

VARIETIES OF TRANSPERSONAL EXPERIENCES: OBSERVATIONS FROM LSD PSYCHOTHERAPY¹

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INTRODUCTION

Until recently the theoretical structures of psychiatry and psychology were based on the observations of a rather limited range of mental phenomena and human experiences. Very little systematic and serious attention was given to a variety of phenomena that have been described over centuries within the framework of the world's great religions, as well as temple mysteries, mystery religions, initiation rites, and various mystical schools. There has been a tendency in contemporary science to label such experiences simply as psychotic and to consider them manifestations of mental illness, because similar or identical experiences can frequently be observed in schizophrenic patients. Such classification has in the past almost precluded unbiased scientific study of these phenomena and acceptance of their possible relevance for the understanding of human personality and the nature of man. When such study was attempted, it focused frequently on peripheral aspects, and inadequate and often superficial explanatory hypotheses were offered by the investigators. This can be best illustrated by Freud's attempts to explain religious phenomena; obviously underestimating the paramount role of firsthand visionary experience for the development of religions, he equated religion with symbolic rituals and tried to explain it in terms of unresolved conflicts of the child's psyche and in terms of infantile sexuality (Freud, 1952).

*contemporary
science and
transpersonal
experience*

In this situation, only some rather exceptional individual investigators have been able to do pioneering work in exploring certain territories of the human mind as yet uncharted

¹This article is based on the presentation given by Dr. Stanislav Grof for the Transpersonal Section of the 1971 convention, Washington D.C.

*pioneering
efforts*

by occidental psychiatry and psychology. William James' (1902) book on the varieties of religious experiences and Marghanita Laski's (1962) book on ecstasy have become classics in the field. Roberto Assagioli, the founder of psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1965), has recognized the experiences mentioned above and integrated them into a comprehensive system of personality theory and psychotherapy. Abraham Maslow (1969) laid the foundations of a new concept of psychology and of the nature of man based on observations of spontaneously occurring peak experiences. In his approach, these experiences are considered as supranormal, rather than pathological phenomena and have important implications for the theory of self-actualization (Maslow, 1964). The most famous and systematic attempt to revise our concepts of the dimensions of human personality was made by Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology (Jung, 1959). Within his system the narrow concept of the human unconscious as described by Freud has been considerably expanded to encompass the collective and racial unconscious and a variety of transindividual primordial experiential patterns, the archetypes.

*a decade of
dramatic change
in psychology
and psychiatry*

The last decade has been a period of rather dramatic changes in the field of psychology and psychiatry, both in theory and in practice. The experimentation with psychedelic substances as well as their widespread abuse has confronted the professionals with a variety of observations and experiences for which the existing theoretical frameworks appeared to be too narrow and inadequate. At the same *time* revolutionary psychotherapeutic techniques have been developed, such as Gestalt psychotherapy, bioenergetics, encounter groups, marathon and nude marathon groups, etc. These new techniques have been able to induce in a relatively short time a variety of experiences that were only infrequently and exceptionally observed in conventional psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy; some of them bear a striking similarity to the phenomena occurring in psychedelic sessions or those described within the framework of various religious and mystical systems. In addition, a variety of laboratory techniques have been developed by which similar experiences can be produced with a reasonable degree of consistency. Such techniques include, for example, sensory deprivation or sensory overload, use of alpha and theta feedback for voluntary control of internal states, new modifications of hypnosis, use of various kinesthetic devices, etc. The picture of this period of transformation and fermentation in psychology and psychiatry would be incomplete without mentioning the striking increase of interest in ancient religious systems and Oriental

spiritual disciplines among mental health professionals as well as laymen.

In the last five years these previously isolated efforts of individual investigators started to converge, and the foundations were laid for a new interdisciplinary approach to the study of consciousness. The annual Conferences on Voluntary Control of Internal States held at Council Grove, Kansas, made it possible for researchers from various scientific disciplines interested in the study of altered states of consciousness to get together for exchange of information and to make the first attempts at preliminary formulations in this new scientific field. Two new journals were established focusing primarily on publications in this area, the *Journal for the Study of Consciousness* and the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. Several of the major professional meetings have had in recent years sections dedicated specifically to lectures and panel discussions on so-called transpersonal psychology. Recently Anthony Sutich announced the birth of a new organization specializing in this field, the Association for Transpersonal Psychology.

new developments in the study of consciousness

However, in spite of the fact that the terms *transpersonal experiences* and *transpersonal psychology* have been used quite frequently in a number of papers and professional discussions, no systematic effort has been made, to my knowledge, to define and describe transpersonal experiences. In this paper I would like to make such an attempt using the observations from my LSD research.

need to define and describe transpersonal experience

For more than fifteen years, experimental research in psychotherapy with LSD and other psychedelic substances has been the major area of my professional interest. During these years, I have personally conducted over 2000 psychedelic sessions and, in addition, had the privilege of access to records from over 1300 sessions run by several of my colleagues in Europe and in the United States. The majority of the subjects in these sessions were patients with a wide variety of emotional disorders, such as severe psychoneuroses, psychosomatic disorders, borderline psychoses and various forms of schizophrenia, sexual deviations, alcoholism and narcotic drug addiction. Another rather large category of these subjects was that of "normal" volunteers-psychiatrists, psychologists, students, and nurses who asked for psychedelic sessions for training purposes; painters, sculptors, and musicians seeking artistic inspiration; philosophers and scientists from various disciplines interested in insights that the psychedelic experiences have to offer; and priests and theolo-

description of author's experimental research in psychotherapy with psychedelic substances

*the psycholytic
and the
psychedelic
approaches*

gians willing to explore the mystical and religious dimensions of these experiences. A small fraction of the sessions were conducted with patients suffering from a terminal disease and facing impending death, in particular with cancer patients (Grof et al., 1971).

During the early years of my LSD research when I worked in the Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague, most of the subjects received repeated medium dosages of LSD (100-250 ug) within the framework of analytically oriented psychotherapy (the psycholytic approach). In psycholytic treatment the LSD sessions are given after 2-3 weeks of preparatory psychotherapy. A psycholytic series can consist of 15-80 LSD sessions usually with an interval of 1-2 weeks between sessions. Intensive psychotherapeutic help is offered to the patient during the drug sessions as well as in the intervals between the sessions. This method represents an intensification and acceleration of dynamic psychotherapy. According to the nature of the emerging unconscious material, Freudian, Rankian, or Jungian approach might be used in various stages of the treatment. Since 1967 when I came to the United States, I have been using mostly high dosages of LSD (300-500mg) in a special set and setting, aimed at facilitating a religious experience (the psychedelic approach). In the latter approach, the use of eyeshades, stereophonic earphones, and music of special selection was an important part of the treatment procedure.

I have spent many hours studying and analyzing the material from the LSD sessions obtained in this research. In several papers (Grof, 1970a, b, c, 1971) and in a book that is in press (Grof, in press), I have tried to conceptualize some of the clinical observations that seem to facilitate the understanding of the LSD reaction and that have a bearing on the theory of psychotherapy and on personality theory. In these papers I have mentioned and briefly described a variety of transpersonal experiences that are without doubt the most interesting phenomena observed in psychedelic sessions. Because of the general nature of these previous publications, a systematic and detailed discussion of transpersonal experiences was not included.

A DEFINITION OF TRANSPERSONAL EXPERIENCE

It seems appropriate to introduce a discussion of transpersonal experiences by an attempt at their definition and description. Transpersonal experience is then defined as an

experience involving *an expansion or extension of consciousness beyond the usual ego boundaries and the limitations of time and space.*

definition

In the "normal," or usual, state of consciousness the individual experiences himself as existing within the boundaries of his physical body (the body image), and his perception of the environment is restricted by the physically determined range of his exteroceptors; both his internal perception and his perception of the environment are confined within the usual space-time boundaries. In psychedelic transpersonal experiences, one or several of these limitations appear to be transcended. In some cases, the subject experiences loosening of his usual ego boundaries, and his consciousness and self-awareness seem to expand to include and encompass other individuals and elements of the external world. In other cases, he continues experiencing his own identity but at a different time, in a different place, or in a different context. In yet other cases, the subject experiences a complete loss of his own ego identity and a complete identification with the consciousness of another entity. Finally, in a rather large category of these psychedelic transpersonal experiences (archetypal experiences, encounters with blissful and wrathful deities, union with God, etc.), the subject's consciousness appears to encompass elements that do not have any continuity with his usual ego identity and cannot be considered simple derivatives of his experiences in the three-dimensional world.

Since the concept of normal or usual consciousness was introduced in the above discussion, it seems appropriate to mention the relationship between so-called altered states of consciousness and so-called transpersonal experiences. Although there is considerable overlap between these two categories of experiences they do not appear to be identical. The term altered states of consciousness encompasses transpersonal experiences; there are, however, certain types of experiences that can be labeled altered states of consciousness, but do not meet the criteria for being transpersonal. For example, a vivid and complex reliving of a childhood memory occurs in an altered state of consciousness, but is not necessarily a transpersonal experience.² The same is true, for example, for various fantasy plays and symbolic experiences resulting from the use of the technique of induced affective

relation between altered states of consciousness and transpersonal experiences

²Even reliving of childhood memories in psychedelic sessions can, however, involve transpersonal elements: in the process of working through a traumatic incident from the past, the Subject frequently has to re-experience the roles of all the participants involved in such a situation.

imagery. Similarly, a primarily esthetic experience involving visions of colors, ornamental patterns, and geometrical structures in psychedelic sessions would have to be labeled an altered state of consciousness, but would not meet the criteria of transpersonal experience as defined above.

DESCRIPTION, DISCUSSION, AND SOME CLINICAL EXAMPLES

In the following text, transpersonal experiences occurring in psychedelic sessions with LSD and other substances will be described, briefly discussed, and some of them illustrated by clinical examples. The question naturally occurs to what extent the definition and description of transpersonal experiences from psychedelic sessions can be applied to transpersonal experiences occurring under different circumstances. All the experimental and clinical evidence indicates that the psychedelic drugs are most likely only catalysts, or unspecific amplifiers activating deep levels of the human unconscious. In this sense, they are truly "mind manifesting" agents and can be seen as important tools for investigation of the human mind. From the phenomenological point of view, it does not seem to be possible to distinguish the experiences in psychedelic sessions from similar experiences occurring under different circumstances, such as instances of so-called spontaneous mysticism, experiences induced by various spiritual practices, and phenomena induced by new laboratory techniques. The multilevel nature and the intensity of the psychedelic experiences make it possible to examine the complex mutual interrelationships among various categories of transpersonal experiences and to study various natural experiential patterns. There seems to be good reason to believe that the description and eventual classification of transpersonal experiences from the data of psychedelic research will be relevant to similar efforts with data on transpersonal experience obtained under a variety of nondrug conditions.

*psychedelic
drugs as "mind
manifesting"
agents*

*similarities
between drug
and non-drug
induced
experiences*

PERINATAL EXPERIENCES

Several rather important types of transpersonal experiences can be referred to as perinatal experiences, because many LSD subjects associated them with or related them to the circumstances of biological birth. From a logical point of view they should still be considered personal experiences because they reflect the early biological history of the individual. There are, however, several reasons for labeling them as transpersonal experiences. They are related to early

*types of
transpersonal
experience
associated with
or related to
biological birth*

periods of development which are traditionally considered beyond the possibility of memory recording or recall. Vivid and complex pictorial reliving of a past event (as compared to a mere recall) is in itself beyond the usual realm of personal experience. In addition, biological and emotional re-experiencing of various facets of the birth trauma represents only one important aspect of the perinatal experiences. The LSD subjects experiencing various perinatal patterns describe quite consistently that they are accompanied by other important categories of transpersonal experiences, such as the experience of spiritual death and rebirth, encounter with the archetypal images of the Terrible Mother and the Great Mother, elements of the collective and racial unconscious, identification with other persons or groups of persons, etc. In the following text the perinatal transpersonal experiences will be described in a sequence corresponding to the stages of delivery from which they can be logically derived. The hypothetical significance of perinatal experiences for personality theory and psychopathology was outlined in previous publication and expressed in the concept of the so-called Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPM) (Grof, in press).

EXPERIENCE OF COSMIC UNITY

This important transpersonal experience seems to be related to the primal union with mother, the original condition of the intrauterine existence during which the child and his mother form a symbiotic unity. The LSD subjects frequently related this experience to the "good womb," an intrauterine experience in the absence of any noxious stimuli. In such a situation the conditions for the child are optimal, involving security, satisfaction of all needs, and undifferentiated ecstatic feelings. The basic characteristics of this experience are transcendence of the subject-object dichotomy, exceptionally strong positive affect (peace, tranquility, serenity, bliss), a special feeling of sacredness, transcendence of time and space, experience of pure being ("eternity now and infinity here"), and a richness of insights of cosmic relevance. This type of tension-free melted ecstasy can be referred to as "oceanic ecstasy." With eyes closed, the cosmic unity is experienced as an independent complex experiential pattern. With the eyes open, it results in an experience of merging with the environment and unity with the perceived objects. It is basically this experience that is described by Walter Pahnke's mystical categories (Pahnke & Richards, 1966) and to which Abraham Maslow refers as "peak experiences" (Maslow, 1969). In psychedelic sessions, it seems to be

*basic
characteristics
of cosmic
unity experience*

closely related to the "good womb" experiences, "good breast" experiences, and to happy childhood memories. It also appears to be a rather important gateway to a variety of other transpersonal experiences, such as ancestral memories, elements of collective and racial unconscious, evolutionary memories, archetypal experiences, etc.

EXPERIENCE OF COSMIC ENGULFMENT

*experiential
pattern related
to onset of
delivery*

This experiential pattern appears to be related to the very onset of delivery. The previous harmony and equilibrium of the intrauterine existence is disturbed, at the beginning by various alarming signals of a biochemical and physiological nature, later by mechanical muscular contractions. This situation is subjectively experienced as an imminent threat of a vital danger. There is a high amount of anxiety, but its source cannot be identified and the atmosphere of insidious danger can result in paranoid ideation. Not infrequently the subject, from the adult level, reports experiencing evil influences coming from members of secret organizations, inhabitants of other planets, noxious radiation, gases, etc. Intensification of this experience typically results in the vision of a gigantic and irresistible whirlpool, a cosmic Maelstrom sucking the subject and his world relentlessly to its center. A frequent experiential variation of this dangerous engulfment is that of being swallowed and incorporated by a terrifying monster (such as a giant dragon, python, octopus, whale, or spider). A less dramatic form of the same experience seems to be the theme of descent into the underworld and encounter with various monstrous entities.

EXPERIENCE OF "NO EXIT" OR HELL

*first clinical
stage of
delivery*

This experience can be logically related to the first clinical stage of delivery, when the uterine contractions encroach on the fetus and cause his total constriction, but the uterine cervix is still closed and the way out is not yet open. This experience is usually characterized by a striking darkness of the visual field and rather sinister and ominous colors. The subjects feel encaged and trapped in a claustrophobic no-exit situation and experience incredible psychological and physical tortures. Typically this situation is totally unbearable and at the same time appears to be endless and hopeless; no possibility of escape can be seen either in time or in space. Typically the subjects feel that even suicide would not terminate it and bring relief.

The experience of agony usually has many biological concomitants (such as concerns about the heart beat, problems *with* respiration, feelings of general oppression, profuse sweating, etc.) and is usually accompanied by fear of death. This immediate and profound encounter with death has two typical consequences: the opening of areas of religious experiences intrinsic to the human personality make-up and unrelated to previous education and background; and a painful existential crisis where all values in human life and the meaning of life itself are seriously questioned.

*experience of
agony, encounter
with death and
typical
consequences*

This experiential pattern can be experienced on several different levels; these levels can be experienced separately, simultaneously, or in an alternating fashion. The deepest level is related to various concepts of hell—a situation of unbearable suffering that will never end, as it has been depicted by various religions of the world. In a more superficial version of the same experiential pattern, the subject looks at the situation in this world and sees our planet as an apocalyptic place full of terror, suffering, wars, epidemics, accidents, and natural catastrophes. Existence in this world appears to be completely meaningless, nonsensical, and absurd, and the search for any meaning in human life completely futile. The world and human existence are seen as though through a negatively biased stencil; the subject appears to be blinded to any positive aspects of life. In the most superficial form of this experiential pattern, the individual sees his own concrete life situation in terms of circular patterns and as *completely* unbearable and *full* of insoluble problems.

*various concepts
Of hell*

Agonizing feelings of metaphysical loneliness, alienation, helplessness, hopelessness, inferiority, and guilt are a standard part of these experiences. The symbolism that most frequently accompanies this experiential pattern involves the crucifixion and the suffering of Christ ("Father why hast Thou forsaken me?") and his visions in the Garden of Gethsemane; the Biblical story of the expulsion from Paradise; images of hells from various religions; the concept of the Dark Night of the Soul; Greek mythological figures from Hades (Sisyphos, Tantalos, Ixion, Prometheus, etc.) as well as Buddha's concept of suffering as expressed in his Four Noble Truths.

The *most* important characteristic that differentiates this pattern from the following one is the unique emphasis on the role of the victim and the fact that the situation is unbearable, inescapable, and eternal—there is no way out either in space or in time.

*unique emphasis
on role of
victim and his
situation*

EXPERIENCE OF THE DEATH-REBIRTH STRUGGLE

*experiential
pattern related
to second clinical
stage of delivery*

Many aspects of this experiential pattern can be understood if we relate it to the second clinical stage of delivery. In this stage the uterine contractions continue, but the cervix stands wide open, and the gradual and difficult propulsion through the birth canal occurs. There is an enormous struggle for survival, mechanical crushing pressures, and a high degree of suffocation. In the terminal phases of delivery, the fetus can experience immediate contact with a variety of biological material such as blood, mucus, fetal liquid, urine, and even feces.

From the experiential point of view this pattern is rather complex; it involves a variety of phenomena on different levels which can be arranged in a typical experiential sequence. The most important characteristic of this pattern is the atmosphere of a titanic fight. Condensation and explosive release of immense energy is experienced, and the subject describes feeling powerful currents of energy streaming through his whole body. Visions typically accompanying these experiences involve various dynamic geometrical images in rich colors, exploding volcanoes or atomic bombs, launched missiles, gigantic fires, dramatic scenes of war, destruction, power plants, hydroelectric stations, high-voltage electrical power lines and flash discharges, cosmic fireworks, etc. A mitigated form of this experiential pattern would involve scenes of wild battles, revolutions, and exploratory adventures (such as the conquest of new continents or the space race).

sexual aspects

Another important aspect of this experiential pattern is excessive sexual excitement frequently mixed with intense aggression. These experiences can be accompanied either by imagery of abstract figures with a sexual and sensual undertone or rather complex scenes of wild orgies, lascivious carnivals, rhythmical sensual dances, harems, etc. Very frequent are visions of sadomasochistic orgies, with enormous discharges of aggressive energy, such as visions of bloody murders, tortures and cruelties of all kinds, executions, fanatical religious mobs mutilating themselves and others, atmospheres of wild battles and bloody revolutions.

*characteristics
that distinguish
death-rebirth
experience
from no-exit
experience*

Several important characteristics of this experiential pattern distinguish it from the previously mentioned no-exit experience. The situation here is not hopeless, and the subject is not helpless; he is actively involved and has the feeling that his striving has a certain direction and goal and that his suffering has a certain meaning. In religious terms, this situation, therefore, would be closer to the concept of pur-

gatory than to that of hell. In addition, the subject does not play exclusively the role of helpless victim; he is an observer and at the same time can identify simultaneously or alternately with both sides. Frequently he can hardly distinguish whether he is the aggressor or the victim. Whereas the no-exit situation represents sheer suffering, the experience of the death-rebirth struggle represents the borderline between agony and ecstasy and the fusion of both. It seems appropriate to refer to this type of experience as "volcanic ecstasy" in contrast to the "oceanic ecstasy" of cosmic union.

Two additional aspects of the death-rebirth struggle should be mentioned in this connection, both belonging to the final stages of this struggle and immediately preceding the experience of rebirth itself. The first of these is often described as passing through a purifying and rejuvenating fire that destroys whatever is rotten and corrupted in the individual and prepares him for the experience of rebirth. The second is scatological in nature and involves rather disgusting encounters with various forms of repulsive biological material, such as feces, urine, sweat, menstrual blood, products of putrefaction, etc. Here, not only visual and tactile elements are involved, but also olfactory and gustatory perception; the subject experiences eating feces, drinking blood or urine, sucking on open putrefying wounds, etc. It is interesting to mention in this connection the far-reaching parallels between these psychedelic experiences and elements of various mystery religions, temple mysteries, and initiation rites. The test by fire and test by repulsive material are rather frequent elements of the latter. For example, the sequence of situations in the initiations of the Hermetic tradition involved a shattering encounter with imminent death, test by fire, test by oily and muddy material, and temptation by sexual seduction (Schure, 1961).

The religious symbolism of the experiential pattern of the death-rebirth struggle is related to religions that glorify or use bloody sacrifice as part of their ceremonies. Rather frequent are visions of scenes from the Old and the New Testament (the crucifixion, Moses and the tablet with the Ten Commandments, Abraham and Isaac), scenes of worshipping Moloch, Baal, Astarte, or Kali, images of ceremonies from various Pre-Columbian cultures involving sacrifice and self-sacrifice, such as in the Aztec, Mayan, or Olmec religion, etc. Visions of religious rituals and ceremonies involving sex and/or wild rhythmic dances are also frequent illustrations of the rebirth struggle; they involve a wide range of scenes related to the cult of Cybele, various

purifying aspects

scatological aspects

religious symbolism

phallic sects, and the tribal religions of the aborigines. A frequent symbol associated with the purifying fire is the image of the legendary bird Phoenix; the scatological aspect of the rebirth struggle is symbolized occasionally by scenes such as Hercules cleaning the stable of Augias, the Harpies contaminating the food of Fineus, etc.

*physical
manifestations*

A typical cluster of physical manifestations regularly accompanying the above pattern of experiences seems to confirm the relation of these experiences to the biological birth trauma. Examples of these physical manifestations are: enormous pressure on head and body, problems with breathing, torturing pains in various parts of the body, cardiac distress, profuse sweating, alternating chills and hot flushes, nausea and projectile vomiting, as well as great generalized aggressive tension discharged in tremors, twitches, jerks, and complex twisting movements.

DEATH-REBIRTH EXPERIENCE

*experiential
pattern and
third clinical
stage of
delivery*

This experiential pattern seems to be meaningfully related to the third clinical stage of delivery. In this stage, the agonizing experiences of several hours culminates, the propulsion through the birth canal is completed, and the extreme intensification of tension and suffering is followed by sudden relief and relaxation. Physiologically, after the umbilical cord is cut, the blood ceases to circulate in the involved vessels, and a new pathway is opened through the pulmonary area. The physical separation from the mother has been completed, and the child starts its existence as an anatomically independent individual.

"ego death"

The death-rebirth experience represents the termination and resolution of the death-rebirth struggle. Suffering and agony culminate in an experience of total annihilation on all levels -physical, emotional, intellectual, moral, and transcendental. *This* experience is usually referred to as an "ego death"; it seems to involve an instantaneous destruction of the previous reference points of the individual. The ego-death experience can be accompanied by images of various deities, such as that of the goddess Kali, Moloch, Huitzlopochtli, Shiva the Destroyer, or experienced in identification with the death and resurrection of Christ, Osiris, Dionysos, etc.

After the subject has experienced the very depth of total annihilation and "hit the cosmic bottom," he is struck by

VISION of blinding white or golden light and experiences freeing decompression and expansion of space. The Universe is perceived as indescribably beautiful and radiant; the general atmosphere is that of liberation, redemption, salvation, love, and forgiveness. The subject feels cleansed and purged and talks about having disposed of an incredible amount of "garbage," guilt, aggression, and anxiety. He feels overwhelming love for other fellowmen, appreciation of warm human relations, friendship, and love. Irrational and exaggerated ambitions as well as cravings for money, status, prestige, and power appear in this state absurd and irrelevant. The appreciation of natural beauties is enormously enhanced, and an uncomplicated and simple way of life in close contact and harmony with nature seems to be the most desirable of all alternatives. Anything of natural origin is experienced with utmost zest by all the widely opened sensory pathways. Brotherly feelings for all fellowmen are accompanied by feelings of humility and a tendency to engage in service and charitable activities.

"rebirth"

The experience of rebirth is frequently followed by what is usually described as an experience of "cosmic union" and seems to be closely related to the "good womb" and "good breast" experiences and happy childhood memories. The individual tuned into this experiential area usually discovers within himself genuinely positive values, such as a sense of justice, appreciation of beauty, feelings of love, self-respect, and respect for others. These values, as well as motivations to pursue them and act in accordance with them, seem to be on this level an intrinsic part of the human personality. They cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of reaction formations to opposite tendencies or as sublimation of primitive instinctual drives. The individual experiences them as intrinsic parts of the universal order. In this connection, it is interesting to point to the parallels with Abraham Maslow's concept of metavalues and metamotivations (Maslow 1969). Typical symbolism for this experiential pattern are visions of radiant sources of light experienced as divine, of a heavenly blue color, of a rainbow spectrum, or of peacock feathers. Rather frequent are nonfigurative images of God, such as the Cosmic Sun or Brahma, or personified representations of God and various deities. The subjects can see the traditional images of the Christian God as an old man sitting on a throne and surrounded by cherubims and seraphims in radiant splendor; they can experience union with the Great Mother or Divine Isis, see the Greek Gods on Mount Olympus drinking nectar and eating ambrosia, etc. Other visions involve gigantic halls with richly decorated

*positive values
as intrinsic part
of the human
personality*

*perfect and
harmonious
physical
functioning*

columns, huge marble statues and crystal chandeliers; beautiful natural scenery, such as the starry sky, mountains, the ocean, flourishing meadows, etc. From the biological and physiological point of view this experience is accompanied by a feeling of perfect and harmonious physical functioning.

EMBRYONAL AND PETAL EXPERIENCES

*episodes
identified
as specific
occurrences
during
intrauterine
existence*

It was mentioned above that the LSD subjects experiencing the oceanic feelings of cosmic unity frequently refer in this connection to intrauterine existence. In addition, it is not infrequent in psychedelic sessions to experience concrete episodes that are identified as specific occurrences during intrauterine development. They are mostly instances of psychotraumatization resulting from disturbing stimuli of a physical or chemical nature. The reports of such relivings cover a wide range from attempted abortions through consequences of maternal disease or dietary trespassing to almost anecdotal descriptions of parental sexual intercourse experienced in advanced stages of pregnancy. Similarly as in the case of childhood memories and birth memories, the authenticity of these recollections is problematic. It seems, therefore, advisable to refer to them as experiences rather than as memories. Occasionally, however, it was possible to get surprising confirmation by independent questioning of the persons involved. Data from the sessions of professionals (such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and scientists from other disciplines) who experienced episodes of intrauterine existence in their LSD training sessions show that they were quite regularly astounded at how convincing, and authentic these experiences appeared to be.

The following clinical example can be used to illustrate the problems involved in trying to verify the authenticity of relived intrauterine experiences in LSD sessions:

*clinical
example*

In one of the LSD sessions of a psycholytic series, the patient described a rather authentic intrauterine experience. He was aware of the fetal body image with his head being relatively bigger than an adult's. He felt immersed in fetal liquid and fixed to the placenta by the umbilical cord. There were two sets of heart sounds with different frequencies and frequent sounds that he identified as related to peristaltic movements of the intestines. On the basis of cues that he was not able to identify, he diagnosed himself as a rather mature fetus just before delivery. Suddenly he heard strange noises coming from the outside. He felt they were distorted by the abdominal walls and the

fetal liquid and had a strange echoing quality. He could hear laughing and yelling human voices and sounds reminding him of carnival trumpets. He started thinking about an annual flower mart held every year in his native village two days before his birthday.

After having put together the mentioned pieces of information, he concluded that his mother must have attended the mart in an advanced stage of pregnancy. The mother confirmed independently that she left home in spite of strong warnings from her mother and grandmother to participate in the mart. This had precipitated the delivery of the patient.

In general, intrauterine experiences are associated with other types of transpersonal experiences. Positive experiences are related to feelings of cosmic unity and images of various blissful deities. Episodes of disturbances seem to be accompanied by visions of demons, wrathful deities, and archetypal evil appearances. A rather frequent concomitant of the embryonal and fetal experiences are phylogenetic (evolutionary) experiences. This liaison occurs even in unsophisticated subjects, who do not know anything about Haeckel's biogenetic law according to which the fetus in its embryonal development repeats, in a condensed way, the history of its species.

*relation of
intrauterine
experiences to
other types Of
trans-personal
experience*

ANCESTRAL EXPERIENCES

In experiences of this type, the subject feels that he is exploring his genetic lineage and reliving episodes from the lives of his ancestors. Sometimes such experiences are related to the relatively recent history of the maternal or paternal family, but occasionally they reach back many centuries. Thus a Jewish subject can experience episodes from tribal life in Biblical times, a person of Scandinavian origin can relive scenes from the adventurous cruises and wild conquests of the Vikings, or an American Negro can witness events from the early history of slavery. Ancestral experiences are usually rather complex, and they represent a mixture of elements ranging from identification with individual ancestors through feeling the psychological atmosphere in the families, clans and tribes, to insights into cultural attitudes, beliefs and prejudices, traditions and customs. Sometimes the subject can acquire illuminating insights into the friction points and incompatibilities between the maternal and paternal lineage and can understand how he has introjected them as his own intrapsychic conflicts.

*exploring
genetic
lineage*

A very important characteristic of ancestral memories that

distinguishes them from the following category (collective and racial experiences) is the convinced feeling of the subject that he is confronted with real elements from his individual history, "reading his own genetic code."

Careful unbiased study of ancestral experiences can occasionally reveal that they contain specific information that was not known or accessible to the subject. One of several unusual coincidences observed during my LSD research can be used as an illustration of the complexity of this problem for the researcher:

*clinical
example*

A female patient treated by psycholytic therapy because of her severe cancerophobia and borderline psychotic symptomatology had in the advanced stage of treatment four consecutive LSD sessions that consisted almost exclusively of scenes and sequences that took place in Prague of the seventeenth century. This time was a rather crucial period in Czech history; after the lost battle of the White Mountain in 1621, which marked the beginning of the Thirty Years' War in Europe, the country ceased to exist as an independent kingdom and came under the hegemony of the Hapsburg dynasty. In an effort to destroy the feelings of national pride and defeat the forces of resistance, the Hapsburgs sent mercenaries to capture the country's most prominent noblemen. Twenty-seven outstanding members of nobility were then beheaded at a public execution on a scaffolding erected on the Old Town Square in Prague.

During her sessions, the patient had an unusual variety of images and insights concerning the architecture of the experienced period, typical garments and costumes, as well as weapons and various utensils used in everyday life. She was also able to describe many of the complicated relations existing at that time between the royal family and the vassals. The patient has never specifically studied this historical period, and special books had to be consulted in order to confirm the reported information. Many of the experiences were related to various periods of life of a young nobleman, one of the twenty-seven members of nobility beheaded by the Hapsburgs. In a rather dramatic sequence the patient finally relived with powerful emotions and in considerable detail the actual events of the execution including the terminal anguish and the experience of agony.

I spent a considerable amount of time in an effort to verify the historical information as well as to understand her experiences in psychodynamic terms as symbolic disguise for her relevant childhood experiences or present life situation. The experiential sequences did not seem to make sense from this point of view, and I finally gave up and forgot this incident after the patient's LSD experiences moved into other areas. Two years later, when I was already in the United States, I

received a long letter from the patient with the following unusual introduction: "Dear Dr. Grof, you will probably think that I am absolutely insane when I share with you the results of my recent private search." In the text that followed, the patient described how she happened to meet her father, whom she had not seen since she was three years old when her parents divorced. After a short discussion, her father invited her to have dinner with him, his second wife, and their children. After dinner, he told her that he wanted to show her his favorite hobby, which she might find of special interest. During the Second World War, it was required by the Nazis that every family present to the German authorities its pedigree demonstrating the absence of persons of Jewish origin for the last five generations. Preparing such a pedigree because of existential necessity, the patient's father became absolutely fascinated by this procedure. After having completed the required five-generation pedigree for the authorities, he has continued this activity because of his private interest, tracing the history of his family back through the centuries. This was made possible by a rather complete system of birth records kept in the archives of parish houses in the European countries.

After dinner, the father showed to the patient with considerable pride a carefully designed ramified pedigree of their family, indicating that they were descendants of one of the noblemen executed after the battle of the White Mountain. After having described this episode in the letter, the patient expressed her belief that highly emotionally charged memories can be imprinted in the genetic code and transmitted through centuries to future generations. The information obtained from her father only confirmed her previous suspicion, which was based on the convincing nature of the relived memories.

After my initial amazement in regard to this most unusual coincidence, I was able to discover a rather serious logical inconsistency in the patient's account. One of the experiences she had in her "historical" LSD sessions was the reliving of the terminal anguish of the nobleman during his own execution. Physical death terminates, of course, the biological hereditary line; a dead person cannot procreate and pass the memory of his terminal anguish to future generations. Before completely discarding the information contained in the patient's letter, however, one fact deserves serious consideration - none of the remaining Czech patients who had a total of over 1600 sessions had ever even mentioned this historical period. In this patient, four consecutive LSD sessions contained almost exclusively historical sequences from this time. The most unusual coincidence of these experiences with the results of her father's genealogical quest make this clinical observation a problem rather difficult to interpret within the framework of the traditionally accepted paradigms.

COLLECTIVE AND RACIAL EXPERIENCES

*episodes from
various cultures
in the history
of mankind*

In advanced LSD sessions of a psycholytic series or in high-dose psychedelic sessions, the subjects frequently experience episodes from various cultures in the history of mankind. This can be associated with rather total and complex insights concerning religion, social structure, moral code, art, and other aspects of the cultures involved. These experiences can be related to any country of the world and any historical period; they seem to be independent of the subject's own racial background, cultural tradition, and even previous training, education and interests. Thus an Anglo-Saxon can experience the history of the Afroamericans, a Jew elements of the Japanese or Chinese tradition, or a person of Slavic origin scenes from the Central American Pre-Columbian cultures.

*insights into the
history of
mankind*

These experiences frequently contain detailed information about various cultural aspects that can be verified by study of archeological sources; occasionally this can concern rather unusual and specific data definitely beyond that known by the subject previously. Such information can, for example, involve details of the mummification of Egyptian pharaohs or the esoteric significance of the pyramids, technical aspects of the Zoroastrian "Towers of Silence," symbolism of the Hindu sculptures and religious ceremonies, etc.

The subject experiences these elements as insights into the history of mankind, as cultural identification, or as illustrations of the cosmic drama; he does not have the feeling of exploring his own individual history that is essential for ancestral experiences.

PHYLOGENETIC (EVOLUTIONARY) EXPERIENCES

*exploring one's
evolutionary
pedigree*

In this type of experience the subject identifies with his animal ancestors on various levels of development; this is accompanied by a realistic feeling that the subject is exploring his own evolutionary pedigree. The identification is rather complex, complete, and authentic; it involves the body image, a variety of physical feelings and physiological sensations, specific emotions, and a new perception of the environment. Occasionally the subjects report insight into zoological or ethological facts that by far exceed the level of their education in natural sciences. In addition, the experiences involved appear to be qualitatively different from human experiences and frequently even seem to transcend the scope

of human fantasy and imagination. The subject can have, for example, an illuminating insight into what it feels like when a snake is hungry, when a turtle is sexually excited, or when a salmon breathes through its gills. Identification is most frequent with other mammals, with birds, reptiles, amphibians and various species of fish. Occasionally, the subjects report identification with much less differentiated forms of life, such as coelenterates or even unicellular organisms. Evolutionary experiences are sometimes accompanied by changes in neurological reflexes and certain abnormal motor phenomena that appear to be related to the activation of archaic neuronal pathways.

"PAST INCARNATION" EXPERIENCES

This is probably the most fascinating and obscure category of transpersonal experiences. The subjects report experiencing in a vivid, dramatic, and convincing way scenes or fragments of scenes that happened at another time and place in history. These scenes usually involve one or several other persons (or less frequently animals) and are accompanied by powerful emotions. The feelings and emotions accompanying these situations are for the most part distinctly negative (physical pain, hatred, anguish, aggression, jealousy, greed, despair, etc.) and only exceptionally positive. They are accompanied by a feeling that these episodes are a reliving of events that actually happened in one of the subject's past lives (in one of his previous incarnations). The opening of this area of experiences is sometimes preceded by the emergence of complex nonverbal instructions about the phenomenon of reincarnation and the law of karma as a perennial law mandatory for each individual. Reliving of these scenes is usually experienced by the subject as "burning of bad karma." The fun conscious reliving of all the painful emotions involved in the destructive karmic scene followed by mutual forgiveness results in a feeling of paramount achievement and indescribable bliss. This is sometimes accompanied by an interesting phenomenon—a subjective experience of a gigantic karmic hurricane, blowing through centuries and tearing the karmic bonds. According to the insights of LSD subjects, the laws of reincarnation seem to be independent of the subject's biological lineage and the genetic transfer of idioplasma. The assignment of an individual spiritual entity to a particular physical body and a specific life seems to bypass biological hereditary lines and violate genetic laws.

*phenomenon of
reincarnation
and the law
of karma*

PRECOGNITION, CLAIRVOYANCE, AND "TIME TRAVEL"

*clairvoyant
visions*

This category of LSD experiences involves those ESP phenomena that are characterized by temporal extension of consciousness. Occasionally the subjects report, particularly in advanced sessions of an LSD series, convincing anticipation of events that will happen in the future. Sometimes they see complex and detailed scenes of future events in the form of vivid clairvoyant visions. Some of these experiences show various degrees of similarity with actual happenings occurring later. Objective verification in this area seems to be a particularly difficult task. The possibility of the *deja vu* phenomenon and of the Subject's distortion in the perception of later events are just two of the major pitfalls involved.

"time travel"

Another interesting phenomenon of this category is the experience of "time travel." The individual has a convincing feeling that he can transcend the limitations of time at will and travel to any specific time period in a way not dissimilar to that described in science fiction about time machines. The subjective feeling of a free decision distinguishes these experiences from elemental and uncontrollable reliving of episodes from childhood, ancestral history or from elements of the racial and collective unconscious. It is usually combined with a similar voluntary manipulation of the location of the events involved.

EGO TRANSCENDENCE IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

*oneness with
another person*

This type of experience is characterized by various degrees of loss of ego boundaries and by merging into union and oneness with another person to the point of experiencing dual unity. In spite of the subjective feeling of total merging with the interpersonal partner, the subject always retains simultaneously the notion of his own identity. In psychedelic sessions this dual unity can be experienced with the therapist; sitter, or other participating persons. It can also occur as a purely subjective experience independent of the actual persons present during the session. Typical examples in this case are the experience of unity with a sexual partner (with or without the element of genital union), the mother-child union, and the experience of oneness in the disciple-guru relationship. This type of experience is typically accompanied by profound feelings of love and of sacralization of the relationship involved.

IDENTIFICATION WITH OTHER PERSONS

Unlike in the preceding type of experience, the subject experiences complete identification with another person and loses to a great degree the awareness of his own original identity. This identification is total and complex; it involves the body image, the full range of emotions and psychological attitudes, facial expression, gestures and mannerisms, postures, movements, and even the inflection of voice. There are many different types and levels of this experience. Reliving of traumatic childhood experiences involving more than one person is frequently characterized by simultaneous or alternating identification with all the participants; this can give a transpersonal flavor to many otherwise typically personal experiences. In this connection, or independently, the subject can experience identification with his close relatives, friends, acquaintances, teachers, political figures, etc. At other times such identification can involve typical representatives of various professional, ethnic, or racial groups, famous historical figures (such as Genghis Khan, Emperor Nero, Hitler, or Stalin) or religious teachers (such as Jesus or Buddha).

*different types
and levels of
complete
identification
experience*

GROUP IDENTIFICATION AND GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS

This category of experiences is characterized by further expansion of consciousness; instead of identifying with individuals, the subject experiences identity with typical groups characterized by their race, religion, profession, or destiny. In this way the subject can experience the role of the Jews persecuted through centuries, of the Christians tortured and sacrificed by the Romans, of the victims of the Spanish Inquisition, members of various religious sects such as the Flagellants or the Russian Skopzy,³ of all the soldiers who have ever died on all the battlefields since the beginning of the world, of all terminal patients or persons dying in accidents, prisoners in concentration camps, members of individual Indian castes or of the total population of India, etc.

*expansion of
consciousness
to groups*

ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION

These frequently occurring experiences can be distinguished from the previously described phylogenetic memories by the absence of the feeling that the individual explores his own developmental history. Otherwise, the identification can be

*differentiation
from
phylogenetic
memories*

³ Skopzy (Russian expression meaning "rams") is a name given to members of a Russian religious sect whose fanatic members used to automutilate themselves by castration.

in all respects as authentic and convincing as in the case of evolutionary experiences; it contains frequently interesting information about animal psychology, ethology, sexual and breeding habits, etc.

*differentiation
from auto-
symbolic animal
transformations*

It is necessary to differentiate these experiences also from the much more superficial autosymbolic animal transformations. In the latter experiences, the subject can symbolize his aggression by identification with a predator (such as a tiger, lion, or black panther), his polymorphously perverted instinctual drives by identification with a monkey, his strong sexual drive by identification with a stallion, etc. These experiences lack the experiential authenticity of phylogenetic memories or of animal identification and can be easily recognized by the subject as a symbolic representation of his own emotions and complexes. The subjects who experienced in a series of consecutive sessions all three experiential varieties—animal autosymbolic transformation, animal identification, and phylogenetic memories—can distinguish them easily by their specific experiential flavor.

PLANT IDENTIFICATION

*experiencing
the basic life
processes of
plants*

The instances of experiencing the consciousness of various plant forms are in general much less frequent than those concerning animal life. The subject may have a unique feeling of witnessing and consciously experiencing the basic life processes of the plants such as germination of the seeds, vegetable growth, pollination, and photosynthesis.

As in the case of some previously mentioned experiences, the subjects repeatedly report that the feeling of authenticity and the special experiential flavor of this experience cannot be appreciated by someone who has not had it. It is this experiential character that makes it difficult to discard these identification experiences as mere phantasies. At this point, it seems difficult to offer a plausible explanation of this phenomenon within the framework of the existing commonly accepted paradigms.

ONENESS WITH LIFE AND ALL CREATION

*identification
with the
totality of
life on this
planet*

In these experiences the subject identifies with the totality of life on this planet. He can then experience the complexity of the phylogenetic development of all life forms, problems related to the survival and extinction of species, or to the viability of life as a cosmic phenomenon.

CONSCIOUSNESS OF INORGANIC MATTER

Not infrequently the LSD subjects experience consciousness of inorganic material; the phenomena they can identify with can range from a single atom to various materials such as diamond, granite, or gold. Sometimes the consciousness of particularly stable and durable substances can be experienced as involving an element of sacredness. Some subjects described, for example, that from this point of view the granite statues of the Egyptians and the Pre-Columbian golden sculptures do not appear as images of deities, but deities themselves; what was worshipped was the stable, immutable, and undifferentiated consciousness of the material involved. In the light of such experiences, the subjects see consciousness as a basic phenomenon existing throughout the universe; the usual human consciousness appears to be only one of its many outgrowths.

*an element of
sacredness*

PLANETARY CONSCIOUSNESS

In this type of experience the consciousness of the subject seems to encompass all the phenomena of this planet, including both organic and inorganic matter. It is a relatively rare phenomenon occurring usually in advanced sessions of an LSD series.

EXTRA-PLANETARY CONSCIOUSNESS

Here the subject experiences phenomena related to celestial bodies other than our planet, existing within our solar system or outside of it. A special type of experience belonging to this category is the consciousness of interstellar space reported independently by several of our subjects. It is characterized by feelings of tranquility, serenity, purity, infinity, and eternity, and unity of all conceivable opposites.

*consciousness of
interstellar
space*

EXPERIENCES, TRAVELING CLAIRVOYANCE, "SPACE TRAVEL," AND TELEPATHY

The experience of leaving one's own body is a frequent occurrence in psychedelic sessions. The subjects describe that they experience themselves completely detached from their actual physical bodies, hovering above them or watching them from another part of the room. Another typical experience of this kind is that of losing contact with one's body and entering various experiential realms independent of the body and physical processes.

*out-at-body
experiences*

*traveling
clairvoyance*

Less frequently does this experience have the form of traveling clairvoyance in which the subject experiences himself at another place in the physical world and can give a detailed description of the situation that he encountered. Attempts to verify such ESP perception can sometimes bring interesting results.

Occasionally, the subject has the feeling that he can actively control such a process, transcend the usual limitations of space and travel at will to any location he chooses. The following example shows the specific difficulties that can occur if the subject tries to experiment with this unusual condition and put the experience to a rigid test.

clinical example

The first three hours of this session were experienced as a fantastic battle between the forces of Light and Darkness; it was a beautiful illustration of the description from the ancient Persian Zend Avesta concerning the fight between the armies of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. It was fought on all conceivable levels—in the cells and tissues of my body, on the surface of our planet throughout history, in the cosmic space and on a metaphysical, transcendental level. Occasionally I had a rather convincing feeling that the battle I was witnessing and experiencing had something to do with the relationship between matter and spirit, in particular with the entrapment of spirit in matter.

After this battle was over, I found myself in a rather unusual state of mind; I felt a mixture of serenity and bliss with the naive and primitive faith of the early Christians. It was a world where miracles were possible, acceptable, and understandable. I was preoccupied with the problems of time and space and the insoluble paradoxes of infinity and eternity that baffle our reason in the usual state of consciousness. I could not understand how I could have let myself be "brainwashed" into accepting the simple-minded concept of one-dimensional time and three-dimensional space as being mandatory and existing in objective reality. It appeared to me rather obvious that there are no limits in the realm of spirit and that time and space are arbitrary constructs of the mind. Any number of spaces with different orders of infinities could be deliberately created and experienced. A single second and eternity seemed to be freely interchangeable. I thought about higher mathematics and saw deep parallels between various mathematical concepts and altered states of consciousness.

In this situation, it suddenly occurred to me that I do not have to be bound by the limitations of time and space and can travel in the time-space continuum quite deliberately and without any restrictions. This feeling was so convincing and overwhelming that I wanted to test it by an experiment. I decided to try traveling to the city of my birth which was several thousand miles away. After visualizing the direction and the

distance, I set myself into motion and tried to fly through space to the place of destination. This effort resulted in an experience of flight through space at an enormous velocity, but to my disappointment, I wasn't getting anywhere. I stopped this activity and reconsidered the situation; I could not understand that the experiment would not work in spite of my convincing feeling that such space travel was possible. Immediately, I realized that I was still under the influence of my old concepts of time and space. I continued thinking in terms of directions and distances and approached the task accordingly. It suddenly appeared to me that the proper approach would be to make myself believe that the place of the session was actually identical with the place of destination. When I approached the task in this way, I experienced peculiar and bizarre sensations. I found myself in a strange, rather congested place full of vacuum tubes, wires, resistors, and condensers. After a short period of confusion, I realized that I was trapped in a TV set located in the corner of the room of the apartment in my native city where I spent my childhood. I was trying to use, somehow, the speakers for hearing and the tube for seeing. Suddenly I understood that this experience was a symbolic expression ridiculing the fact that I was still hung up on my previous beliefs concerning space and matter. The only way of transmitting images at long distances that was conceivable and acceptable for me was based on the use of electromagnetic waves such as in the case of television broadcasting. Such a transmission, of course, is restricted by the velocity of the waves involved. At the moment when I realized and firmly believed that I could operate in the realm of free spirit, and did not have to be restricted even by the velocity of light or other types of electromagnetic waves, the experience changed rapidly. I broke through the TV screen and found myself walking in the apartment of my parents. I did not feel any drug effect at that point, and the experience was as sober and real as any other experience of my life. I walked to the window and looked at the clock on the street corner; it showed a five-hour difference from the time in the time zone where the experiment took place. In spite of the fact that this difference reflected the actual time difference between the two zones, I did not find it convincing evidence. I knew the time difference intellectually, and my mind could have easily fabricated this experience.

I felt I needed a much more convincing proof of whether or not what I was experiencing was "objectively real" in the usual sense. I finally decided to perform a test, to take a picture from the wall and later check in correspondence with my parents if something unusual happened at that time in their apartment. I reached for the picture, but before being able to touch the frame, I was overcome by an increasingly unpleasant feeling that it was an extremely risky and dangerous undertaking. I felt suddenly the uncanny influence of evil forces and a touch of something like "black magic"; it seemed as if

I were gambling for my soul. I paused and started analyzing what was happening. Images from the world's famous casinos were flashing in front of my eyes-Monte Carlo, Lido, Las Vegas, Reno ... I saw roulette balls spiraling at intoxicating speeds, mechanical movements of gambling slot machines, dice jolting on the green surface of the tables during a game of craps, scenes of gamblers involved in baccarat and flickering lights of the keno panels. This was followed by scenes of secret meetings of statesmen, politicians, army officials and top-notch scientists. I realized that I had not yet overcome my egocentrism and could not resist the temptation of power. The possibility of transcending the limitations of time and space appeared to be intoxicating and dangerously seductive. If I could have control over time and space, an unlimited supply of money appeared to be guaranteed, together with everything that money can buy. AI! one had to do under those circumstances was to go to the nearest casino, stock market or lottery office. No secrets would exist for somebody controlling time and space at will; he could eavesdrop on summit meetings of political leaders, read top secret documents and get hold of the most recent scientific discoveries. This would open undreamed of possibilities for controlling the course of events in the world.

I started understanding the dangers involved in my experiment. I remembered passages from different books warning against toying with these powers before the individual overcomes his ego limitations and reaches spiritual maturity. There was, however, something that appeared even more relevant. I found out that I was extremely ambivalent in regard to the outcome of my test. On the one hand, it seemed extremely enticing to be able to liberate oneself from the slavery of time and space. On the other hand, however, it was obvious that something like this had far-reaching and serious consequences and could not be seen as an isolated experiment in voluntary control of space. If I could get confirmation that it was possible to manipulate physical environment at a distance of several thousand miles, my whole universe would collapse as a result of this one experiment, and I would find myself in a state of utter metaphysical confusion. The world as I knew it would not exist any more; I would lose all the maps I relied on and felt comfortable with. I would not know who, where, and when I was and would be lost in a totally new, frightening universe about the laws of which I would have not the slightest notion.

I could not bring myself to carry through the intended experiment and decided to leave the problem of the objectivity and reality of the experience unresolved. This made it possible for me to toy with the idea that I had conquered time and space, while at the same time allowing me, in case the whole thing became too frightening, to see the whole episode as one of many peculiar deceptions due to the intoxication of my brain by a powerful psychedelic drug. The moment I gave up the

experiment, I found myself back in the room where the drug session took place.

I never forgave myself for having wasted such a unique and fantastic experiment. The memory of the metaphysical horror involved in this test makes me doubt, however, that I would be more courageous given a similar chance in the future.

Occasionally, telepathic experiences can be observed in psychedelic sessions. The firm feeling the LSD subject has that he can read the minds of the persons present in the session or that he can tune into people in other parts of the world *is* more frequently a self-deception than an objectively verifiable fact. Besides gross distortions and misinterpretations there are, however, situations that are strongly indicative of genuine ESP communication. Occasionally the LSD subject can be unusually accurate in his awareness of the sitter's ideation and emotions without even looking at him. Two subjects who have the session at the same time can share many ideas or have parallel experiences without much verbal communication and interchange. Exceptionally, a claim made by an LSD subject about telepathic contact with a distant person can be supported by objective evidence obtained by independent investigation.

*telepathic
experiences*

ORGAN, TISSUE, AND CELLULAR CONSCIOUSNESS

In this type of experience, the subject reports a feeling of authentically tuning into the consciousness of a certain part of his body, such as individual organs or tissues (heart, liver, kidney, bone, intestinal mucose membrane, uterine epithelium, etc.) or even individual cells (white and red blood cells, cells of various organs, etc.) The rather frequently reported experience of conscious identification with the germinal cells (sperm, ova) and of the moment of conception belongs to this category. Occasionally this can be associated with interesting insights into biochemical and physiological processes that appear *to* be beyond the scope of the subject's medical education.

*tuning into
consciousness of
parts of the
body*

SPIRITISTIC AND MEDIUMISTIC EXPERIENCES

These rare experiences closely resemble phenomena known from spiritistic seances and occult literature. The subject can, for example, exhibit signs of a mediumistic trance; his facial expression is strikingly transformed, his countenance and gestures appear alien, and his voice is dramatically changed. He can speak in a foreign language, write auto-

*mediumistic
trance*

matic texts, and produce obscure hieroglyphic designs or draw strange pictures and unintelligible squiggles.

*encounters with
astral bodies*

Another experience from this category is that of encounter with astral bodies or spiritual entities of deceased persons or extrasensory communication with them. The following episode from an advanced LSD session of a psycholytic series at the Prague Psychiatric Institute can be used as an illustration:

*example
clinical*

A patient treated by LSD psychotherapy for a complicated psychoneurosis of an obsessive-phobic nature was reliving in one of her sessions an extremely painful traumatic episode from her childhood. Her father was hospitalized for many years in a mental institution for a psychotic condition. When the patient was ten years old, her father suffered a cerebral haemorrhage and was discharged from the hospital to die in the home setting. The patient had to witness the deterioration of her father and was even at his bedside at the time of his terminal agony. In this session she literally regressed back to childhood and became a little frightened girl watching the death struggle of her father. At first she watched his terminal agony, but later started experiencing it herself; in full identification with her father, she approached the moment of physical death. When they crossed the threshold of life and death in this peculiar dual unity, she went into a state of almost uncontrollable panic. It was not possible to communicate with her for at least two hours. After the contact was reestablished, she was able to describe her experience in retrospect:

"After we crossed the threshold of life and death, I found myself in an uncanny and frightening world. It was all filled with fluorescent ether of a strangely macabre nature. There was no way of assessing whether the space involved was finite or infinite. An endless number of souls of deceased human beings were suspended in the luminescent ether; in an atmosphere of strange distress and disquieting excitement, they were sending me nonverbal messages through some unidentifiable extrasensory channels. They appeared unusually demanding, and it seemed as if they needed something from me. In general the atmosphere reminded me of the descriptions of the underworld that I read in Greek literature. But the objectivity and reality of the situation was beyond my imagination-it provoked sheer and utter metaphysical horror that I cannot even start describing. My father was present in this world as an astral body; since I entered this world in union with him, his astral body was as if superimposed over mine. I was not able to communicate with you [the therapist] at all, and it seemed pointless. I was sure that you knew as little about this macabre world as I did, and you could not, therefore, be of any help. It was 'by far the most frightening ex-

perience of my life- in none of the previous LSD sessions did I encounter anything that would come close to it."

EXPERIENCES OF ENCOUNTERS WITH SUPRA-HUMAN SPIRITUAL ENTITIES

Occasionally LSD subjects report the experience of being in the presence of or even identifying with spiritual entities or supra-human beings existing on higher planes of consciousness and higher energy levels. Such beings can appear in the sessions in the role of guides, teachers, and protectors. The subjects can sometimes identify these spiritual entities by name (Jesus, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, etc.),

EXPERIENCES OF OTHER UNIVERSES AND OF ENCOUNTERS WITH THEIR INHABITANTS

These experiences occur extremely rarely in psychedelic sessions. The subjects find themselves in strange and alien universes that do not appear to be part of our cosmos, but exist parallel to it. They report encountering entities inhabiting these alien worlds and experience various dramatic adventures resembling those from science fiction stories and novels.

ARCHETYPAL EXPERIENCES

Even subjects who have not had any previous exposure to C. G. Jung's books and ideas will experience and describe typical Jungian archetypes, especially in advanced sessions of an LSD series. Most frequently this involves experiences of generalized and universalized social roles, such as that of the Martyr, Fugitive, Outcast, Ruler, Tyrant, Buffoon, etc. Other typical categories of archetypal experiences are sacralized roles and images such as the Great Mother, the Terrible Mother, the Great Hermaphrodite, etc. Occasionally the subjects experience complex archetypal situations-that of the Cosmic Man, Golden Age, or Dark Age, etc.

typical Jungian archetypes

EXPERIENCES OF ENCOUNTER WITH BLISSFUL AND WRATHFUL DEITIES

This category of experiences is closely related to the previous one. In a *strictly* Jungian sense the encounters and/or identification with various deities would be considered arche-

encounter and/or identification with concrete deities related to specific cultures

typal experiences. Sophisticated professionals acquainted with Jung's theories who volunteered for LSD sessions seemed, however, to distinguish clearly between the archetypes as previously described and experiences involving concrete deities related to specific cultures. The deities occurring in LSD sessions form two rather sharply defined groups: blissful or light deities and wrathful or dark deities. Typical representatives of the former group are Isis, Ahura Mazda, Apollo, and others; the later group comprises such deities as Kali, Baal, Moloch, Astarte, Huitzilopochtli, etc. The encounter with these deities is usually accompanied by very powerful emotions, ranging from metaphysical horror to ecstatic rapture. The subjects usually do not have the feeling, however, that they are confronted with the Supreme Being or the ultimate force in this universe.

ACTIVATION OF THE CHAKRAS AND AROUSAL OF THE SERPENT POWER (KUNDALINI)

Kundalini yoga and psychedelic psychotherapy

Many experiences in LSD sessions show a striking similarity to those described in various schools of Kundalini yoga as manifestations of activation and opening of the individual chakras. When the subjects are familiar with this Indian concept, they often make specific references to chakras and the Serpent Power (Kundalini). Even in the case of LSD subjects unfamiliar with Indian philosophy and religion, descriptions are often parallel. The system of the chakras seems to provide a useful map of consciousness that is of great help in conceptualizing and understanding many unusual experiences in psychedelic sessions.

An extremely rare and exceptional experience occurring usually in advanced LSD sessions is 111at which resembles the descriptions of arousal of the Serpent Power (Kundalini) in the sacral parts of the spinal cord and the upward flow of spiritual energy resulting in subsequent opening of all the chakras. This culminates in a profound ecstatic spiritual experience related to the highest chakra that the Indians refer to as the Thousand-Petal Lotus.

It is interesting to mention in this connection that in a dis-

sChakras (a Sanskrit term for "wheels") are hypothetical centers of radiation of primal energy (prana) roughly corresponding to certain levels of the spinal cord and certain body organs. Most systems distinguish seven chakras: (1) anal chakra (miiHidhiira), (2) genital chakra (svadisthana), (3) navel chakra (rnanipara), (4) heart chakra (anahara), (5) throat chakra (vishuddha), (6) brow chakra (ajna) and (7) crown chakra (sahasrtra). The flow of prana is mediated by one central conduit (susaumnaj) and two lateral conduits (ida and pingala).

cussion following a paper pointing out the similarities between the LSD experiences and the Indian religions (Grof, 1970a), many of the Indian participants seemed to agree that among all the systems of yoga, the Kundalini yoga bears the closest resemblance to psychedelic psychotherapy. Both techniques can produce profound and dramatic experiences in a relatively short time but involve the greatest potential risk and danger.

CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE UNIVERSAL MIND

One of the most profound and total experiences in psychedelic sessions is often described as "consciousness of the Universal Mind." In it, the subject is convinced that he is experiencing the ultimate force in the Universe. This experience is typically referred to as ineffable and subjects complain about the imperfection and inadequacy of the symbolic structure of the language to describe it. The basic attributes of the Universal Mind as experienced by the LSD subjects can be best expressed by the Sanskrit word *Sat-chit-ananda*; it suggests infinite existence, infinite wisdom, and infinite bliss. Occasionally the experience of the Universal Mind is associated with interesting insights into the process of the creation of the three-dimensional world and into the Buddhist concept of the Wheel of Death and Rebirth.

The experience of the Universal Mind is closely related to but not identical with the experience of cosmic unity described earlier.

THE SUPRACOSMIC AND METACOSMIC VOID

It is the experience of primordial Emptiness and Nothingness, which is the ultimate source of all existence. The terms supra- and metacosmic refer to the fact that this Void appears to be both supraordinated to and underlying the world of creation. It is beyond time and space, beyond any change, and beyond polarities such as good and evil, light and darkness, stability and motion, agony and ecstasy. The experience of the Supracosmic Void in its full depth and metaphysical relevance is a rare occurrence in LSD sessions; it is probably close to the Buddhist concept of nirvanam. As with the consciousness of the Universal Mind, the Void cannot be described in words, but it can be experienced under special circumstances. It is also possible to attain an experiential and intuitive insight into the emergence of the

*basic attributes
of Universal
Mind as
experienced
by LSD
subjects*

*primordial
Emptiness
and Nothingness*

Universal Mind from the Supracosmic Void and into the initiation of the process of creation.

* * *

*difficulties
in further
classification*

Being a first attempt at describing transpersonal experiences occurring in psychedelic sessions, this paper is necessarily incomplete and represents only a brief and sketchy outline of vast territories of the human mind as yet unknown to and uncharted by traditional Western science. Transpersonal experiences are so multifaceted and cover such a wide range of phenomena that it is extremely difficult to find a *principtum divisionis* and present a simple and comprehensive system for their further classification. Using broad descriptive categories such as mystical, religious, occult, and parapsychological seems to be of questionable practical value and, in addition, results in semantic confusion and an overlapping of categories.

*the concept
of "depth"
of the un-
conscious*

One possibility would be to introduce the concept of "depth" of the unconscious; various categories of these experiences would then refer to the level of the unconscious at which they originate or reflect the degree of difficulty in eliciting them by means of specific techniques. Such an approach would require a proof that such stratification really exists as well as a reliable system of defining the depth of various experiences.

*ancient
systems*

It might be possible to use one of the existing ancient systems that have developed a detailed map of consciousness, such as the Indian system of the chakras. It is very difficult, however, to clarify these systems and separate them from their underlying ideologies in such a way as to make them acceptable to wide professional audiences in the West.

*an
interesting
possibility*

An interesting possibility would be to choose a system of classification based on the distinction of whether or not the content of the transpersonal experience consists of elements of the phenomenal world (or "objective reality") as we know it from our usual state of consciousness. Some of the transpersonal experiences involve phenomena the existence of which has been generally accepted on the basis of consensual validation, empirical evidence, or scientific research. This is true, for example, for perinatal, intrauterine, ancestral, and phylogenetic experiences or elements of collective unconscious. It is not the content of the experience that is surprising, but the existence of these elements in the human unconscious and the possibility of experiencing them

in a rather realistic way. The category of transpersonal experiences of this sort can be further subdivided on the basis of whether the extension of consciousness that they involve can be understood in terms of alteration of the dimension of time or space.

There exists also a group of ESP phenomena that could be classified as transpersonal experiences, the content of which is understandable within the framework of "objective reality." In the case of precognition, clairvoyance, "time travel," out-of-body experiences, traveling clairvoyance, "space travel," and telepathy it again is not the content of the experiences that is unusual but the way of acquiring certain information or perceiving a certain situation that according to generally accepted scientific paradigms is beyond the reach of the senses.

The second broad category of transpersonal experiences would then involve phenomena that are not part of "objective reality" in the Western sense. This would apply to such experiences as communication with spirits of deceased human beings or suprahuman spiritual entities, encounter or identification with various deities, etc.

The following tentative classification is based on the principle described above:

TRANSPERSONAL EXPERIENCES

I. EXPERIENTIAL EXTENSION (OR EXPANSION) WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF "OBJECTIVE REALITY"

A. *Temporal Expansion of Consciousness*

Perinatal Experiences

Cosmic Unity

Cosmic Engulfment

"No Exit" or Hell

Death-Rebirth Struggle

Death-Rebirth Experience

Embryonal and Fetal Experiences

Ancestral Experiences

Collective and Racial Experiences

Phylogenetic (Evolutionary) Experiences

"Past Incarnation" Experiences

Precognition, Clairvoyance and "Time Travels"

B. *Spatial Expansion of Consciousness*

Ego Transcendence in Interpersonal Relations
Identification with Other Persons
Group Identification and Group Consciousness
Animal Identification
Plant Identification
Oneness with Life and All Creation
Consciousness of Inorganic Matter
Planetary Consciousness
Extra-Planetary Consciousness
Out-of-Body Experiences, Traveling Clairvoyance,
"Space Travels" and Telepathy

C. *Spatial Constriction of Consciousness*

Organ, Tissue, and Cellular Consciousness

II. EXPERIENTIAL EXTENSION (OR EXPANSION) BEYOND
THE FRAMEWORK OF "OBJECTIVE REALITY"

Spiritistic and Mediumistic Experiences
Experiences of Encounters with Supra-Human Spiritual
Entities
Experiences of Other Universes and of Encounters with
Their Inhabitants
Archetypal Experiences
Experiences of Encounter with Blissful and Wrathful
Deities
Activation of the Chakras and Arousal of the Serpent
Power (Kundalini)
Consciousness of the Universal Mind
The Supracosmic and Metacosmic Void

*interrelations
between various
types of
transpersonal
phenomena*

It is necessary to bear in mind that transpersonal experiences, in particular in psychedelic sessions, do not always occur in a pure form. It was mentioned before that, for example, perinatal experiences are frequently accompanied by other types of transpersonal experiences, such as identification with other persons, group identification, some archetypal experiences, or encounters with various deities. Similarly, the embryonal experiences can occur simultaneously with phylogenetic memories and with the experience of cosmic unity, etc. This seems to reflect deep intrinsic interrelations between various types of transpersonal phenomena as well as the multilevel nature of the psychedelic experience.

Whatever may prove to be the most fruitful approach to the

problem of future classification, it is hoped that the attempt in this paper to define and describe transpersonal experiences on the basis of observations from psychedelic sessions will attract the attention of more professionals to the area of transpersonal experiences. Systematic research of these most unusual phenomena could dramatically change our concepts of man and be of unforeseen relevance to the psychiatry and psychology of the future.

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LSD Psychotherapy book. Read 15 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. The sensationalism surrounding the widespread use of LSD in the 1960s. Building on his observations while conducting LSD research and on Otto Rank's theory of birth trauma, Grof constructed a theoretical framework for pre- and perinatal psychology and transpersonal psychology in which LSD trips and other powerfully emotional experiences were mapped onto the psyche—the field of psychedelic psychotherapy. Being the founding president of the International Transpersonal Association (founded in 1967), Grof is known for his early studies of LSD and its effects on the psyche. Transpersonal experiences occur only rarely in early sessions of psycholytic therapy; they become quite common in advanced sessions after the subject has worked through and integrated the material on the psychodynamic and perinatal levels. After the final experience of ego death and rebirth, transpersonal elements dominate all subsequent LSD sessions of the individual. Occasionally, transpersonal experiences can occur in the culmination periods of the first high-dose session of psychedelic treatment. The common denominator of this otherwise rich and varied Transpersonal Experiences; Observations from LSD Psychotherapy. Journal of Transpersonal Psychology 1972, IV, 45-80. 3) Martin, A Joyce. A Case of Homosexuality and Character Disorder in a man of 37 treated by LSD and Resolved within Four Months. Abstract only (one paragraph) published in: Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics 1967, 15, 44. I, " II I.