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The Journal of

Transpersonal Psychology

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Editor's Note

Here we are at the end of 2021 with COVID still lingering amongst us, now with the omicron variation that purportedly first manifested in South Africa and has now spread around the globe, providing yet another indication of how interconnected we are. Seems like quite a poignant message if, as a human species, we can hear and heed the call. Omicron, the 15th letter of the Greek alphabet, has within it the Greek word for "small" (micro) as opposed to omega, the last letter of the Greek alphabet, which contains the Greek word for "large" (mega). Let us hope that omicron might remain "small" in its intensity but retain its mighty message for humanity.

In our opening article of this volume, Sanskrit scholar **Ben Williams** and neuroscientist **Marjorie H. Woollacott** have teamed up in collaborative inquiry across their disciplines. They offer an analysis of the parallels between a medieval Sanskrit philosophical text and current neuroscientific research, both of which address perceptual filtering processes that govern individual perception and reduce broader conscious awareness. Specifically, the authors focus on selected writings of philosopher/theologian Utpaladeva, teacher of the philosophy of non-dual Kashmir Śaivism. Illuminated is a comprehensive understanding of these teachings, complemented by findings from modern neuroscience, both of which suggest that conceptual thinking can function as a filtering mechanism to a vaster consciousness. A discussion follows of practical ways to reduce the filtering function. The authors call for further inquiry, offer specific pathways, and encourage further collaborative endeavors across disciplines.

Two articles that follow focus on hypothesis testing research efforts. First, **Rense Lange** and **James Houran** report on the results of their large scale on line survey. Included is a detailed understanding of their research approach. Their interest revolves around the concept and experience of a particular state termed *enchantment,* for which they offer the reader a robust foundation and understanding of prior research on the experience, context, and nature of enchantment and its catalysts. Offered in a parallel but related manner is the literature on Exceptional Human Experiences (EHAs), coined as many readers know by Rhea White, which often induce an experience of enchantment. That relationship between EHAs and enchantment was substantiated by their inquiry, as well as their hypothesis of a self-reinforcing loop in which Transliminality and Paranormal Beliefs (PBs) foster EHAs, which induce an experience of enchantment, which in turn reinforces and promotes more transliminality and PBs. They call for additional research focused in part on the limitations they perceived in their own efforts and offer specific suggestions toward that end.

Maximilian Inglis and **Lance Storm** then tackle the ongoing issue regarding the differentiation between psychosis and spiritual emergency (SE) and the nature of the healing potential of the latter. With a strong literature base and attention to method, their inquiry further built upon previous evidence that offered alogia and depression as differentiating variables for psychosis as well as a(n) hypothesized relationship with existential concerns (EC), namely: death, isolation, identity,

freedom, and meaning. Findings confirmed the presence of alogia and depression with psychosis but not with SE. Confirmed as well were their hypotheses regarding the way in which ECs, and any resulting Existential Distresses (EDs), are handled: Psychosis as a coping mechanism for ED by creating a more tolerable reality, but SE as a healing mechanism for ED. Significantly, according to the authors, their study is the first to link EC and SE quantitatively. Accordingly, they call for more confirmatory as well as exploratory inquiry. Particularly important as well are the practical implications of differential approaches to, and treatments for, the two constructs.

Benjamin Bendeck Sotillos rounds out the articles by ushering readers into a dimension of thinking and being about our humanness, the roots of psychology, and its intersection with other disciplinary forces and cultures, all of which he addresses as restoring the "Science of the Soul," embraced by an array of cultures throughout human history. He expresses his appreciation to have had the privilege to engage a foremost Islamic scholar and philosopher, **Seyyed Hossein Nasr**, in an Interview with a conversation style format. As a prelude and framework, Sotillos provides readers with a rich introduction about the essence, experience, background and contributions of Nasr and the relevance of his lifelong professional trajectory to the transpersonal field, including his role as mentor and friend to the late Huston Smith, long time Editorial Board member of this Journal.

Our Book Review section in this volume highlights seven books. **James Fadiman,** long standing Editorial Board member since inception of the *Journal* in 1969, and with pivotal roles in catalyzing and launching the transpersonal movement, begins the section with his review of **Ram Dass's** last book, an autobiography entitled *Being Ram Dass*. Fadiman had a long-standing relationship with and understanding of Ram Dass, who served as his professor (aka Dr. Richard Alpert) during Fadiman's undergraduate years at Harvard. Readers may recall his In Memoriam tribute upon the passing of Ram Dass on 22 December 2019 (see Volume *52*(1), 2020, pp. 56-59).

Next, we are greeted once again by long time past editor of the *JTP* and Executive Director of the ATP, **Miles A. Vich,** who reviews a new translation of the *Tao Te Ching,* authored by Editorial Board member **Rosemarie Anderson** (*The Divine Feminine Tao Te Ching: A new translation and commentary*)**.** Given the reviewer's familiarity with eleven of the many other translations of the *Tao Te Ching*, and his knowledge of the author's background and experience, he offers an in-depth understanding of the unique significance of the author's rendition and its Divine Feminine character. Moreover, he contextualizes the work within the transpersonal terrain by illuminating, for example, Anderson's approach to translating and the way of knowing brought to the feat.

Manuel Almendro then embraces a review of a recent book authored by the late **Claudio Naranjo** entitled *The Revolution we Expected: Cultivating a New Politics of Consciousness*. Readers may recall his In Memoriam tribute to Naranjo published in Volume *51*(2), 2019, pp. 166-175. He renders the book as a synthesis of Naranjo's lifetime work aimed at both personal and collective levels in tackling the world's problems. Unconsciousness surfaces as a main concern with humanistic

and transpersonal perspectives serving as antidotes. Almendro writes from an informed perspective. Having been colleagues with Naranjo since the 1980s, he is able to infuse the review with direct knowledge as well. Moreover, given the Spanish language that both share, Almendro was able to understand the nuances of the language and render a more robust review as he read the book in the original Spanish as well.

Following on, **Ben Chandler** and **Peter Addy** offer their review of *Beyond the Narrow Life: A Guide for Psychedelic Integration and Exploration,* authored by **Kile M. Ortigo**, with a foreword by *JTP* Editorial Board member **William A. Richards**. Readers may recall Peter Addy's article (in Volume *39*(1), 2007, pages 1-22) entitled "Facilitating Transpersonal Experiences with Dextromethorphan: Potential, Cautions, and Caveats." They begin their review reminding the reader that ancestral and religious frameworks in cultures that have traditionally employed such substances provide guidance for integrating the resulting experiences, support of which is often lacking in "Western" nations. Here, according to the reviewers, is where Ortigo's book makes a significant contribution as a "travel guide," especially for exploratory journeys one may have made or may make outside of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy. Included are real life "journeying reports," as well as experiential interaction resources worksheets, exercises, meditations, etc. The reviewers further explain how Campbell's *Hero's Journey*" and Jungian theory frame the discussion and offer a few concerns and caveats as well.

Moving onward, **Jürgen Kremer** (Editor of *ReVision: A Journal of Consciousness and Transformation)* turns our attention to an individual as well as societal concern: *Understanding Suicide's Allure: Steps to save lives by healing psychological scars,* authored by long-time Editorial Board member **Stanley Krippner** and colleagues **Linda Riebel, Debbie Joffie Ellis, and Daryl S. Paulson.** He begins the review with a compelling introduction to what he terms the "taboo topic of suicide in Western society" and notes the magnitude of the data on suicide, along with the observation that 60% had not previously expressed thoughts of suicide. He offers the reader an in-depth understanding by covering the wide swath of territory that the book addresses, noting particularly unique contributions devoted to Indigenous populations as well as the use of psychedelics in treatment, and other issues that are often neglected in most texts. Highlighted is the manner in which transpersonal perspectives are infused throughout the book.

Steve Taylor, a familiar author to *JTP* readers, offers an extended essay review of *Consciousness Unbound: Liberating Mind from the Tyranny of Materialism,* co-edited by Edward F. Kelly and Paul Marshall, which he contextualizes within the larger literature base of the transpersonal field. He first offers the reader a thorough review of each chapter, which collectively offer an array of metaphysical models that are able to incorporate phenomena that, as he explains, are not understood or explored by "physicalistic" science. Harkening to William James, he reminds the reader that while James initially opted to ignore metaphysical matters, he later embraced a solid position that urged and advocated for further inquiry embracing such a framework. He then reviews the varying positions of scholars in the transpersonal field with regard to the metaphysical. Given the diverse perspectives and ongoing debates, he questions and offers a challenge as to how the

transpersonal field will choose to consider post-materialist metaphysical models. In resonance with the book, he urges a commitment to embrace and explore post materialist metaphysical approaches that may also have an ancillary aim of influencing mainstream psychology, stressing of course the difference between "good" and "bad" metaphysics.

Completing the Book Review section, **Marie Thouin** ushers us into a new year with a new publication by Editorial Board member **Jorge N. Ferrer**, entitled *Love and Freedom: Transcending Monogamy and Polyamory*, actually scheduled for release in 2022. New also, as Thouin relates, is Ferrer's original vocabulary, detailed discussion, and practical supportive guidance for navigating the territory, such as overcoming romantic jealousy, among other matters.

Finally, our *Book Our Editors Are Reading* section features both print and electronic books as well as audio editions.

Onward to 2022.

MB

Conceptual Cognition and Awakening: Insights From Non-dual Śaivism and Neuroscience

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ABSTRACT: This article explores parallels between the theory of conceptual cognition in a Sanskrit philosophical work on non-dual philosophy, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* ('Stanzas on the Recognition of Śiva'), and brain processes that filter out a broader perceptual awareness. This philosophy discusses the power of conceptualization as an essential component of the creative process in which all-pervasive consciousness identifies itself with a particular individual/mind-body complex. We show parallels between this framework and research identifying brain networks active in the process of filtering a vast array of perceptual inputs into a narrowly defined individual psycho-somatic subjectivity. This is followed by a consideration of practices designed to reduce the filtering function of conceptuality in the text under consideration and in neuro-scientific studies on meditation and other experiences that include expanded and lucid states of awareness.

In this article[1] we discuss a seminal text on non-dual Śaiva philosophy from medieval Kashmir, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* ('Stanzas on the Recognition of Śiva') of Utpaladeva (*ca*. 925-975). The insights of this text will be considered in light of contemporary neuroscientific findings on the default mode network and neural correlates that may correspond to some of the epistemologies, models of consciousness, and practices forwarded by this tradition.

The *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* (ĪPK) philosophically sets forth a non-dual framework for reality and closely examines the role of mind, language, and conceptuality in creating our experience of reality.[2] The text also offers an account of the nature of ignorance, which in this tradition takes the form of non-recognition of our true nature as expanded awareness. It proposes an antidote to this ignorance through practical methods that liberate one from a limited scope of identity to an all-embracing self-awareness. After exploring chapter four of this text, which offers a summation of the tradition's key principles, we will consider how its explanatory model for how consciousnss differentiates into individual minds compares with recent studies in neuroscience on the filtering of perceptual inputs. This will create an essential framework for understanding the tradition's methodology for reducing the filter function of the conceptual mind.

Part I of the article will clarify Utpaladeva's views on reality, the self, and the nature of creation, the process whereby consciousness conceals its innate all-

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pervasive nature, with a focus on the role of concepts in this process. Part II will explore these questions through the lens of modern neuroscience and examines the presence of filters within the brain, which substantially limit our perception of the nature of the universe.[3] Part III of the paper will discuss the awareness practices of the non-dual Śaivas designed to refine and expand cognition beyond dichotomizing concepts and part IV will introduce neuroscience research showing modulation of brain networks that may be associated with this shift in perception. In this way, Parts I and II consider models of consciousness and how it is filtered and Parts III and IV build upon that foundation with a practical consideration of the techniques and corresponding mechanisms by which those filters can be reduced.

Part I. Utpaladeva's Thesis

In tenth-century Kashmir, the philosopher and theologian Utpaladeva composed a systematic treatise intended to demonstrate the validity of the axioms at the heart of his scriptural tradition. He did so by formulating or "translating" these scriptural views on reality into rationally based argumentation designed to be understood by a broader community of non-initiates.[4] The outcome of this effort is his magnum opus, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* (ĪPK) or 'Stanzas on the Recognition of Śiva'. This text effectively became the sourcebook for the systematic philosophy of non-dual Śaivism called "*pratyabhijñā*," a term that designates the liberating "recognition" of the identity between the individual self and universal consciousness.

The ĪPK is well suited to interdisciplinary research, a context in which scriptural claims and the vested authority of charismatic teachers carry little weight. Indeed, the persuasive power of this text's analytic arguments was originally designed for people outside the religion of Śaivism to critically assess its views, and if convinced, potentially adopt them. Chapter Four of the ĪPK, entitled the "Summation of Essential Principles," will be the central focus of our discussion of this knowledge system.[5]

Utpaladeva begins the chapter with a concise statement of his core thesis: there is one innate Self that comprises the essential nature of all sentient and insentient beings, and this all-pervasive consciousness is termed "Śiva".[6] In the tantric philosophical environment of Utpaladeva's non-dual view, Śiva is not a form of God that stands apart from the world and the self. Rather, Śiva refers to the creative consciousness that is the dynamic source and substance of this universe. In this tradition, consciousness freely differentiates into every aspect of manifold reality through its inherent capacity of self-representation (*vimarśa*). This consciousness is innate to all beings, but conceals itself in the course of manifesting the world. This process involves freely assuming the limitations of space-time and the structure of cause and effect. In this way, consciousness unfurls a universe populated by countless subjects and environments of experience, which all ultimately shine within and as that consciousness.

Universal consciousness is taught in this tradition as the unified agency within all impulses (*icchā*), cognitions (*jñāna*), and actions (*kriyā*). Moreover, it leaves traces of its all-pervasive nature in the movement of intention, thought, and action in

individual beings. This is because there is a continuum between the powers of universal consciousness and the agency of limited individuals. Given that all beings are endowed with the powers of intention, cognition, and action, and ultimately these powers are undivided and infinite, the very impulse of desire or the flow of thought can serve as a "token" or "sign" that the individual is infinite consciousness. In this way, embodied life itself becomes a medium for recognition (*pratyabhijñā*). This liberating insight, which unfolds beyond the dichotomizing structure of concepts, experientially reveals that individuality is actually just one manifestation of that timeless and all-pervasive consciousness, Śiva, who is in all ways and at all times the intrinsic identity of all beings.

After presenting this core thesis, Utpaladeva immediately turns to the challenging implications of such a radical view of selfhood. This challenge is that if all beings are in fact universal consciousness whose nature is an utterly free and independent power of infinite scope, why don't they experience themselves in such terms? In response, Utpaladeva presents an account of ignorance, which explains how the infinite agency of consciousness becomes exclusively identified with a psycho-somatic individual self:[7]

> The [layers of the self-sense], such as the mind, [breath, body, and individuality,] are included in the domain of objectivity created [by Śiva]. Śiva leads these [objective layers of the Self] into the awareness of being a limited subject in the form of a perceiver.

In the process of creating a world of diverse beings, the layered instantiations of that emanation, including individual awareness, mind, breath, and body are shifted from being objective to subjective realities. In other words, consciousness freely identifies[8] with those realities, which effectively contracts or delimits the scope of identity to a particular individual domain of experience. In this way, it moves from being all-pervasive to an explosion of separate points of consciousness, each an individual knower, seeing themselves and other beings as objects.

What sustains this separate or excluded sense of individuality based on an identification with a particular mind-body complex, Utpaladeva argues, is simply "non-recognition."[9] This is a state of ignorance about the fact that our true identity is the unified consciousness underlying, threading through, and actively becoming everything. Utpaladeva delineates the structure and anatomy of this ignorance.[10] He offers a model that explains the deeply ingrained conviction that beings are discrete individuals, surrounded by a universe that is "out there." This dualistic perception is examined in this way:[11]

> Individual knowers make universals visible as objects of inner awareness according to a linguistic designation such as a specific pot, silver, white, cloth, or cart through the power of conceptualization. Those knowers, conditioned by the experience of those objects, make themselves into objects with notions such as "I am thin" or "I am happy or sad." This very appearance of the difference between subject and object of cognition, which is linguistic, is the binding power of conditioned existence in the state of a limited individual.

This compact description invites elaboration. The key step in the process of all-pervasive consciousness delineating itself as a particularized and delimited locus of awareness is the "power of conceptualization" (*vikalpanaśakti*). This involves assigning linguistic designations to phenomena, which effectively dichotomizes awareness. It does this by dividing the field of experience through conceptually carving out[12] objects such as a "pot," the stock example given in Indian philosophy.

Importantly, conceptual cognition, which picks out and designates objects, also corresponds to the crystallization of a limited identity. This limited identity is forged through a conceptually constructed image or narrative[13] of self, which gives rise to an identification as a particular psycho-somatic individual. The totality of the pattern of conditioned existence (*saṃsāra*), characterized by the duality between a limited subject and object, obscures a more intimate and expansive access to reality. This shining forth of duality is marked as a linguistic process of conceptualization, and this is emblematic of the way in which Utpaladeva presents duality "as the defining feature of a concept."[14] This dualistic plane of perception is grounded in conceptuality, because the concept (*vikalpa*) of our own identity or any object in the field of our awareness actively carves out[15] a particular reality through a process of excluding all that is different. This act of an all-pervasive consciousness excluding its own vastness in order to give rise to a particular experience of an object can be understood as a process of "filtering."

Utpaladeva summarizes the role of conceptuality as structuring duality within and through the underlying unity of consciousness in the following two verses, which add significant caveats to this discussion:[16]

> The limited world of that [individual subject], which is not common to others, is animated by Consciousness's creative disclosure of the world. Moreover, that completely real limited creation comes into being for the [individual self] who is [actually] one with [Consciousness] through Consciousness's power [of diversification], even though it is not recognized [as such]. That power [of diversification], assuming the form of the fluctuating vital energy, endowed with the activity of conceptual cognitions, and diversified through the various phonemes [that underlie those cognitions], does not allow one to repose in their innate nature.

The conceptual world of experience from a conventional perspective that is dualistic and thus contracted is shown here to have a noble genealogy. Rather than being posited as an ultimately fictitious or fabricated experience superimposed upon reality,[17] this limited world of experience is described as "real" (*satya*), inasmuch as it is disclosed and enlivened by divine consciousness through its inherent power of self-differentiation. This power of diversification is described as the action of conceptualization (*vikalpa-kriyā*). Liberation unfolds through the gradual dissolution of conceptual constructs.

Part II. Contributions to a Limited Sense of Self: Brain Filters that Limit Perceptual Awareness

Utpaladeva refers to concepts that filter our experience of reality and facilitate an identification with a particular mind-body complex. In this section we will explore

a possible neural basis for filters that may contribute to this limited identification with the individual mind and body. One model that psychologists and neurophysiologists have proposed to explain this limited experience of the world is termed the filter theory of human consciousness (Broadbent, 1958). One of the first persons to develop this notion of the brain acting as a filter in his "transmission" theory of consciousness, was the eminent Harvard psychologist William James in the late 1800s and early 1900s.[18] Though most scientists of the era believed that consciousness was produced by brain activity, James and others felt that an alternative view was more viable, that the brain filtered out the contents of a much vaster consciousness (Bergson, 1911; James, 1900, 1912, 1958; Myers, 1903).

This theory of brain processing has been described as similar to that of a receiver/transmitter in modern radios and televisions, with neurons only receiving a small portion of the vibratory information within this vaster reality, due to the many filters within its system (Kelly et al., 2010). Filtering is seen as serving to limit the vast amount of incoming sensory information available, in order to reduce the processing demands on the brain (Broadbent, 1958; Kelly et al., 2010). We propose that filtering networks not only reduce the extent of sensory information available to perception, but may also be operative in the reduction of awareness from the infinite unlimited consciousness that Utpaladeva philosophically posits to the circumscribed sphere of the individual knower.

Research by Broadbent (1958) and others (Driver, 2001) suggests that these attentional filters occur at all levels of the brain, including the sensory receptors themselves, which canalize the vibratory information—like sensible sounds and frequencies of light—into perceptual inputs. There are also higher-level attentional filters that further delimit the information that is consciously registered and perceived. These include the ascending reticular activating system (ARAS) with a central role in filtering and regulation of sensory input, and the wide-ranging default mode network (DMN), also called the narrative or mind-wandering network of the brain because it is the source of the background narratives and stories reverberating continually in our minds (Carhart-Harris & Friston, 2010). The DMN is considered by many neuroscientists to be the source of the ego, the individualized notion of self that identifies with thoughts, emotions, and the diverse social roles one plays in the world (Carhart-Harris & Friston, 2010). Thus, the DMN contributes to the conceptual understanding of the individual as separate from the world.

In addition to the narrative filtering of the DMN, language processing networks in the brain are important conceptual filters. In fact, language has been described as a filter, enhancer, or framer of perception and thought, focusing attention on particular aspects of the world. Strong evidence exists supporting a critical relationship between linguistic and perceptual systems (Vulchanova et al., 2019). For example, research has shown that language regions of the brain are involved in color perception in visual search tasks, and enhance activation levels of portions of the visual cortex. In this way, language regions may affect the discrimination of visual stimuli, prioritizing the perception of some over others (Siok et al., 2009).

In fact, one linguist, Edward Sapir, once went so far as to state, "The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same worlds with different labels attached" (Sapir, 1929, p. 209). This is often referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Kay & Kempton, 1984). It has also been said that language helps some things in the world stand forward, and others recede and it defines the way we divide the world and the types of entities we perceive therein (McGilchrist, 2009). In this way, language processing corresponds to Utpaladeva's notion of the conceptual cognition that divides the world up into pieces, with "duality as the defining feature of a concept." In this way, we become enthralled by the dualistic perception of the world, divided by the power of discursive language and conceptuality. However, Utpaladeva does not completely conflate language and conceptuality. In contrast to many other premodern Indian philosophers and contemporary linguists, he argues for levels of language that cannot be reduced to concepts and linguistic conventions.

Another way that the filters of the brain limit perception of a wider reality, is through reverberating internal circuitry that competes with sensory inputs for attentional focus. The DMN and language processing centers are part of the thalamo-cortical loop, a reverberating network between higher cognitive centers of the brain and the thalamus in the mid-brain. Llinás and colleagues (Llinás & Paré, 1996) suggest that the thalamo-cortical loop creates a potentially "closed" system, with the input to the thalamus from the cerebral cortex being larger than that from the sensory systems. This means that, under normal conditions, brain inputs from our current thoughts are more powerful than inputs from the world around us received through our senses when it comes to informing our perception of reality moment to moment. This reverberating circuitry contributes to the experience of the restlessness of the mind and thus inhibits our ability to rest in the pure presence or awareness in the moment. As Utpaladeva says about concepts that similarly flood our attention, they "do not allow one to repose in their innate nature."[19]

One final aspect of brain filtering relates to the function of the left vs. right hemispheres of the brain, and which hemisphere is dominant in a given moment or by habit (McGilchrist, 2009). McGilchrist proposes that modern society, with its focus on a scientific and mechanistic worldview is left-brain dominant, and thus focused on seeing parts rather than a whole. This stance also explains the modern emphasis on rational linear thought rather than global intuition, and may also relate to the loss of the intuitive ability to perceive novelty in the world (McGilchrist, 2009). Thus, this additional attentional filtering process adds one more layer to the dominance of the perception of duality and to the perception of a separation between self and other within the individual.

In summary, these filtering processes of the brain clearly work to limit one's perception of the world to a specific range of energy frequencies (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile) and they produce the dominance of internally generated narratives (created by discursive language and conceptuality) over sensory information through the activity of the DMN and the thalamo-cortical loop. They also limit our awareness to sensory information involving attention to seeing parts rather than a whole, through left-hemisphere dominance that is prevalent in modern cultures. One consequence is the perception of a narrow band-width of the universe, focused

on self-referential internal narratives that veil the connections and interdependences between beings and the ecologies they inhabit. Furthermore, these central nervous system (CNS) filtering networks may correspond to the act of concealment discussed in the ĪPK, specifically, the way that conceptual narratives, which have been related to the DMN, language centers, and thalamo-cortical loop, serve as filters. This is because these networks determine what sensory information will be perceived and determine how this sensory information will be interpreted in ways that support our current conceptual narrative.

Part IIIa. Recognition through the Dissolution of Concepts

Immediately after describing the way in which Consciousness conceals itself in becoming the world, and the role of conceptuality in that process, Utpaladeva's ĪPK introduces two practices designed to catalyze a realization of the all-pervasive nature of consciousness as he envisions it. The first is the "cessation of concepts," a direct and natural method to reduce the filtering function of conceptual narratives. Utpaladeva gives the following description of the practice:[20]

> Śiva's creative emanation [of the world]... emerges [in awareness] from [a perception of reality] that is clear and vivid. That [world] is revealed gradually as the [all-pervasive] state of Śiva by means of dissolving conceptual narratives as a result of one-pointed [awareness].

Utpaladeva here describes the kind of awareness of reality required to behold "Śiva's creative emanation" of the world, which is shorthand for a vision of everything as permeated by consciousness. He says that perception must be clear and vivid. This is a way of seeing that Utpaladeva understands as operating beyond conceptuality, thus illuminating a world of experience no longer encumbered by dualistic perceptions.

Utpaladeva elaborates the means for cultivating this kind of perception accordingly:[21]

> This takes place gradually by completely habituating oneself to the intermittently arising moments that concepts dissolve in the [mental] activity of an individual knower.

In the flow of cognition, there are moments when the concepts that mediate and filter experience are naturally suspended. The practice is for the practitioner to focus their awareness on these gaps, again and again, until they are naturally habituated to that non-conceptual space. A commentator on this text named Abhinavagupta (ca. 975-1025 CE) emphasizes that a key component to this practice is "becoming one-pointedly focused" upon a reality that is "vividly clear," a kind of naked seeing in which the awareness "I am this entire universe" flashes forth.[22] The practice, then, is to remain constantly alert to these moments when conceptual world and all the mental stories we carry fall away, and to then "completely habituate" awareness to that mode of being. This would continue until it becomes the "basis of operation"[23] for a new perception of reality.

In the *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, a pithy and less-technical text based on the ĪPK composed in the eleventh-century by Kṣemarāja, we find more details on this practice. Kṣemarāja adds this:[24]

> Allowing the mind to become deeply settled in the Heart… one dissolves conceptual narratives that impede the ability to naturally abide in the Self by thinking about nothing in particular. Then one naturally attunes to the perception that one's own awareness is the pure perceiver untouched by [obscuring identification] with the body and other [layers of the self].

Instead of allowing the mind to roam amongst objects or internal states, one invites it to deeply settle into the heart and by "thinking of nothing in particular," the dichotomizing function of concepts calms. In order to appreciate the directive to "think nothing in particular," instead of repressing the mind, practitioners shift their awareness from its endless rumination, allowing conceptual stories to fall away and resting in the intervening gaps, which expand over time.

Kṣemarāja concludes his exposition with a citation of a scriptural source that adds further details on what this practice entails:[25]

> Having completely dissolved all mental activities, O Goddess, there is a radiance that results from no longer being dependent upon the flow of the sense-activities. Then [practitioners] who are established in that [radiance], all at once know that supreme state that flows forth as the nectar of wakeful and unparalleled delight.

This verse provides a powerful insight into the fruit of dissolving conceptual narratives: freedom from "dependence on the flow of sense-activities." Conventionally, the information received through the senses is the orienting map for navigating reality. When the conceptual filters are no longer predominant in perception, this tradition argues, experience is no longer confined to the senses and this opens the space for a direct knowing that is conversant with a much broader spectrum of reality. This verse characterizes this expanded state as streaming forth with ambrosial delight, and this emergence of joy is also found in the accounts explored below.

Part IIIb. Recognition: Refinement of Concepts

The ĪPK now transitions from a practice of dissolving concepts to one that involves the practice of engaging certain concepts (*vikalpa*) as a path of awakening in itself. Utpaladeva offers a teaching on the possibility of freedom within the very flux of the conceptual mind. The practice is given in this formulation:[26]

> "This entire [universe] is my all-pervasive power." Maintaining such an awareness, the one whose nature is the universe becomes Śiva even in the stream of conceptual cognitions.

Here we have a concept that the non-dual Śaivas deem to correspond to the inherent expansive nature of the self, an aligned[27] or pure concept (*śuddha-vikalpa*)

articulated as "this entire universe is my all-pervasive power." This concept, even if it does not correspond to a direct experience, is consciously adopted as a view that begins to recalibrate the perception of the world. Abhinavagupta's explanation of the verse concisely captures the essence of this "concept":[28]

> "There is no separate individual limited being that is me. Rather, I am the ultimate, a unified mass of luminous awareness, which is aware of both the perceiver and perceived. I am that and that alone, and nothing else." For this reason, when there is the stabilization of the awareness "the creation of concepts is also my all-pervading power whose defining feature is freedom," even when our conceptual narratives still operate, we are liberated while living.

The goal of this practice is to stabilize this awareness through continually adopting the vantage point that the self is not simply one individual being among many, but a more fundamental and pervasive awareness in which individual subjectivity and its field of objects arises. Abhinavagupta then adds an additional insight about the very nature of conceptuality. The formation of concepts is not an incidental feature that necessarily obscures awareness through its dualistic display. Rather, he describes it as an expression and a crystallization of the energy of consciousness, which is characterized as a creative force whose freedom is unlimited. This understanding itself is an "aligned concept," and for Abhinavagupta it makes possible the impossible: a practitioner can be liberated while concepts are still propagating.

Aligned thoughts are presented as expressions of a unitive insight into a sense of self that is radically inclusive, even though it is still a concept that mediates our experience. They unify instead of dividing the field of experience. Nevertheless, given that they are "concepts," ultimately, they are unable to directly disclose reality as it is. So how do they liberate? Abhinavagupta explains the mechanism by which this happens: the aligned concepts remove all limiting concepts. In the wake of this process of dissolving or "burning to ashes"[29] dualistic concepts based in ignorance, the aligned concept itself eventually "vanishes," in a refinement process in which the concept becomes more and more transparent, until it no longer filters reality.[30] The inner capacity that drives this process of refining the aligned concept of reality that unifies the field of experience is described by the Śaivas as "intuitive reasoning" (*tarka*). This is a higher-order faculty of judgment that allows a practitioner to continually discern and select the pure concept "this entire universe is my all-pervasive power" within the stream of the mind.[31] This *tarka* also identifies and then actively ignores dichotomizing concepts, since it recognizes that they impede or block one from the goal[32] of recognition of the non-dual Self. Below we will consider how this inner capacity of *tarka* may relate to the executive attentional system in the brain.

Part IV. Neural Correlates of Recognition: Modifying the Filters of Experience

There is an emergent body of research that may shed light on the attenuation of the filtering functions found in the brain, which potentially correspond to the non-dual Śaiva's presentation of the dissolution of conceptuality and the use of aligned concepts (Barrett & Griffiths, 2018; Brewer et al., 2011; Carhart-Harris & Friston,

2010). This research includes studies on (a) a number of meditative practices that effectively reduce the activity in the brain's default mode network (DMN), and (b) the role of the executive system in this process.

For example, the research of Judson Brewer and his colleagues tracks these changes in the DMN or mind-wandering network during meditation (Brewer et al., 2011). In one study they made brain imaging scans of activity in the DMN during the meditation sessions of advanced meditators vs. control participants who were new to meditation. The study centered on three methods of meditation: focusing on the breath, loving kindness meditation (fostering acceptance of both oneself and others), and choiceless awareness (broadening the scope of meditation by attending to whatever arises in consciousness, and letting go of any identification with the objects of awareness). A shared goal of all three practices is to reduce the habit of mind-wandering and self-reference.

Across all three meditation conditions they found that the main nodes of the DMN, the posterior-cingulate cortex and the medial prefrontal cortex, were significantly deactivated in the meditation sessions in long-term meditators in comparison to control participants (Brewer et al., 2011). Brewer and his colleagues thus demonstrate that the reduction in mind-wandering during meditation is associated with a decrease in the activity of the DMN. This study thus suggests that the self-referential activity that is the core function of the DMN and which constructs and sustains an experience of a separate self-sense is substantially reduced in advanced practitioners across these three methods (Carhart-Harris & Friston, 2010). Could this decreased filtering and the corresponding awareness that is unbound by egoic referential coordinates be associated with a clearer, more subtle perception of reality? Some neuroscientists have begun to speculate about this (Kelly et al., 2010; Woollacott & Shumway-Cook, 2020).[33]

An article on the perceptual changes associated with his own long-term practice, written by a professor of psychology (Walsh, 1983), speaks to such perceptual shifts in this way:

> The experience feels like having a faint but discernible veil removed from my eyes, and that the veil is made up of hundreds of subtle thoughts and feelings. Each one of these thoughts and feelings seems to act as a competing stimulus or "noise" that thus reduces sensitivity to any one object. Thus, after meditation, any specific stimulus appears stronger and clearer, presumably because the signal:noise ratio is increased. (pp. 43-44)

Though this is a single case, this portrayal of post-meditation perception as removing a "discernible veil" consisting of layers of mental and emotional activity that compete for one's attention is a compelling metaphor for reduction in the function of the DMN. The resulting quality of perception as endowed with enhanced clarity, furthermore, offers interesting parallels to Utpaladeva's description of non-conceptual cognition as a lucid and vivid perception based in one-pointed focus.

In addition, a scientific study examining more advanced states of meditation (Schoenberg et al., 2018) in practitioners of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, explored changes in their neural substrates associated with progressively deeper states of meditative absorption, culminating in a state described as "brilliantly awake." This culminated in what the authors describe as a unified compassionate experience of oneness. That experience is presented as one in which the residue of self-reference and localization dissipates and an unbounded wholeness and interconnection pervades consciousness. Interestingly, they found that in the period between the meditators' resting state and the first phase of meditation, there was a shift toward a more "effortless" state, associated with a reduction in brain energy[34] and decreased DMN activity. This occurred as they settled into meditation. As they then moved to deeper states of meditation, there was a slight progressive increase in brain energy as the attainment of each state engaged more complex executive attention functioning and active alertness, culminating in a state described as "brilliantly awake." However, they qualify what is meant by this increase in brain energy, saying that it was not cognitively driven through intention, per se, but rather effortlessly sustained by the meditator. This is because global brain energy remained substantially lower than baseline levels.

We might interpret their findings that the executive system was slightly more active in progressively deeper states of meditation as evidence of that system remaining vigilant in inhibiting spontaneous thoughts and emotions from surfacing in awareness. One could argue that this research was conducted by and on persons influenced by the literature on Eastern spirituality. However, this hypothesis is supported by research (Ricard et al., 2014) that shows that the executive system is the cognitive function that is alerted to the distracted nature of mind and actively returns it to the focus of meditation. This finding offers more detail on a key function of the executive system to monitor and ongoingly deactivate the DMN in stabilized awakened awareness.

Moreover, the advanced meditative realizations sustained by this executive function can be fruitfully compared to the capacity of *tarka*, the inner ability to maintain aligned concepts in the flow of the mind. *Tarka* or intuitive reasoning is the discerning faculty that identifies conceptual cognitions and selects for and orients towards aligned concepts that lead to liberation. This inner refinement process eventually becomes automatic and spontaneous, culminating in an unmediated non-conceptual awareness of a vast and inclusive Self. The executive system, similarly, alerts a meditator to a moment of mental distraction, reorients the focus towards the object of meditation, and then sustains that focus (Ricard et al., 2014). In both cases, this capacity is essential to the stabilization of meditative awareness. One plane of analysis to appreciate the functionality of these cognitive systems is the bandwidth of awareness: the DMN is involved with a significantly reduced bandwidth of information, whereas the executive system, in this context, plays a key role in sustaining a vast bandwidth.

An interesting parallel in terms of DMN deactivation is found in a study by Barrett and Griffiths (2018) that conducted a comparative analysis of meditation and psilocybin ingestion and showed that both conditions significantly reduced DMN activity. It is significant to note that in the psilocybin study, the reduced activity in

the DMN was directly correlated specifically with a sense of ego-dissolution and unity awareness. This direct correlation gives additional evidence for the conclusion that the DMN is a filter whose activity blocks access to states of expanded awareness (Barrett & Griffiths, 2018; Carhart-Harris et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2017). What this study adds, in terms of our own interdisciplinary exploration, is an understanding that a reduction in DMN activity can directly correspond to the dissolution of a limited identity in tandem with the emergence of a broad and unitive awareness. Utpaladeva's understanding of the function of *vikalpa* and its dissolution includes these two factors. Conceptuality is what causes consciousness to identify exclusively with an individual psycho-somatic self, which contracts around a narrow stream of sensory information.[35] The dissolution of that limited self-conception, in Utpaladeva's non-dual philosophy, is the means for the recognition of an all-pervasive Self that encompasses the entire objective universe.

In a study that explored the effect of deep states of meditation on the activity in left-hemisphere language centers and networks involved in spatial orientation, Newberg and D'Aquili (2001) used SPECT (single photon emission computed tomography) to explore changes in brain activation in advanced meditators when they reached peak states of meditation, which were accompanied by a felt sense of unity-awareness. During this time, there was a shift in the state of participants from an experience of individuality to that of being one with the universe. At the deepest point of meditation, there was a decrease in the activity of the left hemisphere language centers as well in its orientation areas in the posterior parietal lobe. The latter is associated with the process identifying personal physical boundaries. This study presents evidence that could be seen as complementary to Utpaladeva's proposition that reduction in conceptual activity (in this case, through reduced activity in language centers of the left-hemisphere) is associated with a boundless sense of self, experienced as coterminous with the universe.

One other area of research that supports the hypothesis that reduced or absent brain activity coincides with the removal of perceptual filters is Near-Death Experience (NDE). This typically occurs during traumatic events, e.g., after an individual has cardiac arrest but is later resuscitated. In this case of "clinical death," hospital records show a lack of cardiac and brain activity that may continue for minutes on end. Additionally, EEG data show that during these moments the entire cortex, including the DMN, is completely deactivated (van Lommel et al., 2001). Individuals have reported that during this period of zero brain activity they experienced profound unity awareness (Greyson, 2021), and very often return to waking consciousness with the profound conviction that they have a connection to a much greater infinite consciousness. Individuals often report an experience and perspective akin to Utpaladeva's elucidation of unfiltered awareness, that is, there is one innate Self, an all-pervasive consciousness, which "comprises the essential nature of all sentient and insentient beings." For example, one woman stated, "My perception is [now] that I am not this body, this individual. I am consciousness, and supreme consciousness… is real and is the substrate of everything that exists" (Woollacott & Peyton, 2021).

Another individual example of perceptual filters being removed comes from a woman who experienced an NDE while in a coma for nine days after an accident in

which she was severely burned (Everts, 2019). She described not only her mystical experience, but also the reduction of filters on her newfound expanded awareness. She offers the following account (Everts, 2020):

> All my senses were wide open. My senses of hearing and sight were so sensitive. I sensed all the material and spiritual levels at the same time. I knew what my husband was feeling, I heard what my son was thinking. . . That's how I learned why the ego is developed, why we need this protective wall. If our senses were that open to everything, we wouldn't be able to focus on ourselves. We'd never say anything bad about people in front of them because we'd know right away what the other person would feel.

Following this experience, she was able to reduce this heightened awareness and although it gradually faded, she continued to have access to this vivid and highly receptive awareness. This case study is important for our inquiry in that it presents an experience in which the DMN was completely deactivated during a coma. This resulted in an expanded bandwidth of receptivity of information, but also led to the vital insight that the filtering function of the DMN serves an important pragmatic role in daily life.

Significantly, all of the above studies offer counterevidence to the conclusions a materialist or "production" model of consciousness might draw from the reduction or cessation of brain function. Materialist views that propose that consciousness is fundamentally a product of brain activity predict that reduced brain activity would result in a deterioration in mental acuity, such as confusion or disorientation, while the complete absence of brain activity would necessitate unconsciousness. In these studies, reduced brain activity resulted in the opposite, that is, increases in clarity, perceptual sensitivity and an expansion of the horizon of awareness.[36]

Utpaladeva describes different methods for accessing unfiltered expansive awareness, namely dissolving concepts by attending to the gaps in the flow of awareness and working with aligned concepts. However, neuroscience research offering experimental data on these practices that may distinguish the regions in the brain to which they correspond is still a desideratum. We would like to now offer a few tentative correspondences that this research may confirm. For example, the underlying changes in brain processing during the practice of "aligned concepts" would likely occur in the linguistic centers of the brain. In this practice of employing concepts that affirm and eventually give way to a much vaster horizon of self, the left hemisphere of the brain—that narrowly focuses awareness upon manipulating objects to benefit the individual and is thereby more self-referential—would likely show reduced neural activity. By contrast, it is plausible that through these practices the right hemisphere, which employs global flexible attention, understanding wholes and intuitive processing, would become dominant. This would allow the individual's attention to be global, thus remaining more consistently rooted in a sense of unity between self and the phenomenal world of experience, rather than marked by a sharp sense of separation or duality.

In summary, though there is no current neuroscience research that differentiates the neural activity associated with the various methods of Utpaladeva regarding a

return to an all-encompassing nondual identification with reality, the studies cited do tell us about what occurs when we enter a variety of states of expansive awareness. These include the reduction in activity of the DMN during meditation and during the neuro-modulatory effects of psilocybin; the reduced neural activity in the left hemisphere of the brain in deep meditation; and the absence of neural activity in NDEs. Much of the data appear to show direct correlation between the reduction of the DMN and the extent to which consciousness expands. This further correlates to new capacities of receptivity. These include the influx of information when brain filters are suspended and the senses are no longer the primary medium for orienting our experience and also the clarity and lucidity of perception in non-dual awakened awareness.

Summary and Conclusions

In this article we have elucidated the non-dual Śaiva philosophy of Utpaladeva's ĪPK ('Stanzas on the Recognition of Śiva'), as set forth in the fourth chapter of that text. The ĪPK introduced the power of conceptualization as an essential step in the process of all-pervasive consciousness identifying itself with a particular individual. Conceptualization, in Utpaladeva's theory, creates a dualistic perception of an object in awareness. It is a function of consciousness that sculpts out[37] a portion of reality as it excludes all that is different. This process can be perceived as an act of filtering, as consciousness excludes its own vastness in order to fashion a particularized object of experience. These conceptual cognitions also coincide with a limited identification with a specific mind-body complex.

We believe there are parallels between the theoretical framework of Utpaladeva and neuroscience research that identifies brain networks that may be active in the process of consciousness being "filtered" or "reduced" into a locus of individual psycho-somatic subjectivity. We have shown, for example, that many levels of brain processing contribute to the filtering of perceptual input. These include the following functions: (a) the limited range of the visual and auditory sensory channels to specific vibrational frequencies, (b) the DMN or mind wandering network, (c) the language and narrative centers of the left side of the brain, which create continual conceptualization further limiting and distorting perception, (d) the ascending reticular activating system (ARAS) with a central role in filtering and regulation of sensory input, and (e) the reverberating circuitry of the thalamo-cortical loop, which allows current narratives to be more perceptually dominant in awareness than inputs of sensory information. These all variably contribute to a narrowing of experience and identity.

After describing how an originally unlimited perception of the world is concealed through the process of creation and identification with a limited point of awareness within a mind-body complex, Utpaladeva goes on to describe methods for recognizing the true nature of reality through the "cessation of concepts" and the cultivation of aligned concepts. The former is described as attuning to moments when the concepts mediating our experience are suspended. In the wake of that non-conceptual knowing one experiences a reality that is vividly clear, with the awareness, "I am the entire universe" emerging in the foreground of experience.

Working with aligned concepts consists in cultivating a "way of seeing." Utpaladeva posits that when this perspective becomes lucid and stable, it actively subverts dualistic conclusions about reality. We have hypothesized that the executive attention system and its salience network may play a key role in keeping a practitioner selectively focused upon these aligned concepts. This involves the meta-cognitive ability to continually let go of dualistic thought. This may relate to one aspect of what the non-dual Śaivas call intuitive reasoning or *tarka*, an intellectual and intuitive capacity that distinguishes between what a practitioner should hold on to and let go of on the path to liberation.

This comparative exercise is not aimed at proving or justifying Utpaladeva's non-dual view and theory of consciousness with the research we have collated from neuroscientific studies. Rather, we are juxtaposing them to enrich a consideration of the filter-function of the mind across these disciplines. One potential outcome of this interdisciplinary collaboration is to outline future avenues of research on Utpaladeva's path of awakening, both dissolving concepts and refining concepts, and assessing the distinctive neurological impact of such practices (in contrast to Vipassana, Psilocybin states, etc.). Combining religious studies scholarship with neuroscience research is not without substantive challenges, but hopefully this study models the potential of this kind of interdisciplinary work to enlarge the perspectives, paradigms, and modes of analysis of each field.

Neuroscience research on practices and events that result in a reduction or suspension of concepts that mediate our experience may shed light on some of the neurological systems involved in the process of awakening that Utpaladeva presents. When there is a reduction or stilling of the activity of the default mode network or language centers in the brain during meditation, psilocybin ingestion, or Near-Death Experiences, a limited and bounded sense of identity dissolves into an awareness that is vast and unitive. As the filtering process is reduced, not only is there access to expanded states of awareness, but in certain cases non-local perception (awareness of the thoughts of others) and vividly clear and penetrating insight. These findings can accommodate materialist theories that correlate brain activity with specific conscious experience, but they also suggest an extensive domain of awareness and experience that is not dependent upon brain function. In the reported studies increased or expanded levels of awareness, surprisingly, are associated with decreased brain activity. These data also resonate with the statements of the Śaiva philosophers' description of the culmination of the dissolution of mental activities as a blissful experience of "wakeful and unparalleled delight."

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NOTES

[1]We would like to thank James Reich, who read and discussed much of chapter four of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* with Ben Williams, and also Anne Shumway-Cook, for her inspiration to engage in this collaboration and her encouragement along the way.

[2]Utpaladeva does this in dialogue with imagined Buddhist interlocutors. In the course of refuting Buddhist critiques of the Self, many other philosophical issues are broached, such as the reality of universals, theories of mereology, etc.

[3]We must acknowledge at the outset two prominent views within the neuroscience community on the nature of consciousness: a materialist worldview, which sees it as an epiphenomenon of neural function and a second view, which sees consciousness as a fundamental characteristic of the universe. By exploring the ramifications of the second perspective, our article strives to bridge the insights of cognitive science with the models of reality disclosed in this non-dual Śaiva philosophy.

[4]By deferring to inferential debate and rational proofs to establish the validity of this tradition's ontological claims (further discussed below), this text represents an expansion of an audience beyond the limited ambit of co-religionists or fellow initiates in the Śaiva tantric tradition. On the possible motivations underwriting the widening of an audience represented by the ĪPK, see Torella (2002, p. xiii): "The complex work of exegesis of the scriptures, the reformulation of their teaching and the organizing and hierarchizing of their contents indicate first and foremost its decision to emerge into the open, to escape from the dimension of a restricted circle of adepts—which is what must have been the original nature of these schools—and to offer itself implicitly as an alternative to the dominant Śaivasiddhānta... In order to do this it was necessary to extract a homogenous though varied teaching from the diverse texts; to purge it, without changing its essential nature, of all that it was felt could not be proposed to a wider circle—in other words, of

all that was bound to create an instinctive and insurmountable resistance—by attenuating the sharper points or removing every actually concrete aspect, and finally translating it into a discourse whose categories were shared by its addressees and engaging in a dialogue that would not be afraid to confront rival doctrines."

[5]Although it is less philosophically rigorous than earlier portions of the text, the central points it rehashes are subjected to critical scrutiny in the first two chapters through the pressure of postulated philosophical opponents, most significantly the Buddhists.

[6]*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 4.1: *svātmaiva sarvajantūnām eka eva maheśvaraḥ | viśvarūpo 'ham idam ity akhaṇḍāmarśabṛṃhitaḥ* 'The One innate Self of all beings is Śiva. One with everything, that Self is replete with the undivided awareness, 'I am all this.' All Sanskrit sources are translated by Ben Williams, unless otherwise noted.

[7]*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 4.2: *tatra svasṛṣṭedaṃbhāge buddhyādi grāhakātmanā | ahaṃkāraparāmarśapadaṃ nītam anena tat*.

[8]*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikāvṛtti* ad 4.2 *maheśvarasya jṛmbhāmaye 'smin nirgate tasminn idaṃtāparāmarśe grāhyaṃ yan nirmitaṃ buddhiḥ prāṇo 'tha śūnyaṃ tad vedyaikadeśarūpam ahaṃkārāvamṛśyatāpādanena paricchinnagrāhakīkṛtam* 'When this [universe], which consists in the blossoming forth of Śiva, has emerged, the objects of perception (*grāhya*) that coalesce within objectively-oriented awareness, including the intellect, the vital energy, and the void, which form one fragment of the knowable reality, are transformed into a particular knowing subject. This happens by [Śiva] becoming self-aware as a limited individual.'

[9]*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikāvṛtti* ad 4.3: *etad eva viśvātmanaḥ parimitatvakaraṇam apratyabhijñānam ucyate | evaṃ cānekabuddhiprāṇādikhaṇḍagatāparāhaṃkāraparāmarśaḥ parāparijñānasaṃjñaḥ | pratyagātmano bahavas | teṣu pramātṛrūpeṣu maheśvareṇa svānandaḥ svakriyaikakartṛtānusāriṇī nirmitā* 'It is precisely this non-recognition that is taught [in this system] as the cause of the universal Self becoming limited. And in this way, the awareness of oneself as the limited self as separate (*aparā*), located in the various fragments [of the objective world], including the intellect and vital energy, is what is known as the non-recognition of the highest reality (*parā*). Individual souls are many. Śiva manifests in those knowing subjects his own bliss [and] his own activity, which conforms to a unified agency.'

[10]In explaining the nature of ignorance, Utpaladeva references a diverse set of resources, including tantric speculation on the role of phonemes in cosmogenesis and Indian philosophical debates surrounding the nature and action of conceptual cognition.

[11]*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikāvṛtti* ad 4.8: *te vibhinnāvabhāsāḥ sāmānyātmano 'rthās tadanubhavasaṃskṛtaiḥ kṛśo 'haṃ duḥkhī sukhī vāham iti vicitravyapadeśaviṣayīkriyamāṇātmabhiḥ kṣetrajñair vikalpanaśaktyā tattadghaṭarajataśuklapaṭaśakaṭādināmnāntaspratyavamarśanīyatvena. . . ayam eva grāhyagrāhakabhedāvabhāsaḥ śabdamayaḥ paśubhāve saṃsārabandhaḥ*.

[12]This language is indebted to Catherine Prueitt. See Prueitt (2017).

[13]On the function of *vikalpa* or conceptual cognition as a "story" or "narrative," see the insightful elucidation of this term in Wallis (2017), pp. 345-348.

[14]Prueitt (2017), p. 17.

[15]Prueitt (2017), p. 19: "However, conventionally, different types of perceivers carve away various slices of the ultimate to generate concepts."

[16]*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 4.9-10: *tasyāsādhāraṇī sṛṣṭir īśasṛṣṭyupajīvinī | saiṣāpy ajñatayā satyaiveśaśaktyā tadātmanaḥ || svaviśrāntyuparodhāya calayā prāṇarūpayā | vikalpakriyayā tattadvarṇavaicitryarūpayā*.

[17]Prueitt (2017, p. 19): "The error involved in conventional awareness, then, is not that the conventional concepts of subject and object are simply fabrications with no basis in what is ultimate real. Rather, conventional awarenesses are erroneous in that they only present part of the

truth: they ignore the fact that every moment of awareness is rooted in the infinite variegation of consciousness."

[18]James (1900, pp. 32-33): "Suppose, for example, that the whole universe of material things. . .should turn out to be a mere surface-veil of phenomena, hiding and keeping back the world of genuine realities." James continues (pp. 35-38), "Admit now that our brains are such thin and half-transparent places in the veil. What will happen? Why, as the white radiance comes through the dome, with all sorts of staining and distortion imprinted on it by the glass... even so the genuine matter of reality, the life of souls as it is in its fullness, will break through our several brains into this world in all sorts of restricted forms, and with all the imperfections and queernesses that characterize our finite individualities here below. According to the state in which the brain finds itself, the barrier of its obstructiveness may also be supposed to rise or fall. It sinks so low, when the brain is in full activity, that a comparative flood of spiritual energy pours over. At other times, only such occasional waves of thought as heavy sleep permits get by. And when finally a brain stops acting altogether, or decays, that special stream of consciousness which it subverted will vanish entirely from this natural world. But the sphere of being that supplied the consciousness would still be intact; and in that more real world with which, even whilst here, it was continuous, the consciousness might, in ways unknown to us, continue still." These ideas are further developed in James (1912), particularly in chapter 8, "La Notion de Conscience."

[19]*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 4.9-10, translated above.

[20]*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 4.11: [. . .] *caiśaḥ sargaḥ spaṣṭāvabhāsanāt | vikalpahānenaikāgryāt krameṇeśvaratāpadam*.

[21]*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikāvṛtti* ad 4.11: *tatrāntarāntarodyatkṣetrajñavyāpāravikalpananirhrāsapariśīlanena.*

[22]*Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* ad 4.11: *so 'yaṃ sargo yadā vikalpahānakrameṇa tasminn nirvikalpakaparigṛhīta eva spaṣṭābhe 'rtha ekāgratvam avalambya aham idam ity aiśvaryaparāmarśapadaṃ bhavati tadā. . . krameṇa abhyāsatāratamyena paśoḥ paśutvaṃ pratihantīśvaratvaṃ ca darśayati* 'Being one-pointedly focused upon a vividly clear reality that is perceived through a non-conceptual awareness by dissolving conceptual narratives, that divine creation is revealed [in the awareness] "I am this [universe]." When that takes place, the individual's state of contraction falls away and they are revealed to be Śiva. This happens through a method that has gradations of intensity related to the degree of practice.'

[23]This term is often used in the meditation system developed and articulated by Daniel P. Brown.

[24]*Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* ad 18: *hṛdaye nihitacittaḥ. . . svasthitipratibandhakaṃ vikalpaṃ akiṃciccintakatvena praśamayan avikalpaparāmarśena dehādyakaluṣasvacitpramāṭṛtānibhālanapravaṇaḥ*. Here Kṣemarāja not only develops themes from chapter 4 of the ĪPK, but also alludes to the description of the divine immersion (*śāmbhava-samāveśa*) taught in the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*.

[25]*Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* ad 18: *vihāya sakalāḥ kriyā janani mānasīḥ sarvato vimuktakaraṇakriyānusṛtipāratantryojjvalam | sthitais tvadanubhāvataḥ sapadi vedyate sā parā daśā nṛbhir atandritāsamasukhāmṛtasyandinī.* The text cited here is the *Jñānagarbha*.

[26]*Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 4.12: *sarvo mamāyaṃ vibhava ity evaṃ parijānataḥ | viśvātmano vikalpānāṃ prasare 'pi maheśatā*.

[27]On the translation of *śuddha-vikalpa* as "aligned concept," we are following Wallis (2013), pp. 357ff.

[28]*Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* ad 4.12: *na hi pratyagātmā nāma paśuḥ kaścid anyo yo 'ham api tu parigṛhītagrāhyagrāhakaprakāśaikaghanaḥ paro yaḥ sa evāhaṃ sa cāham eva na tv anyaḥ kaścit. ato vikalpasṛṣṭir api mama svātantryalakṣaṇo vibhavaḥ ity evaṃ vimarśe dṛḍhībhūte saty aparikṣīṇavikalpo 'pi jīvann eva muktaḥ*.

[29]*Tantrasāra*, chapter 4: *tathā hi vikalpabalāt eva jantavo baddham ātmānam abhimanyante sa abhimānaḥ saṃsārapratibandhahetuḥ ataḥ pratidvandvirūpo vikalpa uditaḥ saṃsārahetuṃ vikalpaṃ dalayati iti abhyudayahetuḥ* 'To explain, by the power of concepts, human beings considered their own Self to be bound. Misidentification is the cause of one's connection to

cyclical existence. For this reason, it is said that a concept that is opposed [to that limited Self notion] reduces to ashes the concepts that cause cyclical existence. Thus, [that kind of concept] is uplifting.'

[30]On the process by which pure concepts become ever more lucid, described by Abhinavagupta as "the refinement of concepts," see *Tantrāloka* 4.1-10. For a translation and discussion of this section, see Muller-Ortega (2005), pp. 205ff.

[31]Muller-Ortega (2005), pp. 206-207: "The description of *vikalpa-saṃskāra* [the refinement of concepts] could be seen as offering a theoretical outline of what takes place in the application of *tarka*, the attainment of perfected reasoning… Such a vision offers complete knowledge, the achieved intellectual knowledge which is such that the object of knowledge now translucently reveals itself as being composed of ultimacy, even in what might previously have been judged to be its most superficial, external, and gross levels of manifestation."

[32]Sanderson translates the Yogapāda of the *Mṛgendratantra* and its commentary, which cites *tarka* [=*ūha*] as one of the supports of Yoga. The commentator of the text, Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa elucidates the meaning of *tarka* as the capacity to judge what leads one to the goal and what impedes that process. See Sanderson (1999), p. 9: [due to *tarka*] "the Yogin experiences the manifestation of all things rising before him in their real nature and so gradually understands what state is to be transcended, what nourishes that [state], what undermines it, and what nourishes its underminers, and comes to know in the same way the state to which he should aspire, what nourishes that [state], what undermines it, and what nourishes its underminers. It is for this reason that it is this [reasoning] that is the principal auxiliary of Yoga."

[33]Kelly et al. (2010) have performed considerable research on near-death experiences in which a patient has undergone cardiac arrest and the EEG recording of brain activity is flat-lined. See Kelly et al. (2010), pp. 385-386: "NDEs seem instead to provide direct evidence for a type of mental functioning that varies inversely, rather than directly, with the observable activity of the nervous system....Such evidence, we believe, fundamentally conflicts with the conventional doctrine that brain processes produce consciousness, and supports the alternative view that brain activity normally serves as a kind of filter, which somehow constrains the material that emerges into waking consciousness... [This] may lead to drastic alterations of the normal mind-brain relation and to an associated enhancement or enlargement of consciousness." They also note that 80% of near-death experiencers described their thinking during the NDE as "clearer than usual" (45%) or as clear as usual (35%).

[34]In this study, increased brain energy refers to the magnitude of the current density vector in the Anterior Cingulate Cortex.

[35]It may also be the case that the thalamo-cortical reverberating circuit of brain activity, which often dominates attentional awareness with its internally generated thoughts and memories, would be significantly reduced as one follows Utpaladeva's practice. The exercise of "aligned concepts" is a directive to identify with broader and broader horizons of reality, which is designed to open up a direct non-conceptual experience free of the distortion of inner narratives. This practice may coincide with increased access to information coming in and through the sensory channels and increased sensory acuity, clarity of perception, and intensity of experience.

[36]As early as 1898, William James, referring to a wide range of phenomena left unaccountable by a materialist framework for consciousness, made a very similar point. See James (1900), pp. 49-55: "The transmission-theory also puts itself in touch with a whole class of experiences that are with difficulty explained by the production-theory. I refer to those obscure and exceptional phenomena… as religious conversions, providential leadings in answer to prayer, instantaneous healings, premonitions, apparitions at time of death, clairvoyant visions or impressions, and the whole range of mediumistic capacities, to say nothing of still more exceptional and incomprehensible things. If all our human thought be a function of the brain, then of course, if any of these things are facts, and to my own mind some of them are facts, we may not suppose that they can occur without preliminary brain-action. But the ordinary production-theory of consciousness is knit up with a peculiar notion of how brain-action can occur, that notion being that all brain action, without exception, is due to a prior action, immediate or remote, of the bodily

sense-organs on the brain. Such action makes the brain produce sensations and mental images, and out of the sensations and images the higher forms of thought and knowledge in their turn are framed. As transmissionists, we also must admit this to be the condition of all our usual thought. . . But, in the mysterious phenomena to which I allude, it is often hard to see where the sense-organs can come in. A medium, for example, will show knowledge of his sitter's private affairs which it seems impossible he should have acquired through sight or hearing, or inference therefrom. Or you will have an apparition of someone who is now dying hundreds of miles away. On the production-theory one does not see from what sensations such odd bits of knowledge are produced. On the transmission-theory, they don't have to be 'produced', they exist ready-made in the transcendental world, and all that is needed is an abnormal lowering of the brain-threshold to let them through. In cases of conversion, in providential leadings, sudden mental healings, etc., it seems to the subjects themselves of the experience as if a power from without, quite different from the ordinary action of the senses or of the sense-led mind, came into their life, as if the latter suddenly opened into that greater life in which it has its source. The word 'influx', used in Swedenborgian circles, well describes this impression of new insight, or new willingness, sweeping over us like a tide. All such experiences, quite paradoxical and meaningless on the production-theory, fall very naturally into place on the other theory. We need only suppose the continuity of our consciousness with a mother sea, to allow for exceptional waves occasionally pouring over the dam. Of course the causes of this odd lowering of the brain's threshold still remain a mystery on any terms."

[37]On the notion of consciousness or Śiva acting as a "sculptor," see Prueitt (2017), p. 23: "Abhinavagupta picks up on this conception of Śiva as the one who creates the universe from within himself in his benedictory verse to Chapter Six: 'We praise Śiva, the sculptor of variety, who—by his mere will—using the chisel of exclusion, carves out objective entities, which are the mass that is not different from his own self."

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Replicable Survey Evidence for an 'Enchantment—Psi' Loop

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ABSTRACT: We conducted a large-scale online survey to examine "situational-enchantment" as a special mental state that is conducive of psi-related or exceptional human experiences (EHEs). A convenience sample of 707 online respondents completed measures of Transliminality, Paranormal Belief (New Age Philosophy vs Traditional Paranormal Beliefs), EHEs, and Enchantment. After establishing the reliability and scalability of all measures via Rasch scaling, respondents were randomly assigned to either a Training set ($n = 471$) or Validation set ($n = 236$). Competitive testing with path analysis on the Training set found that the best-fitting model affirmed our prediction of a self-reinforcing loop between Enchantment and EHEs (psi), which was mediated by a link between Transliminality and Paranormal Belief, and this solution was accompanied by excellent model fit. This same pattern was fully replicated in the Validation set, thereby establishing the empirical stability of our process model. The results support the hypothesis that enchantment collectively acts as an aftereffect, example of, and catalyst for EHEs and putative psi. We discuss the findings relative to clinical contexts and future research.

Keywords: enchantment, exceptional human experiences, paranormal belief, psi, transliminality

Thesaurus.com defines *enchantment* as "the art, act, or instance of 'magic' or 'great delight,' with synonyms that include "fascination, allurement, attraction, captivation, and rapture." These characterizations echo transpersonal and positive psychology's focus on efficacious emotions and emergent experiences (Palmer & Hastings, 2013). However, a more esoteric synonym — 'mesmerized' — perhaps more fittingly describes enchantment as something that transcends the mere feeling of great wonder or delight. Mesmerism (or 'to be mesmerized') refers to 'hypnotic appeal' and specifically involves "the induction of a trancelike state using the vitalistic principle of animal magnetism" (American Psychological Association, n.d.). These descriptions imply that waking consciousness is altered such that an individual becomes engrossed within an object, person, or situation, and thereby partially controlled by being 'under this spell.' Bennett (2001) similarly remarked that enchantment, "consists of a mixed bodily state of joy and disturbance, a

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transitory sensuous condition dense and intense enough to stop you in your tracks and toss you onto a new terrain and to move you from the actual world to its virtual possibilities" (p. 111).

Accordingly, enchantment involves the feeling of being lifted out of the everyday experience of the mundane world and mentally situated 'betwixt and between' reality and fantasy (for a review, see Drinkwater et al., 2020). Many types of events apparently can induce this state, including natural and manmade '*sacred spaces*' (Bermudez, 2009; Berner, 2020), *extreme physical activities* (Jones, 2004), *vast spatial orientations* (Yaden et al., 2016), *aesthetic experiences* (van Elk et al., 2016), *psychedelic use* (Davis et al., 2020), *religious and secular pilgrimages* (Rodner & Preece, 2019), and *paranormal tourism* (Houran et al., 2020). However, people also report enchantment in many aspects of their daily lives that do not require extraordinary environments or activities like those above. Particularly, Lange, Houran, and Tracey's (2021) cluster analysis of tourists' narratives revealed five categories of enchanting experiences that were labeled: (a) *Escapade* (an adventurous escape to a particular destination), (b) *Nostalgia* (reminiscence related to special 'first-time' events), (c) *Catharsis* (participation in events related to liberation or ecstasy), (d) *Communion* (impromptu or planned fellowship under special circumstances), and (e) *Attachment* (family activities that reinforce bonding and sense of legacy).

To be clear, recent studies (Drinkwater et al., 2020; Houran, Lange, & Laythe, 2020) suggest that situational-enchantment is neither a generic synonym for concepts like 'engagement, inspiration, motivation, empowerment, or emotional connection' as proposed by Kawasaki (2011), nor is it reducible to a singular emotion like 'awe, inspiration, wonder, surprise' (e.g., van Elk et al., 2016) or the "feeling of being connected in an affirmative way to existence" (Bennett, 2001, p. 156). Enchantment instead appears to be a complex arousal state involving cognitive dissonance or dis-ease, i.e., an individual's state of 'ease' being imbalanced or disrupted. In other words, an enchanted individual is readily absorbed within a melee of 'pleasant' ideations and emotions (e.g., excitement, surprise, awe, and wonder), simultaneously mixed with more 'unpleasant' ones (e.g., uneasiness, disorientation, tension, and unpredictability).

This potent juxtaposition ostensibly results from a 'person—environment' enaction (e.g., Drinkwater et al., 2020; Houran et al., 2020; Jelić et al., 2016) that disrupts normal waking experience with a sudden, unexpected, or profound awareness that ultimately culminates in a transformative feeling of connection to a 'transcendent agency or ultimate reality.' Specifically, qualitative and quantitative modeling indicates that the state of enchantment encompasses five competing themes: (a) Emotional, (b) Sensorial, (c) Timeless, (d) Rational, and (e) Transformative (Drinkwater et al., 2020; Houran, Lange, & Laythe, 2020; cf. Bermudez, 2009; van Elk et al., 2016). Drinkwater et al. (2020) further proposed an epiphanic-type process for enchantment defined by an experient's Detection, Absorption, Consternation, Impression, and Affirmation of a target stimulus or experience. This five-stage 'Dissonance—Enchantment model' was developed independently

of the EHE literature, but it parallels Brown's (2000; Brown & White, 1997) and Woodard's (2012) emphasis on the role of cognitive dissonance in motivating a percipient's search for meaning-making in EHEs that often leads to a transpersonal awakening.

Enchantment and Exceptional Human Experiences (EHEs)

Coined by Rhea White (1993, 1997), the term 'EHE' signifies spontaneous or induced (a) Mystical/ Unitive, (b) Psychic/ Paranormal, (c) Encounter-Type, (d) Unusual Death-Related, and (e) Exceptional Normal experiences that typically stir awe or other efficacious outcomes in percipients (Braud, 2012; Palmer & Hastings, 2013; Sagher, Butzer, & Wahbeh, 2019; White & Brown, 1998). Some authors even suggest that EHEs represent, or can usher in, a broader evolution of human consciousness (Portela, 2021). Of course, when unexpected, inexplicable, or unmanageable, EHEs can also provoke anxiety, fear, and even spiritual or existential crisis (for discussions, see: Brown & White, 1997; Palmer & Braud, 2002). Parapsychologists contend that many EHEs also involve psi-functioning (e.g., Krippner & Murphy, 1973; MacDonald & Friedman, 2012; Tart, 2004). To clarify, 'psi' refers to the unknown factor in apparent parapsychological experiences or experimental outcomes that is ostensibly unexplained by known physical or biological mechanisms (Irwin & Watt, 2007). Many authorities consequently describe EHEs and psi phenomena as being interrelated or even synonymous, so we likewise adopt this view here by using the expression 'EHEs (psi)' to denote potentially two sides of the same proverbial coin. Furthermore, much tangential literature on 'emergent experiences, transcendence, and sacred moments[1]' strongly hints that Enchantment can be collectively an *aftereffect*, *example* of, and *catalyst* for EHEs (psi).

For instance, research demonstrates that some perceptually-vast or aesthetic stimuli can befuddle people's current frames of reference and correspondingly induce awe, affect body perception, heighten life satisfaction and prosocial behaviors, as well as positively alter the subjective sense of time and patience (Piff et al., 2015; Rudd, Vohs, & Aaker, 2012; van Elk et al., 2016). These types of effects are usually strongest for individuals who score high on psychological absorption, i.e., the tendency towards full immersion in external sensory events or mental imagery. This observation further agrees with Maij and van Elk's (2018) finding that people who are prone to extraordinary experiences also score higher on the Tellegen Absorption Scale (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974). Moreover, ratings of enchantment likewise coincide with scores on measures of psychological absorption (van Elk et al., 2016) and the personality trait of openness to experience (Berenbaum, 2002).

These collective findings might help to explain why putative psi phenomena (including paranormal belief) often seem to coincide specifically with artistic

[1] Other terms for EHEs include "environmental epiphanies" (Storie & Vining, 218, p. 155) and "peak experiences, Minerva experiences, transpersonal experiences, extraordinary phenomena, transcendental experiences, extraordinary experiences, praeternatural experiences, metanormal functioning, wondrous events, high holy moments anomalous experiences non-ordinary and transcendent experiences, and supernormal performance, and nonlocal mind" (Palmer & Braud, 2002, pp. 30-31).

expression and experience (e.g., Cardeña, Iribas, & Reijman, 2012; Maraldi & Krippner, 2013), and more broadly, with thin (or permeable) mental boundary functioning (e.g., Thalbourne & Houran, 2003; Thalbourne & Storm, 2012). Further to this last point, it is well known that psi experiences can literally flood people during a 'spiritual crisis or emergency' (Grof & Grof, 1986/2017; Storm & Goretzki, 2021). This term refers to a type of identity crisis whereby a spontaneous EHE profoundly affects an individual's system of meaning-making (cf. Brown, 2000; Brown & White, 1997; Woodard, 2012). Therefore, the ensuing dis-ease related to the EHE can include significant disruptions to the person's psychological, social, or occupational functioning (Dein, 2012). Taken altogether, the available evidence seems to implicate direct relationships between EHEs, enchantment-related ideations, ostensible psi phenomena, and thin boundary functioning.

The Present Research

The above discussion suggests that Enchantment might be a natural component or outcome of EHEs (psi) that further promotes more EHEs (psi). We tested this proposed structural relationship, and the potential mediating variables of Transliminality and Paranormal Belief (Thalbourne & Houran, 2003; Thalbourne & Storm, 2012; Ventola et al., 2019), by surveying adult respondents of diverse age and gender from the American population about their (a) personal history of EHEs, (b) perceived Enchantment with their EHEs, and (c) trait levels of Transliminality and Paranormal Belief (PB). Consistent with the tenets of the Dissonance—Enchantment model, we hypothesized that these four variables form a self-reinforcing loop, i.e., 'Transliminality → Belief → EHEs (psi) → Enchantment → Transliminality.' In other words, Transliminality and PB foster EHEs (psi) that induce a sense of Enchantment, which then promotes more Transliminality and PB.

As in past research on related topics (Cicero et al., 2021; Lange & Houran, 1998, 1999; Lawrence et al., 1995), this hypothesized process model was tested using path analysis. This is a statistical method for investigating direct and indirect relationships among a set of exogenous and endogenous variables (Bollen & Pearl, 2013; Wuensch, 2016; Zhang & Wang, 2017). It is basically a generalization of regression and mediation analysis where multiple input, mediators, and output can be used. The pattern of relationships among variables is described by a path diagram, which is a type of directed graph. Variables are linked by straight arrows that indicate the directions of the causal relationships between them.

Method

Participants

We recruited 707 respondents ($M_{age} = 41.13$, median = 40.00, $SD = 14.80$, range = 18-70 yrs.) in the United States from the paid 'SurveyMonkey Audience®' research

panel. Our sample consisted of 397 women and 310 men, who agreed to participate voluntarily in the study after being informed about its purposes and conditions. Respondents could withdraw at any point. We purposely did not collect ethnicity data to help minimize the questionnaire length, and respondents were not screened for potential mental health issues or problem substance use. Using the simple rules-of-thumb proposed by Boomsma (1982, 1985; cf. Wang & Rhemtulla, 2021), this number of respondents suffices for the planned path-analyses that use five main variables.

Measures

We administered four standardized questionnaires via the SurveyMonkey® platform:

1. *Paranormal Belief*. The 16-item, Rasch-scaled version (Lange, Irwin, & Houran, 2000) of the Revised Paranormal Belief Scale (RPBS) (Tobacyk, 1988, 2004) remedies the original 26-item, Likert-based form (seven response categories anchored by "strongly disagree to strongly agree"), with its artificial structure of seven factors due to differential item functioning, i.e., sex and age response biases. Lange, Irwin et al. (2000) showed that the RPBS comprises only two, moderately correlated belief subscales that apparently reflect different issues of control.

Specifically, 'New Age Philosophy' (NAP, 11 items, Rasch reliability = .90) seems related to a greater sense of control over interpersonal and external events (e.g., belief in psi), whereas 'Traditional Paranormal Beliefs' (TPB, 5 items, Rasch reliability = .74) seem more culturally-transmitted and beneficial in maintaining social control via a belief in magic, determinism, and a mechanistic view of the world. NAP scores seem to be more consistently correlated to anomalous experiences than are TPBs, and several studies support the construct validities of these two Rasch subscales (Houran, Irwin, & Lange, 2001; Houran & Lange, 2001; Houran, Thalbourne, & Ashe, 2000).

2. *Exceptional Human Experiences*. The Anomalous Experiences Inventory (AEI) (Kumar, Pekala, & Gallagher, 1994) is a 70-item (T/F) instrument with five subscales: (a) Anomalous/Paranormal Experiences, (b) Anomalous/Paranormal Beliefs, (c) Anomalous/Paranormal Abilities, (d) Fear of the Anomalous/Paranormal, and (e) Drug Use. Gallagher, Kumar, and Pekala (1994) reported good psychometric properties of the AEI from a Classical Test Theory perspective.

We specifically used the Anomalous Experiences and Anomalous Abilities subscales to measure EHEs. However, we reduced these two subscales to 23 items (i.e., Abilities = 8 items and Experiences = 15 items) to focus only on (a) experiences of an overtly anomalous or transpersonal character, versus (b) experiences with overly loose or vague themes (e.g., "I can alter my state of consciousness at will" or "My horoscope is fairly accurate") or activities that

seemingly lack obvious or meaningful outcomes (e.g., "I have tried channeling or have been a medium" or "I have attended seances").

3. *Transliminality*. The Revised Transliminality Scale (RTS: Lange, Thalbourne, Houran, & Storm, 2000) is a 17-item (T/F), Rasch-scaled measure of "hypersensitivity to psychological material originating in (a) the unconscious, and/or (b) the external environment" (Thalbourne & Maltby, 2008, p. 1618). Thus, this variable parallels Hartmann's (1991) mental boundary construct and also the notion of sensory-processing sensitivity (Aron & Aron, 1997). The Rasch reliability is .82, and RTS scores ($M = 25$, $SD = 5$) consistently predict different syncretic cognitions and lower psychophysiological thresholds (for recent overviews, see Evans et al., 2019; Lange et al., 2019).

4. *Situational-Enchantment*. The Enchantment Adjective Checklist (Enchantment-ACL) (Houran, Lange, & Laythe, 2020) is a 21-item (T/F), Rasch-scaled measure ($M = 50$, $SD = 15$) of the five themes that define experiences of situational-enchantment: (a) Emotional, (b) Sensorial, (c) Timeless, (d) Rational, and (e) Transformative. Houran, Lange, and Laythe (2020) indicated that scores show good internal reliability (Rasch reliability = 0.82) and a positive correlation with people's global ratings of perceived enchantment ($r = 0.51$, $p < .001$).

Procedure

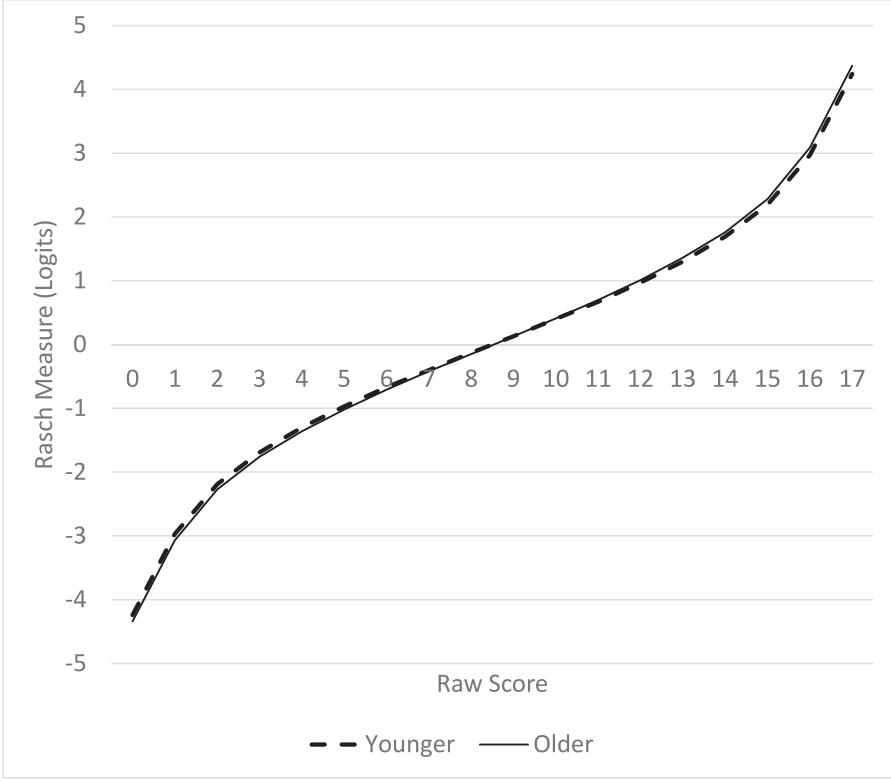
Rasch scaling was used to produce measures with an interval-level of measurement, the basics of which we have addressed in previous papers (for an overview, see Lange, 2017). Particularly, this study extends past research by using multi-variate Rasch modeling (Adams et al., 1997; Robitzsch et al., 2021) to estimate the factors' 'direct' (i.e., attenuation-corrected) correlations. These are useful to determine whether sets of related items indeed form distinct factors. Rasch scaling translates respondents' raw-scores into Rasch 'logit' values of response 'difficulty.' This requires that questionnaire items be unbiased, i.e., their difficulty levels should be invariant across subgroups of respondents. This assumption was tested statistically (Linacre, 2021), as item-biases may combine also to produce test-level biases. Next, we next examined the structural relationships among these factors with path analysis to determine whether the data supported the hypothesized causal chain. It is important to note that model fit is a necessary condition to infer causation but not a sufficient condition itself (Bollen & Pearl, 2013). All path analyses were conducted with von Oertzen et al.'s (2015) *Ωnyx* software.

Note that some researchers might propose using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) rather than path analysis in this context, and indeed the two approaches often yield similar results despite the fact that path analysis ignores measurement error. However, we prefer path analysis here as this allowed us to use the metric (i.e., interval-level) variables provided by the Rasch model, whereas SEM essentially relies on (weighted) raw scores.

Table 1
Fit and Bias Statistics for Enchantment, Transliminality, Anomalous Experiences Inventor(AEI), New Age Philosophy (NAP), and Traditional Paranormal Belief (TPB) (n = 707)

	No. of items	No. items with Outfit > 1.4	No. of items with |z| > 2.58 (i.e., $p < 0.01$, 2-sided)	
			Women vs Men	Old vs Young
Enchantment	21	0	3	0
Transliminality	17	1	3	4
AEI	23	0	3	5
NAP	11	1	1	3
TPB	5	0	0	3

Figure 1
Translation of Raw Scores to Rasch Estimates for Anomalous Experiences Inventory (AEI) for Younger and Older Respondents.



Results

Preliminaries

Using the data of all 707 respondents, we Rasch scaled each factor's items via Linacre's (2021) *WINSTEPS*® software. Table 1 indicated that just two items showed model misfit, as indicated by an Outfit value > 1.4 (for a presentation and discussion of

Table 2
Correlations among Enchantment, Transliminality, Anomalous Experiences Inventory (AEI), New Age Philosophy (NAP), and Traditional Paranormal Belief (TPB) in a Multi-Dimensional Rasch Model.

	Enchantment	Transliminality	AEI	NAP	TPB
Enchantment	1	0.52[b]	0.58	0.34	0.22
Transliminality	0.74[a]	1	0.60	0.37	0.25
AEI (EHEs)	0.86	0.91	1	0.44	0.30
NAP	0.45	0.46	0.59	1	0.70
TPB	0.29	0.29	0.45	0.83	1
Reliability	0.81	0.78	0.84	0.94	0.85

[a] Entries *below* the diagonal are *attenuation-corrected* correlations ($n = 707$)
[b] Entries *above* the diagonal are *standard* (i.e., *attenuated*) correlations ($n = 707$)

this criterion see e.g., Linacre, 2021). Given the large number of items ($n = 77$), this was not deemed problematic (Lange et al., 2004). For each factor we further conducted tests for response biases due to respondents' gender and age (below vs. above the Median age of 40 years). Table 1 shows that all factors contained at least one biased item ($p < .01$), and the total number of significant biases (i.e., 25 of 154) exceeds the number expected by chance alone ($p < 0.001$). The AEI is the worst performing variable with eight biased items, five of which concern age (Young vs Old, as defined by the median age). While there is bias at the item level, inspection of the raw-score to Rasch-logit values indicates that its practical impact is inconsequential at the test-level.

Figure 1 shows the AEI's raw-score to Rasch-Logit transformation, computed separately for the 341 younger respondents (dotted curve) together with the transformation computed for the 366 older ones (solid curve). We note that the *maximum* difference between these two curves is very small (0.12 Logits) and that this difference is no more than a quarter of the measures' *smallest* standard error of measurement (0.51 Logits). While the biases identified in Table 1 certainly merit further attention, the absence of test-level effects implies that our measures are essentially unbiased.

Next, we used Robitzsch et al.'s (2021) *TAM* software to treat the questionnaires as defining five factors of a multivariate Rasch model. Table 2 shows the standard Pearson correlations between these factors above the diagonal and the attenuation-corrected correlations below the diagonal as based on the data for all 707 respondents. The lowest corrected correlation ($r = 0.29$) involves TPB as related to both AEI and Enchantment. The highest corrected correlation ($r = 0.91$) occurs for Transliminality and AEI, which is insufficient to decide that these two variables are identical (see e.g., Adams et al., 1997). While there are commonalities, we conclude that the five factors assess meaningfully different constructs (Lange, 2017) and their Rasch measurement properties imply that they are suitable for path analysis. The bottom row of Table 2 shows the reliability of the five factors, all of which are acceptable as their values range from 0.78 to 0.94 (cf. Kline, 1986/2015).

Path Analysis

We hypothesized that the four factors form a causal chain fundamentally defined by the positive feedback loop of 'Transliminality → Belief → EHEs (psi) →

Enchantment → Transliminality,' perhaps involving additional links. Absent previous studies, we anticipated that a wide variety of models had to be considered, thereby increasing the likelihood of spurious results. Thus, we randomly divided the data into a separate (a) 'Training' set with 2/3 of the cases ($n = 471$) to test various formulations and 'hunches,' and (b) a 'Validation' set ($n = 236$) with the remaining one-third of cases to replicate the solution obtained from the Training set. Also, to avoid confounds due to respondents' ages and gender the assignment to these sets was stratified across these two variables. All factors were Rasch-scaled separately within each respondent group, i.e., respondents' Rasch trait estimates in the Training and Validation sets did not share a common calibration.

Excluding self-loops, Figure 2 contains four variables that can be connected in twelve different directional ways. After standardizing the variables, all twelve path models were fitted using the data of the Training set only. Figure 2 shows the best-fitting model, with the regression weights (w) below or to the right of each link and their standard errors of estimate (SE_w) in parentheses. Note that the TPB variety of Paranormal Belief was omitted as its inclusion caused non-convergence. Otherwise, as anticipated, we confirmed a self-reinforcing loop with weights that are all positive and all differ significantly from 0 (all $w/SE_w > 6$, $p < .001$, 2-sided). However, as indicated by Figure 2 and the left side of Table 3, acceptable fit required a link from Transliminality to the AEI (our measure of EHEs). Inclusion of this link significantly improved model fit ($\chi^2(1) = 62.76$, $p < 0.001$), and it was needed to obtain acceptable fit indices ($RMSEA = 0.07$ vs 0.26, $CFI = 0.99$ vs 0.88, $TLI = 0.98$ vs 0.66). We therefore conclude that Transliminality affects EHEs directly, as well as indirectly via Enchantment.

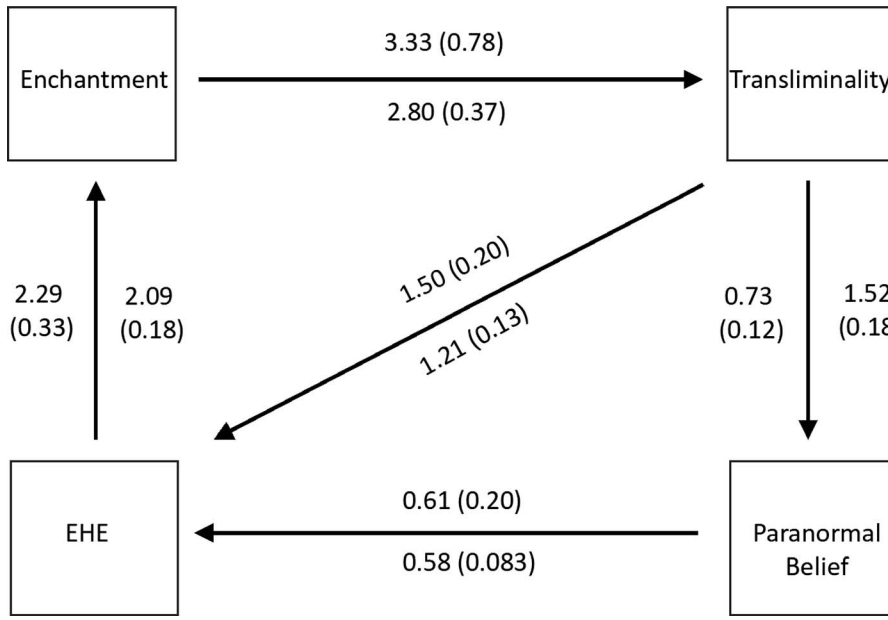
The above cannot be explained as a chance finding from extensive search and repeated model testing, as the results in Figure 1 and the right side of Table 3 concerning the Validation set closely mirror those from the Training set. That is, the regression weights shown above and to the left of each link in Figure 1 are all positive and statistically significant (all $w/SE_w > 3.09$, $p < 0.001$, one-sided), and adding the diagonal link again significantly improves model fit ($\chi^2(1) = 40.97$, $p < 0.001$). The root mean square error of approximation ($RMSEA$) of the resulting model is excellent (0.05), with the CFI and TLI fit indices both exceeding 0.99.

Discussion

Researchers and clinical practitioners should unquestionably count situational-enchantment among the range of emotional reactions or psychological outcomes associated with EHEs (psi). In fact, our findings suggest that a sense of enchantment is not merely an end-point but also a mental state that can foster additional anomalous or transpersonal experiences. It might likewise be conducive for putative psi, similar to the perceptual-personality variables of Transliminality and Paranormal Belief (Cardeña et al., 2014; Thalbourne & Houran, 2003; Thalbourne & Storm, 2012; Ventola et al., 2019). Taken altogether, the results affirm our basic hypothesis and arguably align with a Trickster model, or the tendency for EHEs (psi) to occur during conditions of loose (or 'thin') boundary functioning that include some degree of psychophysical flux or dis-ease (Cardeña et

Figure 2

Final "Enchantment-Psi" Path Model across Training and Validation Samples.



Note:
Regression Weights and *SE* for Training Sample are shown Below / Right of Line
Regression Weights and *SE* for Validation Sample are shown Above / Left of line
AEI = Anomalous Experience Inventory (i.e., exceptional human experiences/psi)

al., 2014; Grof & Grof, 1986/2017; Hansen, 2001; Laythe et al., 2021; Storm & Goretzki, 2021; Thalbourne & Houran, 2003; Thalbourne & Storm, 2012; Ventola et al., 2019). Thus, we boldly propose that EHEs might be characterized more precisely as 'Enchanting Human Experiences.'

These findings have at least three interesting implications. *First*, empirically speaking, we found that targeted items from the AEI (Kumar et al., 1994) fit a unidimensional Rasch model. This result implies that these EHEs do not form the five qualitatively different categories noted in our introduction but rather are

Table 3
Path Analyses in Training set (N = 471) vs. Validation set (N = 236).

	Training		Validation	
Include Trans -> AEI	No	Yes	No	Yes
χ^2	66.03[a]	3.29[b]	42.44[a]	1.47[b]
df	2	1	2	1
RMSEA	0.26	**0.07**	0.29	**0.05**
CFI	0.88	**0.99**	0.84	**0.99**+
TLI	0.66	**0.98**	0.53	**0.99**+

[a] $p < 0.001$
[b] $p > 0.05$

subsumed within a common latent construct. This idea deserves intense scrutiny, as new modeling studies with different measures and diverse samples would indeed determine whether EHEs are unidimensional and with predictable behavior patterns. For instance, and contrary to our findings, Kohls and Walach (2016) found a four-factor solution for EHEs (i.e., positive spiritual experiences, experiences of deconstruction/ ego loss, psychopathological experiences and dream-type experiences) using principal component factor analysis. New and leading-edge psychometric analyses are thus critically needed to clarify the fundamental issues of conceptualization and measurement of EHEs for future research on their ostensible causes, mediators, and aftereffects (cf. Lange, 2017; Lange, Ross et al., 2019).

Second, conceptually speaking, it seems feasible for researchers to utilize certain events known to induce enchantment (e.g., Houran, Lange, & Laythe, 2020; Piff et al., 2015; Rudd et al., 2012; van Elk et al., 2016) as a novel or unobtrusive way to generate EHEs or psi-related outcomes under more natural but quasi-controlled conditions. This view agrees with other research that suggests putative psi most strongly or reliably manifests within more spontaneous or unrestrictive social or physical settings (e.g., Lange & Houran, 2013; McClenon, 2019; Ventola et al., 2019). Third, phenomenologically speaking, clinicians and researchers should expect that individuals seeking to understand the nature or meaning of their EHEs – especially when motivated by a strong sense of enchantment – are prone to have a greater frequency (and perhaps diversity) of EHEs in the future. This might explain why psi experiences can markedly increase during spiritual emergencies. Our robust path model certainly implies that enchantment somehow increases people's perceptual 'sensitivities' (i.e., transliminality) to the core stimuli or environmental conditions that fuel EHEs.

That said, other salient factors or processes could also be involved in our observed model. Enchantment might promote confirmation biases, for example, due to heightened 'openness to experience' or 'hypervigilance' to environmental cues during an individual's process of meaning making. We imagine that these types of effects would be acerbated by poor emotion regulation (Aron & Aron, 1997) or a low 'analytic cognitive style,' i.e., the willingness or disposition to critically evaluate outputs from intuitive processing and engage in effortful analytic processing (Ross et al., 2017). Such percipients are expected to need responsible guidance on how best to contextualize their EHEs on an ongoing basis either by making them more intellectually familiar or emotionally manageable. Fortunately, there is a burgeoning literature on best practices for addressing altered or anomalous experiences within clinical settings (see e.g., Coly & McMahon, 1993; Laythe et al., 2021; Roxburgh & Evenden, 2016a, 2016b; Targ & Hastings, 1987).

Despite replication, we acknowledge that our results derived from retrospective and self-reported data that was sourced with a non-probability sampling method. Thus, the strength of associations among the variables is likely to be influenced by possible latency effects, or how reliably and correctly the respondents remembered their past experiences, emotions, and outcomes. Furthermore, confirmations of our results could involve modeling tactics other than path

analysis, such as the more versatile SEM method. However, both approaches can partially disguise multicollinearity's effects. We highly value the metric nature of Rasch scaled variables and therefore recommend that alternative research designs be used that maintain the variables' Rasch properties, while controlling for multicollinearity and other factors that can affect the reliability and validity of research results.

It is also a major limitation that our model did not explore ethnicity, race, or cross-cultural effects, which should be a prime focus in new studies. To be sure, some literature suggests that empirical findings in psychological science obtained with samples taken from 'Westernized, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic' (WEIRD) populations do not generalize to different cultural and linguistic populations (e.g., Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). This likewise applies to measurement and is inclusive of concepts such as spirituality (e.g., MacDonald et al., 2015). Accordingly, our findings should be replicated with samples drawn from different cultures and notably ones that are not WEIRD.

Furthermore, enchantment might not be the only state-dependent variable in the model. Authors have similarly discussed how Transliminality (Evans et al., 2019) and Paranormal Belief (Irwin et al., 2018) perhaps fluctuate in accordance with one's situational factors. Conceptual replications are needed therefore to examine real-time interactions among the variables considered here, as well as to explore the possible roles of other individual differences in our process. These issues are ripe areas for future research, as several pertinent research designs (e.g., van Elk et al., 2016) and alternative measures of EHEs (e.g., Kohls & Walach, 2016) are readily available to investigators. Nevertheless, this initial study contributes to the growing literature on situational-enchantment as a psychological phenomenon and offers important theoretical and practical insights for modeling transpersonal processes and addressing mediators of altered, anomalous, and potentially parapsychological experiences.

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EXISTENTIAL CONCERNS AS PREDICTORS OF SPIRITUAL EMERGENCY AND PSYCHOSIS

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ABSTRACT: The cause of psychosis remains uncertain, and the current biological model for treating psychosis is only about 41% effective. Calls have been made for new hypotheses to be examined to aid in the understanding and treatment of psychosis. Evidence suggests that spiritual emergency (SE) can be psychologically healing and can be differentiated from psychosis by its divergent relationship with alogia and depression. Existential psychologists have posited a relationship between psychosis and existential distress (ED). The present study aimed to confirm alogia and depression as differentiating variables between psychosis and SE, in addition to exploring the relationships SE and psychosis have with existential concerns (ECs). Results confirmed that alogia and depression predict psychosis only, and there was no overlap in the ECs that predicted SE and psychosis. Psychosis was predicted by increased death anxiety, existential loneliness, and identity distress, while increased meaning (search for and presence of), psychological reactance, and decreased death anxiety predicted SE. The results indicate that SE may lead to psychological healing given the reduction in ED, while psychosis seems more a means of coping with ED. The findings have implications for the diagnosis of and potential treatments for psychosis.

Keywords: psychosis, spiritual emergency, existential concerns, existentialism, spirituality.

Psychosis is a highly debilitating psychological disorder that causes the individual to experience a phenomenal break from reality. There are five key symptoms prevalent in psychosis outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM–5*): (a) delusions, (b) hallucinations, (c) disorganized thinking and speech (e.g., alogia), (d) grossly disorganized or abnormal motor behaviour, and (e) negative symptoms, such as diminished emotional expression, decrease in self-motivated purposeful activities and asociality (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Gaebel and Zielasek (2015) additionally point out that "depressive and manic symptoms also come into play" (p. 12). There are many factors that are associated with psychosis, and the 'umbrella review' by Radua et al. (2018) is perhaps the most comprehensive report to date that systematically assessed a host of reviews and meta-analyses. Their conclusions were that the key factors associated with psychosis include "trait anhedonia, premorbid IQ, minor physical anomalies" (p. 49), and "urbanicity [i.e., "socio-environmental adversities"]", which tie in with "substance use, social isolation, social defeat, social fragmentation, and discrimination" (p. 58). In their meta-analysis, Oliver et al. (2020) found suggestive evidence (or greater) that transition to psychosis is associated with attenuated positive psychotic symptoms (e.g., "obsessive thoughts, derealization and depersonalization experiences," p. 116), "global functioning" (to do with social, psychological, and occupational functioning as, for example, in

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everyday living), and negative psychotic symptoms (such as loss of motivation, "social anhedonia and ideational richness," p. 117).

The global prevalence of psychotic disorders is estimated to be between 3.8 to 4.6 per 1000 persons and is ranked among the top 15 leading causes of disability worldwide (Moreno-Küstner, Martín, & Pastor, 2018). Thus, the severe impact of psychosis necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the cause and ideal treatments for the disorder, yet currently the aetiology of psychotic disorders is not well understood (Moncrieff, 2009). The prevalent explanatory hypothesis is the "dopamine hypothesis," a biological explanation that proposes psychosis is triggered by a dysregulation of dopaminergic activity in the brain (Tost, Alam & Meyer-Lindenberg, 2010). This operational theory has been the dominant theory since the discovery of the first effective antipsychotic agents in the early 1950s, but the reasons why this dysregulation occurs and what influences play a role in its development are still uncertain (Howes & Kapur, 2009). Examples of evidence supporting this hypothesis come from Gaebel and Zielasek (2015), who found evidence indicating a relationship between some psychosis symptoms and "alterations of dopamine neurotransmission" (p. 13), and Radua et al. (2018) also note the neurobiological links to psychosis.

The dopamine hypothesis is pragmatically useful due to the ease of using biological treatments such as antipsychotic medication, but it has limitations. Currently there is no clear biological marker that we can use to identify psychosis, and there are numerous cases of psychosis that cannot be explained biologically (Shields, 2014). Additionally, the efficacy of biological treatments using antipsychotic drugs to reduce psychotic symptoms and prevent relapse is only 41% (Leucht et al., 2009). The dopamine hypothesis also lacks cultural sensitivity as it fails to account for religious and spiritual variables, leading to the potential misdiagnosis of spiritual experiences and introduction of harmful iatrogenic (treatment related) effects (Bowman, 2009; Cashwell & Young, 2005; Chirban, 2001; Johnson, Hayes, & Wade, 2007). Consequently, calls have been made for new hypotheses to be investigated regarding the aetiology and potential treatments of psychosis (Moncrieff, 2009).

The aims of this exploratory and confirmatory study are complementary, and concern the nature of psychosis, 'spiritual emergency' (SE), and 'existential distress' (ED). We use the term 'existential distress' (and its acronym ED) in a global sense to represent the more general state of emotional and cognitive distress caused by any or all five of the so-called 'existential concerns' (ECs), nominally labelled 'death', 'isolation', 'identity', 'freedom' and 'meaning' (Koole, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2006). Specifically, the study is an investigation of the hypotheses: (a) psychosis as a coping mechanism for existential distress, and (b) spiritual emergency as a healing mechanism for existential distress. The former posits that when one's ED becomes too great, the psyche produces an alternative more bearable reality to help one cope (Shields, 2014). The latter posits that certain types of psychosis that are not biologically explainable may be due to the psyche experiencing an SE that may lead to healing seen through a reduction in ED; in other words, spiritual awakening/emergence (Grof & Grof, 1990).

Psychosis as a Coping Mechanism for Existential Distress

Existential psychology is a humanistic approach to understanding psychopathology as uniquely individual experiences and draws on concepts from existential philosophy to explain psychological conditions in terms of the impact one's existential beliefs have on one's psychological well-being (Hunot et al., 2013). The principles of existentialism are applied to psychology to allow for a holistic view of human beings by considering their unique capacity for consciousness, and the relationship that the ECs have with mental well-being.

Existential psychologists argue the aetiology of mental disorders from a psychological and phenomenological perspective—that is, as subjectively experienced by each individual (Frankl, 1979; Thorne, 1973; Yalom, 1980). Specifically, they suggest that as conscious beings we need to contend with, accept and find meaning within our existential reality (Saunders, 1988). Thorne also noted the incapacitating effects of self-doubt, and concerns over self-worth and lack of meaning, and pointed out existential psychology's role in the integration of such complaints and disorders in the context of "Self-functioning and the state of Being in the world" (p. 387). Thus, coming to terms with our existential reality is regarded as so important, that existential psychotherapists see the avoidance of existential issues as a cause of psychopathology (Frankl, 1979; Shields, 2014; Yalom, 1980). Research suggests that existential issues are so profoundly important to us that we value the significance and meaning of life events in relation to our existential beliefs (Hirsh, 2010).

In the field of existential psychology, it has been proposed that psychosis is a coping mechanism against overwhelming ED (Shields, 2014). Under this hypothesis, psychosis occurs when individuals become overwhelmed by ECs, but refuse to acknowledge these concerns or change their behaviour. The refusal to contend with one's ECs leads to a build-up of ED, and if ED becomes too great the psyche copes by generating an alternative, more bearable reality. The psychotic episode, therefore, is a mechanism for coping with ED, as it allows an individual to escape existential realities that the individual could not otherwise avoid.

While existential psychologists agree that ED has a negative impact on one's mental wellbeing, ED as a theoretical construct still lacks a concrete definition (LeMay & Wilson, 2008). For some, ED is a 'spiritual pain' or 'suffering' that affects an individual's entire being (Cassel, 1982; Grof & Grof, 1990; Kearney, 2000; Millspaugh, 2005; Saunders, 1988), with the spiritual aspect of this pain understood to be a connection to the transcendent (i.e., referring to broader questions about existence). Cassel (1982) describes this suffering as "... the state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness of the person" (p. 640). Kissane (2000) suggests that ED is experienced as an overwhelming mental turmoil, stemming from a feeling that one cannot cope, or does not know what to do to alleviate one's current life situation. While definitions vary, the recurring theme is that ED is an overwhelming aversive emotional state caused by the inability to overcome the distress caused by ECs threatening the integrity of the individual. Existential psychologists Koole et al. (2006) refined existential issues down to the 'Big Five' ECs: listed above

(namely, death, isolation, identity, freedom, and meaning—these will be discussed in detail later).

If the coping mechanism hypothesis is true it would aid in the explanation of psychotic symptoms that the biological hypothesis has yet to explain. For example, the reason why one particular type of positive symptom occurs, grandiose delusions, continues to elude researchers (McKay & Kinsbourne, 2010). If psychosis is a coping mechanism for managing ED, then grandiose delusions are the psyche generating an alternative more bearable reality to cope, whereas negative symptoms are a withdrawal from their unbearable reality (Shields, 2014).

Qualitative evidence stems from interviews with patients who have recovered from psychosis who reported that creating a new self-narrative was integral for their recovery (Roe & Davidson, 2005). In another study, six individuals who suffered from psychotic disorders were interviewed, and each revealed they had incurred an existential threat just before their psychotic break (Williams, 2011).

Researchers argue that the current model for psychosis treatment does not allow for subjective experiences, motivations, and beliefs of the patient to be considered (Grof & Grof, 1990; Yip, 2004). Interviews with psychotic patients suggest they are unhappy with their clinicians because they wish to discuss their subjective experiences, but such themes are thought to be irrelevant (McCabe et al., 2002; Van Meer et al., 2003). When psychotic patients in a care facility were interviewed about which issues were most important to them they consistently expressed existential needs such as autonomy, beliefs about existence and the meaning of their illness in their lives as most pressing (Wagner & King, 2005). These studies strongly suggest that the subjective experiences and existential needs of psychotic patients may provide insight into developing our understanding of psychosis, and that further research into the relationship between ED and psychosis is necessary.

Spiritual Emergency

The second aim of this study is to investigate the construct 'spiritual emergency' (SE) and explore whether SE can act as a psychological healing mechanism for ED. Bronn and McIlwain (2015) note that religious and spiritual issues have been differentiated from psychopathology in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders* (*DSM-V*), also including a nonpathological diagnostic category (Code V62.89: "Religious or Spiritual Problems"; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This major step was largely precipitated by the Grofs with the main point being that SE should not lead people to seek mental health services for spiritual problems (Grof & Grof, 1990). Lukoff, Lu, and Turner (1998) see spiritual problems as "distress associated with a person's relationship to a higher power or transcendent force that is not related to a religious organization" (pp. 22-23). The *DSM-V* also refers to spiritual problems as stemming from questions about spiritual values not necessarily related to organised church or religious institution (APA, 2013). Debate may centre on

how closely related SE is to psychosis in its presentation, but proponents of SE argue that it is a unique construct as it can be psychologically healing and treated without medication.

Grof and Grof (1990) define SE as "critical and experientially difficult stages of a profound psychological transformation that involves one's entire being" (p. 31). SE is thought to occur when one experiences a rapid and dramatic onset of personal crisis that leads to 'spiritual emergence'—a naturally occurring psychological phenomenon that is transformational in nature. Spiritual emergence involves a gradual unfolding of spiritual awareness, with the movement of an individual to a more "expanded way of being" that can lead to enhanced emotional and psychosomatic health, greater freedom of personal choices, and a deeper connection with other people, nature and the cosmos (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 34). Spirituality in spiritual emergence should be thought of as situations and personal experiences of certain dimensions of reality that give one's life and existence, in general, a numinous quality (Grof & Grof, 1990; Jung, 1968). Typically, spiritual emergence is gradual and subtle, lasting months or years. However, if spiritual emergence is suppressed, or one experiences a dramatic life event, then spiritual emergence can be dramatic, rapid and dominate the phenomenal experiences of the individual; this is an SE (Kane, 2005).

The phenomenal experiences of SE are similar to symptoms of psychosis and may include certain manifestations of delusions, hallucinations, and disorganized/abnormal motor behaviour (Grof & Grof, 1990). As SE symptoms correspond with the DSM-V criteria for psychosis, proponents of SE argue it is often mislabelled as psychosis (Bragdon, 2013). However, conventional understandings of psychosis have been criticised for overlooking or dismissing the spiritual experiences often reported during psychosis; and by labelling spiritual experiences as delusions, conventional psychiatry may be conflating multiple constructs (Goretzki, Thalbourne, & Storm, 2009; Grof, 1985; Phillips, Lukoff, & Stone, 2009). Indeed, recent findings from Bronn and McIlwain's (2015) research led them to conclude that SE is a distinct construct and "should be differentiated from psychopathology" (p. 367).

Differentiating Psychosis from Spiritual Emergency

It is difficult to differentiate between psychosis and SE as the term psychosis is not accurately and objectively defined in contemporary psychiatry due to psychosis manifesting phenomenally in a wide multitude of forms (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 43). While psychosis and SE can be similar in their presentation, studies have found that SE can be differentiated from psychosis by its divergent relationship with alogia and depression (Bronn & McIlwain, 2015; Storm & Goretzki, 2021). Alogia is the disfluency of thought and speech and is a common negative symptom of psychosis, but has been found to be absent for individuals experiencing an SE (Bronn & McIlwain, 2015).

Psychosis also tends to be correlated with depression, yet Bronn and McIlwain (2015) found depression using DASS-21 (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) did not

correlate significantly with SE, as measured on the Spiritual Emergency Scale (SES), a 30-item measure of SE constructed by Goretzki, Storm, and Thalbourne (2014); and Storm, Drinkwater, and Jinks (2017) found that scores on the SES did not correlate significantly with depression as measured on Beck's Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) (Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996). While the DSM-V specifies alogia and depression as symptoms of psychosis, we hypothesize that these two symptoms are unique to psychosis but not SE.

Healing Potential of Spiritual Emergency

Research indicates that therapeutic approaches that are effective for SE, are not suitable for treating psychosis (Grof & Grof, 1990**)**. In contrast to psychosis, if SE is treated using a transpersonal approach (i.e., SE is left to run its course in a safe environment under supervision) it has the potential to be a transformational healing process (Cooper et al., 2015). Individuals who experience an SE successfully have reported a wide variety of benefits that they attribute to the experience, including but not limited to: alleviating various forms of emotional and psychosomatic disorders, aiding interpersonal relationships, reducing aggressive tendencies, improving self-image, increasing tolerance towards others, building a deep sense of connection with other people and nature, and enhancing general quality of life (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 41). As SE may act as a psychological healing process, the use of antipsychotic drugs would hinder the healing potential of the experience and may introduce harmful iatrogenic effects, potentially leading to worse health outcomes for the patient (Bronn & McIlwain, 2015). Therefore, to improve patient outcomes, it is imperative that clinicians identify variables that differentiate psychosis from SE.

Existential Concerns and Psychosis

There are many ECs that have been proposed to contribute to ED, but (as stated above) Koole et al. (2006) narrowed these down to the 'Big Five' ECs, nominally labelled: death, isolation, identity, freedom, and meaning (search for and presence of). These five ECs (or six ECs if we count 'search for meaning' and 'presence of meaning' as two separate ECs) were all found to be correlated with one another by Kretschmer and Storm (2017), supporting the notion that these proposed ECs are fundamentally related to each other and contribute to the proposed superordinate construct ED. The properties of each EC along with their potential relationship to psychosis and SE are now summarised:

Death

ECs relating to death contend with the awareness of the inevitability of death vs. the desire for a continued existence (Koole et al., 2006). Most individuals sooth ECs surrounding death in two ways: through a worldview that provides hope of a literal immortality, or through a symbolic immortality of enhanced self-esteem

through exceeding societal expectations (Burke, Martens, & Faucher, 2010). Meta-analyses have shown that death anxiety is strongest in late adolescence, coinciding with this age group being the most likely to develop psychosis (Harrop & Trower, 2001). Existential psychologists argue that this age group is particularly vulnerable because during this time-period individuals are capable of understanding their own mortality, but do not yet have a consolidated worldview to buffer against their fear of death, leading to overwhelming ED and consequently psychosis (Shields, 2014, p. 146).

Isolation

Isolation concerns relate to the need to feel connected to others vs. experiences of rejection and the knowledge that our subjective experience of reality can never be fully shared (Koole et al., 2006). Social exclusion, separation from others and ostracism serve to remind us that we are fundamentally separate from others, and our unbridgeable phenomenological gap reminds us that we are fundamentally alone in this world. As such, the more socially isolated we become, the more ED we incur due to existential loneliness.

Research reveals that social isolation significantly increases the likelihood of developing psychosis (Lim & Gleeson, 2014; Reininghaus et al., 2008), and has been posited to be a prime cause of psychosis according to the 'social deafferentation hypothesis' (Hoffman, 2007). This hypothesis suggests that high levels of social withdrawal/isolation in vulnerable individuals prompt social cognition programs to produce spurious social meaning in the form of complex, emotionally compelling hallucinations and delusions representing other persons or agents.

Identity

Personal identity concerns stem from the sense of who one is and how one fits into the world vs. uncertainties due to conflicts of self-identity (Koole et al., 2006). While particularly prevalent in adolescence, ED arises when one struggles to integrate one's vast range of experiences to create and maintain a consistent sense of self and how one fits in the world throughout one's lifespan.

To alleviate the threat to identity posed by undesirable or inconsistent information about the self, people use a wide variety of tactics, including distorting their perceptions of self and affirming or exaggerating unrelated but valued aspects of the self (McGregor, 2006). If identity distress were to become too great, these distortions of the perception of self may become severe enough to develop psychosis. In support of this claim, researchers have found substantial overlap between symptoms of identity disorders and psychosis, such as depersonalization, derealization, delusions and auditory hallucinations (Laddis & Dell, 2012; Steinberg, 1994).

Freedom

Freedom concerns relate to the experience of free will vs. external forces on behaviour, and the burden of responsibility for one's choices in response to a complex array of alternatives (Koole et al., 2006). Research inspired by reactance theory has shown that threats to freedom create an aversive psychological state (reactance) that motivates people to restore and reassert their freedom (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). If one's perception of autonomy is threatened in response to regulations or impositions, psychological reactance (reactance for short) is directed towards restoring the behaviour that is threatened through oppositional behaviour to reassert their perception of freedom.

The links that reactance may have with psychosis is conflicted. Higher levels of reactance are predictive of increased non-compliance of patients with psychotic conditions and consequently associated with greater psychopathology (Hoge et al., 1990; Kasper et al., 1997). Joubert (1990) found that happiness is negatively correlated with reactance, and Dowd et al. (1994) showed that reactance was associated with aggression, a construct they argue to be similar to depression. In contrast, reactance is positively correlated with personality variables such as *internal locus of control*, meaning one believes they have control over their life outcomes (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Individuals with greater internal locus of control tend to have increased confidence in oneself, are happier and have better life outcomes (Phares, 1976). As there is conflicting research, the presence or absence of depression alongside reactance may be indicative of whether higher levels of reactance intensifies or lessens ED.

Meaning

Meaning concerns stem from the desire to believe life is meaningful vs. life events that seem random or inconsistent with one's bases of meaning (Koole et al., 2006). Existential psychologists argue that meaning is the greatest defence against ED (Saunders, 1988; Yalom 1980). Frankl (1959) emphasises that meaning is our primary motivation in life, and if meaning is absent then we are left with an existential vacuum that leads to psychopathology. Indeed, when treating psychosis in a psychiatric setting, it is acknowledged that in the first episode of psychosis it is imperative that the patient find meaning in the experience to increase the likelihood of successful treatment (McGorry, 1995).

Interviews with psychotic patients reveal that the desire to find meaning in their lives is their primary concern, suggesting an absence of presence of meaning, and the existence of Frankl's existential vacuum (Wagner & King, 2005). Other studies have found that psychotic patients were able to overcome their disorders by finding existential explanations (meaning) for their psychosis through individual agency, social influences, and cultural resources (i.e., spirituality/religion) (Larsen, 2004). Additionally, broad measures of religiosity have significant negative correlations with psychoticism, suggesting a protective relationship that the presence of meaning has against psychosis (Francis & Wilcox, 1996; Roman & Lester, 1999).

Existential Concerns and Spiritual Emergency

Currently, SE as a construct is almost exclusive to the transpersonal psychological literature despite increasing evidence for psychosis and SE being unique constructs (Harris, Rock & Clark, 2019). As such, there is currently no substantive quantitative research to draw on that examines the relationship between ED and SE. Although quantitative research is lacking, subjective accounts from individuals who experience SE strongly suggest a connection between SE and ECs. For example, Grof and Grof (1990) found that experiencing an SE often results in a fundamental change in existential belief within the individual. These changes include, but are not limited to: finding more meaning and purpose in life, feeling freer (less bound or restricted) feeling interconnected or 'one' with the universe, being less fearful of death and discovering a new identity, all of which coincide with the 'Big Five' ECs.

The potential link between SE and ED is also evident in how ED and SE are described. As previously mentioned, ED has been described as a 'spiritual pain' or 'suffering' that affects an individual's entire being. This description of ED compares with SE as a "critical and experientially difficult stage of a profound psychological transformation that involves one's entire being" (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 31). The similarities between ED and SE are so cogent that SE researchers Viggiano and Krippner (2010) have identified 'Existential Crisis' as a potential type of SE (p. 123). As such, we expect experiences of SE to have relationships with the ECs, but as this is the first study to link the two constructs quantitatively, we can only hypothesize how they might be related.

Design of the Current Study

This study aims to determine whether the six ECs are related to psychosis or SE, and to determine whether alogia, depression and the six ECs can be used to differentiate between the two constructs. Specifically, this study tests (a) the individual relationships of the ECs with each other, and the ECs with both psychosis and SE; (b) the potential of the ECs, alogia, and depression to predict psychosis and SE; and (c) whether ECs, alogia or depression can be used to differentiate between psychosis and SE. Bivariate correlational analyses were conducted to test whether there are relationships between each variable. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses (MRAs) were conducted to test the predictive power of the ECs, depression and alogia, with psychosis and SE as criterion variables. Accordingly, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

1. There are relationships (a) between the six ECs (i.e., amongst each other), and (b) between the six ECs and SE and Psychosis.

2. The six ECs (Death, Isolation, Identity, Freedom, Meaning [Search for and Presence of]), Depression and Alogia predict Psychosis.

3. The six ECs (Death, Isolation, Identity, Freedom, Meaning [Search for and Presence of]) predict SE, but Depression and Alogia do not predict SE.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics: Psychosis, Spiritual Emergency Scale (SES), and the Existential Concerns

Variable	*M*	*SD*	α	Range		Mean 95% CI
				Potential	Actual	
EPSS	4.82	3.77	.85	0-15	0-15	4.45 - 5.19
EPSS-POS	3.78	2.98	.80	0-12	0-12	3.49 - 4.08
Alogia	1.04	1.00	.58	0-3	0-3	0.94 - 1.14
SES	6.82	6.20	.90	0-30	0-30	6.21 - 7.44
BDI-II	34.90	12.40	.95	21-74	21-70	33.64 - 36.10
ELQ	57.80	20.30	.76	22-132	22-115	55.80 - 59.82
IDS	21.40	7.70	.85	10-50	10-42	20.61 - 22.14
HPRS-R	32.60	7.34	.82	11-55	13-54	31.82 - 33.27
DAS	6.91	3.36	.76	0-15	0-15	6.58 - 7.24
MLQ	43.40	8.48	.71	10-70	19-64	42.52 - 44.20
MLQ-P	23.10	7.44	.90	5-35	5-35	22.34 - 23.81
MLQ-S	21.90	8.15	.92	5-35	35-35	21.05 - 22.66

Note. EPSS = Experiences of Psychotic Symptoms Scale; EPSS-POS = Experiences of Psychotic Symptoms Scale (positive symptoms only); Alogia = Experiences of Psychotic Symptoms Scale (alogia symptoms only); SES = Spiritual Emergency Scale; BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II; ELQ = Existential Loneliness Questionnaire; IDS = Identity Distress Scale; HPRS-R = Hong's Psychological Reactance Scale Revised; DAS = Templer's Death Anxiety Scale; MLQ = Meaning In Life Questionnaire; MLQ-P = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Presence of meaning); MLQ-S = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Search for meaning).

Method

Participants

A total of 399 participants were recruited through The University of Adelaide's School of Psychology's Research Participation System and Facebook advertising. The University of Adelaide's participants consisted of first-year psychology students enrolled in the 2020 study year. All participation was voluntary, and the first-year psychology students received course credit for participation with no reward offered for non-university students. Participants were required to complete the survey online via computer, had to be fluent in English, and be 18 years or older. Five participants were removed from analysis for completing the study faster than the questionnaires could plausibly be read (six minutes), leading to 394 participants analysed. Mean age of 44 years ($SD = 20$ years; min. = 17 years; max. = 86 years). There are 99 males (Mean Age = 43 years; $SD = 22$ years; min. = 18 years; max. = 86 years), and 293 females (Mean Age = 44 years; $SD = 19$ years; min. = 17 years; max. = 84 years). (One participant did not specify sex.) In anticipation of testing requirements, age groups were created by splitting the sample into three age groups: grp1 = 17-25 years old ($n = 123$); grp2 = 26-39 years old ($n = 51$); grp3 = 40-78 years old ($n = 219$). For the same reason, we divided income into seven groups and education into five groups (see Table 2).

Measures

1. *Beck Depression Inventory-II* (BDI-II) (Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996): The BDI-II is a 21-item forced-choice self-report measure of depression designed to rate the

Table 2
Demographic Statistics: Psychosis (EPSS, EPSS-POS, & Alogia), & Spiritual Emergency (SES)

		EPSS		EPSS-POS		ALOGIA		SES	
Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Sex									
Female	294	4.78	3.77	3.77	3.00	1.00	0.98	6.64	6.06
Male	99	4.94	3.81	3.80	2.96	1.14	1.06	7.32	6.60
Religion									
Christian	134	4.54	3.65	3.60	2.91	0.95	0.98	6.78	5.94
Spiritual	81	5.68	4.16	4.49	3.34	1.19	1.03	4.76	4.67
Atheist	71	3.70	3.31	2.92	2.58	0.79	0.93	3.39	4.06
Agnostic	27	5.67	3.71	4.41	2.94	1.26	0.94	4.04	3.46
Unaffiliated	34	5.03	3.42	3.82	2.66	1.21	1.07	4.76	4.67
Other*	47	5.17	3.99	4.00	3.12	1.17	1.07	9.28	7.70
Income									
< $20,000	48	6.81	3.96	5.27	3.10	1.54	1.05	7.70	6.41
$21-50,000	113	5.26	3.73	4.14	2.95	1.12	1.02	7.64	6.30
$51-75,000	78	4.23	3.36	3.37	2.80	0.86	0.85	6.94	6.47
$76-100,000	58	5.15	3.91	3.97	3.09	1.19	1.00	7.26	6.32
$101-150,000	59	3.59	3.30	2.78	2.50	0.81	0.99	4.75	5.24
$151-200,000	23	3.48	3.47	2.83	2.73	0.65	0.94	4.87	4.59
$200,000 +	15	3.80	4.20	3.13	3.54	0.67	0.98	6.67	7.14
Education									
Under Year 12	25	4.60	3.56	3.64	2.84	0.96	0.94	6.16	5.02
Year 12	119	5.86	3.84	4.41	3.08	1.45	1.01	5.97	5.86
TAFE	70	5.34	3.78	4.19	2.97	1.16	1.00	7.69	6.63
Graduate	93	4.57	3.94	3.69	3.18	0.88	0.95	7.74	6.56
Post-graduate	86	3.35	2.98	2.77	2.40	0.58	0.82	6.53	6.16

* 'Other' includes Buddhism/Islam/Hinduism

severity of depression based on depression characteristics defined by the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Each item measures the cognitive, affective, and somatic symptoms associated with depression, with scores ranging from 0-3 for each item. The measure has been found to have strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$), and high level of test-retest (one week) reliability coefficients that range from .72 to .93 (Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996).

2. *Templer Death Anxiety Scale* (DAS) (Templer, 1970): The DAS is a 15-item self-report 'true' or 'false' forced-choice questionnaire that measures death anxiety, with item scores summed to quantify the severity of death anxiety. The DAS has been validated through use in prior existential research for measuring existential death concerns and has been found to have strong psychometric properties (Weems et al., 2004). The scale reported a high test-retest reliability (.83) after three weeks, and has good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$; Kretschmer & Storm, 2017).

3. *Existential Loneliness Questionnaire* (ELQ) (Mayers, Khoo, & Svartberg, 2002): The ELQ was chosen as it was the only scale identified in the literature to specifically measure existential isolation. There are 22 items, with each item measured on a 6-point Likert scale reflecting how true the statement is for the individual (1 = not at all true of me, to 6 = very much true of me). The ELQ has strong internal consistency (.90) and good reliability ($\alpha = .78$; Brandstatter, Baumann, Borasio, & Fegg, 2012). Initially, the scale was designed to measure existential loneliness in HIV-infected women. In the current study references in

three questions to HIV specifically were removed to be suitable for the general population. For example: "because I am HIV+ I feel hopeless about having a romantic relationship" was altered to "I feel hopeless about having a romantic relationship".

4. *Identity Distress Survey* (IDS) (Berman, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2004): The IDS was selected to measure identity as it has been shown to be a valid tool for measuring existential identity concerns in prior existential research (Weems et al., 2004). The IDS is a 10-item self-report measure. Each item is answered on a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher identity distress (ranging from 1 = none, to 5 = very severely). The measure was found to have strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$; Kretschmer & Storm, 2017), with a test-retest (within a three-month period) coefficient of .82 (Berman et al., 2004).

5. *Revised Hong Psychological Reactance Scale* (HPRS-R) (Hong & Faedda, 1996): This scale was selected as reactance theory has been illustrated as a paradigm reflective of existential freedom (Koole et al., 2006), and the scale has been used successfully to measure existential freedom in prior research (Kretschmer & Storm, 2017). The HPRS-R is an 11-item self-report measure of psychological reactance. Item responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree). The scores from the 11 items are summed for analysis, with high scores indicating reactant personalities. It is a reliable measure of the reactance construct as 78% of the variance in HPRS-R scores can be attributed to reactance (Brown, Finney, & France, 2010), and has been found to have strong internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$; Kretschmer & Storm, 2017).

6. *Meaning in Life Questionnaire* (MLQ) (Steger et al., 2006): The MLQ was selected as it consists of two subscales that measure two aspects of existential meaning: (a) presence of meaning in life (MLQ-P), and (b) search for meaning in life (MLQ-S) (Kretschmer & Storm, 2017). The MLQ consists of a 10-item self-report measure, with each item answered on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = absolutely untrue, to 7 = absolutely true). The MLQ has been found to have good reliability, with a test-retest (four weeks) coefficient of .70, and strong internal consistency being reported for both the MLQ-S ($\alpha = .87$) and MLQ-P ($\alpha = .86$) subscales.

7. *Experiences of Psychotic Symptoms Scale* (EPSS) (Goretzki, Thalbourne & Storm, 2009): The EPSS was selected as it is the only scale designed specifically to discriminate between the symptoms of psychosis outlined in the DSM-IV and spiritual experiences. Additionally, the measure has two subscales that differentiate between the positive symptoms of psychosis and the negative symptom of alogia that will be used to test the hypotheses. The EPSS is a 15-item true/false questionnaire, with higher scores on the EPSS indicating an increased likelihood of having experienced psychosis. The measure has good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$; Storm & Goretzki, 2021) and good test-retest (three weeks) reliability of .84 (Goretzki, et al., 2009).

8. *Spiritual Emergency Scale* (SES) (Goretzki, Storm & Thalbourne, 2014; see Appendix): The SES was selected as it is currently the only known measure of

Spiritual Emergency (Cooper et al., 2015). The SES is a 30-item yes/no questionnaire and contains items from eight different subscales that were identified by Grof (1985) as the major themes of Spiritual Emergency. The SES has been shown to have good internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$) and test-retest (8 to 12 months) reliability (.67 to .88) (Storm & Goretzki, 2021).

Procedure

Ethics approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Adelaide (approval number #20/13). Participants from The University of Adelaide accessed the survey through the research participation webpage. The study was posted as an advertisement to Australian users of Facebook until the planned number of participants was reached. Participants had to read an information page and give consent before commencing. Each measure was presented sequentially in random order, and participants answered all questions until the survey was complete.

Results

Preliminary Findings

The descriptive statistics for all scales and subscales can be found in Table 1. Cronbach's alphas (indicating reliability) were very good for all scales, although Alogia was only .58 (not reliable as it falls below .70, but considered "sufficient to permit valid theory-based research" (Smith, 1992, p. 136). The descriptive statistics for the demographic variables Sex, Religion, Income, and Education, and for the dependent variables (DVs) Psychosis (EPSS) and Spiritual Emergency (SES), including the two EPSS subscales of Positive Symptoms of Psychosis (EPSS-POS) and Alogia, can be found in Table 2. To simplify analysis of the demographic variable Religion, we demarcated only the major denominations (i.e., religious affiliation or religious membership) of the organized religious bodies, but had to merge smaller groups (Hindu, Islam, Buddhism) into the heterogeneous category 'Other'.

The sample comprised two semi-distinct groups (students: $n = 114$; and Facebook: $n = 261$) and a minor group, which was not used in the following participant-source comparison due to being too small and non-distinct ($n = 19$). Although Facebook participants can be university students, and *vice versa*, we conducted comparisons on key variables using the multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), with Sample Source as a covariate with two levels (Grace-Martin, 2021; Meehl, 1970). The effect of the covariate was not significant. Education was also not significant. However, results for tests on Age, Sex, Income, and Religion were significant, indicating that EC values differed across the respective levels of these four demographic measures (results are given in the *Note* for Table 3). Regarding homogeneity of variance/covariance, there were no significant differences, Box's $M = 146.79$, $p = .228$. In support of this finding, results for five Wilks' Lambda tests

Table 3
MANCOVA and ANOVA: Demographic Differences on Variables (EPSS, SES, & Six ECs)

Demographic Variable	*F*	*df*	*p*	Partial Eta^2	*F*	*df*	*p*	Power
Sex								
DAS	8.96	1, 371	.003	.02	8.21	1, 390	.004	.82
Age Group								
EPSS	10.12	2, 371	< .001	.05	8.53	1, 388	< .001	.97
SES	4.94	2, 371	.008	.03	5.21	2, 388	.006	.83
ELQ	6.43	2, 371	.002	.03	7.92	2, 388	< .001	.95
MLQ-S	12.26	2, 371	< .001	.06	7.63	2, 388	.001	.95
IDS	15.61	2, 371	< .001	.08	22.61	2, 388	< .001	1.00
Income								
EPSS	4.57	6, 371	< .001	.07	5.39	6, 385	< .001	.99
ELQ	4.13	6, 371	< .001	.06	4.00	6, 385	.001	.97
Religion								
EPSS	2.67	5, 371	.022	.04	2.76	5, 386	.018	.83
SES	14.52	5, 371	< .001	.16	14.53	5, 386	< .001	1.00
MLQ-S	9.10	5, 371	< .001	.11	6.78	5, 386	< .001	1.00

Note. ECs = Existential Concerns; EPSS = Experiences of Psychotic Symptoms Scale; SES = Spiritual Emergency Scale; DAS = Death Anxiety Scale; ELQ = Existential Loneliness Questionnaire; MLQ-S = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Search for meaning); IDS = Identity Distress Scale; BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II. Sample Source: Pillai's Trace = .03, $F(10, 362) = 1.16$, $p = .316$; Education: Pillai's Trace = .15, $F(50, 1830) = 1.14$, $p = .236$; Age: Pillai's Trace = .19, $F(20, 726) = 3.86$, $p < .001$; Sex: Pillai's Trace = .07, $F(10, 362) = 2.91$, $p = .002$; Income: Pillai's Trace = .26, $F(60, 2202) = 1.63$, $p = .002$; Religion: Pillai's Trace = .39, $F(50, 1830) = 3.09$, $p < .001$.

were all non-significant. In testing homogeneity of regression slopes, *F* test results were not significant.

Mean-score comparisons were made between the two groups on the six ECs (ELQ, MLQ-P, MLQ-S, IDS, HPRS-R, DAS), as well as BDI-II, EPSS, and SES. Only DAS was significantly different, but the effect size was very weak, $F(1, 371) = 4.12$, $p = .043$ ($\eta^2 = .01$). We then prepared two correlation matrices (Partial and Bivariate), and checked *r*-value differences using the Fisher *r*-to-*z* transformation (http://vassarstats.net/rdiff.html). We also checked Sex and Age as possible correlates of the above nine variables. Although the relevant correlations tended to be significant in both matrices, there were no significant *z* scores for the corresponding paired *r* values. We regarded the full sample as homogeneous and suitable for multiple regression analyses (MRA).

As mentioned, five demographic variables were investigated: Sex, Age group, Income, Education, and Religion. Given the very large sample ($n = 394$), parametric tests were used. The same MANCOVA used above tested for demographic differences on Psychosis (EPSS), Spiritual Emergency (SES), and the six ECs. Significant effects were found for Sex, Age, Income, and Religion (for statistics, see Table 3). However, the effects (measured as partial eta-squared) tended to range from weak to moderate. As a follow-up to the MANCOVA, a series of 11 univariate ANOVAs were then run. Results are given in the four columns on the far right of Table 3, which include power values. All differences were significant.

Table 4
Pearson's Correlations: Psychosis (EPSS), Spiritual Emergency (SES), and the Six ECs

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. EPSS	–						
2. SES	.51**	–					
3. DAS	.23**	-.08	–				
4. ELQ	.46**	.09	.21**	–			
5. IDS	.48**	.11*	.38**	.65**	–		
6. HPRS-R	.34**	.29**	.13**	.35**	.31**	–	
7. MLQ-P	-.27**	.09	-.29**	-.60**	-.45**	-.17**	–
8. MLQ-S	.35**	.17**	.35**	.36**	.49**	.16**	-.26**

Note. $df = 392$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; DAS = Templer's Death Anxiety Scale; ELQ = Existential Loneliness Questionnaire; IDS = Identity Distress Scale; HPRS-R = Hong's Psychological Reactance Scale Revised; MLQ-P = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Presence of meaning); MLQ-S = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Search for meaning).

Planned Analysis

Hypothesis 1: There are relationships (a) between the six ECs (i.e., amongst each other), and (b) between the six ECs and SE and Psychosis:

Pearson's Correlations. Pearson's correlation tests (two-tailed) were conducted to explore relationships between the six ECs amongst each other, and between the six ECs with SE and psychosis.

1. All six ECs were significantly correlated with one another, giving a total of 15 significant correlations (see Table 4). The hypothesis was supported.

2. The Spiritual Emergency measure (SES) correlated positively and significantly with three ECs: IDS, HPRS-R and MLQ-S. The Psychosis measure (EPSS) correlated significantly and positively with all ECs, apart from MLQ-P which had a negative correlation. The hypothesis was partially supported for SE and fully supported for psychosis. NB: Psychosis was positively and significantly correlated with SE. Table 4 shows that 25 of 28 correlations are significant, and even if we discount 5% (i.e., < 2) as the result of chance due to multiple analysis, the majority of these correlations are not Type I errors (Foster et al., 2018). Due to the significant overlap between SE and Psychosis (EPSS) found in the correlations and in prior literature, it was decided that they would be entered as predictor variables of each other in the relevant MRAs.

Multiple Regression Analyses (MRA). A series of MRAs were conducted to determine which variables would be predictors of the DVs Psychosis and SE. In each model the hierarchical block-wise sequential regression (i.e., 'Entry' method) was used. The hierarchical regression is a sequential process involving the entry of predictor variables into the MRA in separate steps.

Variables that were found to be predictive of SE or psychosis in prior literature (BDI-II, EPSS, EPSS-POS, Alogia and SES) were to be added in the first step (Model 1). The EC measures: death anxiety (DAS), existential loneliness (ELQ),

identity distress (IDS), reactance (HPRS-R), presence of meaning (MLQ-P), and search for meaning (MLQ-S) were added in the second step (Model 2) to see whether adding the ECs would significantly improve the model's ability to predict the relevant criterion variable. This hierarchical method enabled the study to confirm findings from prior research in addition to exploring whether ECs can predict psychosis and/or SE.

The five assumptions of multiple regressions of (a) normality, (b) linearity, (c) independence, (d) no outliers, and (e) homoscedasticity, were assessed in each model. The assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity were examined through visual inspection of the histogram, P-P plot, and scatter plots with locally weighted smoothing lines (LOESS) grafted onto the scatter plots to aid visual interpretation. Additionally, the Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) test of normality was deployed to test the residuals (critical alpha was set to .001 due to the sample being very large and sensitive tests like S-W tend to report statistically significant results when they do not actually exist; Hahs-Vaughn, 2016).

The Mahalanobis Distance (MD) was used to find outliers. MD identifies significant outliers by determining if the maximum observed value exceeds the critical value given by a chi-square distribution, using the relevant degrees of freedom to determine the number of predictors in the model (probability level set for MD was $\alpha < .001$). Independence of variables was determined by analysing the Tolerance values, with Tolerance values larger than .2 indicating no multicollinearity.

Hypothesis 2: The Six ECs (Death, Isolation, Identity, Freedom, Meaning [Search for and Presence of]), Depression, and Alogia predict Psychosis:

Two MRA's (MRA_{1a} and MRA_{1b}) were conducted to test Hypothesis 2 (H2). This step was taken because the measure used for alogia is a subscale of the EPSS. Therefore, to test whether alogia was a predictor of psychosis (MRA_{1a}), the 'Alogia' subscale was included as a predictor variable and the 'Positive Symptoms of Psychosis' (EPSS-POS) subscale was used as the DV. As the DSM-V includes alogia as a symptom of psychosis, MRA_{1a} would only partially test the EC hypothesis, so MRA_{1b} was conducted using the full EPSS as the DV, which includes the 'Alogia' items.

Positive Symptoms of Psychosis (MRA_{1a}). For MRA_{1a} the EPSS was separated into its two sub-measures: (i) EPSS-POS and (ii) 'Alogia', with EPSS-POS being the DV. Depression (BDI-II), Spiritual Emergency (SES) and Alogia were entered in the first step of the regression, followed by ECs in the second step. The five assumptions of normality, linearity, no-outliers, independence of variables and homoscedasticity were assessed for the model. Visual inspection of the histogram and P-P plot indicated that the normality and linearity assumptions had not been violated. For outliers, the MD critical statistic is 27.88 for nine predictors. One case exceeded the critical value and was removed. The LOESS line was effectively flat, and the scatter plot showed no evidence of heteroscedasticity. The S-W test confirmed normality, finding a non-significant departure from normality in residuals, $W(392) = .99$, $p = .325$. Independence of variables was confirmed as Tolerance was greater than .2 for all variables.

Table 5
MRA_{1a} Coefficients for Positive Symptoms of Psychosis (EPSS-POS)

						Correlations		
Block	B	SE	β	*t*	*p*	Zero-Order	Partial	Part
Step 1								
Alogia	1.58	.11	.53	14.86	< .001	.72	.60	.45
SES	0.16	.02	.34	10.37	< .001	.53	.47	.32
BDI-II	0.04	.01	.18	5.19	< .001	.45	.26	.16
Step 2								
Alogia	1.48	.11	.50	13.18	< .001	.72	.56	.40
SES	0.17	.02	.35	10.09	< .001	.53	.46	.30
BDI-II	0.02	.01	.10	2.17	.031	.45	.11	.07
DAS	0.08	.03	.08	2.47	.014	.22	.13	.07

Note. Alogia = Experiences of Psychotic Symptoms Scale (alogia symptoms only); SES = Spiritual Emergency Scale; BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II; DAS = Templer's Death Anxiety Scale. Model 1: $F(3, 389) = 229.43$, $p = .001$; $R = .80$; $R^2 = .64$; Adj. $R^2 = .64$ ($SE = 1.80$); R^2 Change = .64. Model 2 $F(6, 383) = 3.14$, $p = .005$; $R = .81$; $R^2 = .66$; Adj. $R^2 = .65$ ($SE = 1.77$); R^2 Change = .02.

In Model 1, Alogia, SES, and BDI-II entered as predictors. This model was significant, with the adjusted R^2 value indicating 64% of the variance was explained by Alogia, SE, and Depression (for other statistics, see *Note* in Table 5).

In Model 2, Alogia, SES, and BDI-II remained. This model was also significant, $F(9, 383) = 81.09$, $p < .001$. Additionally, one EC entered: DAS (excluded were ELQ, MLQ-P, MLQ-S, IDS, and HPRS-R). MRA_{1a} shows the association between the explanatory variables and the criterion variable (EPSS-POS) was strong and significant (Multiple $R = .81$). The addition of DAS in the second step increased the adjusted R^2 value significantly by .017, increasing the variance explained to 65%. Table 5 lists the standardized regression coefficients (β) for the two steps: Alogia was the strongest predictor of EPSS-POS, followed by SES, BDI-II, and DAS. (NB: In Table 5 we only report the significant predictors.)

Psychosis (MRA_{1b}). For MRA_{1b} the full scale of the EPSS was used as the DV. The BDI-II and SES were entered in the first step of the regression, followed by ECs in the second step. Normality and linearity assumptions had not been violated. For outliers, the MD critical statistic was 26.12 for eight predictors. One case exceeded the critical value and was removed. The LOESS line was relatively flat, and the scatterplot showed no evidence of heteroscedasticity. The S-W test confirmed normality, finding a non-significant departure from normality, $W(392) = .99$, $p = .002$ (α set at .001). Independence of variables was confirmed (Tolerance > .2 for all variables).

In Model 1 of MRA_{1b}, SES and BDI-II entered as predictors. The model was significant, with the adjusted R^2 value indicating the model explained 43% of the variance in EPSS scores (for other statistics, see *Note* in Table 6).

In Model 2, BDI-II and SES entered, as well as three ECs: ELQ, IDS, and DAS (excluded were MLQ-P, MLQ-S, and HPRS-R). This model was significant, $F(8, 384) = 49.82$, $p < .001$. MRA_{1b} shows the association between the explanatory variables and the EPSS was strong and significant (Multiple $R = .71$). The addition

Table 6
MRA_{1b} Coefficients for Predictors of Psychosis (EPSS)

						Correlations		
Block	B	SE	β	*t*	*p*	Zero-Order	Partial	Part
Step 1								
SES	.28	.02	.46	11.96	< .001	.51	.52	.46
BDI-II	.13	.01	.42	10.86	< .001	.47	.48	.42
Step 2								
SES	.27	.02	.44	11.31	< .001	.51	.50	.40
BDI-II	.06	.02	.19	3.52	< .001	.47	.18	.13
IDS	.08	.03	.16	3.12	.002	.48	.16	.11
ELQ	.02	.01	.12	2.01	.045	.46	.10	.07
DAS	.12	.05	.11	2.71	.007	.23	.14	.10

Note. SES = Spiritual Emergency Scale; BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II; IDS = Identity Distress Scale; ELQ = Existential Loneliness Questionnaire; DAS = Templer's Death Anxiety Scale.
Model 1: $F(2, 390) = 147.87$, $p < .001$; $R = .66$; $R^2 = .43$; Adj. $R^2 = .43$ ($SE = 2.85$), R^2 Change = .43.
Model 2: $F(6, 384) = 10.18$, $p < .001$; $R = .71$; $R^2 = .51$; Adj. $R^2 = .50$ ($SE = 2.67$); R^2 Change = .08.

of the ECs in the second step increased the adjusted R^2 value by .08, and the total variance explained to 50%. Table 6 lists the β values for the two steps: SES was the strongest predictor of EPSS, followed by BDI-II, IDS, ELQ, and DAS. (NB: In Table 6, we only report the significant predictors.) The ECs predictive from strongest to weakest, were IDS, ELQ and DAS.

Hypothesis 3: The Six ECs (Death, Isolation, Identity, Freedom, Meaning [Search for and Presence of]) predict SE, but Depression and Alogia do not predict SE:

To determine which of the explanatory variables were the strongest predictors of Spiritual Emergency (SE), MRA_2 was performed. MRA_2 had the variables EPSS-POS, Alogia and BDI-II selected for the first step of the regression, followed by ECs in the second step.

After analysing the scatterplot and LOESS lines for MRA_2 it was determined that the normality and linearity assumptions had been violated. The SES data underwent a square-root transformation as this was shown to be a valid form of transformation in previous SE research (Bronn & McIlwain, 2015, p. 359). MRA_2 was repeated with the transformed data. The assumptions of normality, linearity and heteroscedasticity were no longer violated. The critical value for the MD was 27.88 for nine predictors. Three outliers exceeded the critical value and were removed. A S-W test of the residuals confirmed the visual inspection and found a non-significant departure from normality, $W(390) = .99$, $p = .617$. Independence of variables was confirmed (Tolerance > .2 for all variables).

In Model 1 of MRA_2, EPSS-POS and BDI-II entered as predictors. This model was significant, with the adjusted R^2 value indicating 30% of the variance was explained by the EPSS-POS and BDI-II (for other statistics, see *Note* in Table 7).

In Model 2, EPSS-POS entered, but BDI-II was excluded. Additionally, four ECs entered: MLQ-P, MLQ-S, HPRS-R, and DAS (excluded were ELQ and IDS). This

Table 7
MRA_2 Coefficients for Predictors of Spiritual Emergency (SES) – Transformed

						Correlations		
Block	B	SE	β	*t*	*p*	Zero-Order	Partial	Part
Step 1								
EPSS-POS	.28	.03	.63	10.07	< .001	.54	.46	.43
BDI-II	-.01	.01	-.11	-2.31	.021	.14	-.12	-.10
Step 2								
EPSS-POS	.26	.03	.59	9.80	< .001	.54	.45	.39
HPRS-R	.04	.01	.20	4.48	< .001	.31	.22	.18
MLQ-P	.04	.01	.20	3.72	< .001	.10	.19	.15
DAS	-.06	.02	-.14	-3.18	.002	-.05	-.16	-.13
MLQ-S	.02	.01	.10	2.20	.028	.17	.11	.09

Note. EPSS-POS = Experiences of Psychotic Symptoms Scale (positive symptoms only); BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II; HPRS-R = Hong's Psychological Reactance Scale Revised; MLQ-P = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Presence of meaning); MLQ-S = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Search for meaning); DAS = Templer's Death Anxiety Scale.
Model 1: $F(3, 387) = 56.59$, $p < .001$; $R = .55$; $R^2 = .31$; Adj. $R^2 = .30$ (SE = 1.10); R^2 Change = .31.
Model 2: $F(6, 381) = 27.01$, $p < .001$; $R = .64$; $R^2 = .40$; Adj. $R^2 = .39$ (SE = 1.03); R^2 Change = .09

model was significant, $F(9, 381) = 28.60$, $p < .001$. MRA_2 shows the association between the explanatory variables and the SES was strong and significant (Multiple $R = .64$). The addition of the ECs in the second step increased adjusted R^2 by .09, and the total variance explained to 39%. Table 7 lists the β values for the two steps: EPSS-POS was the strongest predictor of SES, followed by the HPRS-R, MLQ-P, DAS, and MLQ-S (DAS was a negative predictor, and its correlations were negative). (NB: In Table 7, we only report the significant predictors.)

Review of the Regression Analyses

A summary of significant predictors for each MRA can be found in Table 8. Alogia predicted Positive Symptoms of Psychosis (EPSS-POS) only (not SES scores). Depression predicted both measures of psychosis, but not SES scores. The SES predicted both measures of psychosis, but only EPSS-POS predicted SES scores. For the ECs, only one EC (DAS) predicted EPSS-POS. Three ECs (ELQ, IDS, & DAS) predicted scores on the full-scale measure of psychosis (EPSS), and four ECs (MLQ-P, MLQ-S, HPRS-R, & DAS) predicted SES scores. The only EC that predicted both SES scores and psychosis was DAS.

As DAS also predicted EPSS and SES scores, comparisons of respective correlations were conducted to determine whether the DAS relationships with psychosis were significantly stronger than the corresponding SE correlations. There were significant differences at the $p < .001$ level using the Fisher *r*-to-*z* transformation for correlations in the same sample with one variable in common (see Table 9; Steiger, 1980). Additionally, there were differences in the directional relationships for the six DAS correlations as DAS had positive relationships with psychosis, but negative relationships with the SE measure. These differences mean DAS relates to psychosis in a way that is unique and clearly discernible from the way it relates to SE, which is to say psychosis and SE diverge at this point.

Table 8
Significant Predictors in the Three Hierarchical MRAs

	MRA Model		
Variable	MRA_{1a} (EPSS-POS)	MRA_{1b} (EPSS)	MRA_2 (SES)
Alogia	✓	—	X
SES	✓	✓	—
BDI-II	✓	✓	X
EPSS-POS	—	—	✓
ELQ	X	✓	X
MLQ-P	X	X	✓
MLQ-S	X	X	✓
IDS	X	✓	X
HPRS-R	X	X	✓
DAS	✓	✓	✓

Note. X = non-significant; ✓ = significant; — = not applicable; Alogia = Experiences of Psychotic Symptoms Scale (alogia symptoms only); SES = Spiritual Emergency Scale; BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II; EPSS-POS = Experiences of Psychotic Symptoms Scale (positive symptoms only); ELQ = Existential Loneliness Questionnaire; MLQ-P = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Presence of meaning); MLQ-S = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Search for meaning); IDS = Identity Distress Scale; HPRS-R = Hong's Psychological Reactance Scale Revised; DAS = Templer's Death Anxiety Scale.

Post Hoc Analysis–Demographic Variables as Predictor

As shown in Table 3, significant EPSS scoring differences were found between Age groups, Income groups, and Religions. There were also significant SES scoring differences between Age groups and Religions. It was considered worthwhile entering these demographic variables into their respective hierarchical MRAs (MRA_{1b} & MRA_2) as a third step in each, to determine their possible predictive powers. Religion had to be converted into a dummy variable ('Denomination') as it was originally a nominal variable in the database and would not be valid in an MRA. Hence, 'Denominational/Spiritual' = 1; 'Non-Denominational/Non-Spiritual' = 0.

For the repeated MRA_{1b}, in respect of outliers, the MD critical statistic is 31.26 for 11 predictors. Two cases exceeded the critical value and were removed. Age group and Income group entered, but Denomination did not enter. Models 1 and 2 were effectively the same as for the original MRA_2 (see *Note* for Table 6). The value of

Table 9
Death Anxiety (DAS) as a Predictor of Psychosis and Spiritual Emergency

Variable	Psychosis	Spiritual Emergency	*z*	*p*
DAS				
Zero-order	.22†	-.05	5.60	< .001
Partial	.13†	-.16	5.59	< .001
Semi-partial	.07†	-.13	3.36	< .001
DAS				
Zero-order	.23‡	-.05	5.69	< .001
Partial	.14‡	-.16	6.01	< .001
Semi-partial	.10‡	-.13	4.18	< .001

Note. $N = 392$; DAS = Templer's Death Anxiety Scale; † EPSS-POS = Experience of Psychotic Symptoms Scale - Positive symptoms subscale (12 items); ‡ EPSS = Experience of Psychotic Symptoms Scale - Full scale (15 items).

Table 10
MRA_{1b} Revised Coefficients for Predictors of Psychosis (EPSS)

						Correlations		
Block	B	SE	β	*t*	*p*	Zero-Order	Partial	Part
Step 1								
SES	.28	.02	.46	11.92	< .001	.51	.52	.46
BDI-II	.13	.01	.42	10.76	< .001	.47	.48	.41
Step 2								
SES	.27	.02	.44	11.22	< .001	.51	.50	.40
BDI-II	.05	.02	.18	3.28	.001	.47	.17	.12
IDS	.09	.03	.18	3.44	.001	.49	.17	.12
ELQ	.02	.01	.12	2.02	.044	.46	.10	.07
DAS	.11	.05	.10	2.49	.013	.22	.13	.09
Step 3								
SES	.28	.02	.46	11.44	< .001	.51	.51	.40
BDI-II	.06	.02	.20	3.83	< .001	.47	.19	.13
Age Grp	-.60	.17	-.14	-3.48	.001	-.24	-.18	-.12
Income	-.28	.09	-.12	-3.24	.001	-.21	-.16	-.11
IDS	.06	.03	.11	2.09	.036	.49	.11	.07
DAS	.11	.05	.10	2.42	.016	.22	.12	.09

Note. SES = Spiritual Emergency Scale; BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II; IDS = Identity Distress Scale; ELQ = Existential Loneliness Questionnaire; DAS = Templer's Death Anxiety Scale.
Model 1: $F(2, 388) = 146.00$, $p < .001$; $R = .66$; $R^2 = .43$; Adj. $R^2 = .43$ ($SE = 2.85$); R^2 Change = .43.
Model 2: $F(6, 382) = 10.63$, $p < .001$; $R = .72$; $R^2 = .51$; Adj. $R^2 = .50$ ($SE = 2.66$); R^2 Change = .08.
Model 3: $F(3, 379) = 7.44$, $p < .001$; $R = .73$; $R^2 = .54$; Adj. $R^2 = .53$ (SE = 2.60); R^2 Change = .03.

adjusted R^2 in Model 3 indicates 53% of the variance was explained by the addition of the Income and Age Group (see Table 10). This model was significant, $F(11, 379) = 40.17$, $p < .001$.

Step 1 and 2 predictors were as reported in Table 6. Model 3 shows the association between the explanatory variables and EPSS was strong and significant (Multiple $R = .73$; see Table 10). Table 10 also lists the β values for the three steps: In Model 3, SES was the strongest predictor of EPSS, followed by BDI-II, Age Group, Income, IDS, and DAS (Age Group and Income have negative β values). The correlations for Age Group and Income were negative. (NB: In Table 10, we only report the significant predictors.)

For the repeated MRA_2, the MD critical statistic is 29.59 for 10 predictors. Two cases exceeded the critical value and were removed. Age group and Denomination entered. Models 1 and 2 were effectively the same as for the original MRA_2 (see *Note* for Table 7). The value of adjusted R^2 in Model 3 indicates 45% of the variance was explained by the addition of the Age Group and Denomination (see Table 11). This model was significant, $F(11, 379) = 29.47$, $p < .001$.

Step 1 and 2 predictors were as reported in Table 7. Model 3 shows the association between the explanatory variables and SES was strong and significant (Multiple $R = .66$; see Table 11). Table 11 also lists the β values for the three steps: In Model 3, EPSS-POS was the strongest predictor of SES, followed by Denomination, MLQ-P, HPRS-R, DAS (which has a negative β value), and Age Grp. The correlations for DAS were negative. (NB: In Table 11, we only report the significant predictors.)

Table 11
MRA_2 Coefficients for Predictors of Spiritual Emergency (SES) – Transformed

						Correlations		
Block	B	SE	β	*t*	*p*	Zero-Order	Partial	Part
Step 1								
EPSS-POS	.28	.03	.63	10.06	< . 001	.54	.46	.43
BDI-II	-.01	.01	-.11	-2.28	.023	.15	-.12	-.10
Step 2								
EPSS-POS	.26	.03	.58	9.74	< .001	.54	.45	.39
HPRS-R	.04	.01	.20	4.54	< .001	.32	.23	.18
MLQ-P	.04	.01	.20	3.86	< .001	.09	.19	.15
DAS	-.06	.02	-.15	-3.24	.001	-.06	-.16	-.13
MLQ-S	.02	.01	.10	2.16	.032	.17	.11	.09
Step 3								
EPSS-POS	.25	.03	.56	9.75	< .001	.54	.45	.37
Denomination	.66	.12	.22	2.28	.023	.08	.12	.09
MLQ-P	.03	.01	.19	3.76	< .001	.09	.19	.14
HPRS-R	.03	.01	.18	4.27	< .001	.32	.21	.16
Age Grp	.15	.07	.10	2.28	.023	.08	.12	.09
DAS	-.04	.02	-.11	-2.48	.014	-.06	-.13	-.09

Note. EPSS-POS = Experiences of Psychotic Symptoms Scale (positive symptoms only); BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II; HPRS-R = Hong's Psychological Reactance Scale Revised; MLQ-P = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Presence of meaning); MLQ-S = Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Search for meaning); DAS = Templer's Death Anxiety Scale.
Model 1: $F(3, 387) = 55.66$, $p < .001$; $R = .55$; $R^2 = .30$; Adj. $R^2 = .30$ ($SE = 1.10$); R^2 Change = .30.
Model 2: $F(6, 381) = 10.55$, $p < .001$; $R = .63$; $R^2 = .40$; Adj. $R^2 = .39$ ($SE = 1.03$); R^2 Change = .10.
Model 3: $F(2, 379) = 21.09$, $p < .001$; $R = .68$; $R^2 = .46$; Adj. $R^2 = .45$ ($SE = 0.98$); R^2 Change = .06

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate two issues relating to the nature of psychosis, spiritual emergency (SE), and existential distress (ED): (a) psychosis as a coping mechanism for ED, and (b) SE as a healing mechanism for ED. The findings were of considerable interest as there was no comparable overlap in the existential concerns (ECs) as predictors of the two constructs, psychosis and SE, suggesting experiences of psychosis and SE result in manifestly different forms of ED.

The significant correlations between each of the ECs supports Hypothesis 1, and corroborates Kretschmer and Storm's (2017) findings. Presence of meaning in life (MLQ-P) was the only EC that correlated negatively with all other ECs, indicating a lack of meaning in life may tend to be associated with increases in other ECs. These results suggest that existential loneliness, identity distress, death anxiety, reactance (perceived lack of freedom), and *search for* meaning in life may all be ameliorated by the *presence* of meaning in life. This finding supports Frankl's (1959) claim that the presence of meaning in life may be paramount to existential well-being, whereas lack of meaning may likely lead to an existential vacuum that may even induce ED.

The significant correlations of all ECs with psychosis supported Hypothesis 1. Identity distress (IDS) had the strongest correlation with psychosis as measured on the EPSS, corroborating findings by Laddis and Dell (2012) that identity disorders

and psychosis have considerable overlap. Existential loneliness (ELQ) had the second strongest correlation with psychosis, thus supporting a similar finding by Lim and Gleeson (2014), and the correlation also lends support to Hoffman's (2007) 'social deafferentation hypothesis'. Positive correlations for psychosis with search for meaning (MLQ-S) and negative correlations with MLQ-P (presence of meaning) is consistent with interviews with psychotic patients who consistently reported that the desire for meaning is their most pressing concern (Wagner & King, 2005).

The positive correlation of reactance (HPRS-R) with psychosis supports earlier literature that shows a high level of reactance (low level of freedom) is associated with greater psychopathology (Hoge et al., 1990; Kasper et al., 1997). The positive relationship between psychosis and death anxiety (DAS), in addition to the predictive relationship that Age Group had in MRA_{1b} (Table 10) corroborates research findings by Harrop and Trower (2001), and by Burke et al. (2010), which suggest that if younger individuals have higher psychosis, it may in part tend to be due to increased death anxiety.

The SES significantly correlated with three ECs, providing partial support for Hypothesis 1. The SES had the strongest correlation with the EPSS, supporting previous research showing significant overlap between psychosis and SE (Goretzki et al., 2013; Storm & Goretzki, 2021). While the two constructs are related, the SES correlated significantly with IDS, HPRS-R, and MLQ-S only, suggesting those who experience an SE may have less ED than those who have psychosis, since we cannot make any conclusions about death anxiety, existential loneliness, and presence of meaning in relation to SE. These findings lend support to Shields's (2014) notion that psychosis and ED are related, whereas SE is less so (Grof & Grof, 1990).

In regard to results for tests on Hypothesis 2, the significant predictors of EPSS-POS (Alogia, SES and BDI-II) in Step 1 of MRA_{1a}, confirmed previous studies showing that Alogia and Depression predict psychosis, and that SE and psychosis have significant overlap (Bronn & McIlwain, 2015; Storm et al., 2017; Storm & Goretzki, 2021). In total, these predictors were able to explain 64% of the variance in EPSS-POS scores. DAS (death anxiety) was the only EC to enter the regression, doing very little to increase the explanatory power of the model (a 1% increase only). While the correlational findings described above indicate the possible presence of ED (as ECs) in those who have experienced psychosis, MRA_{1a} suggests the ECs do not generally predict positive symptoms of psychosis. As Shields's (2014) hypothesis proposed that the psyche generates alternative realities (i.e., positive symptoms) to cope with ED, this distress is not represented in the ECs, although a minor case can be made for death anxiety.

MRA_{1b} revealed similar results to MRA_{1a}, with the SES and BDI-II explaining 43% of the variance. Of note is the considerable increase in the partial (.48) and semi-partial (.42) correlations of the BDI-II in MRA_{1b} in comparison to the partial (.26) and semi-partial (.16) correlations in MRA_{1a}, suggesting a potential overlap that Depression and Alogia have for predicting psychosis (i.e., Alogia may have

considerable influence on Depression, which cannot be gauged when Alogia items are put back into the psychosis scale; the EPSS).

The addition of the IDS and ELQ in the model raised variance explained to 50%. The medium-strength zero-order correlations for IDS and ELQ support earlier links of loneliness (social isolation) and identity distress to psychosis (Laddis & Dell, 2012; Lim & Gleeson, 2014; Reininghaus et al., 2008). Interestingly, DAS had the lowest zero-order correlation in the model, but the least reduction in partial and semi-partial correlations (after SES), suggesting that death anxiety has a unique relationship to psychosis, since it is the only EC that entered both MRAs.

Regarding our findings for tests on Hypothesis 3, Alogia was not found to be a predictor of SES scores, though EPSS-POS and BDI-II explained 30% of the variance in SES scores. It was predicted that EPSS-POS would be the only predictor of SE in Step 1 of MRA_2, but BDI-II also entered, which was not thought to happen based on Bronn and McIlwain's (2015) finding that Depression (BDI-II) was not related to SE. They concluded that depression could be used to differentiate SE from psychosis. However, the predictive relationship that depression has with SE is actually opposite to its relationship with psychosis (β for BDI-II is positive in both MRA_{1a} and MRA_{1b}, but negative in MRA_2), so that the lower the BDI-II score, the more it tends to predict a high SES scores (note also the negative partial and semi-partial correlations in Model 1 of MRA_2). Besides these informative findings, DAS did not enter Model 2. These findings strengthen Bronn and McIlwain's (2015) proposal that SE is distinct from psychosis in its divergent relationship with depression and alogia.

After EPSS-POS, the two ECs, HPRS-R and MLQ-P, were the strongest predictors of SE, with DAS and MLQ-S following—a total of four ECs. The two strongest EC predictors, HPRS-R and MLQ-P, give rise to the suggestion that those experiencing SE the most, tend to report higher levels of reactance (i.e., they feel less free), but tend to report a strong presence of meaning. Low death anxiety (DAS) is associated with (and predicts) higher SES scores, the latter of which is also predicted by increased search for meaning (MLQ-S). Reduced death anxiety and higher search for meaning, which both tend to be found in those with a high level of SE, seems to coincide with Frankl's (1959) notion that meaning in life is beneficial to happiness and wellbeing. These four ECs may provide a key to the healing potential nested in the more complex construct of SE.

In summary, the MRAs confirmed that SE and psychosis are similar constructs as they were strong predictors of each other. However, the different predictors for each indicate that SE and psychosis do not entirely overlap, and may even have different outcomes in regard to psychological health. As such, our findings corroborate much of the SE literature, and strengthen the claim that SE is a distinct construct and "should be differentiated from psychopathology" (Bronn & McIlwain, 2015, p. 367).

Review of Aims

In the following review of our aims, we will discuss psychosis as a *coping* mechanism for existential distress, and then consider spiritual emergency as a *healing* mechanism for same.

Psychosis as a Coping Mechanism for Existential Distress

Identity distress, existential loneliness, and death anxiety predicted psychosis, suggesting the unhealthy psychological state may be due to increased ED (as represented in the relevant ECs). The absence of *presence of* meaning as a negative predictor for psychosis was unexpected and conflicts with the previous literature positing that a lack of meaning is a cause of psychopathology (Frankl, 1979; Larsen, 2004; Shields, 2014; Yalom, 1980). The lack of *search for* meaning as a predictor conflicts with Wagner and King's (2005) subjective patient interviews who reported that the search for meaning was their most important concern. As both the presence of meaning, and search for meaning, were strong predictors of SE, it suggests the possibility that the desire for meaning found within psychotic patients in the literature may be due to individuals being misdiagnosed with psychosis when they are instead experiencing an SE, as Bragdon (2013) posited. As higher levels of identity distress, existential loneliness, and death anxiety predicted experiences of psychosis (using the EPSS), the findings of this study indicate that ED does play a role in psychosis, and Shields' (2014) hypothesis was partially supported. If psychosis is no more than a coping mechanism, most often manifesting in positive symptoms, the three relevant predictor ECs may at least indicate possible therapeutic solutions that focus on resolving the clinically identified levels of identity distress, and/or existential loneliness, and/or death anxiety.

Spiritual Emergency as a Healing Mechanism for Existential Distress

Considering the ECs only, SE was predicted by reactance, *search for* meaning, *presence of* meaning, and death anxiety, all of which are proposed to indicate ED. Reactance at a high level (i.e., at a low level of freedom) was an EC that could be seen as inducing ED, as Dowd et al. (1994) found that it is correlated with anger, and Joubert (1990) found that happiness is negatively correlated with the construct. However, reactance is also positively correlated with increased internal locus of control, which corresponds with higher levels of independence, confidence in oneself, and better life outcomes (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Given that higher levels of meaning predicts SE, and Depression was a negative predictor of SE in Step 1 of MRA_2, it seems more plausible that higher levels of reactance indicate increased confidence in oneself, and valuing independence rather than being indicative of anger, depression, or unhappiness. In addition to these claims, existential psychologists also agree that meaning is the greatest defence against ED (Frankl, 1979; Saunders, 1988; Yalom 1980), and we note that DAS scores tend to be low if SES scores are high, indicating another point of departure from psychosis where DAS tends to be high when EPSS is high. These ECs either have a healing role, or

they may be seen as spurs that precipitate healing, which might eventually lead to spiritual *emergence* that is a noted outcome of SE (Grof & Grof, 1990). As ED is seen as 'spiritual pain' (Cassel, 1982; Kearney, 2000; Millspaugh, 2005), the reduction in ED supports Grof and Grof's (1990) hypothesis that SE can be a psychological healing process as opposed to a coping mechanism claimed of psychosis.

Post-Hoc Analysis

In addition to these findings, our post hoc findings add demographic dimension to our MRAs. (For these analyses, see Tables 10 & 11.) Age was found to be a predictor of both EPSS scores (psychosis) and SES scores (indicating spiritual emergency; SE). However, younger participants tended to exhibit *higher* EPSS scores, whereas younger participants tended to exhibit *lower* SES scores. We note that Shields's (2014) suggestion that younger individuals are more prone to psychosis, but we might also assume that SE is predominantly a concern of older people. The negative predictive relationship that psychosis has with income may also give support for the coping mechanism hypothesis, as wealthier individuals have greater access to costly support structures that can alleviate ED, whereas income did not predict SE, further suggesting that psychosis and SE are different constructs. This assumption is firmed up by the finding that professing a religious denomination, and/or having a spiritual inclination, tends to be associated with higher SE, but they have no relevance to level of psychosis.

Practical Applications and Implications

These findings have implications for how we view psychosis diagnostically and treatment-wise. Currently, biological treatments through medication has a reported efficacy rate of 41% (Leucht et al., 2009). As SE is not currently, or at least *not sufficiently* recognised in clinical practice, this low efficacy rate could be due to many individuals with SE being misdiagnosed with psychosis and subsequently prescribed medication, when a transpersonal approach may provide alternative, more appropriate treatment options. The findings of this study support the argument that the current diagnostic criteria for psychosis is too broad and should be refined in order to address SE as a condition in its own right (Grof & Grof, 1990; Phillips et al., 2009).

Our findings have implications for how to view the relationships that psychosis has to spiritual and existential needs. Currently, spiritual and existential needs are not considered to be related to psychosis, but the findings of this study suggest that clients with SE have specific existential and spiritual concerns that could be brought to their attention as part of a recovery and treatment regime. As ED is prevalent in psychotic patients, integrating therapies that focus on alleviating ED in addition to current treatments may aid in improving health outcomes for psychotic patients. We note, therefore, that the following may be of clinical interest:

We found psychosis and SE were predicted by ED, but *in different forms* as represented in the five or six ECs. Death anxiety, identity distress, and existential loneliness predicted psychosis. Death anxiety also predicted SE (but the relationship was negative), and the other ECs are different—SE is predicted by reactance and meaning (search for, and presence of). The clinician may only have to focus on healing for one condition, or maybe both (given the potential overlap), if either is suggested. The predictor ECs could be used to demarcate the strategy, using available treatment options for the psychotic component (to deal with death anxiety, identity distress, existential loneliness), but for the SE, the clinician might follow therapeutic guidelines (or develop these) that address the reactance issue (as a perceived lack of freedom), and draw attention to (and/or foster a greater appreciation for) what the individual finds meaningful, and identify other sources of meaning, and integrate all of these.

Limitations

As all measures were self-reports and the study was completed online, this method of data collection may be a potential limitation as it allows for the possibility of inauthentic responses. This study attempted to control this limitation by including three control items (decoy questions), and participants who responded too speedily were excluded. The large sample size and parametric testing allowed for inferences to be made towards the general population, but the sample consisted primarily of first-year psychology students and individuals recruited from Facebook. Upon testing, these differences were not a factor of concern, but differences on demographic variables can sometimes be expected since student populations tend to be younger and inexperienced in a range of life areas compared to the wider populace. Also, selection bias may be a potential confound, as only individuals who were interested in the topic would have chosen to complete the study.

The three-item Alogia scale produced a low Cronbach's alpha of .58. The questionable Alogia item is "Have you ever believed that your thoughts were being interfered with in some way?" as this item produced a lower mean (.14) compared to the other two items (.42 and .47) and had lower inter-item correlations. This item did not cause psychometric problems in other studies (Bronn & McIlwain 2015; Storm & Goretzki, 2021). It seems Facebook populations differ from other populations; e.g., alphas from Bronn and McIlwain (2015) were .70 for their "student sample" (p. 359), and .78 for their "spiritual sample" (p. 360). Therefore, test results involving Alogia in this study should be treated with due caution.

Future Research

As this study was the first of its kind to examine quantitatively the relationships between psychosis, SE, and ED as represented by the 'Big Five' ECs, only further research along similar lines will validate the findings reported above. Research could also branch out into investigations of other ECs (or refinements of the 'Big Five') to determine precise relationships that existential concerns and distress have with psychosis and SE. Grof and Grof (1990) state that only individuals who are

willing to accept their life circumstances, and are open to change, may be able to experience an SE. As reactance is related to internal locus of control and predictive of SE, investigating personality characteristics such as locus of control may prove fruitful in furthering our understanding as to why some individuals experience SE, others experience psychosis, and others tend to experience both.

As SE can be psychologically healing, future research could also look at whether certain psychotic episodes may be transformed into less challenging SEs by alleviating the effects of the relevant ECs that predict those episodes. For example, as psychosis was predicted in this study by increased death anxiety and identity distress, whereas SE was not, we might expect treatment focussing on both would ameliorate the psychotic symptoms, perhaps even leading to spiritual emergence, with or without the crisis aspects. Of course, one predictor of SE (i.e., reactance indicating a threat to freedom) also needs addressing.

Summary

The findings of this study confirmed that alogia and depression can differentiate SE from psychosis. Additionally, this study found that the relationships that psychosis and SE share with ECs differentiate the two constructs. The findings suggest that although psychosis and SE overlap a great deal, each is a unique manifestation with different mental health outcomes due to divergences in ED. The client who is challenged by psychotic symptoms *and* SE can be seen as an individual engaged in the twofold task of *coping* and *healing* simultaneously. In particular, the healing aspect of SE (e.g., transformation) is evident in the pivotal role played by meaning (both 'search for' and 'presence of'). However, psychosis *and* SE are not necessarily comorbid. Consequently, further investigations into psychosis, SE, and ED are necessary as they may lead to refinements in diagnosing psychosis beyond biological criteria, possibly leading to options that improve the efficacy rates of treatment. Moreover, while SE can still be seen as a challenge, it is one that appears to embody its own treatment regime.

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Appendix

The Spiritual Emergency Scale

Introduction: This research is seeking information about extraordinary experiences that occur in the natural, un-intoxicated state, so it is important that you do not include those instances when you may have been under the influence of drugs.

Instructions: Circle 'Yes' or 'No' for each item. Raw score is total count of 'Yes' answers.

1.	Have you ever lost your sense of reference as your outer and inner worlds dissolved?	Yes / No
2.	Have you ever experienced the spontaneous production of complex visual geometrical images or chants inside your head?	Yes / No

3.	Have you ever heard voices, music or the repetition of mantras, without knowing where they're coming from?	Yes / No
4.	Have you ever experienced intense sensations of energy and/or heat streaming along your spine?	Yes / No
5.	Have you ever experienced the spontaneous desire to create rituals?	Yes / No
6.	Have you ever undertaken a powerful inner experience that involved a journey into another world?	Yes / No
7.	Have you ever had the ability to move into and out of non-ordinary states of consciousness at will?	Yes / No
8.	Have you ever developed a deep change in consciousness during which you lost contact with everyday reality?	Yes / No
9.	Have you ever experienced insights and/or visions, in which you received secret or sacred teachings and healing powers to take back to the "ordinary" world?	Yes / No
10.	Have you ever experienced an increased connection with animals and plants and the elemental forces of nature?	Yes / No
11.	Have you ever had the experience of dealing with something that has a divine nature and is radically different from your ordinary perception of the everyday world?	Yes / No
12.	Have you ever experienced the sense of becoming one with humanity, nature, the creative energy of the universe and/or God?	Yes / No
13.	Have you ever spontaneously attained profound insights into the nature of reality?	Yes / No
14.	Have you ever felt a sense of overcoming the usual divisions of the body and mind and reaching a state of complete inner unity and wholeness?	Yes / No
15.	Have you ever experienced going beyond your normal understanding of time and space and entered a timeless realm where these categories no longer apply?	Yes / No
16.	Have you ever been aware of the presence of spiritual entities?	Yes / No
17.	Have you ever spontaneously received accurate information about things in the past, present or future, by extra-sensory means?	Yes / No
18.	Have you ever spontaneously gained a greater understanding of the cosmos?	Yes / No
19.	Have you ever spontaneously lost your sense of identity?	Yes / No
20.	Have you ever been able to see auras around people, animals, plants or other living things?	Yes / No
21.	Have you ever experienced a greater awareness of the interconnectedness of all things?	Yes / No
22.	Have you ever been overwhelmed by powerful emotions and physical sensations, concerning yourself and others in various circumstances and historical settings?	Yes / No
23.	Have you ever experienced living what seemed to be another life, in another time and place, in great detail?	Yes / No
24.	Have you ever felt like you have personally witnessed detailed sequences of events taking place in other historical periods and/or cultures that you have had no previous exposure to?	Yes / No
25.	Have you ever had the need to fight off or try to control the actions of a negative being or entity?	Yes / No
26.	Have you ever experienced rich connections with mythological symbols from ancient history?	Yes / No
27.	Have you ever felt that you were in the centre of huge events that had cosmic relevance and were important for the future of the world?	Yes / No
28.	Have you ever experienced a visionary state taking you back through your own history and that of mankind to creation?	Yes / No
29.	Have you ever been aware of a cosmic battle being played out between the forces of good and evil or light and darkness?	Yes / No
30.	Have you ever experienced the destruction of an old sense of identity followed by rebirth and a renewed purpose for living?	Yes / No

The Authors

Maximilian Inglis, HB.PsySci., is currently a researcher with a focus on meaning, suicidality, unconscious symbolism, altered states of consciousness, spirituality, psychosis, and existential distress. His personal interest in these topics have existed for a decade, with his first degree being in Bachelor of Behavioural Science

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Lance Storm, Ph.D., is a Research Fellow at the School of Psychology, University of Adelaide, where he also completed his post-graduate studies in 2002. He has published in many journals including *Psychological Bulletin*, *Journal of Parapsychology*, and *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, and the Jungian journals *International Journal of Jungian Studies* and *Quadrant*. He has edited or co-edited three books including *Synchronicity* (2008), and he is author of the Jungian-influenced book *The Enigma of Numbers* (2008). His interest in spiritual emergency stems from over 25 years studying Jung's Analytical Psychology in order to understand the nature of the self, human development, and the differences and similarities between the manifestations of our spiritual nature and the strivings and sufferings of the human soul, both of which are very often mistaken for psychopathology. He can be reached at lance.storm@adelaide.edu.au

NOTE: This study is based on the first author's Honours thesis, which was supervised by the second author.

On the Science of the Soul
A Conversation with Seyyed Hossein Nasr

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ABSTRACT: The monopolistic tendency of modern science in asserting itself as the exclusive interpreter of the human psyche or mind through its psychology does so while negating the most crucial dimension that makes it a complete psychology, the metaphysical order as is found across the world in all times and places. The reductionistic turn of modern Western psychology away from its metaphysical roots has deformed the original "science of the soul" rendering it null and void. That spirituality and metaphysics have been marginalized and deemed irrelevant in modern science was assumed to be the logical course of progress. Ironically, however, their fundamental absence is the reason contemporary psychology is in disarray. Numerous individuals may see this as preposterous and think that to suggest this is to turn back the clock to the dark ages of knowledge. However, if psychology is returned to its origin in metaphysics, sacred science, and spiritual principles, it can again become worthy of being called a "science of the soul." This interview with Islamic philosopher, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, on the discipline of psychology explores the original meaning of the "science of the soul" as it is understood across the diverse cultures of the world.

Keywords: metaphysics, epistemological pluralism, psychology, human diversity, perennial philosophy, perennial psychology

Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933) is University Professor of Islamic Studies at The George Washington University, in Washington, DC. Professor Nasr was born in Tehran into a family of distinguished scholars and physicians. He received his early education in Iran, and completed his undergraduate degree in Physics and Mathematics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Nasr then studied Geology and Geophysics, and completed his PhD in the History of Science and Philosophy, at Harvard University. He began his illustrious teaching career in 1955 when he was still a young doctoral student at Harvard University. Over the years, he has taught and trained numerous students from different parts of the world, many of whom have become important and prominent scholars in their fields of study, including scholars such as Laleh Bakhtiar (1938–2020), William C. Chittick, Sachiko Murata, Gholam Reza Aavani, Ibrahim Kalin, Caner Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E.B. Lumbard, Waleed El-Ansary, Oludamini Ogunnaike, Yusuf Casewit, Mohammed Rustom, Tarik M. Quadir, David Dakake, Muhammad U. Faruque, and Fuad S. Naeem.

Professor Nasr is one of the most important scholars of Islam and comparative religion in the world today, and is recognized among the foremost living exponents of the perennial philosophy. He was instrumental in founding the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy (now the Iranian Institute of Philosophy)

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The endnotes and references were created by the author/interviewer.

in 1974, which drew many Iranian and foreign scholars from diverse parts of the world who later became distinguished specialists in their fields. It attracted notable figures such as Henry Corbin (1903–1978), Toshihiko Izutsu (1914–1993), and William C. Chittick (b. 1943). In 1984, the Foundation for Traditional Studies, of which Professor Nasr is the president, was created. It is the publisher of *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies* and was established to disseminate traditional thought as found in the world's religions and mystical dimensions. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Faculty of Theology of Uppsala University in Sweden (1977) and was the first Muslim and first non-Western scholar to deliver the prestigious Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh (1981). In 1999, he was chosen to be the first Muslim scholar to receive the Templeton Religion and Science Course Award. Professor Nasr has been included in the Library of Living Philosophers and is listed as one of the world's "500 Most Influential Muslims"; he is the author of over fifty books and five hundred articles, which have been translated into many languages. Some of his highly regarded titles include: *Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (1964); *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (1966); *The Encounter of Man and Nature* (1968); *Sufi Essays* (1972); *Knowledge and the Sacred* (1981); *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (1987); *The Need for a Sacred Science* (1993); and *Religion and the Order of Nature* (1996). Nasr is the editor-in-chief of *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (2015) and a renowned intellectual figure both in the West and the Islamic world. He is a much sought-after speaker at academic conferences, university seminars and public lectures, as well as appearing on many radio and television programs in his area of expertise.

This interview was conducted in an effort to bring awareness to the metaphysical roots of the discipline of psychology in order to restore the "science of the soul" as it has been known across the diverse cultures of the world since time immemorial. It is the framework of the perennial philosophy and its psychology that is needed in the present-day to resolve the methodological dilemma as to how to straddle the intersection between psychology, culture, religion, and spirituality without confusing and reducing them. The power of this framework is illustrated, for example, in the work of Abraham H. Maslow (1908–1970), a pioneer within two "forces" of modern psychology – humanistic and transpersonal. The first sought to reclaim the personhood from the dehumanized shibboleths of behaviorism and psychoanalysis, and the second aimed to reclaim the role of the sacred within the discipline. It was in Maslow's exposure to the perennial philosophy that he found a multidimensional model to support an epistemological pluralism informed by human diversity, its knowledge systems, and the religious and spiritual traditions of the world (Maslow, 1968, 1994).

Huston Smith (1919–2016), doyen in the field of comparative religion, needs no introduction to the readers of *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, as he was closely involved with the advancement of humanistic and transpersonal psychology (Bendeck Sotillos, 2013a). He was invited on numerous occasions to be a keynote speaker at conferences on these subjects and received an honorary doctorate from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. He was on the editorial board of both the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*.

Professor Smith has published many articles and has also contributed essays to a variety of anthologies edited by key authors in these fields (see endnote 1).

What may be less known to readers of *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* is that Professor Nasr was not only a close friend of Huston Smith, but also a mentor of his. Smith was one of the founders and the vice-president of the Foundation for Traditional Studies. Smith was introduced to the perennial philosophy through Aldous Huxley's (1894–1963) popular anthology *The Perennial Philosophy* (1944), and this perspective became the mainstay of his intellectual outlook (Bendeck Sotillos, 2017). Countless individuals had not only encountered the study of the world's religions through Huston Smith, but were introduced to the writings of perennialist authors such as René Guénon (1886–1951), Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877–1947), Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998), and Titus Burckhardt (1908–1984), as well as others such as Martin Lings (1909–2005), Leo Schaya (1916–1985), Joseph Epes Brown (1920–2000), Marco Pallis (1895–1989), Whitall N. Perry (1920–2005), William Stoddart (b. 1925), and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933).

Smith's essay in the *Library of Living Philosophers* series entitled "Nasr's Defense of the Perennial Philosophy," clearly affirms a shared intellectual footing with Professor Nasr, as well as an undeniable affirmation of the perennial philosophy: "I [Huston Smith] am the one who is closest to Professor Nasr's philosophical position, most importantly his endorsement of the perennial philosophy" (Smith, 2001, p. 139). Smith recognized Nasr's book *Knowledge and the Sacred*, which was based on his Gifford Lectures, as "one of the most important books of the twentieth century" (Smith, 2007, p. vii).

For individuals unfamiliar with his work, Nasr has defined the perennial philosophy as follows:

> A knowledge which has always been and will always be and which is of universal character both in the sense of existing among peoples of different climes and epochs and of dealing with universal principles. This knowledge which is available to the intellect is, moreover, contained at the heart of all religions or traditions, and its realization and attainment is possible only through those traditions and by means of methods, rites, symbols, images and other means sanctified by the message from Heaven or the Divine which gives birth to each tradition. (1993, p. 54)

Nasr also elucidates how the perennial philosophy is intimately connected to metaphysics and embraces other disciplines, including psychology or the "science of the soul":

> The *philosophia perennis* possesses branches and ramifications pertaining to cosmology, anthropology, art and other disciplines, but at its heart lies pure metaphysics, if this latter term is understood. . .as the science of Ultimate Reality, as a *scientia sacra* not to be confused with the subject bearing the name metaphysics in postmedival Western philosophy. (p. 54)

The following conversation with Professor Nasr was conducted on July 18th, 2020.

Samuel Bendeck Sotillos: Professor Nasr, you have been a staunch critic of modern psychology. As you have pointed out, psychology as it is known today stands in radical contrast to how it was understood across the diverse societies and civilizations in its ancient and original sense as the "science of the soul." Through a trajectory spanning several centuries with the developments of the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment project, psychology, or the "science of the soul," has, in your opinion, become gradually disfigured, fragmented, and turned upside-down. Can you please speak to the paradoxical and problematic situation that what we call psychology in the present day perhaps, in reality, is not psychology at all?

Seyyed Hossein Nasr: First of all, let me start with the term itself. We have in traditional writings in Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism what could be translated as "psychology" in the sense that is logos/science of the psyche. The way that the term "psychology" has been transformed in the last few centuries in the West has resulted in modern psychology. There is, however, really nothing that corresponds to it in traditional civilizations.

From the point of view of tradition [see endnote 2], modern psychology is an illegitimate use of what is called knowledge of the psyche in order to explain something which it cannot explain. In principle, to understand anything you have to comprehend it. This is what "comprehension" means; the very word "comprehension" means "to encompass." So, only the greater can know the lesser.

By what means are you able to know the psyche if you do not believe that there is a higher level of reality in the human being than the psyche? This is the great paradox of modern psychology and that is why it discovers certain things – there is no doubt about that – yet it cannot be considered to be a legitimate "science of the soul" because there is no legitimate "science of the soul" without understanding the levels and hierarchy of being. The fact is that the soul is not an abstraction or simply acting molecules on the one hand, or simply a substance cut off from higher levels of reality on the other. It is actually one of several levels of reality, and it interacts both with what is below it – that is, the *corpus* or body – and also with what is higher than it, which is the Spirit.

The greatest mistake of modern psychology is to confuse the *Pneuma* and the *psyche*, the Spirit and the psyche, the *Spiritus* and *anima*, which we had in classical medieval Christianity, and also in Greek and Islamic thought.

SBS: A serious issue that contemporary psychology seems to need to come to terms with is its unchecked hegemonic and totalitarian position that there is no psychology except for that of modern Western psychology. It refuses to acknowledge that modern Western psychology has never been and cannot be a neutral or value-free discipline and that there are many psychologies connected to the diverse human collectivities and their religious traditions. It appears that the time has come for the decolonization of psychology or the "science of the soul." Could you please weigh in on this pressing and vital matter (see endnote 3)?

SHN: What you say is to some extent correct, but is not completely correct, because in the last few decades one of the events that has taken place is that there has been an attempted revival of traditional psychologies in non-Western societies. You now have people in India, Hindus who practice Hindu psychology; you have it in the Islamic world and elsewhere, even to some extent in the West. So, it is not completely true, although it is to a large extent true. I accept that.

There is part of psychology that can be taught and practiced in relation to medicine, in relation to the elements and forces of the body, and in relation to the body and the psyche, and there are people with mental disorders, who can be treated in relation to psychophysical elements of the human being. There is a place for some aspects of modern psychology if it were to accept its own limitations, for it to treat certain forms of mental illness. I have some of my own students and disciples who sometimes are in clinical need of a psychologist or therapist and I recommend that they obtain this support. The trouble is that even in that case most of the Western psychologists are either agnostic or atheist at least when it comes to the practice of psychology and they operate in a world in which the reality of the Spirit, which in fact determines the nature of the soul in many ways and how it acts and how it responds, is absent [see endnote 4]. So, we are in a very difficult situation.

The spread of Western psychology globally is very unfortunate. Some psychologists, including Western psychologists, have realized that in contrast to Western physics, where the specific weight of sodium is the same in Paris and Beijing, in the field of psychology, the religious, spiritual, psychological, cultural elements of a particular civilization cause this science to not be the same everywhere, as it is applied in different worlds. Certain principles might be the same, but their applications are not always the same.

Therefore, there is no one single science of psychology like there is one single quantum mechanics. I do not even accept that there is one single physics. In many of my writings, I discuss this issue: there are different ways of looking at the physical world, but on a certain level one can teach electromagnetic theory and apply it whether you are in Delhi or Beijing, Tehran, Paris, or New York, and through that science and its application you are able to generate electricity and light in your house. That you can do, but in the field of psychology, it is very different.

One of the good events that has occurred in fact has a lot to do with the introduction of certain traditional writings on the "science of the soul" such as the famous essay of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "On the Indian and Traditional Psychology, or Rather Pneumatology" [1977], which has awakened many people in both Western and non-Western cultures to the very rich psychological traditions that exist, but of which many Western contemporaries are unaware.

I have had personal experience of many Persians – I am a Persian myself – going to Western psychologists with problems that any Persian doctor, even without being a specialist would realize are culturally oriented and related; they do not exist in Liverpool the same way that they exist in Isfahan. I have seen that many, many times. It is very important to emphasize that when we talk about the traditional "science of the soul," which deals with certain eternal truths, but as they are applied

to different circumstances and conditions, and therefore it is not uniform like, say, the physical sciences are to an extent. As I said, even that I do not accept, but at least on a certain level a Boeing can fly from Europe to Beijing and fly on the basis of the same laws of aerodynamics, which exist in both places. In the field of psychology, that is not true.

SBS: Modernism and by extension postmodernism are the very negation of Spirit; this negation constitutes the foundations of modern science and its psychology. A central challenge to the authentic meeting between spirituality and psychology is the entrenched negative assessment and pathologizing tendency of psychology toward religion. Can contemporary psychology return to its complete and integral condition as a "science of the soul" within the bedrock of science as it is known today? If so, what needs to occur for this to take place?

SHN: Absolutely not. The bedrock of modern science is physics. In physics anything other than the physical world is an epiphenomenon depending on the physical world. It has no independence of its own. Modern science, as long as it remains in the confines of Cartesian bifurcation and the materialism of the seventeenth century, which remains the dominant philosophy of nature, you might say, of the philosophy of science that has dominated Western science for the last four centuries – it is not able to do that at all, no.

You cannot extend modern science to include psychology. It has been attempted by some psychologists who use quantitative methods and so forth and so on, but they do not really get to the reality and nature of the soul. The soul does not mean anything and is not even used scientifically because of the influence of modern science. The word "soul" itself is not a scientific term today. Rather, the term "psyche" is used, yet in a very limited way reduced from its meaning in the traditional context [see endnote 5]. Human beings use it in everyday parlance, but in modern science, the word "soul" does not mean anything, and therefore to the question that you asked, the answer to it is definitely not.

SBS: Within all the world's religions and their mystical dimensions resides a complete and integral psychology or "science of the soul." The great art historian of the twentieth century Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has referred to it as the perennial psychology (1977), which is innately aligned with the perennial philosophy. How would you define the perennial psychology?

SHN: What you call perennial psychology is in a sense an application of perennial philosophy. Perennial psychology is based on the understanding of the total human microcosm and also macrocosm on that we human beings are constituted of the hermetic tri-division of Spirit, soul, and body that was so famous in the West of *Spiritus*, *anima*, *corpus* in the Middle Ages in Latin, and in Greek, *Pneuma*, *psyche*, *hylé*, and other corresponding divisions. This tripartite division was absolutely essential to the understanding of the nature of man, the *anthrōpos*. Perennial psychology means a psychology that is based on this timeless truth, but the application of perennial psychology is not the same as the application of perennial metaphysics.

In perennial metaphysics we are dealing with universal principles with particularization that is in fact related to a language that is used for the expression of that particular metaphysical truth, whether you are using German, Persian, English, Arabic, or Chinese, or whatever it is. Whereas perennial psychology is really the application of the understanding of the cosmic and microcosmic dimension of the human soul at its different levels, but as it applies to a particular human collectivity. The human soul is conditioned by the revelation, which dominates over that particular civilization in which the human being is raised, even if they come to reject it.

The cause and manner of the rejection of God in France is very different from the rejection of God in Delhi. The rejection of the truths of a particular tradition is also within the cadre of its worldview. It is the traditions that form the world within which the soul acts, reacts, and even rebels against because when you act against, it is against something; it is against a concrete factor or a concrete statement. Perennial psychology is very pertinent as a subject for the understanding of this issue as well.

It must be understood that although there are universal principles that you see in perennial psychology in different domains, its application as schools of traditional psychology or the "science of the soul" that were developed are based on a particular civilization, its culture, but most of all its religion, its traditions, even its climate and the relationship of a particular human collectivity with its natural ambiance. All of these factors were considered, and you have to take them into consideration.

SBS: Although the perennial philosophy was the cornerstone for the inclusion of the spiritual dimension within contemporary psychology, especially within humanistic and transpersonal psychology, in recent years, key representatives within these orientations have called for the expulsion of this framework from psychology (see endnote 6). Yet this seems to fail to recognize that without the perennial philosophy there is no ontological and corresponding epistemological foundation that can facilitate both human diversity and religious pluralism. What role do you see the perennial philosophy and its perennial psychology providing in contemporary psychology and mental health treatment?

SHN: Perennial philosophy is a whole, a totality, and cannot be used legitimately piecemeal in a profane psychology. Its legitimate use would be to understand its principles and applications and consequently modify current schools of psychology in accordance with the Truths of the perennial philosophy. But then, of course, modern psychology and mental health treatments would no longer be what they are today.

SBS: There are many individuals seeking psychotherapy or mental health services who do not have a religious tradition and are not necessarily interested in religion, yet there are others who over the course of treatment realize their need for religion. With this said there are also those who want to deepen their spiritual life, but do not know how and if it can be incorporated into their mental health treatment. Psychotherapists knowledgeable in religion and spirituality or the perennial

psychology would be well equipped in working with individuals who are either secular or religious in their outlook. However, the same is not the case for mental health professionals lacking this knowledge or training, and as a result, it seems like they could potentially do harm unknowingly. Do you have any thoughts on this?

SHN: What you say is very pertinent. However, the first part of your statement, two questions above although true in many cases, is not true for everyone, but if it is true it should also hold up for mental health professionals.

SBS: Many individuals today do not know whether they need psychological or spiritual help; they appear to be unable to discern between these two domains, which leads to many problems, including the blurring of the function of the psychotherapist or mental health professional and that of the spiritual guide. It is apparent that contemporary psychology is incapable of distinguishing what has been termed "the decisive boundary" (Lings, 1991), that is the separate domains of the spirit and psyche. Can you please explain why this is relevant and how the perennial psychology can aid in rectifying this issue?

SHN: In traditional societies, the people who fulfilled the function of a psychologist today were priests, Brahmins, *hakims* in Islam, or people corresponding to them. They did not separate the spiritual needs of the patient from psychological needs; the two were not separated in most cases from each other. The problem that you pose is really a modern problem. If a psychologist has a religious foundation, who at least believes in God, he is able to treat many of the psychological problems that a person has and does so much better than a secular psychologist, even, if that patient be secular because sometimes that person has problems that have to do with the separation of the soul from the Spirit. A psychologist with religious function can do a better job in most cases than a secular psychologist for whom the reality of the person is bound by and exhausted by his or her psychological reality.

SBS: While present-day individuals struggle with myriad psychological issues and may require a certain amount of psychological help prior to entering the spiritual path or while on the path itself, it appears that no amount of therapeutic work at the horizontal level of the empirical ego can ever be sufficient, meaning the process of psychotherapy can go on for years, if not throughout one's entire life, without achieving psychological health. This is because the ego is unable to transcend itself and requires a vertical dimension or the Spirit for integration. With this said, there are those who emphasize, "You have to be somebody before you can be nobody" (Engler, 1983, p. 36). Or "If you don't befriend Freud, it will be harder to get to Buddha" (Wilber, 1996, p. 155). Although they are not necessarily saying the same thing, they do appear to presuppose that the saints and sages of the religions had forgotten or were unaware that individuals first need to enter into therapy or receive mental health treatment to achieve psychological health prior to embarking on the spiritual path. Can you please address this?

SHN: No, the saints and sages were not forgetful or ignorant of the psychological realm; such a statement does not mean anything. Yes, the door to spiritual realization lies through "Know thyself," the Delphic saying, or in Islam, the saying

of the Prophet, *man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu*, "He who knows himself knows his Lord." Self-knowledge is important, but it has nothing to do with having therapy in the modern sense although spiritual realization starts with curing the ailments of the soul understood traditionally. So, there is such a thing as spiritual therapy, in a sense of treatment; "therapy" means "to cure," to cure an ailment, in Greek. A spiritual teacher, when someone comes to him for initiation to follow the spiritual path, in a sense first treats the soul of that person as a doctor would treat the body – the master is a doctor of the soul who treats the soul of the disciple before allowing him or her to have access to means of practice that belong to the spiritual realm which also involves the cure of the ailments of the soul.

The spiritual life implies having a soul capable of becoming healthy; spiritual life means that you have to have a strong foundation on which you can build an edifice, a spiritual edifice. The traditional Sufi masters in Islam were all master psychologists, but not in the modern sense, but in the sense of knowing the soul of the disciple, knowing the knots in his soul, and when the knots could be revealed causing the person to have problems. To be able to untie the knots, you have to know them; you cannot untie a knot unless you know the knot. All spiritual masters who were authentic in various traditions were master psychologists in a certain sense.

SBS: There are those who assert that the religions are trapped in a premodern worldview and emphasize that they need to be liberated from their cultural trappings and updated (see Wilber, 2017, 2018). Deriving from this perspective is the assertion that the world's religions are somehow without models for human development and need to integrate the insights of developmental psychologists such as Jean Piaget (1896–1980), Clare W. Graves (1914–1986), Jane Loevinger (1918–2008), Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987), Don Beck (b. 1937), and Robert Kegan (b. 1946), among others, for them to be complete and integral. This suggests that the universal and timeless wisdom found throughout the world was unaware of the phases and intricacies of human development. What are your thoughts on this?

SHN: I consider such views to be total nonsense. In fact, spiritual teachers were fully aware of the possibilities of human development in the vastest sense of the term. What does "development" mean? We use it all the time: economic development, social development, this and that. Let us take a more specific meaning – the growing of the soul as it actualizes all its possibilities. There is a part that has to do with the intellectual and mental aspects of the human being in the first, second, third, fourth grades. In each grade you learn something and your soul and mind develops. That is easy to understand. Wisdom traditions carried such successive and upward stages of development into the spiritual realm far beyond what modern developmental psychologists can know or imagine.

Spiritual development must begin with the possibilities that exist within the soul of the person who is going to be spiritually developed. You can develop dough and knead it until you make bread, but you cannot do that with a brick. You have to have the appropriate substance in the soul. That is why not all human beings are made for the spiritual life, but God's Mercy is such that he makes religion accessible to all; so even if they do not have the possibility of developing to the

highest levels of sanctity and metaphysical knowledge, at least they can develop the possibility of their soul to be good servants of God, lovers of God, good human beings and so on.

SBS: In recent years, there has been a revival of psychedelics in clinical research providing very promising results in the treatment of mental health and substance use disorders, including trauma and end-of-life care. Even though the medical use of psychedelics has demonstrated efficacy in clinical trials, what are your thoughts and concerns on using psychedelics for medical and therapeutic purposes? While psychedelic substances may be able to relieve suffering or help at one level, could they also cause suffering or harm on another? Meaning, are there any spiritual dangers of which modern medicine, psychiatry, and psychology may be unaware and to which we need to pay close attention?

SHN: This is a very complicated and vast field. Huston Smith [1919–2016] was one of the first people to try LSD [lysergic acid diethylamide] at Harvard and has written a very good book [*Cleansing the Doors of Perception* (2000)] about this matter. I concur with what he has to say for the most part. First of all, let me say that there are certain traditions, such as the Native American traditions, where certain substances are used, such as peyote. They are used not to bring about or produce mystical experiences, but in a sense to help the soul experience the spiritual world. Yet this is within the cadre of a particular tradition. Westerners going and taking these substances recreationally is very different and dangerous.

The use of psychedelics for purely medical purposes is not totally unknown to traditional schools of medicine where certain forms of herbal drugs were used for medical purposes to put a person in a state or condition of relieving pain or removing certain ailments. You have it in Hindu medicine or Āyurveda, Islamic medicine, Chinese medicine and so forth. It goes without saying. That is very different, however, from using these psychedelics in order to affect the experience of the soul in its relationship with its final end, to God or to the fear of death. That is not going to relieve the problem. Of course, you can give morphine injections to someone in pain who does not know he is going to die in his sleep. I am not talking about such a situation.

In fact, from a spiritual point of view it is much better to die being awake than asleep. In Islam, the faithful pray that they be aware at the last moment of their lives so as to be able to say, *Lā ilāha illa'Llāh*, "There is no divinity but the Divine." These days many think that it is so wonderful if one dies in one's sleep. How do you know that such a person does not suffer? How do you know what will be going on inside his being? These things must be distinguished from each other.

From a traditional or perennialist point of view, we are totally opposed to the use of psychedelics to induce mystical states, which became prevalent in the 1960s counter-culture movement. We are absolutely against this practice, which is a very serious matter. That is not to be confused with the purely medical use of forms of what you would call psychedelics. Even opium, in a sense, is a psychedelic in that it induces certain psychological states, but it has a very important therapeutic effect

upon the body and was used traditionally as a medicine and is still used today. So, these are two levels to keep distinct from each other.

Traditional teachings were able to protect society to a large extent from the misuse of psychedelics outside of medical situations. There were of course exceptions, such as the case of people who were opium addicts in nineteenth-century China or in the Islamic world; there have always been people in every civilization who have taken drugs for their psychological effects as alcoholics do in the modern world, alcohol itself being a drug. I am not saying that it too was totally absent in days of old, but it was not accepted as the norm outside their spiritual use. What has happened in the modern world, to which we are totally opposed, is the use of drugs as a substitute for religion. I once said jokingly "Karl Marx [1818–1883] said, 'Religion is...the opium of the people' [Marx, 1982, p. 131]. Now *opium is the religion of the people*." We are opposed to that practice, and these two functions of psychedelics must not be confused with each other.

As I said previously, if psychedelics are utilized purely on a medical basis, that is acceptable and there are a few people who through this experience on the medical level, on the biological level that modern medicine deals with, come through it with a kind of opening to the spiritual world. This can happen, but we are again opposed to the use of psychedelics as a means of opening the soul to the Spirit.

SBS: In this connection, it is worth broaching the question here about the role of psychotropic medications – such as anti-anxiety agents, antidepressants, antipsychotics, mood stabilizers, and stimulants – as the statistics illustrating the explosion of individuals taking these medications are alarming and no less a sign of the times. There is mounting research that psychotropic medications do not work as commonly assumed and, in many cases, they not only create more problems such as unwanted side effects, but can also cause chronic and potentially irreversible harm (see endnote 7). The more people diagnosed and treated does not lead to a decrease in mental health problems; on the contrary, the numbers of individuals requiring services is significantly escalating. While psychotropic medications might reduce certain symptoms and could appear to be of benefit to improve functioning and cognition and may be necessary in some cases or for short durations, could they impede spiritual development and psychological integration? What are your thoughts on this?

SHN: Yes, they could, by a person over-relying upon them rather than using his free will to reach God, which God wants us to do in order to walk towards Him; the danger is that such persons will over-rely on these substances rather than using their spiritual will. Spiritually speaking, God wants us to walk towards Him with the free will that He has given us. He has given us faith and intelligence, He has given us revelation to guide us as a means to walk toward Him, and nothing can take the place of this reality.

God did not say, "in my creation I have put certain substances that you can substitute for the spiritual life"; that is not true. It would be against God's Justice, and it would be against God's Mercy, both.

SBS: How do you view the mass dissemination and consumption of psychotropic medications in the modern and postmodern world, not to mention the proliferation of human beings diagnosed with a mental illness of some kind in the present day?

SHN: It is certainly very, very negative, yes; it is a sign of the times, a part of the reign of quantity [see endnote 8] and a kind of illusion based on an absolutization of terrestrial life, of seeing human life as only terrestrial life, which is then absolutized. People are not left to die well spiritually speaking. All of these artificial ways of keeping people alive with tubes and so forth relate to this truth, to the idea that there is nothing after this terrestrial life. In contrast, in traditional societies the important thing is not when you die, but how you die, in what state. That is what is important.

SBS: The contemporary mindset seems to want to ignore the transitory or impermanent nature of human existence and the human being's reliance on the Divine by attempting to remove the reality of suffering from terrestrial life. How should we understand the metaphysical or spiritual dimension of suffering?

SHN: Now, first of all, do not forget that the word "suffering" is related in its meaning to "sacrifice," and "sacrifice" comes from the Latin word *sacrificium*, "to make sacred." To sacrifice in a sense is to sacralize. Suffering is part of human existence, but it is not absolute. For example, Christianity emphasizes the way of suffering, but Islam does not. Nevertheless, a Muslim suffers through life as a Christian does. The significance of suffering spiritually is not, however, the same in all perspectives, in all religions.

To be sure, suffering is a universal phenomenon, but it is not for human beings to try to suffer on purpose in spiritual paths of a sapiential nature. There are certain practices, such as yogis lying on a bed of nails or a Christian monk doing all kinds of extreme forms of asceticism in order to come closer to the Divine. Christ himself suffered on the cross; yet this type of sacred event is not universal. Even in Christianity, where suffering has such a positive spiritual aspect, to relieve the suffering of others is also part of the message of Christ. When Christ said, "feed the poor" [Matthew 25:35], the poor, by not having food, are suffering. That means, therefore, to overcome their suffering. Such a message could not be absent from the message of Christ, and it is certainly not. The New Testament has many statements about it.

In Islam, as in Judaism, religion is not focused on suffering; it is there for the realization of the oneness of God. Some people suffer more, some people less. If you live according to the Divine Norm, you might suffer much less than those who do not, or we might suffer more. A great saint might lose his son to an accident and an atheist may never lose his son. These are very complicated matters, the question of suffering and why we suffer, but metaphysically it is very easy to answer: suffering is the result of separation from God. That is it. If we can overcome that separation, we can overcome our suffering; we are done with our suffering. Suffering is not an end in itself; it is a part of the reality of human life. Some people suffer more, some people suffer less, but God wants us to derive the right lesson

from it in either case: to increase our reliance upon Him, to surrender ourselves more to Him.

We Muslims, when somebody asks us how are you, we say, *al-ḥamdu li'Llāh*, "Praise be to God." Even if we are sick and somebody asks us how we are we always start with *al-ḥamdu li'Llāh*, with resignation to our destiny, to what God has willed of us. In that way, suffering can become a very positive element. There is a very famous story about Śrī Ramana Maharshi [1879–1950], the great sage of India who was an Advaita master of the highest level, and he died of cancer, a very painful form of cancer. When asked if he was suffering, he said, "My body is suffering, but I am not suffering" [see Maharshi, 1996].

In Persian when we say, "How are you?" we use the word *ḥāl*, which also means spiritual state. People say, "*Hāl-e shomā*? – How are you?" I knew a great Sufi master who would respond, "My *ḥāl* is wonderful, it is only my body that is hurting." He would dissociate the pain from his *ḥāl*. Suffering should be taken as part of our destiny, what God has willed for us, and so, we should be able to accept it with patience and surrender and not to rebel. One of the characteristics of the typical modern man is rebellion against his destiny with the illusion that he can live without suffering and also, without God. He says to himself if only he were to put religion and God aside, he would not suffer inwardly. This is one of the main arguments of so many atheists such as Richard Dawkins [b. 1941] and others. It is a very important issue.

Suffering is not an end in itself in most spiritual paths. For example, the path of Shankarāchārya [eighth-century] of Advaita Vedanta is not based on suffering; it comes from the knowledge of the Absolute, the discernment between *Ātmā* and *māyā*. In the human world, it is very difficult not to suffer at all and suffering is part and parcel of being born into the human state of fallen man. The real man or woman, the spiritual person, is he or she who grows through suffering and suffering does not separate that person from God, from the spiritual world.

SBS: You began speaking and writing about the environmental crisis in the 1960s, long before it was popular to do so, and have skillfully articulated its root cause in your book *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (1968). Can you please speak about the perennial psychology and its ecological focus and how it can help reintegrate the human being with the environment?

SHN: Yes, I shall do so. Even traditional psychology alone cannot save the environment. We need a traditional cosmology, a real understanding of the human state and how it is related to the natural world and how the two are related to God. The problem is not only psychological. Traditional or perennial psychology has a very important role because it enables us to realize that the harmony between the human being and the natural environment is a very important component of psychological health. There are many people in the modern world who are atheists, who do not believe in religion or are agnostics at best, but love nature and nature plays a spiritual therapeutic role for them.

I remember that once I was in Sweden on a Sunday. Sweden has had remarkable success in the preservation of its natural environment, even within Stockholm; the forests are so well preserved and untouched. I went with a Swedish friend in the forest with beautiful trees for a walk in the morning and he hugged a tree. I asked him, "What are you doing?" He said, "This is Sunday and for us this is our religion. I hug a tree, and this is my religion." That act alludes to a profound point. It means that these people, without realizing it, are searching for a nonhuman reality with which to associate and they do not connect that nonhuman reality with the reality that is the source of human reality that is God Himself, but within nature. In the spiritual traditions, nature plays a very important role as a support for the spiritual life. In my books *The Encounter of Man and Nature* [1968] and *Religion and the Order of Nature* [1996] and in many essays that I have written over the decades I have discussed this issue.

SBS: There has been a mass popularization of mindfulness and other meditative practices, including yoga, into the dominant culture in the modern West, especially within contemporary psychology, yet there is little or no acknowledgment of the religious and spiritual heritage from which these practices were extracted or appropriated. While these practices can be useful, they appear to be only useful to a certain point due to being removed from their traditional spiritual context. It is as if contemporary psychology wants the fruits of the diverse contemplative practices of the world known to the perennial psychology, but it is not ready to acknowledge its reliance on the spiritual domain for efficacy. Would you please elaborate on this matter?

SHN: I am of course completely opposed to this view. Now, there is a part of *hatha yoga*, which involves stretching and exercising of the physical body, which is permissible on the corporeal level although in integral yoga it is a way of opening the body through *āsanas* [postures] to higher levels of reality, but to practice the higher forms of yoga, especially *tantric yoga*, I do not consider these practices to be positive at all, but to be extremely negative. To meditate simply by having meditation sessions can be very dangerous if it is not related to an integral tradition.

In spiritual practice I always tell my students you have both meditation and the practice of invocation, such as *japa* in Hinduism. The first, which is the meditation, is as if you have a toothache and go to the dentist and the first thing that he does is to empty out the part of your tooth which has been destroyed and then the second part is to fill it with the appropriate substance. The first part corresponds to meditation, which many people do these days, and it is going to make it much worse for the toothache if you do not have the second phase.

Historically when great traditions have met with each other, there has been occasional crisscrossing of certain techniques of spiritual practices across the traditions. I always give the example to my students of the Naqshbandi Order, a Central Asian Sufi order founded by Bahā al-Dīn Naqshband Bukhārī [1318–1389] from near Bukhara that spread into India. When it reached India, certain Naqshbandi Sufis adopted a technique that is still used in some parts of India in which you breathe through one nostril and out of the other. Now, we do not have this practice in other schools of Sufism. It was taken from yoga. It is an element

integrated into another living spiritual tradition, which is very different from taking elements of sacred traditions without believing in the sacred. In the traditional world, such borrowings are integrated into a total worldview and become part of that worldview. These are two very different realities. A lot of this yoga and meditation is like New Age religion, which is really an aspirin substitute for the serious medicine that the soul really needs.

SBS: What advice would you give students pursuing the field of psychology or established mental health professionals in the field, who are interested in incorporating the spiritual dimension not only in their own lives, but also in the work that they do with human beings facing immense struggles and suffering in our times?

SHN: This is a very important question. First of all, to apply any form of knowledge to others, you first of all have to have it within yourself; that is, if a person wants to be a traditional psychologist in the present-day context and wants to integrate perennial psychology into his or her practice, first of all he or she has to incorporate it into his or her own worldview. Ultimately, it is his or her psyche that is acting upon the psyche of the patient. If there is no transformation of the acting psyche, there can be no positive effect on the deeper level upon the psyche that is being acted upon.

You have to begin with yourself, to be able to not only read books on traditional or perennial psychology, but also to understand it and to incorporate it to become part of your worldview so that the psychological treatment of the patient is informed by the fact that the psyche is not an independent substance; it is a substance within a substance, a soul within and in relation to the Spirit. It is not only like a substance, such as the table on which I am leaning. The psychological world is related on one hand to the world of Spirit and on the other hand to the world of the body. You have to understand this cosmology, which negates completely modern cosmology that denies the reality of anything except energy and material domains. You have to be able to make the traditional understanding of the psyche or the soul your own in order to be able to apply it correctly.

I know a few psychologists who have been able to do that, but very few. I hope that in the future more will do so. I even hope that the interview we have had together will at least make some people aware of what real sacred psychology is. You cannot have sacred psychology without the sacred. You cannot engage with the sacred without understanding the sacred, and you cannot understand the sacred without experiencing the sacred.

You have to have a way to experience the sacred and then understand sacred psychology and have the creativity to apply that knowledge to present-day conditions. This is what Sufi masters do even now, those who are qualified Sufi masters. They are not psychologists in the clinical sense, but they are able to apply the traditional teachings of perennial psychology to the condition of disciples who are not medieval people from Damascus – they are men and women who live in the world in which you and I live, who face all of the psychological chaos, fears, anxieties, trepidations – all the problems that go on in the world today.

SBS: Thank you so much for taking the time out of your very full schedule to discuss and elucidate on what is a true and integral psychology or the "science of the soul" and its relationship to the perennial philosophy.

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Notes

[1] See Smith, H., 1978, 1983, 1992, 2006; Smith, H., & Smith, K., 2009.

[2] "Tradition is inextricably related to revelation and religion, to the sacred, to the notion of orthodoxy, to authority, to the continuity and regularity of transmission of the truth, to the exoteric and the esoteric as well as to the spiritual life, science and the arts" (Nasr, 1989, p. 68).

[3] Transpersonal psychology is perhaps the first movement within the discipline to reclaim the diverse religious and spiritual traditions of the world and situate them within its methodological framework. While transpersonal psychology recognizes the importance of religion and spirituality, its adherence to behaviorism and psychoanalysis hampers its depth. There are points of contact between traditional forms of psychology and spiritually integrated psychotherapy, but traditional psychology does not rely on modern science to validate its truths. It is this author's opinion that transpersonal psychology attempts to synthesize humanity's sapiential traditions, yet it does so through the prism of modern science and not from the vantage point of the more comprehensive perennial philosophy, which encompasses the diverse cultures, knowledge systems, religions, and their inner dimensions (see Bendeck Sotillos, 2013b, 2021).

[4] This is in large part due to the desacralization and reduction of psychology or the "science of the soul" and the historical trajectory that has led to this predicament. The spiritual dimension, if it is introduced, is often done so in an *ad hoc* manner based on the subjective or clinical opinion of the mental health practitioner. This is due to the strong bias that the discipline continues to have toward religion and the spiritual traditions because of its divorce from the sacred (Bendeck Sotillos, 2021).

[5] "Take the human state. It is composed of body, soul, and spirit. There is no way one can integrate the body without the presence of the soul. . .. There is absolutely no way to integrate the soul and the mind without the presence of the spirit and intellect, which are ultimately the same reality. It is only the spirit that is able to integrate the psyche, and the intellect the mind. To speak seriously about integration, we must accept the vertical dimension of reality. The reason that we have such difficulty to integrate anything in the present-day world is the eclipse of knowledge of that vertical dimension" (Nasr, 2007, pp. 73–74).

[6] See Ferrer, 2000, 2002; Hartelius, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Hartelius & Ferrer, 2013; Taylor, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2019; Wilber, 1983, 1992, 1997.

[7] See Frances, 2013; Whitaker, 2010; Whitaker & Cosgrove, 2015.

[8] See Guénon, 2001.

The Author

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Book Reviews

DASS, RAM (with Rameshwar Das) (2021). *Being Ram Dass*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True. xiv + 410 pp. ISBN 978-1-68364-628-0. Hardcover. $29.99. *Reviewed by James Fadiman*.

Ram Dass's (Richard Alpert) autobiography is exemplary for its candor. He describes a succession of triumphs, reversals, and surprises, some of which had considerable cultural impact, especially for transpersonal psychology. He recounts successes and failures without the patina of self-congratulation autobiographies are prone to. If anything, his story is as much a saga of his struggles to feel worthy and loved as it is a spiritual journey.

On the first page, Ram Dass suggests that he can best be understood through a specific lens, how he took on almost everything with an attraction to intensity and risk more than to outcome.

> I've always loved things that go fast.... Racing upward, climbing faster and faster, I'd hit the throttle till I'd reached a moment when the adrenaline, the shiver of danger, and the roar of the engine created such a feeling of bliss that I felt suspended in time, the atoms of my being vibrating with joy.... It lasted all of a split second, but I craved that moment.... I love that adrenaline rush, that thrill that always brought me completely into the present.... I've always had this penchant for risk taking.... this adventure side - the curiosity, the impulsivity (and) the optimism has defined my life.

Only in his final years in Kauai, in considerable physical discomfort and needing full-time support, does he finally succeed in slowing down. The arc of his life takes him from riding too fast on his Harley for a "rush" to sitting in silence, recognizing that everything is suffused with love.

Since the sixties, we have been awash in spiritual teachers, many of whose careers ended in sexual and/or financial scandals. Ram Dass was involved with some individuals and groups close to those edges. Although he was caught up in others' dramas more than once, each time he retained or recovered his personal integrity. He describes his role in each situation and its larger context before highlighting the ways it could (and often did) go wrong.

Richard Alpert grew up in a subculture of self-made, wealthy, educated, East Coast Jewish political and social leaders. He was the only sibling who did not go into law. He rose swiftly in academia to positions at Stanford, then at Harvard. There, he became the number one supporter to Tim Leary as they embarked on their culturally disturbing research that morphed into public encouragement for widespread psychedelic use. Later, Ram Dass gave up psychedelics, realizing that his "trips" led to ever diminishing personal returns. After meeting Neem Karoli Baba, who became his guru, he turned away from being an international psychedelic hotshot and a charming, articulate advocate of biochemical enlightenment. Following his guru's instruction, he undertook intense

purification. After a long period of isolation, he emerged with a new name and new habits and behaviors, eventually becoming a charming, articulate advocate of the teachings of his guru. (There is a Sufi saying [see www.indriesshahfoundation.com], attributed to Jesus, who was asked why he was so kind to someone who had wronged him. "I can spend only what is in my purse." True for Ram Dass as well.)

Even after the death of his guru, and later, after a stroke transformed his life, Ram Dass still said that he was only following the path his guru had laid out, teaching what he had been taught. With a curious blend of humility and pride, Ram Dass became the leading voice of this new spirituality as he had been for psychedelics. Despite his identifying as a follower, it is Ram Dess's original teachings that made him popular and important.

It has been described in this journal that, somewhat inadvertently, Ram Dass was the patron of early transpersonal psychology. The donated royalties from his book, *The Only Dance There Is,* supported the association and the journal for a number of years. What is less noticed is that it was the publication of several of his talks, edited by the then journal editor Miles Vich, that established Ram Dass's repute and national reputation. His later collection of images, ideas, quotes, prayers, and practices, *Be Here Now,* put together by the graphics team at the Lama Foundation, became and, more than fifty years later, remains one of the best-selling and graphically the most unusual book of its kind.

Since his Harvard appointment had been cobbled together between four departments: Social Relations, Psychology, the Graduate School of Education, and the Harvard Health Service, it seemed unlikely that Richard Alpert, even though a popular instructor with grants, secretaries and more, would have been asked to stay–even before he explored psychedelics. Ram Dass said that he had been assured of a permanent post at Harvard if he got his publications in order. In University speak, that usually means that everything else is secondary to the usual pressures to publish as well as taking on fewer desirable jobs on less prestigious committees. The reality was that Alpert, and Leary even more so, alienated many of the faculty, partly because of the paradigm-breaking nature of their research, but also because they attracted an inordinate percentage of the graduate students in the department, luring them away from established and tenured professors. If this were not enough, one member of the faculty, particularly vitriolic about their behavior, was in part on the payroll of the CIA. That agency was already researching consciousness-altering substances, not for healing or self-discovery, but for mind control and mind destruction.[1]

It surprised Ram Dass that the psychedelic research, so radical, yet so much part of what he saw as psychology's role, was not welcomed by the faculty with the same excitement shown by the graduate students. While Leary and Alpert felt that their discoveries of extended realms of consciousness could elevate psychology from its second-class citizenship among the sciences, several colleagues reacted as though they were suggesting that they burn the house down to let in more light.

[1] Kinzer, Stephen (2019). *Poisoner in Chief: Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA Search for Mind Control*. Henry Holt and Company.

Interestingly enough, the objections from traditional psychology to the much less provocative tenants of transpersonal psychology were not dissimilar. In each case, what was seen by adherents as revitalization was viewed from the traditional side as revolution or even self-destruction.[2]

While it may have given the remaining faculty a sense of relief when Ram Dass was fired, the extensive media coverage about it became the springboard for his becoming an instant icon to the emerging antiestablishment movements. There could be no higher proof of counterculture citizenship then being the first faculty member fired by the nation's most prominent university.

We are now riding a new wave of intense interest in everything psychedelic, Ram Dass is still seen as one of the important individuals who made psychedelics a national issue, even though he eventually felt that psychedelics were inadequate for the sustained personal realization he sought for himself.

As one of those whose life was changed through association with Ram Dass, I was especially interested in how was it that he worked with psychedelics so extensively, was fired because of that work, and then, after many more intense sessions with psychedelics, dismissed them with the same fervor that he had earlier embraced them.

A problem that sometimes besets discoverers is that they have no idea of the limitations or the dangers of their discoveries. The amount of psychedelics Ram Dass took, and the frequency with which he took them, seem to us now as remarkably excessive. At the same time as the Harvard group members took psychedelics often, The International Foundation for Advanced Study (where I was doing research) had completed a study that indicated, after only a *single* profound session, it took six months or more before the post-session personality restructuring stabilized. Time for integration seemed to be of little interest to the early Harvard explorers.

It seems that Ram Dass took far too many high doses of psilocybin and later of LSD too often. The dosage level for the initial psilocybin experiments were what we would now call moderate. Many subjects' reports stressed increased awareness of personal psychodynamics and released neurotic or even traumatic personal patterns. However, when Leary and Alpert started using LSD without any easy way to know even what their doses were, it changed the nature of their personal work and the ways in which they promoted it.

After giving LSD to some others, Leary was urged to take it himself by the person who had brought LSD into their growing psychedelic community. He took a spoonful of LSD mixed in a mayonnaise like paste. From Ram Dess's report, Leary had no way to conceptualize his own experience, had no guide, and, at that point, lacked much understanding of transcendence. For five days afterwards, he simply stopped speaking to everyone. Only later did he acknowledge that he had felt he had died and had no framework to process the experience.

[2] "A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it." Max Plank, (the creator of Quantum Physics) *Scientific Autobiography and other papers*

A personal note: Not knowing this about Leary, I used the feeling of dying in my book about psychedelics, *The Psychedelic Explorer's Guide*, as an example of the value of having a guide or coach. Without a guide, it is can terrifying and, at worst, fragmenting. With a guide, it often is a remarkable moment, often described as blissful, when the ego is set aside, and one discovers there is a vaster awareness beyond one's personality.

Ram Dass used psychedelics the same way he had used his airplane and his motorcycle, pushing for more and for more often, again searching for those moments when he could feel totally present. As with those other ways, he came to the realization that no matter how well or how often or how amazing the excessiveness experience was, it was followed by a descent into normality or even depression. When what happened to him in India catapulted him out of using psychedelics, he was more than ready to let them go.

Far and away the most moving sections of the book and of his life are when, without intention or preparation, in the presence of a little old man wrapped in a blanket in a temple in India, Ram Dass found himself engulfed in a love beyond anything he'd ever experienced or imagined possible.

The phrase "transformed by love," is never a cliché, because love so often is such a disruptive force. "Falling in love" or "feeling truly loved," may be the high points in one's life. For Ram Dass, whose character structure centered around impressing, pleasing, and earning other's appreciation, being loved without reservation, without having to do anything to deserve it or retain it, changed him in ways that psychedelics never had.

While his worldview had been enlarged in many ways through his use of psychedelics, those experiences did not disrupt his life. Instead, he attempted to include psychedelics as part of his successful professor role. In many ways, the parts of his personality still remained encapsulated and, while strengthened, did not become more harmonized.

However, after feeling total acceptance from Neem Karoli Baba, he immediately and eagerly took on changing his daily habits, his need for intense social interactions, his western diet, and much more. He spent months practicing yoga, chanting, studying "holy books" and other practices designed to help his soul, as he came to use that term, become dominant over his personality.

Ram Dass, although transformed in many ways, was still grappled with acceptance, power, and adulation, now blended with a transformed spirituality. He remained profoundly human, caught up again and again by the same rounds of desires that he had hoped to be rid of during the transformation in India and in the years following.

After his return from India, he underwent a series of trials that read like a contemporary mystery play. First, he is faced by his family, less than happy to see the formerly hyper-conventionally successful Harvard professor dressed in a Hindu robe, bearded and sandaled. How he comes through that trial is one of the delightful parts of the book. Then, he is tempted, and, in certain ways, seduced, by a

succession of powerful gurus, establishing spiritual empires of their own. As with his prior pattern, in each case, he is offered the number one follower position. How he works his way into and out of these other spiritual communities is a series of lessons that any of us who ever left a teacher, or a teaching, can appreciate.

A massive stroke brings on Ram Dass's final transformation, leaving him almost unable to function. As he reflects upon it, he acknowledges how his own behaviors and denial made the stroke more likely. When he has recovered enough and has become a very different kind of teacher, he explains that he is not to be pitied for his physical condition, as he has learned to respect whatever he is given, including the stroke, as a gift from his guru: "... gone was the glib storyteller, the charismatic ex-professor. The survivor on stage was a living soul whose faith had been shaken...." (p. 347).

> Before the stroke, my talks were a mix of heart and intellect. Now, that professional speaker was gone. Now, I express the meditative, quiet parts of my being, feelings of love, joy and peace. Before my lectures had been filled with words–period. Now they were filled with love... (p. 347)

> The stroke took away my fascination for outward things, and I delved more deeply into my inner life. I noticed a change in my awareness. It happened in a moment, and it surprised me. The whole universe became lovable. I loved everything that came in through my eyes, nose, ears, and skin. It all delighted me. It all made me happy... it was as if love was no longer a verb with an object. (p. 348)

Ram Dass often said that he tried unceasingly to be a spiritual being, yet, after his presentations, people came up thanking him for being so human. He used his own foibles to describe human failings, but always with an acceptance for those foibles, in which the act of forgiving transformed them. Perhaps the book's greatest gift is how candidly he acknowledges his falls, and what he learns from each.

While laying out this review, I thought it would be relatively easy to describe Ram Dass I. the professor; Ram Dass II, the LSD evangelist; Ram Dass III, the (almost) ideal disciple, and Ram Dass IV, the spiritual teacher. However, his various personality characteristics disappear and reappear in new guises and take on yet another level of meaning with each iteration. In forever being amused by his own changes, he has given us an example of how to see ourselves playing out our lives, hopefully learning, as he did, from our multitudes of mistakes.

This is a superbly human biography. Reading it lets you not only discover Ram Dass's life and work, but yourself as well.

The Author

Ram Dass's life is the subject of the book. He died in 2019. Love Serve Remember Foundation is dedicated to preserving and continuing the teachings of Ram Dass and his guru, Neem Karoli Baba. https://www.ramdass.org

The Reviewer

James Fadiman has been affiliated with *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* since the initial issue in 1969. He is currently researching the effects of microdoses of psychedelics. His most recent two books are *The Psychedelic Exploder's Guide: Safe, Therapeutic and Spiritual Journeys* (2011) and (with Jordan Gruber) *Your Symphony of Selves: Discover and Learn More of Who We Are* (2020).

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ANDERSON, ROSEMARIE (2021). *The Divine Feminine Tao Te Ching* (R. Anderson, Trans.). Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions. xviii, 152 pp. ISBN 978-1-6441-246-5. Softcover. $16.99. *Reviewed by Miles A. Vich*.

In these times of political, social, and economic difficulties how can we live peacefully, productively, and meaningfully? There is some guidance in the Wisdom Traditions, the various philosophies and religions handed down over centuries in texts and practices. One of the oldest and most enduring of these teachings is the *Tao Te Ching*. Professor Rosemarie Anderson's new translation of this well-known classic opens with a paradox:

The Tao that can be told
Is not the everlasting Tao
The name that can be named
Is not the everlasting name

In this first of 81 legendary poems, we are led into the mystery of the Tao, its nature, influences, beauty, advice, and warnings. The original text, likely written in 516 B.C.E. by the reputed author, Lao Tzu, has not been found. The copies unearthed were made centuries later. Although they are apparently faithful copies, they show some variations in the text. Nevertheless, the descriptions of what the Tao *is* still comes to us somehow essentially intact.

This ancient philosophical gem has seen over 100 English translations alone. Of the eleven I am familiar with it seems they each convey reflections of their translator's various philosophical interests, linguistic preferences, and cultural influences. Most versions describe the Tao as, among other imponderables, a hidden, formless, unfathomable source, one prior to, yet creative of all phenomena.

Tao is often characterized as identical with nature, the essence of the cosmos, impersonal and ever present. In English it has been understood "as *Godhead*, as *Logos*, as *Universal Spirit,* as *The Supreme Oneness,* as *Elan Vital,* as *Existence,* as *Nature*" (Adam, 1976, p.45). To further complicate matters the Tao is said to be ineffable and unknowable, certainly a challenge for translators, reviewers, and the original Lao Tzu! Tao is typically seen as a Way or Path that one travels by

somehow intuitively sensing it. By moving with it one comes into harmony with it (Watson, 1993, p. xviii).

Anderson is familiar with the history and philosophy of Taoism. It was also her years living in Asia and her love of Chinese calligraphy that eventually led her to consider a translation. She knew that most translations characterized the Tao as impersonal, a genderless "It". However, while immersed in the poems, to her surprise, she found repeated examples of words and phrases, such as (in translation) "mother," "virgin" and "womb of creation" that indicated the Tao was not genderless, it was actually feminine.

Proceeding with a scholar's attention to linguistic accuracy she added the method of *wei wu wei*, "to know without knowing." In this case it meant to read and listen intuitively, open to impressions that arrive unbidden, spontaneously, revealing the more subtle meanings of the poems. Gradually it became clear to her that the Tao was not only feminine but was of a *divine feminine* nature. This discovery and the effect of using the *wei wu wei* process also had a strong positive psychological effect on Anderson, which she describes vividly. The book's opening and closing chapters describe her background and the personal experiences that drew her to the *Tao Te Ching*.

Prior translations acknowledge the Tao as having some female characteristics. In the classic Blakney version: "The way itself . . . is described as mother. Even the ideal realm is described as female . . ." (1955, p. 25). Alan Watts: "The imagery associated with the Tao is maternal, not paternal" (1975, p.41). David Hinton discusses the female principle as expressed in various feminine terms, especially the "dark female enigma." He then points out ". . . its dark mystery is everywhere in the *Tao Te Ching,* for it is nothing other than the Tao itself, the central concept in Lao Tzu's thoughts" (2015, p.13).

Anderson's version goes well beyond this, emphasizing the Tao's deeply, intensely, profoundly feminine nature. She accomplishes this by casting the poems (all those quoted here are from the book) in a distinctly mystical and poetic tone. This is beautifully expressed in Poem 25, in part:

A formless presence existed
Before Heaven and Earth arose
Soundless! Vast!
Solitary and unbounded
She may be the mother of the world
I do not know Her name
I call Her the Tao
Obliged to describe Her
I call Her great

Most translators sequence *Tao Te Ching* poems 1 through 81, without titling themes. In Lin Yutang's 1948 Modern Library version there are themes such as Lessons of the Tao, Sources of Power, Conduct of Life and Theory of Government. Anderson does not label themes but does give attention to power, conduct and government

especially in her chapter, The *Wei Wu Wei* of Wisdom and Leadership. She acknowledges that the simple measures of governance advocated in ancient China may not be appropriate in industrialized societies. Yet Lao Tzu's warnings about aggression in governance can apply to our own troubled times. From Poem 29:

To act with force upon the world
I see as bound to fail
All below Heaven is a sacred vessel
Force cannot succeed!
To force is to spoil
To grasp is to destroy

Another kind of aggression is the contemporary attempt to appropriate Tao's mysterious nature, as seen in commercial misuses, such as the *Tao of Golf* or the *Tao of Elvis*, and many others (see *Selling Spirituality*. Carrette & King, 2005, p.94). Translators know that the *Te* in *Tao Te Ching* stands for 'virtue' not exploitation, and *Ching* stands for 'classic' not opportunism. Poem 81 applies:

Sincere words are not sweet
Sweet words are not sincere

In Lao Tzu's time natural processes were dominant uncontrollable forces that strongly affected human life. Hence the identification of Tao with nature and the emphasis on being in harmony with nature as Source. Anderson notes that even in our era's out-of-control and threatening relationship to the planet, the *Tao Te Ching* has guidance for us. By "imitating the Tao … and enacting this feminine path to peace" we can (to paraphrase) impact all our relations with others, our governments, our nations as a whole, and planet Earth (p. 10). She also finds that "Assured that the Tao favors the good in every situation, we flow with what needs to change in the world" (p. 21).

In Anderson's translation, the *yin/yang* complementarity, the feminine and masculine principles, appear metaphorically in Poem 42. She defines them in her notes on the poems as representing 'receptivity and luminosity of the moon' (*yin*) and 'what is active and solar' (*yang*). The relationship between the *yin* as feminine principle and the nature of the formless feminine Tao, is not clear and some further discussion of any differences would have been helpful.

It is not surprising that reading through Anderson's translation, the *Tao Te Ching* reveals an elemental and sophisticated understanding of human psychology. From Poem 33:

Knowing others is to be clever
Knowing self is to be wise
Overcoming others requires force
Overcoming self requires strength

A Taoistic approach to psychology considers those deeply human qualities found in both personal and transpersonal experience. This was an important part of the work

of the modern psychologist Abraham Maslow. For most of his career he favored a Taoistic understanding of creativity, science, psychotherapy, management, parenting and education. He advocated noninterfering observation, 'let it be' attitudes, noncontrolling action and the use of receptive perception (Maslow, 1971). He knew that formless itself, the Tao manifests the creative, which arises as the imaginative, intuitive, artistic, spontaneous energies, the prized capabilities for the development of personality, culture, and society.

In early times in Taoist culture, Anderson finds, the *Tao Te Ching* was initially transmitted orally, was recited, and sung, and later set to music. This leads her to recommend reading the lines as poetry and singing the poems using current melodies. In her Introduction she gives thorough instructions for how to sing and let "the meanings seep into your bones" and how to go even further.

A special feature of the book is the calligraphy. The Chinese ideograms, graphic characters written in ink on paper, accompany ten of the poems. In the author's own hand, they are useful comparisons of earlier styles with modern script style. The author's artful skill with brushwork in both styles is notable. Additional quite useful features are the Translation and Calligraphy Notes, and Notes on the Poems (commentary), plus an Annotated Bibliography.

This is Rosemarie Anderson's latest book. It is very accessible, an attractively designed pleasure to read, and an engaging presentation of an ancient classic. It can also serve as a gateway to further explorations of a centuries old Way. It speaks of a Path that has connected humankind to an enduring, enigmatic, transpersonal mystery. Anderson's translation of the *Tao Te Ching* is a way to see it anew, as in Poem 28:

Know the masculine
But hold to the feminine
And be to the world a channel
As a channel to the world
Your original nature never departs
Not departing from original nature
You become a newborn child again

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The Author

Rosemarie Anderson, Ph.D., is Professor Emerita of Psychology at Sofia University USA, author, and an Episcopal priest. Her initial training was in experimental psychology and behavior genetics. She currently serves on the Editorial Boards of *Qualitative Psychology*, *The Humanistic Psychologist*, *The Journal of Transpersonal Research*, and *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. In 1998, she authored *Celtic Oracles* and co-authored, with the late William Braud, *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. In 2011, Rosemarie co-authored *Transforming Self and Others Through Research* with William Braud and co-authored *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Research: Phenomenological Psychology, Grounded Theory, Discourse Analysis, Narrative Research, and Intuitive Inquiry* with Frederick Wertz, Kathy Charmaz, Linda McMullen, Ruthellen Josselson, and Emalina McSpadden. In 2014, she co-founded the Transpersonal Research Network (www.transpersonalresearchnetwork.com) with several European colleagues and in 2017 co-founded the Sacred Science Circle (http://www.sacredsciencecircle.org/) with Les Lancaster. In August 2017, Rosemarie received the Abraham Maslow Heritage Award from the American Psychology Association, Division 32, Society for Humanistic Psychology. Journal articles, book chapters, and book reviews are available at https://sofia.academia.edu/RosemarieAnderson. Keynote addresses and videos are available on her YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/c/RosemarieandersonVideo). She lives in southern Oregon surrounded by wilderness and wildlife.

The Reviewer

Miles A. Vich, M.A., D.H.L. (hon.), has served in various roles, 1962–1999, in the fields of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, including Editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, as a founding Board member of the Transpersonal Institute, as Editor of *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (*JTP*) and Executive Director of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology. Since retiring in 2000 he has archived many transpersonal documents in the ITP (now Sofia University) Library, Palo Alto, California, and many humanistic era documents in the University of California, Davidson Library, Santa Barbara. He serves on the Board of Editors of *JTP* where he is an occasional contributor. He is also the recipient of the Abraham Maslow Heritage Award, from Division 32, of the American Psychological Association, in 2018, and is pursuing a longstanding interest in art.

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NARANJO, CLAUDIO (2020). *The Revolution We Expected: Cultivating a New Politics of Consciousness*. Translated by Lawrence Schimel. Synergetic Press. Santa Fe & London. ISBN 9780907791829. Paperback. $19.50. *Reviewed by Manuel Almendro*.

The Revolution We Expected, by Claudio Naranjo (1932-2019), presents a synthesis of the author's work and critical perspective on psychology and psychotherapy, politics, education, and eco-sociology, with references to the classical world and its philosophy. Its intent is to contribute to the evolution of Consciousness at both personal and collective levels. The author's direct experience in jungles and in academic settings in different countries gives him credibility in both the map and the territory. Naranjo's extensive culture with which he enriches the sometimes transpersonal bubble is disclosed. I have known Naranjo since the 1980s, which allows me to include my direct knowledge in this synthesis.

Naranjo sees the need for our Western society to carry out an "examination of conscience" in order to analyze its lights and shadows. He also reflects on his personal achievements and failures in promoting socio-political changes in the moribund institutions. He reviews in detail all his contributions: the SAT program (The Seekers After Truth), the Enneagram, his perspective on meditation and education for the spirit, between hope and revolution. He also addresses difficult issues such as how to confront the business models and the economy in order to bring about the long-awaited revolution of Consciousness.

For psychology and psychotherapy professionals this book offers a synthesis of the author's lifetime work in the field of research on expanded states of consciousness. He discusses Indigenous Medicines, Psychedelics, Humanistic Psychology, Gestalt Therapy, with some references to Transpersonal Psychology–especially regarding the transcendence of the ego. He also refers to the Psychology of Enneatype, meditation as self-knowledge and as an educational method based on the "here and now." All this is part of Naranjo's Gestalt broad "recipe." To offer an accurate synthesis, a thorough reading of the content of the book in both the English and Spanish editions has been necessary.

For Naranjo we are in the midst of an uncertain revolution with unconsciousness being the world's main problem. To remedy this situation, we must begin by providing an education geared towards freedom, love and wisdom. His motto was "change the education to change the world." This book is not unlike a sociopolitical testament whose major tenets are the crumbling of patriarchal hegemony and the imminent collapse of our economy. All this implies an Exodus in order to emerge from slavery, entailing death and rebirth on a collective scale. He sees it as the only way out. He sentences that the patriarchal ego -evil- will fall under its own weight.

For Naranjo Humanistic (including Transpersonal) Psychology is the antidote. We would have to overcome our analytical brain, our hunter's mind, the arrogance of science in denying all intuitive knowledge, the dictatorship of economists, encyclopedism and dehumanized strategic thinking in commercial production. Other necessary changes would be enhancing the right hemisphere functions,

reinforcing our inner master by following the teachings of Buddha and Socrates, the sacred tradition, since authoritarianism continues in the Age of Enlightenment after its confrontation with the Church. Naranjo reminds us of what philosophers have said previously such as: "Kierkegard was right in saying that the door to paradise was opened from within" (p. 26) or Pascal "...people not knowing how to remain still in their own rooms" (p.27).

Naranjo talks about everything in all the chapters. He obviously mentions his favorite teachers, Perls and Gurdjieff, and the need to be a witness of oneself, overcoming the neurotic impulse towards egocentrism. In his own way, he follows the approaches of other great thinkers such as Freud, Klein, Horney or Maslow, emphasizing that the key is in purification and psycho-spiritual transformation. And this would constitute the antidote to overcome the capital sins of businesses, since there is no market for virtue. The counterculture movement was a good response, although he warns that "...a little authority greatly accelerates the process of self-organization" (p. 64).

Naranjo points out that a new world will have to arise from a collective expansion of Consciousness. And he comes back to keywords such as wisdom, stillness, empathic love, devotion, surrender, self-awareness, attention in the present to overcome the intelligence of darkness as well as technology and artificial chemistry that keeps us separate from nature. The legacy of Christianity, Buddhism, Dionysian religion, etc. is precious as it stills the seekers of the world's thirst of wanting to be.

Some Key Subjects

Regarding social issues, Naranjo criticizes inequalities starting from the collapse of the political system and ecological damage, which is a meta-problem of the patriarchal mind that maintains patterns of violence, insensitivity, and greed. Finally, psycho-spiritual development and education could be key to solve our planetary crisis.

Love is another of the themes on which Naranjo dwells. He discusses the need to restore the capacity to love oneself and one's neighbor, putting an end to violence. It would be a way of reaching the door of forgiveness as a spiritual act. For him the "... need for love is a great plague..." and "this addiction to love (p.49) needs to be overcome" and "...will require specific corrections in the area of the development of love" (p. 112).

Education focuses on the transformative power of self-knowledge and on a pedagogy that redresses the tendency towards destruction. It must advocate benevolence, generosity, compassion and empathy, overcoming narcissism and egocentrism, i.e., an education for inner and outer peace that integrates the essentials of the therapeutic culture and self-knowledge. He presents the Psychology of Enneatype as a map of the personality with its corresponding view of neurosis, based on the nine characters described by Gurdjieff, and the

teachings of Oscar Ichazo. Yet he denounces Enneagram courses that are not up to standards. He is also critical of the use of psychedelics.

Wisdom, arising from education, constitutes the fundamental objective. It presupposes a knowledge of the spirit by the spirit, the practice of detachment and the search for inner peace as well as psycho-spiritual work. It requires also that we develop our intuitive capacities, reclaiming the wisdom of the ignored cultures and abandoning the monopoly of science, and the dogmatism of religion and reason.

Meditation, around which Naranjo has dedicated a great part of his life, constitutes the basis of education. Detached stillness and silence and living in the present are the doorway to the communion that St. John of the Cross reports on.

In the SAT program -a repertoire of techniques- he describes a technology that draws from his experiences and the legacy of Gestalt Psychotherapy, to which he adds the spiritual traditions and the preceding psychological schools as well as the Hoffman process, psychedelic experiences, the role of music, etc. for the therapeutic descent into the underworld and the ensuing healing renewal.

His concern for the social sphere leads him to advocate for the re-humanization of society based on the humanization of the corporate world, overcoming greed as an objective—as financial institutions bribe governments—and citizen conformity, in order to reach a critical mass that will allow the emergence of a social conscience. Naranjo shows disappointment with the authorities and the community for not exerting the necessary influence to control perverse organizations.

The relevance of this book for therapists, sociologists and those interested in the process towards Consciousness is to learn about the extensive contributions of the most important figure of Gestalt Psychotherapy in recent years, as well as his work of synthesis in the therapeutic process with a social projection.

How to exercise the transcendence of desire and accomplish erotic love does not seem clear. Desire or eroticism? On the one hand, in the line of Buddhism, Naranjo exposes the suffering linked to hyper-desire and yet affirms that “the civilization we have created is anti-erotic, ...the choice of duty over pleasure” (p. 43). He denounces “...our current criminalization of pleasure. . .” (p. 94) proposing “..the decriminalization of desire and pleasure . . .through the Dionysian spirit. . .” (p. 101) confirming “Eros or instinctive love” (p. 110) in such a way that if there were sexual freedom “...there would be no pornography” (p. 197). Faced with certain amorous disabilities “... overcoming them will require specific corrections. . .” (p. 112). As he states, “our desires are problematic ...what separates us from our deep nature” (p.210). Naranjo provides indications on how to handle freedom in the face of group tyranny in view of the “...danger of being devalued because of an anti-authoritarian excess” (p. 286).

In the light of my almost four decades in the field of research and clinical psychology in the transpersonal field, I conclude that Naranjo advances his ideas of the world and life in relation to greed, dogma, authoritarianism and narcissism, not

allowing himself to be trapped by the fear of criticism. Education becomes essential as well as a repertoire of therapeutic techniques that are difficult to articulate without experience. It is worth reflecting on who, how and when to educate...

> Underlying everything is the beautiful prospect of one day being able to listen "...to the subtle voice of heaven" (p. 289).

The Author

Claudio Naranjo, Ph.D., was psychiatrist, therapist, writer, educator, and pioneering explorer of the worlds of consciousness, psychedelia, shamanism, and the sacred traditions, Claudio began his career in Chile and California. He was born in Valparaiso, Chile on November 24, 1932and became a medical doctor in 1959. He traveled to the United States where he first went to the Ohio State University, followed by Harvard, the University of Illinois, and then the University of California and the Berkeley Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR). Later, he joined the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) on the Santa Cruz Campus of the University of California, followed by the California Institute of Asian Studies (currently the California Institute of Integral Studies). He also conducted workshops at the Esalen Institute, specializing in human potential, creativity, and spirituality. Claudio was one of the early pioneers of psychedelic therapy. This work culminated in the founding of the Seekers After Truth (SAT) Institute in 1970.

The Reviewer

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ORTIGO, KILE M. (2021). *Beyond the Narrow Life: A Guide for Psychedelic Integration and Existential Exploration*. Foreword by William A. Richards. Santa Fe, NM: Synergetic Press. xxiv + 430 pp. ISBN: 978-0907791-83-6. Paperback. $19.95. *Reviewed by Ben Chandler and Peter H. Addy*.

An increasing number of people are interested in having psychedelic experiences, and while these states can bring about insight and positive change in one's life, they can also be confusing, overwhelming, and potentially harmful. In communities that make traditional use of the compounds that catalyze these experiences, there are often ancestral and religious frameworks for integrating these experiences built into their respective cultures. Meanwhile, there is a "relative scarcity of theory-driven yet accessible and pragmatic frameworks" (Ortigo, 2021, p. xiv) that are philosophically palatable to psychedelic journeyers in Western developed nations. In these places, where medicalized psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy may conceivably become a reality, the need for integrative resources is starkly apparent.

In *Beyond the Narrow Life: A Guide for Psychedelic Integration and Existential Exploration*, Dr. Ortigo aims to bridge this chasm between psychedelic revelation and integration by offering a practical, hands-on guide and approachable framework for people who want to explore psychedelic states and can't or don't want to participate in psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy.

Ortigo frames this book as a travel guide for exploring the themes frequently encountered in a psychedelic experience. He states that "this book may be about psychedelics to an extent, but not only or even primarily" (Ortigo, 2021, p. xxii). As these themes bear some of the most fundamental inquiries into the human condition, doing the work in this book is bound to result in actionable insights and a wealth of new skills to carry into one's daily life. In this approach, Ortigo has created an accessible resource that remains acutely relevant to readers seeking a book for the express purpose of exploring and integrating their psychedelic experiences. For those who are curious about these experiences, having had them or not, the author provides "Journey Reports" of experiences with various psychedelic compounds at the end of each chapter. These accounts reflect the themes presented in the chapter and how individuals have explored them using psychedelics.

The Hero's Journey (Campbell, 2008), which Ortigo claims "represents an overarching framework for understanding what it means to be human, trials and triumphs alike" (Ortigo, 2021, p. 5), is the scaffold upon which he organizes all of the accompanying theories, examples, and worksheets. The book is partitioned into three story arcs that parallel those of the Hero's Journey (Departure, Initiation, and Return), which "also conveniently parallel the three phases of psychedelic therapy—*Preparation, Psychedelic Experience,* and *Integration*" (Ortigo, p. 6). The corresponding story arcs Ortigo employs are Expanding Awareness, Confronting Existential Trials, and Integrating the Self.

In conjunction with Campbell's Hero's Journey, Ortigo makes frequent use of Jungian theory. If you want a more academically oriented discussion about the confluence of Jungian depth psychology and psychedelic experiences, we

recommend Scott J Hill's excellent treatise (Hill, 2013, reviewed in Addy, 2014). Ortigo's book is more practical and hands-on, showing by example and self-inquiry not so much what archetypes constitute in Jung's rather complicated cosmology, but instead how they can be approached in one's own life.

Ortigo positions the reader as the protagonist of the mythic quest for the elixir of self-actualization. He does this by crafting experiential resources for the reader to use in their inner work. As modern psychedelic research is beginning to show, engaging with these themes through direct experience provides advantages that more didactic methods cannot. He incorporates numerous worksheets, exercises, meditations, and other interactive material throughout in order to foster engagement and offer impactful methods for accomplishing the book's central goals. In addition to connecting the reader to experiencing the book through these arcs and motifs, this approach provides some of what the Hero's Journey itself offers by giving the reader a lens through which to appreciate the archetypes that tie us all together as human beings across time and culture.

One way he captures the pervasiveness of these themes through time is by referencing contemporary works of fiction, especially film (Dr. Ortigo has a background in film studies), and by showing how the Hero's Journey and its themes remain ubiquitous even today. This has the effect of familiarizing and reinforcing the themes of the Hero's Journey as well as providing an avenue for increased connection with humanity. A critique toward this aspect of his book is that he references these works quite frequently, which may be off-putting to people who aren't avid consumers of Western film.

Ortigo does not shy away from challenging the reader to critically examine their most deeply rooted convictions and explore all possibilities. He takes tender care to ensure that readers are following him at their own pace, with timely check-ins and prompts for self-reflection as he begins to tackle more emotionally challenging material. Much like that of the mythic hero, this journey is filled with candid warnings for psychedelic journeyers on avoiding potential pitfalls that may have eluded their awareness. For example, Ortigo details areas where the shadow can be unearthed beneath seemingly positive personality traits, as well as the phenomenon of "ego whiplash," which he describes as a result of "repeated ego dissolution followed by a rapid return to 'normal'" (Ortigo, 2021, p. 303), a potential concern for frequent high-dose psychedelic journeyers. He offers this insightful warning:

> "In response to this whiplash, our everyday egos can reassert control without integrating any new insights. Or, we may choose to focus on the easier lessons offered by psychedelics while ignoring the harder ones that require larger shifts in our behavior, mindset, or lifestyle." (Ortigo, 2021, pp. 303-304)

While Ortigo is generous with such insights—themselves reflections of the depth of his own inner work—he draws few conclusions as he guides the reader toward "embracing paradox and dialectical opposites to form an evolving synthesis" (Ortigo, 2021, p. 254). A formidable pair of opposites he explores in this context is

transpersonal vs. existential psychotherapy, which is perhaps the most exciting framework he brings to this discussion.

People fresh off a psychedelic voyage often declare that there is no such thing as death, we are all connected to a vast web of life and consciousness, and meaning is imbued in every action and object we encounter. Contrast this transpersonal picture with the existential view that death is inevitable and final, we are fundamentally isolated from each other, and there is no intrinsic meaning to be found in the external world. It seems like there is a gap between these two perspectives. Ortigo encourages the reader not to commit to either path, but to remain receptive to whatever may arrive from each. Far from a starry-eyed psychedelic zealot, Ortigo's remarkable humility and impartiality allow him to present these ideas in a way that alienates no one.

One potential shortcoming of the book is that the length can be intimidating. Though not meant to be tackled all at once and rather a companion resource to return to at one's convenience, many people who could benefit from this book might be discouraged from ever picking it up, or from following through with reading it after long upon discovering its size. Clients experiencing significant depression or anxiety may feel overwhelmed if handed any 400-page book. Such individuals would likely find great benefit from reading the book, but it may be better suited for people eager for the next step in their journey of self-actualization rather than people desperate for immediate healing.

Another missed opportunity is that Ortigo's guide left more to be desired regarding shadow work. He does provide valuable exercises for doing more of this work at the closing of the chapter, and states that "meeting your shadow with compassion has provided you with the key for unlocking more of your hidden potential while living your values" (Ortigo, 2021, p. 315). However, this would have been a great place for recommendations on further resources that advise where and how to use that key.

Dr. Ortigo "offer[s] this book in the spirit of harm reduction for people who have already had psychedelic journeys and want to integrate their experience. . . . [and as] a useful companion book for people waiting for legalization or access to psychedelic care" (Ortigo, 2021, p. xv). We recommend this book to people who have had psychedelic experiences and want to integrate them with the help of a digestible framework, people who have not had psychedelic experiences but would like to, and people who want to do inner work without using psychedelics.

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The Author

Kile M. Ortigo, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and founder of the Center for Existential Exploration, which serves clients struggling with profound questions related to identity, meaning, life transitions, and psychospiritual development. He is also a certified psychedelic integration therapist and an advisory board member of various ethically minded psychedelic companies and nonprofits, including Psychedelic Support, an online resource and directory for people seeking psychedelic-informed care in legal, above-ground settings.

The Reviewers

Ben Chandler is an undergraduate student at Michigan State University (MSU) majoring in psychology and neuroscience. He is involved in Students for Sensible Drug Policy at MSU as well as local Decriminalize Nature efforts, and he hopes to one day enter the field of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy and research.

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KRIPPNER, STANLEY; RIEBEL, LINDA; ELLIS DEBBIE JOFFE; & PAULSON, DARYL S. (2021). *Understanding Suicide's Allure: Steps to Save Lives by Healing Psychological Scars*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger. xvi + 343 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4408-6254-0 (print); 978-1-4408-6255-7 (ebook). Hardcover Edition. $50.00. *Reviewed by Jürgen Werner Kremer*.

This important book breaches the taboo topic of suicide in Western societies. The urgency of the issues discussed cannot be underestimated: Epidemiological research shows that there are more than 1 million suicides worldwide and 138 million attempts in the adult US population, with 8.3 million adults having considered suicide during the past year; however, the authors mention that 60 percent of people who killed themselves did *not* express any thoughts about suicide beforehand. This book is not only timely, but it also stands out by addressing suicide from a broad spectrum of perspectives using up-to-date information.

Krippner et al. describe "the allure of suicide" as the compelling, tempting, enticing and even irresistible idea to kill oneself. Part of their mission is to

understand who is attracted to suicide and why. The first section early on acknowledges that suicide is complicated and surveys suicide research and specific issues such as dreams and suicide, teenage suicides, and physician assisted suicide. Subsequent sections discuss suicide in the military, sexual assault and suicide, and bullying as well as depression, anxiety, and PTSD. The book also explores suicide from Indigenous perspectives, an important contribution as there is a dearth of literature on the topic. The final sections of the book discuss professional models of suicide (including transpersonal models), prevention, and healing (a section which importantly includes discussion of psychedelics). Seven chapters address prevention and eight chapters healing. The final section is entitled "Turning the Tide" and adeptly summarizes the central themes of the book with a forward look, emphasizing that there are evidence-based programs which can impact suicide rates positively, provided there is collaboration in the public health field. Throughout the authors emphasize and show that "each suicide is unique," emphasizing the narrative worlds of each person.

Not surprisingly, given the background of the authors, the book takes an existential perspective throughout and includes important discussions from the perspective of transpersonal psychology. The discussion of Indigenous issues or the use of psychedelics in treatment is groundbreaking. The authors point out that only 30 percent of Americans are enthusiastic about their job, a frightening statistic that points to a pervasive loss of existential meaning or, to use an Indigenous perspective, "soul loss" or "spirit sickness." This sense of dispiritedness may become diagnosed as depression, one of the suicide risk factors. The discussion of the continuing history of colonization and exploitation of Indigenous peoples and their lands, the disruption of their connections with nature, is a chapter you are unlikely to find in any other book on suicide. The Guarani of Brazil, who lost 95% of their ancestral lands, have particularly high rates of suicide, "the young people are morally wounded and would rather die than continue" (p. 174).

About one third of the chapters will be of particular interest to transpersonal psychologists. The discussion of psychedelics contributes to paving the way for them to become, if used properly, part of healing efforts and the prevention of suicides. An entire chapter discusses ayahuasca and its effects on suicidality. The authors summarize "the promising effects of psychedelics and similar substances in treating conditions associated with suicide" (p. 319). They conclude, based on current limited use, that they "look forward to responsible understanding and use of mind-altering plants" and emphasize that "psychedelic research should be accelerated, and current prohibitive legislation should be modified" (p. 320). The archetypal theories of Jung and Hillman are used to understand conscious and unconscious aspects of suicide and remind the reader of the help that mythic stories can offer in addressing critical life issues. Krippner et al. note that religious and spiritual struggles are often overlooked by mental health providers, yet they are important for suicide prevention and treatment. Suicidal despair can be prevented or mitigated by a strong religious orienting system. The authors stress that it is important for mental health care providers to be aware of the religious concepts and coping strategies of their clients, which will allow them to support their ability to find meaning.

Understanding Suicide's Allure is a welcome and timely addition to the literature on suicide: it is up to date, it is wide ranging and includes emergent topics, and it discusses important issues often neglected in the literature. Its short chapters are highly accessible, clearly organized, and include relevant stories. Each chapter contains useful information for professionals (psychotherapists, health professionals, educators, et al.) and laypeople alike. The authors are pulling on a wealth of expertise and succeed in making the complexities of this challenging topic transparent. Transpersonal perspectives are used throughout, one of several aspects that makes this book a unique and significant contribution.

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KELLY, EDWARD F. AND MARSHALL, PAUL (EDS.) (2021). *Consciousness Unbound: Liberating Mind from the Tyranny of Materialism*. London, UK: Rowan & Littlefield. xii + 530 pp. ISBN: 978-1538139424. Hardcover. $60.00. Reviewed by Steve Taylor.

Many readers of this journal will be familiar with *Irreducible Mind* (2007), a book that has already attained the status of a classic in the mould of William James's

seminal writings on philosophy, psychology and mysticism. *Consciousness Unbound* is a sequel to *Irreducible Mind* – in fact, a second sequel, following 2015's *Beyond Physicalism. Consciousness Unbound* has been co-edited by Edward Kelly of the University of Virginia's Department of Perceptual Studies (who was also co-editor of the two earlier books) together with the British scholar of mysticism and religion Paul Marshall, who also writes one of the major chapters of the book.

In this review essay, I would not only like to review *Consciousness Unbound*, but also to reflect on its significance to transpersonal psychology, particularly in relation to the issue of metaphysics. As many readers of this journal will be aware, in recent years there has been a great deal of debate about the issue, particularly from figures such as Jorge Ferrer, Glenn Hartelius, Harris Friedman and Michael Daniels. I have also addressed the issue through my "soft perennialist" model (Taylor, 2016), and through the "Taylor-Hartelius debate on religion and spirituality" published in the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* in 2017.

Broadly, the issue is about whether the field should address or include metaphysical issues or adopt any specific metaphysical positions. Friedman (2013) has argued that transpersonal psychology should exclude all metaphysical issues and concepts in an effort to conform to the standard principles of science. Daniels (2021) has argued that transpersonal psychologists should "bracket" their own metaphysical assumptions and beliefs and conduct research from a purely phenomenological perspective. He has argued that there is a clear distinction between phenomenology and ontology, in that the experience of a phenomenon does not provide evidence of its reality. I have argued that it is impossible to avoid metaphysics, since metaphysical assumptions are always in the background, informing and underlying our perspectives. (From this point of view, it is often forgotten that standard scientific materialism, or physicalism – the dominant worldview of our culture – is a metaphysical system, full of beliefs and assumptions about human beings and the nature of reality.) Moreover, I believe that there is no reason why transpersonal psychologists should try to avoid metaphysics. In fact, on the contrary, we should accept and embrace metaphysics.

All of this is relevant to *Consciousness Unbound* because, like the earlier volumes, the book is unashamedly metaphysical. The main purpose of *Irreducible Mind* was to show that physicalism is completely inadequate as a way of explaining human experience and the world. The book showed that physicalism cannot account for phenomena such as consciousness and the influence of the mind over the body. It showed that there is a vast range of "rogue" phenomena that physicalism cannot make sense of, and therefore either denies or explains away, such as psi phenomena, near-death experiences and mystical experiences.

We might say that, while the purpose of *Irreducible Mind* was to clear the ground, the purpose of *Beyond Physicalism* and now *Consciousness Unbound*, has been to build on that ground – that is, to find a different worldview that *can* adequately explain the world and human experience. In other words, the purpose of the books

has been to explore the viability of various non-physicalist metaphysical worldviews.

In this constructive sense, *Consciousness Unbound* is as much of a magnum opus as *Irreducible Mind*. The first three chapters are essential reading, in that they offer concise summaries of the contemporary understanding of three different phenomena that defy the assumptions of physicalism. There is a chapter on near-death experiences by Bruce Greyson, a chapter on "cases of the reincarnation type" by Jim Tucker and a chapter on precognition by Bob Rosenberg. All three chapters present evidence that any open-minded person would find extremely compelling. Particularly striking is the evidence from cases of the reincarnation type presented by Jim Tucker, including young children who (usually beginning around the age of three and continuing until around the age of six) have recalled incredibly specific details about previous identities, which have later been rigorously examined by investigators. Ian Stevenson collected many examples of such cases from Asian cultures where reincarnation is an accepted belief, but in some ways Tucker's cases are more striking because they mostly concern American children, many with Christian parents who initially struggled to accept the notion of reincarnation. Likewise, Greyson presents a compelling argument that NDEs cannot be explained in neurological or physicalist terms, and clearly indicate the possibility of survival. Rosenberg's chapter shows that the evidence for precognition has been so consistent over such a long period of time that the issue is not whether the phenomenon exists but how we can account for it, and what it implies about the nature of reality.

The book's philosophical chapters build on this foundation. The editors state that each philosophical approach should be judged on its ability to explain the above phenomena, as well as others such as consciousness and the mind-body relationship. Several chapters present different metaphysical approaches, including reflexive monism (in a chapter by Max Velmans), analytic idealism (Bernardo Kastrup), a neo-Hegelian approach (Glenn Magee) and monadological idealism (Paul Marshall). Of special note is Jeffrey Kripal's chapter, which summarizes the destructive effects of physicalism in our culture and describes his own perspective of "accidental perennialism." As with my own "soft perennialist" model (Taylor. 2016, 2017a), Kripal makes a distinction between the teachings or doctrines of religions and the mystical experiences of contemplatives of different traditions. Whereas there is a great variety in the former, there are deep commonalities in the latter. As a result, Kripal rejects traditional perennialism (in my terminology, "hard' perennialism) but embraces experiential *essentialism* (i.e., the view that there are fundamental similarities of experiential form and content across traditions).

Bernardo Kastrup provides an admirably forensic deconstruction of physicalism. His own metaphysical alternative suggests that universal consciousness is "dissociated" into individual "alters" (individual conscious beings) in a similar manner to the condition of dissociative identity disorder, where consciousness fragments into different personalities. However, it seems problematic to equate a fairly rare psychological condition with a fundamental process by which individual consciousness emerges from universal consciousness. Kastrup's model does not

actually support the survival of individual identity, since at death individual alters dissolve back into universal mind and lose their individual awareness and identity.

Paul Marshall's final chapter provides a comprehensive summary and evaluation of a vast range of contemporary post-materialist metaphysical approaches. There is such a dizzying variety of these that it appears that a philosophical renaissance is underway. While some approaches may differ, they all share the same fundamental principles. They all posit that consciousness (of if you prefer, mind or spirit) is in some sense fundamental to the universe, and that consciousness or mind cannot be reduced to brain activity. At the same time, Marshall describes his own metaphysical approach of monadological idealism (derived from the "monadic" philosophy of Leibniz), which has a high degree of theoretical elegance and explanatory power and is able to coherently incorporate phenomena such as survival and psi.

Metaphysics in Transpersonal Psychology

How do these post-materialist metaphysical approaches relate to transpersonal psychology? Should transpersonal psychologists - as Friedman and Daniels have suggested - simply ignore or bracket metaphysical issues and knuckle down to research, without considering its theoretical or philosophical implications? Should we simply ignore discussions about life after death, psi phenomena or the origins of consciousness?

It is worth noting that William James originally held such a view. Early in his career, James advocated a "descriptive psychology" that simply conducted research and examined correlations without considering their origins or implications (Lambeth, 1999). Soon afterwards, however, James came to believe that a descriptive psychology was "ungrounded and unstable. . .a psychology particularly fragile, into which the waters of metaphysical criticism leak at every joint" (James, 1892, pp. 467–468). As James further stated in his presidential address to the American Psychological Society in 1894, "no conventional restrictions can keep metaphysical and so-called epistemological inquiries out of the psychology books" (James, 1895/1978, p. 88). In fact, James believed that rather than avoiding the area, psychology could make a significant contribution to metaphysics by investigating the relationship between the mind and body (Kelly, 2007).

Summarising James's views, in *Irreducible Mind,* Edward Kelly has stated, "The real issue, in short, is not whether we will have metaphysics [in psychology], but whether we will have good metaphysics, or bad" (2007, p. 632). Metaphysics is like air – we cannot step outside it because we are always in it. Ferrer (2014) has made a similar point while critiquing Friedman's view that transpersonal psychology should adopt a positivist approach. According to Ferrer, this inevitably entails a shift to a worldview of scientific naturalism, which is hostile to spiritual and supernatural phenomena.

Daniels (2021) has recommended that by bracketing their metaphysical assumptions, transpersonal psychologists can remain "agnostic," and not allow

their own views to bias their research. The idea, however, that we can somehow become "metaphysics-free" is surely a fallacy. One could compare it to a person who decides to start a new life in a new country and tries to drop their previous life history, pretending that all of their previous experiences cannot influence them.

Good and Bad Metaphysics

What, then, are good and bad metaphysics? One aspect of bad metaphysics is when we do not disclose our metaphysical outlook, either through evasion, because we are not consciously aware of it, or because we misguidedly believe it does not affect our views or our research. In other words, bad metaphysics is when a metaphysical framework is unacknowledged or hidden. As Marshall has stated, it is important that we "bring metaphysics out into the open" (2014, p. 11**).** In the "Taylor-Hartelius" debate (Taylor, 2017b), I suggested that this was an issue with Hartelius's approach, which at various times appears to be a "participatory" worldview (in which "consciousness in some form penetrates through all physicality" (Hartelius, 2015, p. 26), while at other times veers close to contextualism or neuroscientific reductionism.

Another aspect of bad metaphysics is when metaphysical concepts are expressed vaguely. Michael Daniels states that he has no objection to a "general (unspecified and indeterminate) notion of a Transcendent Reality (or 'mystery') . . .but rather with the smuggling in of specific (and questionable) metaphysical concepts such as the incarnating individual soul, chakras, God, Absolute Consciousness or an 'all-pervading spiritual force,' unless this is done explicitly and tentatively" (2021, p. 226). However, to advocate general and non-specific metaphysical claims seems counter-intuitive, like looking up items for sale online and preferring a vague and general description of an item rather than a specific and detailed one.

Here Daniels is referring to Jorge Ferrer's concept of "the mystery." In my view, the mystery can be seen as an example of bad metaphysics, because it is so vague and general. Sometimes Ferrer refers to the mystery in terms that resemble an all-pervading spiritual force, as "a common spiritual dynamism underlying the plurality of spiritual insights and ultimates" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 190) or as the source "out of which everything arises" (Ferrer, 2011b, p. 22). At other times, Ferrer's depiction of the mystery is more poetic and oblique - for example as "the irrepressible mystery that urges itself into manifestation through a thousand forms" (Hartelius & Ferrer, 2013, p.196). Ferrer has stated that his vagueness is intentional, as a way of avoiding "claims or insinuations of dogmatic certainty and associated religious exclusivisms" (Ferrer & Sherman, 2008, p. 64). However, this insistence on the "undetermined" nature of the mystery could be construed as a reluctance to "bring metaphysics out into the open" (Marshall, 2014, p.11). At any rate, Ferrer's term is so vague that it is almost meaningless. In addition, there is a lack of explication of the process of how human beings "co-create" spiritual realities by interacting with the mystery. To make such abstract claims without any attempt at explanation or elucidation could also be seen as bad metaphysics.

In relation to the latter point, a third aspect of good or bad metaphysics is when metaphysical claims are overly conceptual and speculative, lacking evidence, and made without sufficient caution or rigor. Schopenhauer (2012) criticized Kant for his overly abstract and conceptual metaphysics, arguing that metaphysics should not be speculative but empirical and grounded in phenomenology. In philosophy, concepts should be a way of storing knowledge, but "not the source from which it draws its knowledge" (p. 41). Perhaps there is a parallel here with Wilber's work. With his tendency to create complex and speculative theoretical models that lack a sound evidential basis, Wilber is vulnerable to exactly the same criticism that Schopenhauer levelled at Kant.

Relativism or Essentialism?

In a recent issue of this journal, Roe et al. (2020) argued that subjective experience could not verify the existence of an objective reality. "Moreover," as they have written, "language and associated cultural memes provide us with a limited repertoire of descriptors for our experiences, that in themselves act to color and demarcate those experiences. Attempts to strip out unnecessary filters or assumptions in order to reveal the underlying 'pure' phenomena'. . .are doomed to failure" (p.195). These views are reminiscent of post-modern relativism, with its opposition to any notion of objective reality or truth. The perspective is reminiscent of the contextualism of Katz (1983), who argued that there is no such thing as "mystical experience" in itself, only different kinds of mystical experience that are developed by different traditions.

However, Roe, Gordon-Finlayson and Daniels (2020) immediately undermine their own relativism by allowing that there are fundamental cross-cultural similarities in near-death experiences, suggesting an underlying ontology. They also claim that Ferrer's participatory philosophy is not wholly relativistic, because all concepts and experiences are "themselves co-created in our participatory encounters with an unknowable and indescribable metaphysical 'Mystery'" (p.196). Here there is another contradiction in that the authors insist that knowledge of objective reality is impossible, then assume the existence of the ontological reality of the mystery. Even if you try to avoid ascribing qualities to a phenomenon, stating that it is "unknowable and indescribable," it does not disqualify it as a metaphysical concept (particularly because, as we have seen, Ferrer and others have been unable to avoid ascribing some qualities to the mystery). To use an analogy, a person cannot claim that they were not in a room just because they hid in a corner and didn't speak.

This relates to the question of phenomenology and ontology. Daniels (2021) may be correct to say that phenomenology cannot count as *evidence* for ontology, but experience can certainly provide important data that can *indicate* the nature of reality. For example, I believe that William James (1986) was correct to argue that mystical experiences are "windows through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world" (p.428). Mystical experiences may not *prove* the existence of an underlying reality, but they provide valuable data that we can evaluate along with other sources of information. Marshall (2015) emphasises the

connection between mystical experiences and psi and suggests that the evidence for the latter supports the objective reality of mystical experience. Since they are intimately connected, both phenomena combine to provide insight about the nature of reality. As Marshall has put it, "The study of mystical experience may offer special insights into the nature of reality and so help elucidate psi and other extraordinary experiences, and indeed the nature of consciousness itself" (2015, p.43).

Certainly, there are strong commonalities among the experiences of mystics associated with a wide range of different traditions, and among experiences that occur outside the context of any spiritual traditions (e.g., Hood, 2006; Marshall, 2005; Rose, 2016; Studstill, 2005; Taylor, 2016). Mystical experiences across (and outside) traditions seem to be glimpses or exploration of a common landscape of expansive human experience. Features of this landscape are an underlying oneness of phenomena, a lack of subject-object duality, timelessness, self-transcendence, luminosity, and so on (Marshall, 2015; Taylor, 2016). Of course, experiences of this landscape are colored and filtered by cultural factors, such as religious belief systems and philosophical traditions, and the experiences are interpreted according to these factors. Nevertheless, there are still essential common aspects of experience that may indicate fundamental aspects of reality. As James (1986) put it, continuing his "windows" analogy, "The difference of the views seen from the different mystical windows need not prevent us from entertaining this supposition [that mystical experiences are windows on reality]" (p. 428).

Other types of experiences – such as near-death experiences and psychedelic-induced mystical experiences – suggest the same common features. This is the "essentialist" rather than the "perennialist" argument (Marshall, 2014; Rose, 2016) or in my terminology (Taylor, 2016, 2017a), "soft" rather than "hard" perennialism.

Additionally, a significant number of mystics and scholars of mysticism would argue against the notion that it is impossible to experience reality in an unmediated and unfiltered form. At the very least, they would argue that it is possible to experience reality in a *less* meditated and filtered form. In other words, it is not the case that (as Katz, 1983, argued) all experiences are equally conditioned. One might argue that one of the primary purposes of meditation is to bring about a deconstruction of normal mental structures, or to bring about what Deikman (1980) referred to as a "deautomatization of perception." In states of deep meditation, it may be possible to experience a state in which the mind appears to be empty of concepts and constructs, and in which perception is deautomatized. An extreme form of this is what Forman (1999) described as the "pure consciousness event," when a person feels part of deep field of wider awareness that is spaceless and timeless. Saso (2015) has used the term "apophatic union" for this state, and like Forman, has suggested that the use of practices to generate the state is a fundamental commonality amongst diverse spiritual traditions. This suggests that it is possible to gain direct experience of a quality that appears to be a fundamental feature of reality.

Transpersonal Psychology as a Post-Materialist Psychology

Since it is - as I have tried to show - impossible for any field to divorce itself from a metaphysical background, transpersonal psychology has a choice to make. If we attempt to bracket out metaphysics or adopt an approach of scientific naturalism, there is a real possibility that (as Ferrer has shown in relation to Friedman's approach) this will mean operating (if only unconsciously) against the background of physicalism.

Clearly, this is not a viable option. It effectively means taking the "trans" out of transpersonal psychology, due to the hostility of physicalism towards spiritual experiences and other "rogue" phenomena. In addition, as *Irreducible Mind* and *Consciousness Unbound* make clear, physicalism is untenable as a metaphysical worldview. At the same time, if we leave our metaphysics vague and general, either because we are unwilling to disclose it or have not developed it adequately, then this leads to confusion. In James's words, this will leave us "ungrounded and unstable…[with] a psychology particularly fragile, into which the waters of metaphysical criticism leak at every joint" (James, 1892, pp. 467–468).

So, what metaphysical orientation should we choose? Since, as *Consciousness Unbound* and *Beyond Physicalism* show, the basic principles of post-materialist metaphysical approaches work effectively and elegantly as explanations of the world and of human experience (much more so than physicalism), there is no reason why transpersonal psychology should not adopt a general post-materialist orientation. Of course, this has traditionally been transpersonal psychology's metaphysical orientation, due to its historical affiliation with spiritual traditions. It is true that this has included some examples of the "bad metaphysics" described above, such as Wilber's theories. Nevertheless, in my experience as a university lecturer, it is this metaphysical orientation that attracts most people to the field. Many people who study transpersonal psychology at my university have had transpersonal experiences that they struggle to make sense of in physicalist terms, or in terms of mainstream psychology (which is underpinned by physicalist assumptions). They are looking for a different metaphysical lens through which to view their experiences.

Certainly, many transpersonal practitioners have bandied around metaphysical assumptions too freely, without sufficient caution, evidence, or explanation. Rather than attempting (always to no avail) to avoid metaphysics, however, we can learn to apply our metaphysics more rigorously and effectively. To use an analogy, if your diet is causing health problems, there is no need to give up food entirely – you just need to be more careful about what you eat.

There is a cultural issue here too. The consequences of the physicalist or materialist worldview have been disastrous, both culturally and environmentally. Physicalism has created a pervasive sense of nihilism, which has itself led to excessive consumerism, hedonism, and individualism. In biomedical terms, materialism has helped to establish a mechanistic model of the human organism in which even psychological conditions are treated as physical disorders that can be "fixed" through pharmacological interventions. In environmental terms, materialism has

encouraged an attitude of domineering recklessness to the natural world in which natural phenomena (which are after all no more than chemical machines) only have a utilitarian value (Taylor, 2018).

Our future welfare as a species (and the welfare of our planet) depends largely on a widespread cultural shift to a post-materialist outlook. One could argue, therefore, that transpersonal psychology has a responsibility to commit broadly to a post-materialist metaphysical outlook in order to contribute to this shift. Certainly, within the context of psychology, it seems the wrong approach for transpersonal psychology to ally itself with mainstream psychology. Surely, a better approach would be for transpersonal psychology to challenge and influence mainstream psychology by committing itself to a postmaterialist metaphysical approach and encouraging mainstream psychology to move beyond its present physicalist metaphysics.

This does not mean that transpersonal psychology should abandon a pluralistic approach. After all, *Consciousness Unbound* (and its companion volume *Beyond Physicalism*) makes it clear that there is a dizzying range of post-materialist perspectives, which differ in many details. Most importantly of all, *Consciousness Unbound* makes it clear that the broad principles of post-materialist approaches – e.g., that mind or consciousness is a fundamental universal principle, that the human mind cannot be reduced to the brain, that anomalous phenomena such as psi and NDEs are real and there is compelling evidence for the survival of consciousness after physical death – are so well-founded both evidentially and theoretically that it is justifiable, and even essential, for us to include them in our worldview.

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The Reviewer

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FERRER, JORGE N. (2022). *Love and Freedom: Transcending Monogamy and Polyamory*. London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield. ix + 212 pp. ISBN: 978-1538156575. Paperback. $29.00. *Reviewed by Marie Thouin*.

Can romantic love and individual freedom coexist in intimate relationships? This question, which has warranted much ink in both academic and popular spheres (e.g., Haag, 2011; Perel, 2010; Ryan & Jethá, 2010), is not new—but Jorge Ferrer's

contribution to the conversation in his new book *Love and Freedom: Transcending Monogamy and Polyamory* is genuinely novel.

Building on seminal works that have pointed to the possibility of creating inclusive intimate relationships beyond the monogamy and polyamory binary (e.g., Barker, 2013; Gahran, 2017; Michaels & Johnson, 2015), *Love and Freedom* innovates by drafting a conceptual-experiential map of the territory of transbinary relationships, suggesting original vocabulary to describe this territory, as well as providing a detailed discussion on overcoming romantic jealousy to support readers who wish to explore intimacy beyond existing normativities and orthodoxies.

While delivering tangible solutions toward its practical aim to "minimize the suffering of the growing number of individuals who feel excluded from—and thus oppressed by—the non/monogamy system and attendant mono/poly bipolarity" (p. 103), it is also the first book to build some bridges among the scholarly fields of transpersonal psychology, religious studies, and contemporary relationship diversity.

The book opens with a well-documented description of the age-old, yet increasingly relevant quandary around the paradoxical human needs for long-term bonding and sexual variety, as well as the pervasive role that mononormativity or monocentrism (i.e., the assumption that monogamy, either lifelong or serial, is the only valid relational model for healthy romantic relationship) has played within these conversations.

Holding a hopeful lens to this loaded topic, Ferrer proposes that the difficulties plaguing traditional marriage today, such as sky-high divorce and affairs rates, *might not be all bad*—and that in fact, they may be guiding us to a brighter future where love and intimacy can bloom in more diverse, more authentic, and less oppressive ways. To this end, he asks:

> What if, rather than trying to conform to outmoded or inadequate relational structures, people boldly cocreate intimate lives more attuned to their essential dispositions, changing needs, and deepest desires? What if we exorcise the monocentric spell and realize that "the problem" might not be, after all, a problem? (p. 2)

To which he suggests the following thesis:

> *Behind the inability to exclusively commit to a single person for life or an indefinite period of time, there may be emerging wisdom at play*. In other words, some of the fears, conflicts, and challenges modern individuals experience in monogamous pledges may arise from an often-unconscious discernment of that relational structure as no longer appropriate for their personal development or even for our culture's historical moment. (p. 2)

To look at intimate relationships free from normativity or ideological orthodoxy first requires an understanding of the different sources of conditioning that limit both the imagination and the real-life possibilities when it comes to intimacy. This

task is undertaken in Chapter 1, "Relational Freedom and the Crisis of Modern Relationships," where Ferrer describes six main sources of conditioning at play around relationships: evolutionary, biological, historical, cultural, social, and biographical. He also introduces the conception of *relational freedom*, as a person's ability to choose intimate relationship styles and configurations based on personal growth and mutual care, rather than on conditioned forces and relational ideologies. While Ferrer denounces mononormativity as impinging upon what should be the fundamental human right of loving "as many people as one desires in constructive, nonharmful ways" (p. 4), he also supports "mindful monogamy" (p. 2) as a legitimate relationship choice when it is chosen outside of monocentric pressures and rejects hierarchies between relationship styles.

Ferrer's analysis of these hierarchies is deepened in the following chapter, "Mononormativity, Polypride, and the 'Mono–Poly Wars'." While mononormativity is the dominant paradigm across modern Western countries, emerging sub-cultures around polyamory and consensual nonmonogamy (CNM) often describe monogamous relating as inferior, unhealthy, or otherwise deficient—leading to a "predicament of mutual competition and condescension among monogamists and polyamorists" (p. 38). Ferrer critiques both forms of relational normativity—monopride/polyphobia and polypride/monophobia—and demonstrates the need to look at relationships beyond *both* monocentrism and emerging polynormativities. He shows, using a review of the empirical literature on the psychological health and relationship quality of monogamous and polyamorous individuals and couples, the ideological nature of these wars—and that no one side is more "correct" than the other.

The next chapter, "Sympathetic Joy: Beyond Jealousy, Toward Relational Freedom" focuses on one of the most prominent roadblocks to achieving relational freedom: romantic jealousy. Because the experience of jealousy "ensures the supremacy of monogamy and monogamous love [serving] a property-owning patriarchal culture" (Tsoulis, 1987, p. 25) and commonly affects CNM relationships as well, Ferrer argues, "the pursuit of relational freedom requires a new approach to jealousy" (p. 61). To this end, Ferrer explores how the application of *mudita,* the Buddhist contemplative practice of sympathetic joy, to intimate relationships can transform jealousy and expand relational choices. According to Ferrer, the transformation of jealousy into *compersion*—a term that was coined in CNM contexts to describe empathic joy (for a review of literature on compersion, see Thouin-Savard [2021])—can show that "several forms of relationship may be spiritually wholesome (in the Buddhist sense of leading to liberation) according to various human dispositions and contextual situations" (p. 76).

Chapter 4, "The Dawn of Transbinary Relationships," is where the most unprecedented contribution of the book lies. Ferrer elaborates on the conceptual and experiential territory beyond the non/monogamy system and proposes a navigational map. In the same way that transgender and gender diversity movements opened possibilities of expression beyond the male/female binary, transbinary relationship styles introduce the space beyond the mono/poly binary. To this end, he proposes three plural relational modes—fluidity, hybridity, and

transcendence—and describes several transbinary pathways (e.g., developmental, contextual, intrapersonal, transcategorical) that may take place within each mode. He then coins the term *novogamy* to refer to the "fuzzy, liminal, and multivocal semantic–existential space" (p. 82) beyond the mono/poly binary. Finally, he addresses the concern that transbinary relationship modes may lead to a lack of coherent identity by arguing that "by more fully embracing their inner diversity, complexity, and dynamism, people can foster their personal individuation" (p. 103).

In the final chapter, "Relational Freedom and the Transformation of Intimate Relationships," Ferrer considers "the future of romance after the deconstruction of the belief in a single 'soul mate'," and proposes that "romantic love can stay perfectly alive—and perhaps even more freely flourish—outside patriarchal and monocentric dungeons" (p. 107). He proposes new criteria for evaluating romantic relationships as alternatives to the standard of relationship longevity, and instead suggests "emancipatory, healing, and transformational relationship standards in relation to both individuals and societies" (p. 107). The chapter closes with a discussion of social justice, privilege, and collective responsibility, admitting that "social locations drastically impact the degree of relational freedom available to different populations" (p. 114) and that exercising relational freedom "must be balanced with a caring awareness and examination of the impact of one's choices on others—no matter how 'right' or 'truthful' a decision may feel for any individual" (p. 118).

Love and Freedom is consistent with Ferrer's previous philosophical work: it applies both participatory (see Ferrer, 2002, 2017; Ferrer & Sherman, 2008) and embodied spirituality (Ferrer, 2008) lenses to the realm of intimate relationships. In the same way that his past writings on religion sought to replace ideological hierarchies with an ethical and critical pluralistic approach, Ferrer suggests here that monogamy and polyamory (along with other forms of CNM) are not intrinsically good or bad; instead, people can choose those relational styles for "good" or "bad" reasons—"good" being relational predispositions, developmental and sociopolitical conditions, and personal growth, and "bad" being a socially conditioned, reactionary, or unconscious decision-making process.

In sum, *Love and Freedom* is a valuable book to diverse audiences—scholars, therapists, health professionals, and the general public. In a style unique to Ferrer, it blends a rigorous, well-informed academic voice with a compassionate and personal tone that makes the text readable to non-academics. The original and visionary content of this book ensures that it will become foundational to the development of many new avenues of theory and conversation in the transpersonal field and beyond.

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Jorge N. Ferrer, PhD, is a clinical psychologist, public speaker, and educator. He was a professor of psychology for more than twenty years at California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, where he also served as chair of the Department of East–West Psychology. He has published several books and dozens of articles on psychology, education, and religious studies, and his work on alternative intimate relationships has been featured in journals such as *Sexuality and Culture* and *Psychology and Sexuality*. In his international private practice, Jorge offers professional counseling to individuals and couples focused on the management of jealousy, infidelities, sexual incompatibilities, open relationships, and the design of more satisfying intimate relationships. He was selected to become an advisor to the organization Religions for Peace at the United Nations. Learn more at www.jorgenferrer.com.

The Reviewer

Marie Thouin, PhD, is the founder of Love InSight, a mindful dating and relationship coaching practice where she supports growth-minded people of all relationship styles to foster intentional love lives. Her doctoral research focused on the experience of compersion (empathic joy) in consensually nonmonogamous relationships, which she discusses at www.whatiscompersion.com. Her interests also include the intersection of mindfulness and human sexuality. Marie serves as Editor at the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, where she co-edited a special issue on Transpersonal Sexuality. Learn more at www.loveinsight-dating.com.

Merton, T. (1965). *The way of Chuang Tzu*. New Directions. (Print)

Thomas Merton's *The Way of Chuang Tzu,* is one of Merton's least known books … and my favorite. While Merton's rendering of Chuang Tzu was based on his reading of Western language translations, his mystical knowing may have allowed him to grasp Taoist wisdoms more profoundly than as relayed in the direct translations I have read by Chinese scholars. Unlike Lao Tzu, who wrote in poetic verse, Chuang Tzu's Taoist texts take the form of wisdom stories, parables, and witty tales. In the book's Note to the Reader, Merton declares that he "enjoyed writing this book more than any other…" (p. 9-10). Perhaps Merton's enjoyment makes Chuang Tzu sound more cheerful than I imagine him to have been but I'll never know one way or the other.

Hinton, D. (2020). *China root: Taoism, Ch'an, and original Zen*. Shambhala. (Print0

David Hinton's *China Root* reveals how the native and "messy earthiness" of China's version of Ch'an Buddhism was lost in its migration from China to Japan in the form of institutionalized Zen Buddhist practice. The Japanese penchant for aesthetic minimalism, stillness, and order replaced Ch'an Buddhism's blend of earthy Taoist wisdoms and Buddhist insights from India, resulting in a modern form of Zen Buddhism in Japan and now in the West unlike its down-to-earth origins in ancient China.

… Rosemarie Anderson

Silburn, Lilian. (1988). *Kundalini, The energy of the depths. A comprehensive study based on the scriptures of nondualistic Kasmir Saivism*. State University of New York (SUNY). (Print)

A renowned French translator (1908-1993) and student of the now rare teachings of Kashmiri Shaivism, Lilian Silburn learned from one of the last masters, and here translates from five texts, quoting passages related to the rising of the kundalini, a topic on which she has profound personal experience. See also her biography: *Lilian Silburn, a mystical life* (2022).

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A classic 658-page compendium and articulate history of Western themes of spirituality, rituals, and mysticism as preserved by Freemasonry from the middle ages to the nineteenth century.

Sri M. (2011, 2019). *Apprenticed to a Himalayan master: A yogi's autobiography*. Westland Publications, an Amazon company**.** (Print**)**

This publication recounts Sri M's fascinating and colorful training with great teachers like Babaji and Sri Guru, Himalayan masters capable of "unbelievable" feats of bodily teleportation, transformation of substances, and mind-to-mind communication amid explanations of a universal spirituality. Like Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, this book stretches one's imagination of who we are and what is possible**.**

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Cunningham, P. (2022). *Introduction to transpersonal psychology: Bridging spirit and science*. Routledge. (Print)

This long-waited, thorough introduction of transpersonal psychology will surely become the standard textbook in the field for many years to come.

Daniels, M. (2021). *Shadow, self, spirit: Essays in transpersonal psychology* (Revised & expanded ed.). Imprint Academic. (Print)

A fully updated edition of one of the most rigorous, integrative, and important books in transpersonal psychology ever published—a must-read for students, scholars, and practitioners.

MacDonald, D. A., & Almendro, M. (Eds.). (2021). *Transpersonal psychology and science: An evaluation of its present status and future directions*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. (Print)

A wide-ranging collection of essays assessing the multifarious and complex relations between transpersonal psychology and empirical science.

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A graphic biography of R. Gordon Wasson, starting with his marriage to Valentina Pavlova and their subsequent myco-adventures.

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