

PRACTICAL METHODS IN TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

JOHN HERON

Published by:

Human Potential Research Project  
Centre for Adult Education '  
University of Surrey  
Guildford Surrey GU2 5XH

May  
1975

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## Practical Methods in Transpersonal Psychology

John Heron

What methods are available for the experiential researcher who wishes to explore entry into altered states of consciousness? The purpose of this paper is to present briefly a new and comprehensive typology of strategies for self-directed and voluntary access to such states, where no recourse is had to external chemical and physical aids such as hallucinogens, stroboscopic lights and so on.

For relevant revised notions of research and science, see Zener (1958), Hart (1971), Tart (1971), Heron (1972). For a review, of some ancient and current derivative typologies of meditation technique see Naranjo and Ornstein (1971), Goleman (1972). For a current map of altered states of consciousness, see Ring (1974).

The following typology has its primary source in personal experiences and phenomenological research. It also owes a great deal to relevant literature in the field. I developed this typology because I needed one for my experiential researches that was comprehensive, offering a flexible array of techniques or internal acts whose effects and interactions I could systematically explore. I also needed a typology that was free of the somewhat rigid and constraining mystique and belief-systems of the many different schools and cults offering to teach meditation techniques. These schools and cults tend to call for allegiance to their version of traditional wisdom and practice, rather than for exploration and open-ended research. The classical texts themselves, while indispensable and profound (when not obscure), are embedded in ethical and metaphysical traditions that can seriously be called in question. In experiential research into ASCs we need a new beginning which, while it honours the wisdom of the past, is not unduly bound by it. This theme is renewed in the last three sections of this paper.

In the headings below, when I call a method extraverted, I mean that it involves attention that is primarily directed to the perceived world; when I call a method introverted, I mean that it involves attention that is primarily directed to inner mental processes and contents. But the distinction is not to be taken too rigidly; many of the extraverted methods, especially, may come close to ambiversion - as, for example, the first one below - extraverted witnessing. What is indispensable about the extraverted methods is that the perceived world is being attended to, in different sorts of ways, very fully; whereas in the introverted methods attention is drawn away from the perceived world and the normal perceptual process.

### Extraverted Witnessing

The researcher is living in present time, attending to what is going on, in the midst of everyday perception and activity. This is close to the Taoist practice of we wei, non-interference, non-cultivation, accepting the spontaneous self-so-ness of the ordinary mind (Chung-yuan, 1963); and the Zen practice of jen hsin, letting the mind take its own course.

It is a question of being here now, of being where the action is which is now. This witnessing stops wrestling with what is happening, in the sense of being conflicted about what has not been done, or about what has been done, or about what should be done, or about what should not be done. It accepts what is going on and this acceptance brings the researcher into present time in an unconflicted manner.

Conflict looks away from what is now, from the present emergent situation; witnessing accepts what is coming into being in the world now, including subjective processes of inclination, desire and decision.

In extraverted witnessing, there is no such conscious cultivation: the researcher simply accepts what is going on, he allows himself to be here now in the midst of the flux of inner and outer events. The power of this method lies in its practice of aware acceptance of the flux, which is not the same as a nescient immersion in it, being unawaresly thrown hither and thither by the thrust of events.

A person who is witnessing and accepting without interference what is going on, is also open to the emergence of all possibilities in the present. The person who is lost in the flux is not so open, rather he is the victim of a restricted range of possibilities.

#### Introverted Witnessing

The researcher has withdrawn from the realm of outer events. He is in a quiet place, seated in meditation, and with closed eyes. He is witnessing primarily inner events: sensations, desires, moods and feelings, agitations and anxieties, images and ideas. He notices these without control or censorship. There is no interference in, or cultivation of, these mental contents. The stream with all its variegated currents simply flows through the containing banks of accepting awareness of it.

He is not inattentively distracted by his mental contents, carelessly being caught up and swept along by them - sinking down into an emotional eddy and going round with it, for example. Nor does he overreact consciously against them with vigorous efforts to suppress this or that desire, feeling, image or thought. He watches, witnesses, accepts.

He accepts and brings into full focus his subjective intentionality, that is, his consciousness of internal, mental events. This distinguishes introverted witnessing from introverted disidentification (see below) in which the researcher seeks to strip consciousness of all its empirical intentionality so that he is no longer primarily conscious of anything other than transcendent consciousness itself.

Witnessing is equivalent to satipatthana, or mindfulness, in the Buddhaghosa's system (Goleman, 1972). Introverted witnessing steadies the mind prior to launching into more extended states of awareness.

#### Extraverted Concentration

The researcher focuses his attention on a perceived object and maintains this focus without wavering. If attention wanders, he simply draws it back to the focal object. This practice stills the mind, reducing and eventually eliminating involuntary distracting mental contents. It may de-automatise perception and make available a pristine awareness of the world (Deikman, 1963). It can lead over into extraverted disidentification or into extraverted creative participation (see below). Thus Jakob Boehme gazed at a polished disc and entered thereby into a "lucid vision of the inner reality of the world . . . he gazed into the very heart of things" (Evelyn Underhill quoted in Stace, 1961).

#### Introverted Concentration

The same only with attention focused on some mental content, an image, a syllable, a word or concept; a bodily area, posture or process such as breathing. The practice is effective in stilling response to both external and psychosomatic distractions, making available access to a wide range of ASCs. Cf Book 3, Yoga Sutrās of Patanjali (Coster, 1934). It can lead

over into introverted creative participation (see below) and introverted disidentification. Cf the path of concentration in Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga (Goleman, 1972).

#### Extraverted Creative Participation

The researcher identifies with a phenomenal object which he is actively perceiving, penetrating it with his imagination and participating in it in its fullness. As well as what he can immediately perceive, he may be simultaneously envisioning its form and colour and chiaroscuro as if from another perspective, or he may sense its total gesture in space as if felt from within it.

This is creative participation in the object at the perceptual level, that is, at the level of its immediate aesthetic gesture in the world. This may be extended to include an imaginative participation in the subtle processes through which it interacts with the rest of the phenomenal world, both physical and supra-physical.

He may imaginatively grasp the object in four dimensions, maintaining an awareness of it in the past and future as well as being imaginatively involved with its present appearance. And this applies to its changing form and colour, to its internal processes and the processes that relate it to its environment.

Finally he may see it subsumed within the context of fundamental metaphysical ideas or archetypal principles of being.

In all these respects, the researcher is attending to the "speech" of the object, allowing it to unfold the many aspects of its meaning within active imaginative perception. It is similar to Goethe's "exakte sinnliche Phantasie", his "anschauende Urteilskraft" - "anschauer immer schaffenden Natur" (Goethe, 1946).

#### Introverted Creative Participation

The researcher can work here with given subjective mental contents, such as idio-retinal imagery or a mental image or a thought, taking what comes into awareness, then by giving attention to this selected mental content, giving it space to develop its own internal dynamic toward transcendence. The supposition here is that mental contents when attended to in a certain way without pressure, dominance, suppression or forcing into some pre-selected format - will spontaneously start to undergo a metamorphosis that will progressively take the researcher into altered states of consciousness. Cf Naranjo (1971), Part 1, Chapter 4.

Starting with what is given in consciousness means that the researcher must first engage in introverted witnessing, spending some time attending to the contents of the stream of consciousness. He follows this with a period of introverted concentration, selecting the most promising or pregnant content that to which his attention is most fully drawn by virtue of its potential for development - and concentrating on it for a while. As he concentrates on it, he notices, accepts and follows through its spontaneous internal changes. As the state of consciousness alters, a final stage may be that of disidentification (see below). - the researcher dissociates from the developed mental content using it as a progressively elevated springboard from which he launches himself into pure act, the state of consciousness beyond all name and form.

There is then a natural progression on the introverted side from witnessing, to concentration, to creative participation, to disidentification. Thus while witnessing I may notice my core aspiration toward transcendence; concentrating on this state for a while, it suddenly presents itself as an

image of a rose; participating in this image, the rose unfolds and expands, and perfume rises up from it toward a brilliant sun; I rise up with the perfume, merge with the sun, then disidentify from this image into the state of pure act.

The stage of disidentification need not follow: I may maintain the imagery, experiencing a transcendent state of consciousness refracted by its changing forms.

Prajna, the path of insight in the Visuddhimagga (Coleman, 1972) is a special case of introverted creative participation. The Buddha claimed that the mind, when fully attending to its own contents, will become embarked on a self-transcending chain of insights into its own nature culminating in nirvana - a state of introverted disidentification (see below). Prajna starts with witnessing and reaches its apotheosis in total disidentification, but the core of the process is an emergent series of realisations in which the meditator participates - without attachment.

Inner-directed expressive dancing or movement, inner-directed expressive vocalisations, where these take the researcher into ASCs, are also forms of introverted creative participation. Attending to certain movements or sounds spontaneously emerging within himself, the researcher follows them through, creatively drawing out their potential for entry into ASCs.

Another form, finally, is self-directed cathartic release. Catharsis is more extensively dealt with in a section below.

#### Extraverted Disidentification

The researcher maintains full awareness of and activity within the perceptual world but dissociates from any false and limiting conceptions of himself as perceiver. That is, he does not identify with his body as perceived by others or in a mirror: he does not entertain the notion of himself as peering out of a solid box. He attends to what is actually the case for immediate awareness, and experiences himself as void filled by the world.

Douglas Harding has pointed to the fact that for immediate perceptual experience I have no face (Harding, 1975). To be open to how I am as subject of perception, I have to disidentify from images of myself as object of perception, images derived from how other people describe me as an object of their perception, from how I appear as an object to myself in a mirror, by analogy from how other people appear as objects to me. If I dissociate from these images then as perceiver I am pure openness: I enter the vacuum-plenum paradox - I am an emptiness containing the fullness of the universe.

Of course there are ostensibly localised sensations, but these too are part of the world that fills my emptiness.

#### Introverted Disidentification

In the previous strategy, the researcher disidentifies from irrelevant objective images of his body but remains open to the content of the world that fills the emptiness where he is. He retains identification with this content but in a way that eliminates any dross that obscures its unity within his essential void.

In introverted disidentification, the researcher dissociates from empirical contents of any kind, all perceptions of the world, all mental events such as sensations, desires, feelings, images, thoughts. He becomes pure will absorbed in unmanifest and transcendent being. This is what St John of the Cross describes as "the alienation and withdrawal of the spirit from all things, forms and figures, and from the memory of them" - the soul becomes, as he puts it, "pure act" (St John, 1957).

This active dissociation of consciousness from all mental contents renders it temporarily void of its empirical intentionality, its status of being conscious of this or that. What is then uncovered is its transcendent intentionality, its hidden capacity for being conscious of its own ground. The researcher enters a state of awareness as such, timeless light, "satchit-ananda" - being consciousness, bliss. For a good review of Eastern and Western examples, see Stace (1961) pp. 85 - 123.

#### Extraverted Voluntarism

The researcher takes action in the external world the effect of which is the inauguration of altered states of consciousness for himself and, perhaps, others. Thus one example is the decision followed by action to take time, and move into a physical place, for a period of ASC exploration. Or the activities involved in organising and setting up a group for regular ASC exploration; and then each occasion of going to attend the group. Or the activities of preparing, designing, constructing a place for personal ASC research.

The researcher may deliberately change his diet, his sleeping rhythms, his sexual activity, his patterns of physical exercise, his occupation, his dwelling, his personal relationships, his timetabling of each day - in order to predispose his mind to enter ASCs.

He may bring an ASC to bear upon, and so induce a change of state in, a relationship or an activity in which he is currently engaged by a change of attitude or thought process involving visualisation, mental concentration, silent mantra, silent prayer - thus combining ASC-entry methods with his overt acts in the situation.

A further example is that of ritual, in which the researcher will use a set of movements, procedures, gestures, sounds and invocations, manipulations of material things or elements in various ways, to induce a qualitative change in the state of consciousness in himself, in those in the immediate environment or perhaps in a more remote physical place. Ritual may be practised solo, in pairs or in groups.

There is also interaction in the intensive personal growth group which, especially where it has cathartic consequences (see below), can evolve into significant ASCs.

#### Introverted Voluntarism

The researcher is in the meditation position, dissociated from the immediate physical environment or any activity within it. He may embark on an out of the body experience with some particular mission in mind, or seek to produce telekinetic or telepathic effects at a distance. In any event, he is seeking to function as an effective agent, inducing a change of state of minds and places, but by working at subtler levels of being, without recourse to any overt bodily actions or physically based rituals.

#### Acts of Consciousness

These then are some of the basic acts of consciousness in which the researcher can engage. They are modes of working with the inherent intentionality of consciousness - that is, its nature as consciousness of this or that (Brentano, 1874). They are ways of directing attention, or may also be regarded as forms of exercise of pure will. Reviewing again briefly these acts of consciousness, they are:

Witnessing

Concentrating

Creative participation in the given

Disidentification

Voluntarism: induction of a change of state in the world at large to effect ASCs

There are, of course, other acts of consciousness that can induce ASCs which are well established in the western cultural condition. They include:

Sustained reflective thinking: analytic and/or synthetic  
Creative imagination: genesis in art and science - illumination  
or inspiration followed by working through the germinal idea  
Aesthetic appreciation: imaginative identification with works  
of art of all kinds, as performer and/or spectator  
Romantic love: or, more generally, elevated interpersonal  
rapport  
Appreciation of nature: response to the beauty of the  
phenomenal world  
Physical adventures: exhilaration in meeting the challenge of  
the world  
Parenthood: especially giving birth

But each of these can be seen as an applied variant of one or other of the basic five acts of consciousness immediately preceding.

### Worship

There is now something else quite fundamental to be considered. It is best regarded, I believe, as an inherent state of consciousness rather than an act of consciousness. I will call this state aspiration: aspiration toward self-transcendence, toward emancipation of consciousness from restrictive attitudes, beliefs and practices, from false identifications and so on. Aspiration is an inherent dynamic inclination of the will - (where by the term "will" I mean the capacity for directing attention, for controlling the intentionality of consciousness) - toward transcendence.

To apply to this germinal aspiration the act of consciousness I have, called (introverted) "creative participation in the given" leads over into those ASCs we call worship, silent praise, contemplative prayer (Happold, 1971).

### Interpersonal Contemplation

There is another important application of (extraverted) creative participation in the given and that is in relation to another human being: the reciprocal activity of interpersonal contemplation - each practising imaginative exploration of the internal reality of the other, and of the relating itself, while engaging in mutual silent gazing (Heron, 1970).

Interpersonal contemplation may also take the form of extraverted disidentification: in gazing at you I disidentify from all objective images of myself as perceived and known from outside, and so become an essential void filled by you.

Or it may be explored by extraverted voluntarism, as in Tantric sexual yoga (Garrison, 1972); or as in open cathartic encounter.

### Group Interaction

Silent group interaction as in a group meditation using one or other of the various methods given above, greatly facilitates entry into and amplifies ASCs. Similarly with formalised group ritual, certain types of group movement and dancing.

Overt group interaction, where there is a high degree of openness, risk-taking, self-disclosure, mature care and trust, and where members feel safe enough to abreact painful emotion from old traumas and restrictions of being, can result in very significant ASCs (Heider, 1974). Many cathartic groups today, such as those in the human potential movement, are secular in their ideology and practices. But their precursors in earlier centuries had an explicit sacramental basis, such as Pietist groups, Quakers, Shakers, Hassidic groups and so on (Oden, 1972).



## Catharsis

There seems to be little doubt that cathartic episodes, where these relieve either primary tensions of the human condition - generated, for example, by the gap between imagination and action or conception and execution, between the longing for human closeness and the universal fact of separation, and so on - or the secondary tensions, due to humans interfering with and hurting each other, have a powerful effect in bringing a person into present-time awareness and producing a purified and enhanced perception of the self and the world.

The human is not only a formal, controlling mind-expanding being but also a convulsive life-renewing being. The convulsive process applies not just at the obvious physical level but also at a complex psycho-physical level relating to the personal experiences of the subject. Human beings, I believe, need a time, a place and a technique with which to relieve themselves of accumulating psycho-physical tensions and distresses rooted in their social experience: a time to laugh, tremble, sob and storm in harmless anger.

Self-directed cathartic release, as practised for example in co-counselling (Heron, 1973), is a special form of what I have called introverted creative participation. The subject, aware of and in touch with a tendency to convulsive or cathartic release of tension, by simple methods amplifies the tendency and allows the release to occur in a way that subtly balances the voluntary and the involuntary.

There are thus two complementary ways of entering ASCs, the cathartic and the non-cathartic. The former - a convulsion of life - is warm, Dionysian, dramatic and socially moving, involving obvious physical as well as emotional upheaval. The latter - an expansion of mind - is cool, Apollonian, quiet and socially tranquil, involving socially imperceptible physical and emotional changes. Either, of course, may lead over into the other.

The cathartic way can produce an ASC that is very much rooted in the realities of the human condition: it is an immanent present-time awareness that is produced by a cleansing upheaval and renewal of the psycho-physical system. The focus is thus very much on incarnate experience on being here and now in the world. Non-cathartic ways, especially the introverted ones, can lead to ASCs that may be quite transcendent, dissociated from the external spatio-temporal order and the psycho-physical system. Some of these ASCs can have a focus that is beyond the world. This immanent-transcendent polarity of focus is profound and another reason for seeing the two ways as complementary and mutually balancing. There is some danger of a monopolar approach at either end, with one way being used to the exclusion of, and in part as a defense against the cultivation of, the other way.

The interaction between these two ways calls for a great deal more systematic experiential enquiry. See, for example, the paper by Heider (1974).

## Intentional Objects

I have suggested that the various methods outlined for entering ASCs can be regarded as ways of working with the inherent intentionality of consciousness of this or that. We can witness, concentrate on, participate in and develop, disidentify from, induce a change of state in, the various objects/contents of consciousness. By "Intentional Objects" I mean everything which can be an object for or content of consciousness. I propose in this section briefly to review the sorts of such "objects"

1 Percepts of the physical world: persons and things as perceived

- 1a Trans-individual ESP impacts of persons, organisms and things in the physical world, past, present or future.
- 2 Subjective states: sensations, desires, emotions, memories, idiosyncratic subjective imagery of all kinds, personal constructs (private or idiosyncratic thoughts, meanings, interpretations), deliberation and decision; and various harmonious or conflicted interactions of these.
- 3 Concepts and language (thought structures in the public domain); logical principles; empirical theories; metaphysical constructs; conceived possibilities.
- 4 "Given" images, symbols, visions: the products of Aha experience, inspiration, illumination, hallucinogens.
- 5 Extrasensory "percepts" of other states of being - trans-physical states - and of the persons, entities, energies and powers therein.
- 6 Insights into archetypal principles of being (cf. Fawcett's imaginings, Plotinus' forms)
- 7 The one, the void, the unmanifest source of consciousness itself.

This is not as such a list of altered states of consciousness, or of the intentional objects of such states. States of consciousness involving 1a, 4, 5 or 6 can properly be regarded as ASCs. Certain forms of 1, 2 and 3 may also be regarded as ASCs; but other sorts and combinations of 1, 2 and 3 would be regarded as ordinary states of consciousness.

This account of intentional objects is very tentative. It does not claim to be anything other than an exploratory gesture. There clearly is or can be some overlap and/or interaction among some of the different items on the list.

#### Ordinary States of Consciousness (OSCs)

The concept of an OSC is culturally relative: what constitutes an OSC is what is hypothesised as the norm for the waking, everyday, workaday state of mind of most people in a given culture, and this will be a function of the prevailing norms and values of the culture, its widely accepted social practices, as all these things have emerged out of past history. For each individual in the culture, an OSC will be his idiosyncratic version of the norm, varying from it to a greater or lesser extent.

The norm for any given culture has also, no doubt, a transcultural component, which will be a function of universal physiological and physical constraints on consciousness which are inherent in the human condition as such - the fact that we as humans all have a similar anatomy and physiology and inhabit a planet where certain restrictions on survival universally apply. I will refer to the physiological factors and the planetary environment factors together as human condition factors (HCFs).

My conjecture is that HCFs operate to produce a transculturally valid OSC one that applies universally - that has some of the following features, at least.

- 1 There is a tendency for consciousness to have a restricted focus on survival tasks; and a restricted focus on the face-to-face and small group interactions that directly or indirectly relate to survival and survival tasks.
- 2 There is a tendency for this restricted focus to be compulsive, stereotypic and anxiety-laden.

Above and beyond this there are culturally relative factors (CRFs). For contemporary European and North American societies at least - and no doubt beyond them - CRFs operate to produce an OSC norm that has some at least of the following features.

1 For immediate perception, that is, in the very act of perceiving, the world tends to be seen as mechanistic, materialistic, atheistic and deterministic. And this is so by and large, I conjecture, whatever the higher-order belief system the individual holds - whether theistic, atheistic or confused agnostic. This is a consequence of the limiting world view that has now thoroughly permeated our language and selective perception and that originated with the birth of modern science in the 16th Century.

2. Along with this, there is a tendency for the OSC to be strongly activist and task-oriented, with an emphasis on work and achievement, on the intellectual, the analytic, the practical, the mechanical, on organisational rules, forms, procedures and positions.

3 A further corollary is that interpersonal and emotional life tends to be non-cathartic, rather rigid and closed, with much alienation, social distance and embarrassment separating people.

4 Finally, the OSC tends to see the inner mental life of the individual as a whirlpool of pure subjectivity, a purely idiosyncratic private zone which as such has no access to reality apart from sense perception and its elaboration in systematic controlled observation. However, this purely private zone is also seen as the locus of a certain range of pleasures and satisfactions which are selectively fostered and pursued. These pleasures relate primarily to the body, to property, to spectator-participation and to recreational social interaction. This purely private zone is also the locus of a good deal of passively tolerated psychological pain, conflict, anxiety and discomfort, a subtle ennui and ataraxia.

The prevailing OSC norm also has some very worthwhile tendencies buried in the above four features:

1 It implies anon-dogmatic, non-authoritarian way of acquiring knowledge.

2 It tends toward equity and social justice in the political and economic organisation of the community.

3 It stresses the acquisition of potentially unlimited skills in creative mastery of the environment - the exercise of human autonomy.

No doubt this section gives an inadequate account of the prevailing OSC norm, and no doubt every aware and intelligent person would give a somewhat different account of it. Yet my assumption is that all these differing individual accounts would have 'a significant area of common overlap.

It is clear that what I mean by an OSC norm is a culturally typical way of being in the world. One of the most powerful CRFs that determine the OSC norm is language and the prevailing objective intension - publicly accepted connotation - of its terms and locutions. The child's perception of the world becomes at a very early stage permeated with the concepts that it acquires with the mastery of language. It sees the world through the conceptual framework imbibed with language; and it relates to persons and things in accordance with social practices that are closely tied in with linguistic norms. There is a certain world-view implicit in our forms of speech, a world-view that commenced with Kepler, Galileo and Newton. Language, as the carrier of the ideology of an epoch, initiates us all into the prevailing OSC.

### The Ambiguity of "Altered": Transcendent and Immanent ASCs

The phrase "altered state of consciousness" can have two rather different meanings. It can mean a state that is quite different from, and other than, my ordinary state: I enter it from my ordinary state and return from it to my ordinary state. Obvious examples of this kind of altered state are dreams and lucid dreams. The altered state is simply time off from my ordinary waking state.

The introverted methods given in this paper also induce altered states of this kind. For all these methods involve turning attention away from ordinary perception of, and everyday activity in, the physical environment. Of course, as time goes by indirect effects upon my ordinary waking state may accrue from the regular practice of the introverted methods. But just as such, the states entered by means of introverted attention are states in which the researcher takes time off from his ordinary waking state.

The other meaning of "altered state of consciousness" is that it refers to a change in my ordinary waking state itself. I am going about my everyday affairs, but in an altered state of consciousness. I am not taking time off from my waking activities, I have just altered the consciousness with which they are engaged. Clearly all the extraverted methods can be used to induce altered states of this kind.

We thus have a basic distinction between transcendent and immanent ASCs. Transcendent ASCs are those which involve temporarily closing down everyday-activity states of consciousness and are directly entered by introverted methods. Immanent ASCs are those which transform everyday-activity states of consciousness and are directly entered by extraverted methods.

However, immanent ASCs may also be indirectly induced as a cumulative by-product of introverted methods. Similarly, transcendent ASCs may be indirectly induced as a consequence of direct address to extraverted methods.

#### Transcendent ASCs

These, as I have said, are states that are turned away from everyday-activity states of consciousness. But within them there is a distinction between states that involve Unitary Consciousness as such, beyond all differentiation and multiplicity; and states that involve differentiated content - especially 1a, 4, 5 and 6, singly or in various combinations, from the list of intentional objects given earlier.

#### Immanent ASCs

A similar distinction applies to immanent ASCs in which everyday-activity states of consciousness are transformed. The researcher may simply perceive through the physical senses and through physical activity that all is One. He apprehends the One Presence in and through the multiplicity of persons and things as perceived. On the other hand he may, in and through his immediate relation with persons and things, apprehend the subtle forces and energies, presences and powers, which at extrasensory levels appear to be significantly involved with the perceptual world.

A comprehensive immanent ASC may be something like this:

1 For immediate perception the world is seen as creative process; emerging out of synchronous and harmonious formative forces and energies; upheld within a unifying Presence; relatively indeterministic (or, which is the same, relatively deterministic), with significant degrees of freedom for innovation and non-predictable change.

2 There is attunement to being as well as doing; to present time; to the process that is emerging now; to what the heart of the human is now undergoing; the intellect is informed by the process, rather than trying to manipulate and evade it.

3 Interpersonal and emotional life can be either disciplined and controlled or cathartic and emotionally open. It can be flexible and imaginative, with rapidity of attaining warmth, intimacy and meaningful interaction.

4 The inner mental life of the individual is experienced as autonomous and self-directing; as continuous on its fringes with the sweep of intelligible energies and influences that inform and sustain the phenomenal world; and as one in essence with all things. It is also experienced as a locus of joy and pleasure in the exercise of its own powers; in the ingress of such influences and such a unifying Presence in itself, in other person and in the world at large.

Well, this may not be very accurate but, as we start to get experiential research into ASCs under way much more systematically than has as yet occurred, then we may start to reshape the conceptual framework or world-view implicit in our use of language and the current prevailing OSC or way of being in the world will start to undergo a slow metamorphosis; retaining, hopefully, in enhanced form those worthwhile tendencies already noted.

#### How to Begin

If the researcher is going to embark on an enquiry that may start to change our whole way of being in the world, how is he to begin? One beginning is the way of authority: the enquirer finds a suitable experienced teacher of method who will tell him what to do and how to do it and will deal with any problems and difficulties that arise from practice. The advantage of this approach is that it can be very helpful to have a guide when entering territory one has never explored before, where the terrain is unlike anything previously experienced. The disadvantage is that the guide may have unjustifiably rigid assumptions about the proper route to take, and these assumptions may distort and limit his map of the territory.

There is a great difference in spirit between an explorer and a follower. The latter may progress relatively smoothly along a well-worn pathway, the former may discover much more about the overall lay of the land although his journey may at times be more confusing and disquieting.

The other beginning, therefore, is the way of exploration. Well-versed in all extant maps and charts, the enquirer takes a fresh look at the territory and makes his own way. There is a guide, of course - the very process of exploration itself. Of all the various methods listed above, for the way of exploration the primary one is what I have called "creative participation": because this method itself applies to the other methods. It has a first-order application to given mental contents, but a further second-order application to the different possible ways of attending to (or disattending from) those contents.

In other words, once I am fully aware of the different possible relevant acts of consciousness in which I can engage - witnessing, concentrating, creatively participating, disidentifying, taking overt action - then the incidence, sequence, timing and emphasis of these different acts can become a matter for the method of creative participation. With this simple array of concepts, I am alerted to an internal technology such that the deeper processes of being become my direct guide.

#### Notes from a Transpersonal Diary

I would like to end this paper by quoting from a Transpersonal Diary which I wrote in the summer of 1974 as a record of a four-week stay in a Greek Island, a period which I devoted intensively to the "way of exploration" of ASCs. A portion of the Diary reviews the different methods, the final one mentioned being that of creative participation as follows:

"He (the solitary meditator) can work with and through them (the given array of mental contents) dynamically, progressively and inspirationally, following the thread of their own internal dynamic toward transcendence. Thus idio-retinal imagery can be developed into clairvoyant exploration; vague yearning can be transfigured into intensely prayerful aspiration; imaginative constructs of inner spaces can be developed into high levels of objective consciousness of such spaces. This spontaneous, dynamic tendency of mental contents toward transcendence, when brought within the ambience of meditative intent is, I suspect, a much neglected aspect of meditative technique. But it is, of course, a psychological presupposition of human beings starting out on meditation practices in the first place. This method I used throughout the whole of the Diary period, not only intermittently on mental contents themselves but also in the selection of the other methods - their timing, incidence, sequencing and their internal construction, innovation and development.

"There is one method about which I am doubtful, would certainly never recommend and would certainly never practice myself, and that is forcible suppression, elimination and weeding out of what are judged to be undesirable and distracting mental contents. It is better calmly and mindfully to take note of the mental shadows, and by noticing them without interference seek to become more aware of the source of the light that throws them into evidence. The more they are dispassionately noticed and studied - without identifying with them - the more that source of light will rise to the zenith of consciousness like a noonday sun, so that its radiance claims all attention and the shadows fall into insignificance and obscurity.

"The particular method - or combination of methods - you use and the way you use them is probably a function of the kind of metaphysic and ethic you or the tradition to which you subscribe - adopts. Thus if you see the phenomenal universe as maya (in the sense of deceptive illusion), then mental contents and their correlative worlds will be seen as something to be transcended and seen through. It is a question of decontaminating consciousness from their influence and impact. The one who has 'attained' in such a tradition is a supreme exemplar of the negative virtues, of which the foremost is non-attachment. He devotes his external efforts to enabling others to find the way to the same kind of tranquil and blissful dissociated passivity before phenomena. The wheel of rebirth is over; the phenomenal universe on every level has been shed like a redundant skin.

"If, on the other hand, you see the universe as an expressive artefact, an evercreating enterprise that is a mode of being of the divine, then mental contents and their correlative worlds will be seen as windows, symbols, cyphers and potential sources of revelation, divine disclosure and creative energy. They are to be seen through in the other sense, that is, not in the sense of realising their distracting illusoriness, but seen through in the sense of penetrating in awareness to their meaning, core, source and creative potential. It is thus a question of enriching consciousness by releasing their sacramental, self-transcending and creative nature. The one who has attained is a supreme example of the positive virtues, of which the foremost is reclamation of the phenomenal. He devotes his external efforts to cooperating with others in the creation of a dynamic, innovative, self-transcending and sacramental social order, as a human artefact within the total artefact of creation."

Postscript

I would like to recommend the formation of groups of explorers - as ' distinct from groups of followers of some teacher, school or method. A group of explorers would meet to explore ASCs, having a clear grasp of the range of internal techniques. The explorers would avail themselves of the extra boost that comes from group work in this field. They would need some skills in group process to reach a consensus on procedures, to monitor group unfoldment and evaluate what occurs. They would need to be free of dogmatism and the insistence that there is only one correct way of proceeding; but they would need wisely to take note of what others have reported. They would need to be psychodynamically competent and open to cathartic episodes.

Finally, what about the researcher's motives? Maybe there are three interdependent motives no one of which is reducible to either or both of the other two, and each one of which requires the addition of both the other two to prevent its own corruption:

- 1 A wish to find out more, experientially and theoretically, about the depth and breadth and height of the total scheme of things.
- 2 A wish to improve the quality of one's personal life and mind.
- 3 A wish to improve the quality of the life and mind of others.

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