The season's of a man's life*. New York: Knopf.
- Loneragan, B. J. (1957). *Insight: A study of human understanding*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Loneragan, B. J. (1972). *Method in theology*. New York: Herder & Herder.
- Lonetto, R., & Templer, D. I. (1986). *Death anxiety*. New York: Hemisphere Publishing.
- Lovejoy, A. (1936/1964). *The great chain of being*. Cambridge, Harvard University. (Original work published 1936)
- Lowenthal, M. F. & Haven, C. (1968). Interaction and adaptation: Intimacy as a critical variable. In B. Neugarten (Ed.), *Middle age and aging* (pp. 390-400). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lu, F. G., & Heming, G. (1987). The effect of the film *Ikiru* on death anxiety and attitudes toward death. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 19(2), 151-160.
- Maslow, A. H. (1964). *Religions, values, and peak-experiences*. NY: Viking.
- Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being* (2nd ed.). New York: Van Nostrand.
- Maslow, A. H. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York: Viking.
- Maslow, A. H. (1979). *The journals of A. H. Maslow* (2 Vols., R. J. Lowry, Ed.). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- McDermott, J. J. (Ed.). (1968). *The writings of William James: A comprehensive edition*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Merrell-Wolff, F. (1973). *The philosophy of consciousness without an object: Reflections on the nature of transcendental consciousness*. New York: Julian Press.
- Metzner, R. (1980). Ten classical metaphors of self-transformation. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 12(1), 47-62.
- Metzner, R. (1986). *Opening to inner light: The transformation of human nature and consciousness*. Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher.
- Miller, M. E., & Cook-Greuter, S. R. (Eds.). (1994). *Transcendence and mature thought in adulthood: The further reaches of adult development*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Moody, R. A. (1975). *Life after life: The investigation of a phenomenon -- survival of bodily death*. New York: Bantam.
- Morse, M., & Perry, P. (1990). *Closer to the light: Learning from children's near-death experiences*. New York: Villard.
- Morse, M., & Perry, P. (1992). *Transformed by the light: A study of the powerful effect of near-death experiences on people's lives*. New York: Villard.
- Murdock, M. H. (1978). Meditation with young children. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 10(1), 29-44.
- Myers, F. W. H. (1903). *Human personality and its survival of bodily death* (2 vols.). London: Longmans, Green.
- Myers, F.W.H. (1889-1895/1976). *The subliminal consciousness*. New York: Arno Press. (Reprinted from *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, Vols. 5, 6, 8, 9, and 11). (Originally published 1889-1895)
- Noyes, R., & Kletti, R. (1976). Depersonalization in the face of life-threatening danger: An interpretation. *Omega*, 7, 103-114.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

- Osis, K. (1983, April). Book review of *Adventures in immortality: A look beyond the threshold of death*. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 77(2), 181-185.
- Osis, K., & Haraldsson, E. (1977/1997). *What they saw. . . at the hour of death* (3rd ed.). Norwalk, CT: Hastings House. (Original work published 1977)
- Ouspensky, P. D. (1931). *A new model of the universe*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Ouspensky, P. D. (1957). *The fourth way*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Pasricha, S., & Stevenson, I. (1986). Near-death experiences in India: A preliminary report. *Journal of Nervous and Mental disease*, 174(3), 165-170.
- Pattison, E. (1967). The experience of dying. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 21, 32-43.
- Piaget, J. & Inhelder, B. (1969). *The psychology of the child*. New York: Basic Books.
- Piechowski, M. M. (2001). Childhood spirituality. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 33(1), 1-15.
- Pollio, H. (1982). *Behavior and existence: An introduction to empirical humanistic psychology*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.
- Ring, K. & Cooper, S. (1999). *Mindsight: Near-death and out-of-body experiences in the blind*. Palo Alto, CA: Williams James Center for Consciousness Studies at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology.
- Ring, K. (1980). *Life at death: A scientific investigation of the near-death experience*. New York: Quill.
- Ring, K. (1984). *Heading toward omega: In search of the meaning of the near-death experience*. New York: William Morrow & Co.
- Ring, K. (1998). *Lessons from the light: What we can learn from the near-death experience*. Portsmouth, NH: Moment Point Press.
- Roberts, J. (1999a). *The early sessions: Volume 5 of the Seth material*. Manhasset, NY: New Awareness Network.
- Roberts, J. (1972). *Seth speaks: The eternal validity of the soul*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Roberts, J. (1974). *The nature of personal reality: A Seth book*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Roberts, J. (1976). *Psychic politics: An Aspect psychology book*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Roberts, J. (1977a). *The "unknown" reality: A Seth book, Vol. 1*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice.
- Roberts, J. (1979b). *The 'unknown' reality: A Seth book, Vol. 2*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Roberts, J. (1979d). *The nature of the psyche: Its human expression. A Seth book*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Roberts, J. (1981b). *The individual and the nature of mass events: A Seth book*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Roberts, J. (1997c). *The early sessions: Volume 2 of the Seth Material*. Manhasset, NY: New Awareness Network.
- Roberts, J. (1998a). *The early sessions: Volume 3 of the Seth Material*. Manhasset, NY: New Awareness Network.
- Roberts, J. (1999b). *The early sessions: Volume 6 of the Seth material*. Manhasset, NY: New Awareness Network.
- Robinson, E. (1983). *The original vision: A study of the religious experience of childhood*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Rogers, C. R. (1951). *Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications and theory*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rogo, D. S. (1993). *Leaving the body: A complete guide to astral projection*. New York: Fireside Books.
- Roll, W. G. (1982). The changing perspective on life after death. In S. Krippner (Ed.), *Advances in parapsychological research* (Vol. 3) (pp. 147-285). New York: Plenum Press.
- Rosenberg, L. (2000). *Living in the light of death: On the art of being truly alive*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Rothberg, D. (1986). Philosophic foundations of transpersonal psychology: An introduction to some basic issues. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 18(1), 1-34.



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

- Rothberg, D., & Kelly, S. (Eds.). (1998). *Ken Wilber in dialogue: Conversations with leading transpersonal thinkers*. Wheaton, IL: Quest.
- Saavedra-Aguilar, J. C., & Gomez-Jeria, J. S. (1989). A neurobiological model for neardeath experiences. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 7, 205-222.
- Salter, W. H. (1950). *Trance mediumship: An introductory study of Mrs. Piper and Mrs. Leonard*. London: Society for Psychical Research.
- Schorer, C. E. (1985). Two native American near-death experiences. *Omega*, 16(2), 111-113.
- Schumacher, E. F. (1977). *A guide for the perplexed*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Shettles, L. & Rorvik, D. (1983). *The scientific evidence for life before birth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Siegel, R. K. (1980). The psychology of life after death. *American Psychologist*, 35(10), 911-931.
- Smith, H. (1976). *Forgotten truth*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Sobel, H. (1981). Toward a behavioral thanatology in clinical care. In H. Sobel (Ed.), *Behavioral therapy in terminal care: A humanistic approach* (pp. 3-38). Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Sogyal. (1993). *The Tibetan book of living and dying*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Sprong, J. S. (Ed.). (1987). *Proceedings on the symposium on consciousness and survival: An interdisciplinary inquiry into the possibility of life beyond biological death*. Sausalito, CA: Institute of Noetic Sciences.
- Stack, R. (1988). *Out-of-body adventures*. Chicago, IL: Contemporary Books.
- Stevenson, I. (1977). Research into the evidence of man's survival of death: A historical and critical survey with a summary of recent developments. *Journal of Nervous and Mental disease*, 165, 152-170.
- Stevenson, I. (1984). *Unlearned language: New studies in xenoglossy*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.
- Stevenson, I. (1987). *Children who remember previous lives: A question of reincarnation*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.
- Stevenson, I. (1997a). *Reincarnation and biology: A contribution to the etiology of birthmarks and birth defects* (2 Vols.). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Stevenson, I. (1997b). *Where reincarnation and biology intersect*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Sutherland, C. (1995). *Reborn in the light: Life after near-death experiences*. New York: Bantam.
- Tamminen, K. (1994). Religious experiences in childhood and adolescence: A viewpoint of religious development between the ages of 7 and 20. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 4(2), 61-85.
- Tart, C. T. (1986) *Waking up: Overcoming the obstacles to human potential*.
- Tart, C. T. (Ed.). (1975). *Transpersonal psychologies: Perspectives on the mind from seven great spiritual traditions*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Tart, C. T. (Ed.). (1997). *Body, mind, spirit: Exploring the parapsychology of spirituality*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton roads.
- Templer, D. (1969). Death anxiety scale. *Proceedings: 77th annual convention*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Vaughan, F. (1985). *The inward arc: Healing and wholeness in psychotherapy and spirituality*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Verny, T. (1981). *The secret life of the unborn child*. New York: Delta Books.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language*. (A. Kozulin, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Original work 1934).
- Waldman, M. (1990). Reflections on death and reconciliation. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 22(2), 167-174.
- Walsh, R. (1984). *Staying alive: The psychology of human survival*. Boulder, CO: New Science Library.
- Walsh, R., & Shapiro, D. H. (Eds.). (1983). *Beyond health and normality: Explorations of exceptional psychological well-being*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

- Walsh, R., & Vaughan, F. (Eds.). (1993). *Paths beyond ego: The transpersonal vision*. Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher/ Perrigree
- Wambach, H. (1979). *Life before life*. New York: Bantam.
- Washburn, M. (1995). *The ego and the dynamic ground: A transpersonal theory of human development* (2nd ed.). Albany, NY: State University Press of New York Press.
- Washburn, M. (2003). Transpersonal dialogue: A new direction. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 35(1), 1-19.
- Weimer, S. R., & Lu, F. G. (1987). Personal transformation through an encounter with death: Cinematic and psychotherapy case studies. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 19(2), 133-150.
- Weisman, A. D. (1972). *On dying and denying*. New York: Behavioral Publications.
- Weiss, B. L. (1988). *Many lives, many masters*. New York: Simon Schuster.
- Wilber, K. (1975). Psychologia perennis: The spectrum of consciousness. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 7(2), 105-132.
- Wilber, K. (1977). *The spectrum of consciousness*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.
- Wilber, K. (1979). A developmental view of consciousness. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 11(1), 1-21.
- Wilber, K. (1980). *The Atman project: A transpersonal view of human development*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.
- Wilber, K. (1981a). *No boundary: Eastern and Western approaches to personal growth*. Boulder, CO: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K. (1981b). Ontogenetic development: Two fundamental patterns. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 13(1), 33-58.
- Wilber, K. (1983a). *Up from Eden: A transpersonal view of human evolution*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K. (1983b). *A sociable god: A brief introduction to a transcendental sociology*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K. (1991). *Grace and grit: Spirituality and healing in the life and death of Treya Killam Wilber*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K. (1994, Summer). Stages of meditation. *Quest*, 7(1), 42-46.
- Wilber, K. (1999a). Spirituality and developmental lines: Are there stages? *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 31(1), 1-10.
- Wilber, K. (1999b). An approach to integral psychology. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 31(2), 109-136.
- Wilber, K. (2000a). *Sex, ecology, spirituality: The spirit of evolution* (rev. ed.). Boston: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K. (2000b). *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K., Engler, J., & Brown, D. (Eds.). (1986). *Transformations of consciousness: Conventional and contemplative perspectives on development*. Boston: New Science Library.
- Wittine, B. (1995). [Review of the book *Sex, ecology, spirituality: The spirit of evolution*]. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 27(2), 237-243.
- Wooler, R. J. (1987). *Other lives, other selves: A Jungian psychotherapist discovers past lives*. New York: Bantam.
- Woolfolk, R. L., & Richardson, F. C. (1984). Behavior therapy and the ideology of modernity. *American Psychologist*, 39, 777-786.
- Wren-Lewis, J. (1994). Aftereffects of near-death experiences: A survival mechanism hypothesis. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 26(2), 107-116.
- Yeung, W. (1995). Buddhism, death, and dying. In J. K. Parry & A. S. Ryan (Eds.), *A cross-cultural look at death, dying, and religion* (pp. 74-83). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Zaleski, C. (1987). *Otherworld journeys*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

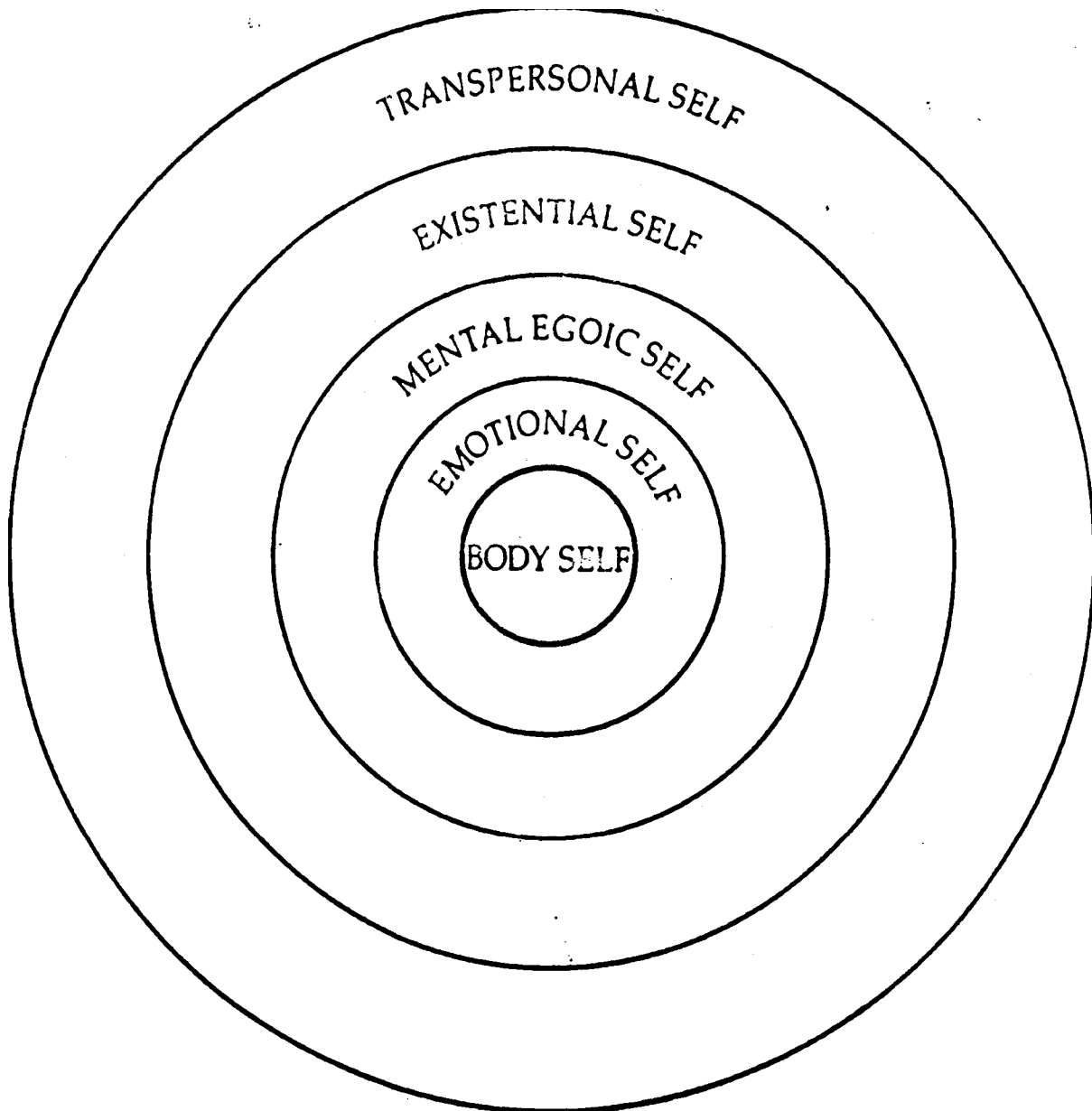


# Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

**Figure 8-1** - Vaughan's Circles of Development

*Absolute Spirit (No Self)*



## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

**Figure 8-2**  
**Exercise in Dis-Identification**  
(Assagioli, 1965/1976, pp. 118-119)

- "I put my body into a comfortable and relaxed position with closed eyes. This done, I affirm: I *have* a body but *I am not* my body. My body may find itself in different conditions of health or sickness; it may be rested or tired, but that has nothing to do with my self, my real 'I'. My body is my precious instrument of experience and action in the outer world, but is *only* an instrument. I treat it well; I seek to keep it in good health, but it is *not* myself. I *have* a body, but *I am not* my body."
- "I *have* emotions, but *I am not* my emotions. These emotions are countless, contradictory, changing, and yet I know that I always remain I, *my-self*, in times of hope or despair, in joy or in pain, in a state of irritation or of calm. Since I can observe, understand and judge my emotions, and then increasingly dominate, direct, and utilize them, it is evident that *they are not myself*. I *have* emotions, but *I am not* my emotions."
- "I *have* desires, but *I am not* my desires, aroused by drives, physical and emotional, and by outer influences. Desires too are changeable and contradictory, with alternations of attraction and repulsion. I *have* desires, but *they are not* myself."
- "I *have* an intellect, *I am not* my intellect. It is more or less developed and active; it is undisciplined but teachable; it is an organ of knowledge in regard to the outer world as well as the inner; but *it is not myself*. I *have* an intellect, but *I am not* my intellect."
- "After this dis-identification of the "I" from its contents of consciousness (sensations, emotions, desires, and thoughts) *I recognize and affirm that I am a Centre of pure self-consciousness*. I am a Center of *Will*, capable of mastering, directing and using all my psychological processes and my physical body"

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

**Figure 8-3**

**Experiencing the Transpersonal Self**

(Vaughan, 1985, pp. 55-57)

**Preparation**

The transpersonal Self can sometimes be experienced directly in meditation. When the mind is quiet and the endless inner monologue ceases, the quiet, open mind may experience the Self as source and context of all experience. When observed closely, all sensations, feeling states, and thoughts are seen to arise in awareness and pass away. The Self that remains the same is your transpersonal Self. The transpersonal Self is the unseen seer who sees, the unheard hearer who hears, the unthought about thinker who thinks. It is the Witness. It is also a source of wisdom, compassion, and creativity each of us has within us and that we can learn to contact.

**Exercise**

Close your eyes, relax, and pay attention to your breathing for a few minutes until your mind is quiet. Imagine that your transpersonal Self represents the highest qualities that you value. This image of your Self embodies all the positive qualities that are latent within you and that you might expect to find in an enlightened being. It embodies your intuitive knowing, your inner wisdom, and your loving kindness. If you were to visibly embody these qualities, how would you see yourself?

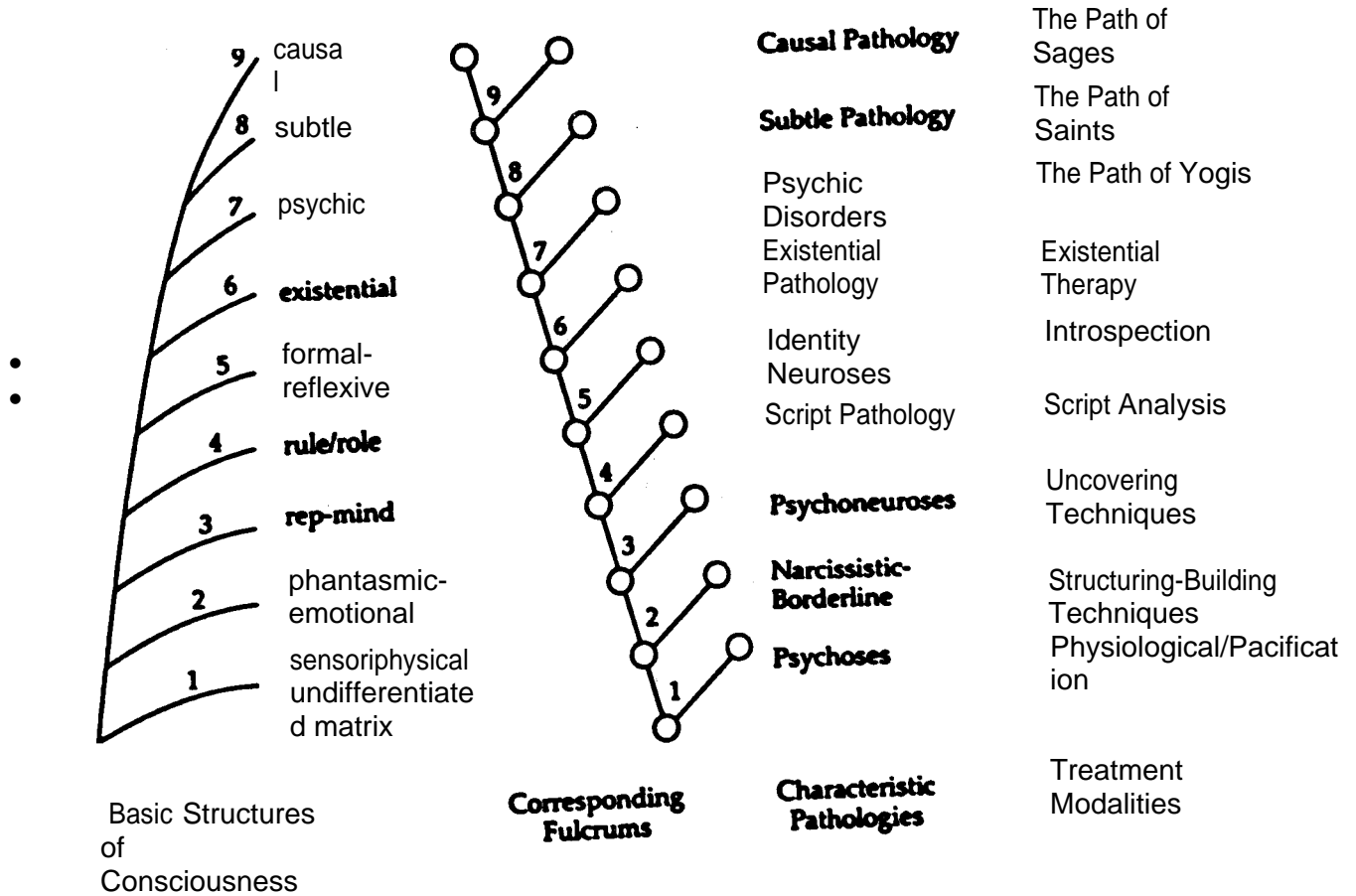
Let the image go now, and focus attention on your breathing. When your mind is quiet again, and your body is relaxed, imagine that you are walking alone in a beautiful place where you feel perfectly safe. Reflect on your life as it is and consider any problem that may be troubling you. Pick one issue that you are concerned about and formulate a single question on which you would like to receive guidance.

Imagine now that your transpersonal Self has come to meet you where you are. Take a moment to imagine what it feels like to be in the presence of a being of total compassion. You can ask this being whatever you want to know. Whatever answer is given, listen and take time to reflect on it. It may be exactly what you need to know for the next step on your way. Trust your Self.

Become your Self.

Let go, say goodbye, and return to being here now in your ordinary waking state.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development



**Figure 8-4. CORRELATION OF STRUCTURES, FULCRUMS, PSYCHOPATHOLOGIES, AND TREATMENTS**

Reprinted from Ken Wilber, Jack Engler, and Daniel P. Brown. *Transformations of Consciousness: Conventional and Contemplative Perspectives on Development* (Boston & Shaftsbury: Shambhala Publications, 1986), p. 145. Diagram copyright (C)1986 by Ken Wilber.

## Chapter 8 – Transpersonal Development

---

**Figure 8-5**  
Right Proportions  
(Ferrucci, 1982, pp. 215-216)

1. Picture in detail the room in which you are sitting, as well as everything around you. Now, in your imagination, move up and away from the room and form a clear picture of the building that contains it.
2. See the building getting smaller as you rise higher and higher. From above, the whole area in which you live lies below you: houses, streets, trees, parks, skyscrapers. People and cars are just barely visible in the streets. Think how each person is the center of his own world, with his own thoughts and hopes, his own problems and projects. Watch them all moving around, living their own lives. Imagine them in their homes, too.
3. Continue your ascent. your field of view expands, enabling you to see other towns in the area, green fields, mountains, and lakes.
4. As you rise higher and higher, you can glimpse oceans and other countries as well as banks of clouds.
5. Now you have the whole planet Earth before you, blue and white, slowly rotating in empty space. From this immense height, you can no longer see people or even guess their existence; but you can think of them, four and a half billion people, each one living on the same planet, breathing the same air. Four and a half billion hearts of people of many different races are beating down there. Think about this for a while, as you continue to visualize the planet Earth.
6. Now, as you move away from it, you see the Earth becoming smaller and smaller. Other planets enter your field of view: bright Venus, red Mars, massive Jupiter -- in fact the whole solar system.
7. The Earth has now vanished, the sun is but a tiny point of light among innumerable stars, and you lost all trace of it. Billions of stars are all around you, below, above, on all sides. There is no more "down," no more "up."
8. All these billions of stars constitute but one galaxy in the universe. It is one among an unknown number of other galaxies reaching out in every direction to infinity.
9. At this point, think of the infinity of time. Here there is no "tomorrow" and no "yesterday;" no haste, no pressure. Everything is scintillating peace and wonder.
10. When you feel inclined, open you eyes again and bring back with you this sense of expansion.