CHAPTER-IV
MYSTIC EXPERIENCE, SELF- TRANSCENDENCE
AND CLINICAL FINDINGS

It has been well known for a long time that we can break the frame of consciousness called self, and experience the feeling of union with some reality beyond self and a feeling of full calm, joy, expanded awareness of creative energy. Such experience has a very close relation to religious discipline and creative activity. This is the experience which is called mystical (James, 1902), selflessness (Okamoto, 1976; Kitamura, 1979), cosmic-consciousness (Bucke, 1901; Fromm et al., 1960; Kuroda, 1987), peak-experience (Maslow, 1962, 1971), universe's experience (Battista, 1978), unity consciousness (Wilber, 1979), pure-consciousness (Farrow & Herbert, 1982).

One trait that Maslow (1968) found characteristic of his self-actualizing subjects was their ability to have mystical or spiritual experiences. He found that most people had experiences of this kind, but perhaps no more than once or twice during their entire lives. Maslow came to call this experience a "peak" experience and he himself was no stranger to it.

Maslow described the mystic experience in the following manner. "Apparently the acute mystic or peak experience is a
tremendous intensification of any of the experiences in which there is loss of self or transcendence of it, e.g., problem centering, intense concentration, muga behaviour, as described by Benedict, intense sensous experience, self-forgetfulness and intense enjoyment of music or art". (1970, p.165).

Maslow (1969) has given various meanings of transcendence out of which some are discussed below.

1. Transcendence in the sense of: loss of self-consciousness, of self-awareness of depersonalization and of self-observing, of the kind characteristically seen in the adolescent. In this sense, meditation or concentration on something outside one's own psyche can produce self-forgetfulness and therefore loss of self-consciousness. In this particular sense transcendence is of the ego or of the conscious self. At least, it can be seen as a precursor of the experience of self-transcendence.

2. Transcendence of culture. In a very specific sense, the self-actualizing man, or the transcendent self-actualizing man, is a universal man. He is a member of the human species. He is rooted in a particular culture but he rises above that culture and can be said in various ways to be independent of it.
3. We transcend ego, self, selfishness, ego-centering, etc., when we respond to the demand-character of external tasks, duties, responsibilities to others and to the world of reality. When one is doing one's duty, this also can be seen to be under the aspect of eternity and can represent a transcendence of the ego, of the lower needs of the self. Actually, of course, it is ultimately a form of metamotivation, and identification with what "calls for" doing. This is a sensitivity to extra-psychic requiredness. This in turn means a kind of Taolistic attitude. The phrase "being in harmony with nature" implies this ability to yield, to be receptive to, to respond to, live with extra-psychic reality as if one belonged with it, or were in harmony with it. We then transcend our own "selfish" wishes, becoming receptive to the demand-character of non-self.

4. The mystical experience. Mystic fusion, either with another person or with the whole cosmos or with anything in between.

5. One transcends death, pain, sickness, evidence, etc., when one is of a level high enough to be reconciled with the necessity of death, pain, etc. From a Godlike or Olympian point of view, all these are necessary and can be understood as necessary. If this attitude is achieved, as for instance it can be in the B-cognition, then bitterness,
rebelliousness, anger, resentment may all disappear or at least be much lessened.

6. Yet another meaning of transcendence overlaps with above. The word "transcendence" can describe accepting the natural world, the transcending the lower needs of the self, that is, of one's selfish within-the-skin demands, of one's egocentric judgements upon extra-psychic things as being dangerous or not dangerous, edible or not edible, useful, etc. This is the ultimate meaning of the phrase "to perceive the world objectively and impersonally". This is one necessary aspect of B-cognition. B-cognition implies a transcendence of one's ego, lower needs, selfishness, etc.

Transcendence of the basic needs (either by gratifying them so that they disappear normally from consciousness, or by being able to give up the gratifications and to "conquer" the needs). This is another way of saying "to become primarily metamotivated'. It implies identification with the B-values.

7. Transcending the present situation in the sense of Kurt Goldstein "to relate to existence also in terms of the possible as well as the actual". This is to rise above being stimulus-bound and here-now, situation-bound, and actuality-bound. Goldstein's reduction to the concrete can be transcended. Perhaps the best phrase here is to rise to the
realm of the possible as well as of the actual.

8. Transcendence of dichotomies (polarities, black and white oppositions, either-or, etc.). To rise from dichotomies to superordinate wholes. To transcend atomism in favor of hierarchical-integration and holism. To bind together separate things into an integration. The ultimate limit here is the holistic perceiving of the cosmos as a unity rising above to a higher viewpoint where one can see that these mutually exclusive differences in opposites can be coordinated into a superordinate unity which would be more realistic, more true, more in accord with actual reality.

9. Transcendence of one's own will (in favor of the spirit of "not my will be done but Thine"). To yield to one's destiny or fate and to fuse with it, to love it in the Spinozistic sense or in Taoistic sense.

10. Transcendence can mean to live in the Realm of Being, speaking the language of Being, B-cognizing, high-plateau-living. It can mean the serene B-cognition as well as the climactic peak-experience kind of B-cognition. After the insight or the great conversion or the great mystic experience one can calm down as the novelty disappears, and as one gets used to good things or even great things, one can learn to live casually in heaven and to be on easy terms with the eternal and the infinite. One can get over being
surprised and startled and then live calmly and serenely among the platonic essences, or among the $B$-values. Peak-experiences must be transient, and in fact are transient. And yet an illumination or an insight remains with the person. He can't really become naive or innocent again or ignorant again in the same way that he was, he cannot un-see. And yet there must be a language to describe getting used to the conversion or the illumination or to living daily or even lounging in the Garden of Eden. Such an awakened person normally proceeds in a unitive way or in a $B$-cognitizing way as an everyday kind of thing, certainly whenever he wishes to. This $B$-cognition or plateau-cognition can come under one's own control. One can turn it off or on as one pleases.

11. The (transient) attainment of full-humanness or perfection or of finality or being an end is an example of transcendence. Coming to an end-state or a total completion is one kind of transcendence.

12. A transcendence of negative (which include evil, pain, death, etc., also include more than that) is seen in the report from the peak-experiences in which the world is accepted as good, and in which one is reconciled to the evils that one perceives. But this is also a transcendence of inhibitions, of blocks, of denials, of refusals.
13. transcendence of fear into the state of not-fearing or of courage (these are not quite the same thing).

14. Also included in Maslow's list is cosmic consciousness. This is a special phenomenological state in which the person somehow perceives the whole cosmos, or at least the unity and integration of it and of everything in it, including himself. The sense of belongingness can be very strongly reported here, as contrasting with the sense of ostracism, isolation, aloneness, of rejection, of not having, any roots, of belonging no place in particular.

Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than as means, whether to oneself, to significant others, to human being in general, to other species, to nature, or to the cosmos.

Maslow stressed that all of these meanings of "transcendence" are naturalistic, empirical and not supernatural or supermundane.

Peak experience has important metaphysical implications because it reveals aspects of reality that are normally hidden or overlooked. For Maslow, it constituted what
religiously oriented people regarded as a genuine revelation. The emotion accompanying these experiences was exultation.

Among the distinguishing characteristics of the peak experience found by Maslow (1970) were the following: (1) wholeness and concreteness: the object perceived will be seen as complete and as utterly unique. It is viewed in terms of itself and does not have to be related, or compared, to anything else in order to be appreciated. "It is seen as if it were all there was in the universe, as if it were all of being, synonymous with the universe" (2) It is perceived with care, if not love: "The caring minuteness with which a mother will gaze upon her infant again and again, will severely produce a more complete perception than the usual casual rubricizing which passes illegitimately for perception" (3) The object is seen in a non-instrumental and nonegocentric way, hence the peak experience "can then more readily look upon nature as if it were in itself and for itself, and not simply as if it were a human playground put there for human purposes".

For Maslow the peak experience (in which stereotyped perception were pushed aside and the world again seen with a child's freshness) was able to join together the artist, the theologian and the scientist, at the moment of revelation or creative insight, extreme emotion, and at times, ecstasy. Indeed, the moment of discovery, whether esthetic, religious,
or scientific, has much in common with the peak experience and might even be regarded as one kind of peak experience.

The term -- "reconciliation" was used by William James to describe the central dimension that he had encountered in his own personal forays into mystical states: "The keynote of it is invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictions and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity". (James, 1962).

Shaffer (1978) points out that for some humanistic psychologists, mystical or "cosmic" states of consciousness reveal to us the underlying unity of the entire universe.

The experience of unity refers to a felt sense that one is joined to the world. It is as though a fundamental dualism that some have tried to challenge conceptually (the subject-object and being-world dichotomies) is obliterated at a most immediate, phenomenological level, and a person no longer feels separate from other people or from the universe at large. (Such an experience is often described as "mystical", though Ornstein (1972), because of the negative connotations that sometimes accompany this word, prefers to call it "mystic" (p.136). To give some sense of what he means by a mystic experience of unity, of "oneness" Ornstein quotes the well-known phrase from William Blake, "If the
quotes the well-known phrase from William Blake, "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite" (Keynes, 1957, p.154).

It was from this same quotations that Aldous Huxley drew the title for the Doors of Perception (1954), a book that describes the dramatically liberating effects of psychedelic drugs, which in the 1960s became prominently associated with consciousness expansion.

Why is the experience of unity so important? Because, say the transformationalists, it can help us grasp dimensions of reality that we usually fail to perceive. It is a strongly holistic view that emphasizes the inter-connectedness of all living matter and it casts doubts on the existential view of man as ultimately alone.

Cosmic consciousness may be regarded as the final stage in the development of consciousness (Kuroda, 1990). The development of cosmic consciousness is mainly due to meditation, and is promoted by abdominal breathing which brings about slow, deep breathing.

Recent experimental data on Transcendental Meditation technique (TM), a sect of Mantra Yoga, support the view that breath suspension has a close relation to cosmic consciousness. Farrow and Hebert (1982) found that breath
suspension is a physiological correlate of the pure consciousness experience.

Of late TM (transcendental meditation) and its biochemical and physiological correlates and therapeutic benefits have been investigated. Studies done by foreign experts (Wallace, 1970; Bloomfield, Cain and Jaffe, 1975; Smith, 1976) and Indian experts (Singh, 1975; Mishra, Mishra and Murthy, 1974) have demonstrated its utility with clinical conditions such as anxiety states, bronchial asthma, hypertension, psychogemric headaches, drug abuse, juvenile offence crime and certain psychiatric conditions and in increasing certain personality needs like n-deference, n-interception, n-dominance, n-change and n-durance.

Rao (1989) has suggested that for research purposes meditation may be considered a process in which attention is manipulated through one-pointed concentration which leads to alterations of consciousness and expanded subjective awareness.

Rao also maintains that further textual studies of classical meditation and the investigation of highly proficient meditators in order to understand the phenomenology of meditation is of greater relevance than recording the physiological correlate of "instant" meditation.
One of the underlying assumptions of transpersonal psychotherapy is that each human being has impulses toward spiritual growth, the capacity for growing and learning throughout life, and that this process can be facilitated and enhanced by psychotherapy. In this respect, it has much in common with growth-oriented humanistic approaches such as client-centered therapy, but goes beyond them in affirming the potentiality for self-transcendence beyond self-actualization.

Like Jungian analysis, transpersonal therapy is essentially non-directive based on the belief that the psyche itself has the capacity for self-healing and that impulses towards health and wholeness can be nourished and developed by a process of integration of unconscious aspects of the psyche (Clark, 1977).

In his research with LSD psychotherapy, Stanishav Grof (1975) observed that all of his subjects transcended the psychodynamic framework and moved into transpersonal realms. This observation implies that a therapist operating in a theoretical context which does not include the transpersonal is necessarily limiting the potential growth of the client. However, Grof also points out that one of hazards of attaining transpersonal experiences is the tendency to value them too highly, and to devalue ordinary, everyday life experience by
Jung (1973), Ram Dass (1974) and others have noted the fact that a psychotherapist cannot take someone beyond where he/she has been. However, it is possible for therapist and client to break new ground together if both are willing to learn from each other as companions on the journey of self-discovery. The therapist can also facilitate or impede the clients' further growth by communicating attitudes or beliefs concerning exploration beyond the range of his/her personal experience. A trans-personal therapist who follows a discipline which enhances inner awareness may find an increasing incidence of spontaneously occurring psychic phenomena in his/her life. The importance of extrasensory perception and intuition in psychotherapy is frequently acknowledged (Clark 1973; Cohen 1969) but in religious traditions extrasensory power are often considered dangerous and actively discouraged. Regardless of personal choice, the therapist who has a transpersonal perspective can work with the client for the integration of such, experience without imposing a belief system on the client.

Just as a therapist has the responsibility for recognizing personal bias in personality theory, it is important for the transpersonal therapist to be aware of
personal bias in metaphysical belief systems, since beliefs inevitably shape perceptions and are subtly communicated to the client. The continuing task for the therapist is one of working on his/her attachment to whatever beliefs may be limiting his/her own capacity for clarity and transcendence.

When a therapist is identified as having a transpersonal orientation, one would assume that he/she thereby affirms the validity and importance of the spiritual quest, and supports the integration of spirit, mind, emotions and body. One would also assume that he/she has had some meaningful transpersonal experience which has experimentally validated a transpersonal viewpoint. The therapist may also be assumed to be on his/her own path. A transpersonal orientation further implies a view of essential human nature as basically divine or transcendent. Psycho-therapy can then be defined as the process whereby the client gets in touch with his/her essential transpersonal nature.

In a study of Glik (1988), participant observation among white, working a middle class spiritual healing groups in the Baltimore area (1981-1983) revealed distinct socio-cultural and interpersonal patterns of action and influence. It is concluded that incorporation of explanatory models, social roles, myths, and symbols into the social, ideational, and ritual context of spiritual healing is essential to its therapeutic effect and that spiritual healing exemplifies a
symbolic healing system. A substantive theoretical model for healing research is suggested.

Walker (1988) considered the role of induced experiences in spiritual development, specifically whether there is a particular religious experience that underlines all religious and that is the constitutive element of religion. The importance of understanding the person and how that person is developing spirituality is emphasized.

Helminiak (1988) summarizes E. Fromm’s understanding of human nature and pinpoints his account of the human tendency to seek further perfection. Fromm argues that biological dichotomy results in contradictions that produce existential needs whose various resolutions determine passions and strivings, which are incessant and inherently unquenchable. Though not wholly unambiguous, his position is believed to be basically correct and supported by empirical evidence and logical argument. It presupposes a spiritual component in human nature that strives toward what is objectively correct and truly worthwhile, and so it is not only useful as a secular transformation of many traditionally religious concern but is also open to easy theistic and, ultimately, Christian interpolation. It is concluded to be a basis for an account of spirituality that cuts across cultures and religions.
The "power within" is a humanistic transpersonal imagery technique that makes accessible to the client resources previously unavailable for personal growth, understanding, and change. The article by Chaplin (1989) reviews the theory, technique, and application of this technique within the context of psychotherapy. The literature review presents a wide range of theoretical explanations of the "power within" experience. A detailed description of the technique provides a framework by which it could be effectively conducted within psychotherapy. Finally, three case examples are presented to demonstrate its therapeutic application.

William James (1899) noted that in hypnosis one of his subjects exhibited split consciousness. While one part of the person was aware of what was occurring during the session, another part was absolutely unaware. In his controversial work, James reported that a subject pricked with a pin during hypnosis communicated in writing about the experience; but when questioned in the normal state, he was unaware of the incident and dismissed his own writing.

Jung (1964) wrote of the potential of the unconscious. He said that the unconscious was the source of hidden fears, a source of great strength, and a resource for self-actualization. Through the technique of active imagination,
he encouraged clients to explore the symbolic representation of their unconscious. Jung (1970) wrote that only by coming to terms with the unconscious could the individual psyche develop and mature.

Oyle (1976) recounted a case of how a young man’s depression was lifted through a change in his conscious attitude. James (1958) referred to this processes as a "religious concession". According to James, the most powerful agent to facilitate the conversion was a vision of the "Livinghood". The therapeutic objective was to convince the client that there was a force within him through which he could be cured. Oyle (1976) accomplished this by guiding the client through a meditative process. Identifying the force, and receiving its advice. In the case cited, the client imaged a fairy who confronted his lack of personal care in the wake of his demanding work activities. Once confronted, the client changed his behaviour and the depression lifted.

Neurologically, Oyle (1976) postulated this process as a method by which the two billion brain cells used for speech and rational thought communicate with the 11 billion other cells concerned with survival and adaptation. Oyle suggested that healing occurs when the conscious and unconscious mind interact.
Emmons (1978) attempted to assimilate the God-directed and brain-directed definition of this phenomenon. He described this capacity as the "inner source" and defined it as a natural help within. Through mediation he encouraged clients to utilize their source of inner knowledge and to initiate their own self-contained systems of help.

Allison (1980), in his work with multiple personality disorder, unexpectedly uncovered what he later came to call the "Inner-self helper". He described it as the aspect of the patient's consciousness that was exceptionally knowledgeable and competent. He said it was a helpful personality who guided the patient as well as assisted the clinician in therapy.

Francuch (1981) wrote about the spiritual nature of this phenomenon. Within the context of therapy, he assisted clients in identifying and interacting with a "spiritual advisor". This he described as an ever-present entity that constituted the body of the "Grand Man: spiritual and natural world". Its function was the "Grand Man: Spiritual and Natural World". Its function was the continuous preservation of freedom by maintaining balance among affections and by giving continuous opportunity for choices, changes, and creativity.
Malimov (1982), a Russian psychologist, described the value of unconscious processes in accessing "hidden reserves" or "human potentials". Through group mediation, music, and breathing exercises, he facilitated the stimulation of imaginational processes that evoked archetypal images and such conceptual symbols as "dignity", "freedom", and "slavery".

Ferrucci (1982) described a psychosynthetic technique of inner dialogue with the self. Through the process of vertical telepathy, he found that individuals could communicate with their super-consciousness and through the dialogue access a powerful source of healing and nourishing love.

Leuner (1984), in his work in guided affective imagery, also described this concept. He defined the "Inner Guide" as a positive symbolic figure that appears spontaneously or is occasionally chosen to lead the individual to creative therapeutic solutions on a symbolic level.

Sheikh (1984) reported a summary of the imaging work of Bresler and Turbo (1979) and Rossman and Remem (1981), who studied the use of the "Inner Adviser" in pain management and personal health. Bresler defined the "Inner adviser" as an imaginary living creative inside, suggestions, and desires. Rossman and Remen described it as a figure of wisdom and care.
In 1975, Moody introduced what he called the near-death experience (NDE) in his popular book "life - after life" and initiated the possibility that in some sense human beings may survive physical death.

Looking at the near death experience as an altered state requires a general understanding of how consciousness operates. According to Tart (1975) what we consider as normal consciousness is in fact only one of countless ways of experiencing or, more precisely, constructing reality. Within the psyche a number of psychological structures operates as a system. The particular organization of these structures determines the state of consciousness and particular kind of reality experienced.

Quimby (1989) developed a consciousness model of the near death experience (NDE) that incorporates the work of Tart (1975), Wilber (1980), Grof (1985), and Grosio (1984). This model views the NDE as an altered state of consciousness triggered by the threat of imminent physical death. The individual is propelled without warning into modes of consciousness containing psychic and spiritual elements representing higher order developmental stages but bearing the particular stamp of a death related archetype. In temporarily visiting stages closer to full completion of his or her developmental possibilities, powerful but unfamiliar
potentials may be activated that can be fully actualized only through sustained spiritual work.

According to Moody some people who had recovered from close encounter with death reported a strange and quite similar constellation of experiences. While no two people described what occurred in exactly the same way, most mentioned such events as experiencing their consciousness functioning outside of the physical body, traveling through a tunnel, seeing deceased friends and relatives, encountering a being of light, experiencing a life review, making a decision to return, and having difficulty communicating what happened. Researchers like Ring (1980) and Sabon (1982) in truth confirmed that, indeed, what Moody had described as the NDE was reported by many other and seemed to occur in about one-third of these instances when people come very close to death.

Ring (1984) has identified additional features of the NDE reported by individuals who described a particularly profound experience. This, Ring has called the core NDE, the features of which, arranged to convey a coherent picture, include:

"(1) [an] incredible speed and sense of acceleration as one approaches. (2) the light that (3) Glows with an overwhelming brilliance and yet (4) does not hurt one's eyes .... One
feels in the presence of the light (5). Pure love, (6) total acceptance, (7) forgiveness of sins, and (8) a sense of home coming .... (9) communication with the light is instantaneous and non verbal and the light (10) imparts knowledge of a universal nature as well as (11) enables one to see or understand he [her] entire life so that (12) it is clear what truly matters in life. One may be aware of (13) transcendental music, (14) paradisiacal environments, and (15) cities of light as one progresses further into the experience. And..... finally (16) once having encountered the light, one yearns to remain with it forever."

That the NDE is an event within the psyche of ordinary people who, for whatever reasons, have had a close brush with death. This conclusion is very much in agreement with the Sufi theory which maintains that even ordinary people can have mystic experience because of divine grace and that the Sufi sees signs of God in his own psyche.

The NDE has trigger the beginning of a transformation to a higher level of consciousness that has been fully achieved only by a handful of the world's great mystics. To complete that journey successfully requires much work. As an experience intimately associated with the termination of life, yet having a profound impact on the subsequent experience of living, it qualifies par excellence as a major altered state of consciousness.
The theory of particle physics tells us that the entire universe is in a continuous state of flow or flux. All life and matter are part of a continuous cosmic transformation. Our present life is only a fleeting moment in the great flow of reality. In this knowledge lies our liberation from the acieties and fear of life and death, and our path to continued growth and spiritual evolution.

In the west psychotherapy tries to change the contents of consciousness, while meditation transforms consciousness itself. The NDE involves a powerful alteration of consciousness in which unconscious elements emerge. In using the term unconscious to discuss altered - state phenomena, it is imperative to make clear that unconscious should not be understood in Freudian sense of repressed instinctual impulses. Such a reductionistic approach would be no more useful in elucidating near - death phenomena than models attributing the experience to abnormalities in brain functioning.

In Wilber's view (1980) there is an inherent powerful, evolutionary thrust in the cosmos characterized by movement through what philosophers have called the Great chain of Being - from matter to life (body) to mind to spirit. According to Wilber human development is a microcosmic replica of macrocosmic evolution. We come into this world at
birth bearing this thrust and pattern as a pure potential that, given proper conditions, operates throughout our lives to unfold successively higher levels or stages experienced as movement from sub-consciousness to self-consciousness to for some few, superconsciousness. Wilber turns to the world's great mystics and sages, particularly those of the East, who have personally experienced and extensively described the higher levels of consciousness.

According to Wilber, as development proceeds, the individual moves from the low to the high subtle. This is the realm of high religious intuition and literal inspiration; of symbolic visions; the blue, gold, and whitelight; of illuminations and brightness upon brightness. It is the realm of higher presences, guides, and angelic beings, which, although they initially and necessarily appear are, according to Wilber, simply high-archetypal forms of one's own being. These statements of Wilber again seem to be the reminder of the world's great Sufis like Rumi and Ibn-Arabi that has already been quoted in the present work.

Grof (1985), a clinician, using psychedelic patients and "normal" individuals, extensively explored and mapped the unconscious. Grof discovered three great realms or levels of unconscious experience. He identified a psychodynamic or biographical unconscious containing contents once experienced
in waking consciousness but forgotten repressed. This is the level of the unconscious described by Freud.

The perinatal realm characterized by the confrontation with birth and death is said by Grof to separate the purely personal unconscious described by Freud from the transpersonal or superconscious stages in Wilber's Model. Entrance into the transpersonal requires successful negotiation of the level of birth and death.

Clinical observations from LSD psychotherapy suggest that the human unconscious contains repositories or matrices, the activation of which leads to the reliving of biological birth and/or profound confrontation with death. The resulting process of death and rebirth is typically associated with an opening of intrinsic spiritual areas in the human mind that are independent of the individual's racial, cultural and educational background.

Lying at the transpersonal or deepest level of the unconscious as mapped by Grof are all varieties of psychic and spiritual experiences, including telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, out-of-the-body experience, as well as the emergence of powerful archetypal elements.

Grof argues on the basis of his work that these matrices can be activated, not only through ritualistic practices and exploration of the deep unconscious but also by
any threat to the physical survival of the organism.

According to Grosso the near death experience activates an archetype of the collective (transpersonal) unconscious. An archetype, as described by Jung, is an inherited psychological structure that gives shape to universal elements of human experience and is experienced through powerful symbols of myth and dream.