ABSTRACT

SURRENDERING TO LIFE:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENTIAL AND
THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS OF HUMAN TRANSFORMATION

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The purpose of this paper is to explore what has been said theoretically in the field of religious psychology about human transformation and compare it to lived experience. Does the paradigm through which transformation is viewed affect one’s perception of the process? What are the characteristics of the process? How does lived experience compare with the theoretical constructs? What does life say about the process? The work is set in the context of a life quest. The body of the work consists of a few major parts:

I. Experiential aspects - the journey of growth is described in terms of personal experience.

II. Theoretical constructs - accounts of academically respected views of transformation within the context of religious psychology.

III. Conclusions - the fruition of the growth process inherent in this research is reported in reference to other telling observations.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ iv

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................... 1

PART

I. THE EXPERIENTIAL ASPECTS .......................................................... 4

   Childhood Absolutism ................................................................................ 8
   Beginnings of Growth .......................................................................... 11
   Journey to Acceptance ....................................................................... 13

II. THE THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS ................................................ 22

   William James ...................................................................................... 22
   John Dewey ......................................................................................... 28
   Thomas S. Kuhn ............................................................................... 31
   Abraham H. Maslow .......................................................................... 34
   Gordon W. Allport ............................................................................. 43
   June Singer and Eugene Pascal on Carl Jung ................................. 48
   Robert Jay Lifton .............................................................................. 59
   Paul W. Pruyser ............................................................................... 67
   Ken Wilber ......................................................................................... 69
   Michael Kearney .............................................................................. 73

III. CONCLUSIONS ................................................................................... 78

WORKS CITED ............................................................................................................. 96
INTRODUCTION

This paper is the culmination of a lifelong fascination with human transformation. It has always been a subject that both attracted and repelled me. The paradoxical nature of my response to the very concept offers a clue that it is a source of great meaning for me and thus exerts a powerful influence on my understanding of reality.

There is a vast difference, however, in what transformation looked and felt like when I was a child and what it looks and feels like today. What accounts for these differences in perception? Is it a matter of age? Is it a process of growth in wisdom? How does my experience compare with that of others? How have the traditional scholars of religious psychology defined and described human transformation over the years?

These are the questions from which this paper springs. That the answers it generates will be longstanding and complete is doubtful. The one thing that has become abundantly clear, as a result of both my lived experience and the research that I have done for this paper, is that the process of transformation itself is a dynamic of such magnitude that it defies any description or definition that is set in stone. The meaning of transformation, it seems more appropriate to say, is discovered, unfolding as life is manifested, present moment by present moment.
I am aware that the term transformation can apply to change of either a negative or positive character, and that transformations do occur which can cause isolation, separation and disintegration. I hesitate to assign a moral value to the term, but in this paper I will use it in the more positive sense of change in the direction of growth, manifested by a more inclusive, more relational and more accurate vision of the complexity of life. My understanding of transformation is that of a dynamic process, by which we become ever more fully human. In the process we are more able to discover, apprehend, understand and respond to reality as it is encountered in our lives. It is the process by which we become more enlivened, more open to the paradoxical, more integrated, more relational and more able to engage the mystery which surrounds us. The changes that we encounter are continuous, always inviting us to growth, but the invitation requires our response, possibly only in the form of an attitude of openness and receptivity. The process can also be marked by extraordinary moments of irrupting grace, experienced from both within and/or without, which change our very character by altering our perception so that even the most ordinary moments are experienced more intensely. The courage required to risk the process can be nurtured by the presence of a supportive community which grounds the individual by its affirmation.

I will begin, where all of my reality ultimately has to begin, in the ground of my own experience. The understanding of transformation that I had as a child involved an instantaneous change of everything, within and outside of myself, that would be miraculously accomplished and make everything perfect (by my criteria, of course). Gradually, as I came to know and understand more about myself and the world, transformation
became an acceptance of both the world and myself as flawed but still worthwhile. Now, beyond mere acceptance, transformation calls me to an understanding that allows me to celebrate what is and to enjoy all of reality, flaws included, as gift and challenge, the blessing and the curse.

I will explore the theoretical constructs and understandings of some of the scholars of the field of religious psychology on the topic of transformation, and compare and contrast their findings with each other and with those of my own experience. Finally I will attempt to draw the threads together to articulate what I have learned from the whole of the research in light of my experience.
PART I

THE EXPERIENTIAL ASPECTS

The cycles of my childhood years were inextricably woven into the Catholic traditions, holidays and devotions; and my understanding of my childhood and the meaning of my life cannot be separated from the powerful influence of these beliefs. All the transformation that has occurred since then springs from those myths and stories in which my life is grounded.

My earliest memories of a religious nature are of a shady, overgrown garden with a tall hedge. It was the side entrance to a small brick building with warm yellow walls and dark woodwork. I remember standing on tiptoe to see over the pew, sunlight streaming in the windows, watching the shadows play on the faces of the statues that seemed to come alive for me in the changing light. When I was still quite small our parish built a huge new church, and some of the warmth seemed to go out of the experience. The walls were pink marble, still a warm welcoming color, but everything was shiny and hard and far away in the new building. Even the entry way seemed sterile to me, with the correct new landscaping of small bushes and flowers.

Both my parents were wonderful storytellers. On Saturday mornings my sister and I crawled into bed with my Mom and Dad, and spent the morning listening to stories
of growing up on a farm, the antics of his pets, and his years as a Boy Scout and troop leader, and her stories of our illustrious forebearers. My Mom told us of our strong and heroic great, great, great-grandmother, Lady Mary Galway, who crossed the ocean with her nine children to try to provide a life for them away from her English husband who was “no good.”

Her grandson, my Mom's grandfather, was an entrepreneur who invented corrugated cardboard and made Henry Ford “cool his heels” on the steps of St. Joseph Church. Ford had come to Sandusky one Sunday morning for a ride on the steam tractor that my great-grandfather had brought back with him from the World's Fair in Paris. My great-grandfather wouldn't miss Mass though, no matter who was in town, and so Henry Ford had to wait until Mass was finished for his first ride on a tractor.

These stories of my family, and all of the stories of the saints, filled my head and my dreams with models toward which to direct my own transformation. I had wonderful detailed ideas about what life should be like, but I really wasn't much interested in what life really was like.

My family was very devoted to the Virgin Mary and from my earliest days we said a daily rosary and went to the novena services on Monday evenings. My Mom had polio as a child, and walked on crutches. She lost her hearing quite suddenly when I was seven, and I eagerly devoured the stories of miraculous cures in the back of the novena booklet. I believed firmly that if I prayed long enough and hard enough we, too, would write our story for the little book. This belief led to any number of rituals on my part, saying one ejaculation of “Jesus, Mary and Joseph” for every step on the way to and from
school, or singing the hymns to the Sacred Heart as I pushed the lawnmower across the yard. But it seemed that I could never quite concentrate enough, and would be distracted by friends or passing cars, or even the trees that shaded the sidewalk. In my childish version of control, everything depended on me, and I was never quite good enough to pull off the cure.

Although I had a happy childhood, and a fairly normal one, I grew up in a hurry, as one can in a family where there is a seriously disabled member. Somehow, it was the things I did that gave me worth or made me worthless in my eyes, and this, together with an innate perfectionistic, streak kept me expending endless energy trying to control my world.

Transformation for me was what would happen when I was finally good enough, capable enough, smart enough... whatever. In my rejection of the world as I perceived it, transformation became the manner by which redemption would be accomplished and through which salvation was obtained. Each night at bedtime when the day was over and replaying in my head, I would analyze my behavior and my choices and come up with wonderful plans for how strong and good I would be tomorrow. If it all had ever worked out we would have had my personal picture of heaven on earth. God played a part in this somehow, but I have an idea that as authoritarian as I believed God to be, he could never be as disapproving or judgmental of me as I was of myself.

I don't recall doing a lot of planning about my temporal life. I was too concerned with my eternal destiny to pay too much attention to what was going on most of the time. I went to school, did my homework and chores, fulfilled the expectations of the people I
loved, and went to bed every night with the firm commitment to be transformed into a perfect person making a perfect world the next day. Transformation was my job then, another way to control, certainly the only way to ever live up to my own rigorous standards. My world was one of absolutes, worthwhile or worthless, sufficient or insufficient, and I was too much of a realist to be able to convince myself that things were okay. I had no understanding of life as a process and very little patience with my inability to change myself and everything else.

I grew up in a suburb on the south side of Cleveland. The area was settled mostly by the Ukrainian Catholic community, whose church property adjoined our back yard, and although there were some people from our parish, St. Francis, on our street, most of the children with whom I played were from Ukrainian families. My sister and I had to be especially well-behaved to maintain these friendships because there was no question that in their eyes we were “outsiders.”

The nuns at school cautioned us about “them” also, and we weren't to step on their church property on the way to and from school. The Ukrainian children were crossing the street and guarding the buses which left the school driveways as we walked home from our school, but even if my Ukrainian friends were there we were not allowed to speak to each other until we had turned the corner of our street, out of sight of the watchful, protective eyes of the sisters who taught at their school.

All of this protection seemed strange to me at the time, but it only took one hard look from someone to make me compliant. I think I believed that lightning would strike if I ever disobeyed anyone. But one afternoon in the hot and sticky boredom that
accompanied a summer vacation lasting far too long, I wandered over the field behind my home to look in the schoolroom windows. There was a young nun, indistinguishable from the ones in my school, decorating her cork boards. She asked if I would like to help her and the thought of lightning never crossed my mind as I ran around the building to the door.

This seditious behavior continued for the rest of the week until school began. One afternoon she asked me to carry an envelope from the annex to the office, next to the open door of the church, and in my bold self-assurance I peeked in as I went by. The church was just like ours too, down to the little red candle in the sanctuary. God, I thought, might not even be able to tell the difference. There was nobody to admit my sin to though, since the rule held at St. Francis, my grade school, and I had to be content with the thought that maybe I had figured out something that our nuns hadn't. Was God in both churches? This early experience caused a general mistrust of authorities who told me not to go places, or do things with certain people. The prejudice just didn't sound like God's idea. Could nuns be mistaken?

My task in life was to obey the rules and get the rewards (eternal), but I was definitely aware of a hierarchy of beings and I saw myself on the bottom of the heap. Confession was torture in those days, when I needed to admit to another human being that I wasn't good enough. But I believed in the grace that I was told I received and went often, to clear the slate and be allowed to start over again being “good enough.” All of this receded in my teenage years, when it became obvious that my pattern was to have all the best intentions, fail mightily, and have to start all over again. I thought of becoming a
nun; in those special clothes, with those special graces of giving up my life for others; maybe then I could be good. But we saw a movie called *The Nun's Story* that brought all those visions to an abrupt end. In the movie, the young sister was working in an insane asylum and was brutally attacked by an inmate. The outside possibility of something like that happening was enough to squelch any budding vocation in me.

I took in every rule and teaching, incorporating them into my way of being. For a God who was supposed to be in charge, though, he didn't seem to be able to control things the way I expected. Prayers went unanswered, and the rest of the world seemed to have as hard a time being "good enough" as I did. We all knew, it seemed, how things *should* be, but they never *were*.

I worked as a volunteer in a home for cancer patients during my high school years and decided that if I couldn't be a nun, at least I could do what they did: care for sick people. The Church would still support me and bless this profession, according to the corporal works of mercy that it mandated. I left home for Cincinnati and Good Samaritan Nursing School. In those days, it was similar to a convent, with the strictly enforced curfew of 7:30 pm on week nights and 11:30 on weekends. I had simply exchanged my parents' authority for that of Sister Andrew who had the same high expectations of my behavior.

My father died suddenly while I was at school, but my faith in heaven was sure and simple enough that I did not grieve for him. I grieved for us, left without him, and worried about what would happen to my Mom, who had always been the one who had to be cared for. She is a survivor, though, made of the same stuff that filled the lives of the
women that came before her with the passions of bliss and tragedy. She provides a model of patient endurance and fidelity that continues to teach me endless lessons.

I loved my work in Intensive Care, where the pattern of crises that I perceived in the world were mirrored in the acute illnesses of the patients. They either got healthy enough to transfer out of the unit, or they died. Everything that I did there was a matter of life and death, which was just the way I pictured the rest of my world in metaphysical terms.

God was still a loving Father, and although I didn't ever measure up to the expectations I thought he had of me, he always gave me a new morning to start again. We were on close and personal terms, though, and I was disrespectful enough to let him know exactly what I thought of every situation to which I was exposed. During my psychiatric rotation I cared for a woman who was deeply depressed and suicidal. We circled the Unit, hour after hour, day after day, and all she ever said was the Act of Contrition. I remember going back to the dorm screaming at God in my head for not somehow letting her know that she was forgiven. It was his fault, of course, being Almighty and All Powerful, and I would not forgive him easily for this intractable behavior which I couldn't justify or understand.

But all this time the real transformations were occurring, working in mysterious ways, totally out of my control. People have always been my saving grace, but there is one who is particularly redeeming. I met a wonderful man who had no respect for the world of absolutes I lived in. He beckoned the soul of me that was so tightly bound up that I never dreamed it was there.
Jim was a student at Xavier and we studied together just to share as much time as possible with each other. I taught him the anatomy and physiology of the eye, while he exposed me to the existentialism of Sarte. He was pretty sure that God put everything in motion and then left us to fend for ourselves, and I was sure that lightning bolts were forthcoming directly. These were interesting ideas to me, but had nothing to do with real life and what I knew were the real Truths that I had been taught and was determined to live by.

We were married and started a family. Then came the children to be responsible for! Jamie and Andy were both healthy, wonderful gifts, and after all my time in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit, I was acutely aware of just how amazing the gift was. But now, besides myself to be good enough, I had to be sure that they were good enough too.

We had moved to Wisconsin, away from family and friends, so most of my life revolved around the kids. My new community of support grew up from the mothers and fathers of the children they played with. These people had different kinds of backgrounds than the sheltered one of my childhood, and definitely broadened my horizons. We talked over coffee about our belief systems and I was gifted on innumerable occasions in innumerable ways by these points of view that were sometimes completely opposite from mine.

These were the early years of the Post Vatican II influence, and one of my friends was involved in the Charismatic Renewal group at our parish. She invited me to a meeting and I went, but only after asking the parish priest if this was an “approved group.” (After all, one can't be too careful!) In his wisdom, he told me that I should try
it, and that if God was calling me to a different relationship I would certainly not want to miss the opportunity to grow into it.

It was the beginning of a whole new way of thinking for me, this idea that I could and should choose my path and trust that what I was exposed to could be honestly evaluated in the light of the experience itself. I went through a "Life in the Spirit" seminar and continued to be involved in the prayer group regularly. We only remained in Wisconsin another six months, then returned to Ohio. The warmth of those caring people in Wisconsin gave me both the courage to risk all kinds of new experiences and the conviction that there would be caring people wherever I ended up geographically.

My new parish in Vandalia didn't have a prayer group, but looking for one got me heavily involved in everything it did have. I was on the Worship Commission, in the Scripture Study group, and began to teach CCD classes. To become certified to teach I took the classes the Archdiocese of Cincinnati offered and loved the exposure they gave to new ways of thinking about religion, faith, and values. The only drawback to the classes was that they were only six to ten weeks long. The class was over before I had figured out what the majority of my questions were.

My friends and I would have long, involved discussions about authors and ideas and how to integrate our new beliefs with the old. But somehow the thirst for knowledge and understanding just got stronger. I became a willing victim of that common and blessed plague of humankind: the more I learned, the more I realized I didn't know, and began to understand the quest that I was on.
The thinking of Matthew Fox and Dick Westley was good news (gospel) to one steeped in original sin and yet appreciative of the basic goodness of the people who had touched my life, but integrating them into my historically absolutist thinking was food for endless reflection. One particular book catalyzed the next step in my growth. The present pope had given a retreat to the recently deceased Pope Paul VI, and I read it one summer. His devotion to Mary was evident in every page. After a childhood of believing, I had given up on the traditional role of Mary as model for motherhood. There would be no challenge to the job, to my way of thinking, if you were the mother of God! What could she possibly understand about the problems I faced every day? So this book by the present pope made me wonder how it was that he could believe what he believed, and I could believe what I believed and we could both still be Catholic (this is part of the paradox still comes up frequently, when I read his pronouncements). But he was the pope! And who was I?

I decided to enroll in the Religious Studies Program at the University of Dayton. Somewhere, I still believed, there would be answers to all my questions and this would be a place to start. I had devoured books all my life, always looking for the answer, the way to live, The Truth. But as I learned more about human beings in general, and different personality types, the stories that we tell, and why we tell them, I began to get some badly needed perspective on my own life. Religious studies, philosophy, history, and literature all helped me to begin to cut the world some slack, to begin to see the process of it all, and to begin to have some patience with it.
Learning about the enneagram and the different personality types helped me immensely to understand the positives and negatives of unique personalities, and the necessity of both pieces. Beginning to accept my passion for perfection as not just a curse, but a gift of endless energy to work for change helped me to start to appreciate the dynamic of life that I was participating in.

More importantly, I began to take time to play for the first time since childhood. Transformation had turned out to be a full-time, lifetime occupation it seemed. But as Peter Berger puts it, in *A Rumor of Angels*, “in joyful play it appears as if one were stepping not only from one chronology into another, but from time to eternity” (73). Learning from my children, how to surrender to the magic of play allowed for the suspension of that burden that made room in me for acceptance.

I could finally begin to see the humor within and around me, assess the ridiculous gut reactions that would surface spontaneously if I allowed them to. And I could instead, choose a more measured response. Because I am basically a gut reactor; allowing the intellectual part of myself to come into play modified and softened the reactions and made me much more human.

Through all of this exploration Jim was patient and present. I would come home all excited by something I had learned that day and it was inevitably something that he'd learned 20 years earlier at Xavier. He told me once that today was as perfect as it could be. I can close my eyes and be there. It was such an outlandish statement that I still feel the shock and delight of it 20 years later. He taught me that the mats on the floor of the car were to put your feet on, not to put in the trunk until you were ready to sell the car.
My friend, my lover, my husband, he gently tugged at the knots of my perfectionism and began to weave them into a thread of appreciation for the present moment.

When my youngest child, Sarah, was three years old I decided to go back to my career in nursing. It was a watershed decision in many ways. As my first experience in a hospital that was not Catholic, the job exposed me to people of all kinds. My mentor, who walked with me through the experience of orientation and the first six months in the Intensive Care Unit, was openly gay, and one of the most caring and competent nurses I have ever known. The year that I went back to work, the first young men with AIDS arrived in our unit. Being the new kid on the block I pulled all the jobs nobody else wanted, and with no knowledge of the actual physiology of the disease, or the way it was contracted, NOBODY else wanted these patients. I became intimately involved, for the first time, with members of the gay community, privy to their greatest hopes and their deepest fears, as I cared for their needs day in and day out.

I had never met a gay person before, but was indoctrinated by my culture from my very earliest years to hate and fear them. Nobody that I can remember actually said they were bad, but the experience of having my mouth washed out with soap for calling a playmate “queer” made the inference perfectly clear in my mind. The subject had come up, of course, in the bible study groups that I was in, and we all know what the bible says about homosexuality. This all ran contrary to the experience that I was having at work, listening to these patients pour out their stories as they came to grips with the terminal illness they faced.
What I had understood from my culture about these people was wrong, and I couldn't hate and fear them anymore. I was angry that I had bought that lie and believed it all my life. What other things was I buying and believing without question? So began the domino effect in my religious life. Because of that one issue, I had to examine all the others to see if the teaching matched the experience, and if I hadn't had the experience and couldn't get it, I had to find someone I trusted who had.

God, for me, has always been revealed in people, and about this time we started a Christ Renews His Parish Program at St. Chris. The program was primarily a community building experience, starting with a shared weekend of renewal and then continuing with weekly meetings in which the women in the group learned to share their histories and journeys of faith in the safety of a small faith-sharing group. At the end of six months, we put on a renewal weekend for another team of women and they began the process.

I thrived in this environment of community and threw myself into the process wholeheartedly. After the formation period of our group had finished, I was invited, and attended classes to become a lay process director. This meant going through the formation period with seven other groups. It was a very empowering experience for me. My role was to make sure that the process was intact, but beyond that I was only there to enjoy the community and have had the benefit of a deep and intense relationship with hundreds of women. The program has ended at our parish now, but the ties that formed because of it have not ended. And I have been allowed to share in the lives of so many wonderful people. This experience has been a hopeful and positive one, disclosing Sacred Mystery in countless ways.
Some of the most transforming moments in my life were connected with the storytelling that happened because of my involvement in the parish. When I was in a workshop one afternoon for lectors and Eucharistic ministers the presenter told the story of “The Rabbi in the Woods.” It is a simple story, only a few pages written down, or maybe three minutes spoken. But it has a powerful message of Incarnation that burned a mark within me. Later that week I saw the presenter again and asked her if she could tell me where I could get a copy of the story. She said that she had one in her office that she would send me, but when it arrived it was a totally different story.

I scoured the books on Hasidic tales in the university library but never found it. I carried it in my memory for about five years telling it over and over in my head so as not to lose any of it. One day in a bookstore I picked up Scott Peck’s book on building community and he had used the story of “The Rabbi in the Woods” for his preface. I felt like what people talk about when they find lost family or “the pearl of great price.” For years afterward, I used that story for renewal groups and workshops and it has never had enough impact for anyone to ask me for a copy of it. What was it that touched me so? Was it only a moment of vulnerability when I desperately needed to hear about the grace of the Divine becoming human so that the human could become Divine? The story still empowers me today.

Another story that precipitated a transformational moment for me was a representation of the loaves and the fishes. The story wasn't even told actually, but was mimed. At one point the storyteller broke a bagel and handed the two halves to the two people closest to him. No words were spoken, remember; he just handed us the bread. The two
people sat for a moment, looking at the bread, and then broke off a piece and handed it to the person closest to them. As the bread made its way around the large group of people the pieces that were shared became smaller and smaller. As this happened, the people that had broken off the first pieces got up to break their larger pieces into smaller ones so that there would be enough for everyone. All at once it was crystal clear to me that the multiplication of the loaves and fishes wasn't ever about making more, but it was about everybody being content with less. In an incredible moment of unity the fact that everybody had some was more important than the fact that everybody had enough. Now, when I try to tell people about that story they smile and nod, like they have known it all their lives, and wonder how on earth I could have lived so long and not have gotten the point of it. But to really understand that story has radically changed my life. I cannot just be a consumer collecting things to bolster my feelings of self-worth. The point is to want less so that there is more to go around.

While I was in China in 1989 I suffered from the most awful case of culture shock. I had never been out of the country, never away from my husband and children and never had any experience of the conditions of a developing nation. The general feeling of alienation because I could not speak or understand the language was heightened by the lack of emotional display that is a cultural phenomenon in China. Nien Cheng explains, in her autobiographical story, *Life and Death in Shanghai*, that it is due to the Cultural Revolution. During that period, when the political system was so volatile, one might be shot in the evening for the display of emotion in the morning. The people learned, under these conditions to show nothing at all on their faces that could be used
against them (82). I was already at a disadvantage—not being able to speak the language. But I was totally disoriented by not being able to get any visual, nonverbal clues either.

One night we were at a train station waiting on the platform under the most beautiful full moon. I looked up and felt it sear my being. I realized that if I had not known that it was the same moon that I saw from my home in Vandalia, I would have sworn that I was on another planet. Everything was so different, and there seemed to be nothing to connect me to the familiar and the safe. And this was in the time of jet planes and globetrotting! Imagine how I would have felt if I had gone through a grueling six-month-long sea voyage with inadequate food and water. It is no longer surprising to me that the people who established the colonies wanted to make the whole world “just like home.” There are many people, I know, who thrive on the strange and exotic, but I am not one of them. I could never excuse behavior that destroys a culture out of a need for security, the way we Westerners did in Colonial and Imperial times. It is so disrespectful of the dignity of the other. But I can never again be quite so sure that in another place and time of less privilege, I would not have behaved as badly.

Enmeshed in the culture of a developing nation, living much closer to the level of poverty and oppression that most of the population of the earth experiences, completely transformed my ability to live comfortably here after my return. I cannot drive down a residential street, with manicured lawns and no weeds, without going back in my mind to the fields where men were walking up and down rows, mile after mile, with hand-held sprayers to protect their food crops. We spend $40./month on lawns while people are starving in much of the world. I cannot forget that in Shanghai, seven people would live
in a room the size of my kitchen. The culture shock was awful while I was in China, but I think it was worse to come home, to live with what I learned there.

Just before I went to China we built a house in the woods and moved. I have always lived in the city, and it was home to me. The thought of being out in the woods all alone was scary, but it has turned out to be wonderful. When I was a child we had a cherry tree in the back yard and I spent many hours in the shelter of its branches. When I was upset I would climb the tree and sit there, working things out in my head, protected by the shield of the leaves and grounded by the stability of the massive trunk. There were giant oaks in our neighbor's front yard too, and we played in the leaves until they were shredded before raking them up.

Living in the suburbs with only some small maples, I lost some of that connectedness with nature that had sustained me in my childhood, and moving out to the woods has reestablished that grounded feeling. There is a massive oak outside my bedroom window. It is the first thing I see in the morning and the last thing I see at night and I understand now how it was that the Druids worshiped the Sacred Mystery in the trees.

My classes in ecology, coming at the time when I was reconnecting with the earth, have transformed my relationship with my environment. My parents lived through the Great Depression and taught me neither to waste things, nor abuse them. Caring for the yard and gardens at home had always been my responsibility. But beginning to understand myself, in the light of quantum physics, as stardust come to consciousness, has implications far beyond conservation. The shift of paradigms, from body vs. soul, where I started as a child, to embodied conscious awareness of the life of the universe is
amazing enough, when I think about it, to have taken this whole lifetime to develop.

My journey has at every moment been graced by the presence of a supportive, nurturing community of family and friends. They have walked each step, shared each concern, celebrated each insight. In the light of their presence I have been safe to explore the world, to expand my horizons and to continue to grow. I read once the advice of Matthew Fox to a graduate student who was unsure of what to study next. His counsel was simple but profound; do the thing you are most afraid of. That challenge has become a part of who I am, and constantly calls me out of my comfort and security into the mystery of life. And so, to further understand this process of transformation, I began to study what other people have said about it.
I began my study of transformation in the tradition of religious psychology with the work of William James. He believed that the rift between science and religion needed to be healed for the sake of society. He was trained as a scientist and applied this discipline to the study of religious experience. His descriptions became the standards by which religious experience was measured for much of this century.

“Our faith comes in moments: our vice is habitual. Yet there is a depth in those brief moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences” (Treasury 103). These words of Ralph Waldo Emerson capture the spirit in which William James understood and expressed his theories on religious conversion. In The Varieties of Religious Experience, James defined religious conversion as

the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self, hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities (157).

Like Jung who came after him he believed that this process of integration was the basis of growth toward the expression of a more authentic self. He defended the integrity of
the religious conversion experience against the competing theories of his time—that it was simply a process of puberty and adolescence or the discharge of a lesion in the cerebral cortex—and tried to study the process in a scientific manner that did not discount it simply because it was both sentimental and mystical (Varieties, 28). The feelings of the reality of a religious experience are, James insisted, not often based on rational and intellectual grounds.

The vast literature of proofs of God's existence drawn from the order of nature, which a century ago seemed so overwhelmingly convincing, today does little more than gather dust in libraries, for the simple reason that our generation has ceased to believe in the kind of God it argued for (Varieties, 72).

The changes in the cultural experience of people predispose them to a different set of religious questions. It is the same argument that will be echoed 70 years later by Andrew Greeley in The New Agenda.

James believed that these experiences carry an enormous sense of inner authority and illumination with them when they come. But they come seldom, and they do not come to every one; and the rest of life makes either no connection with them, or tends to contradict them more than it confirms them (Varieties, 31).

To deny or try to diminish the significance of such experiences of growth toward integrity and autonomy of the self, just because they were incongruent with the more neatly controlled, rational and intellectual was, James asserted, a disservice, to science that strove to understand more about the human being. To scientifically study this movement toward integrity from division was, he felt, of prime importance.
The division of the self happens, James insisted, because of competing goals and desires that exert internal pressure on human beings at every moment. Even our seemingly automatic decisions, like the decisions to get up in the morning or to go to sleep at night, involve competitive choices. In Varieties, James asserts that ordinarily, the successful domination of one of these aims over the others affecting the behavior of the person is neither remarkable or noted. Occasionally, however, the control of a particular goal or set of ideas can so alter the previous characteristics of a personality that it is referred to as a transformation (160). In Talks To Teachers On Psychology: And To Students on Some of Life’s Ideals, James spoke of a “higher vision of an inner significance in what, until then, we had realized only in the dead external way” (242). Transformation then is a new way of seeing reality and is at least partially dependent on the human disposition and awareness.

James employed Starbuck’s description of these transformational experiences as being of two types: volitional and self-surrender (Varieties, 169). Volitional conversion is not usually considered a transformation as such, because it is gradual enough, albeit not without periods of greater or lesser activity, to be a normal process of growth. There remains, though, a degree of self-surrender involved in the volitional conversion simply because any process of the intellect and will is under the control of the ego which has as its function the greatest emphasis of the personal self. In order to grow in the fullest determination of the word, some part of that present self has to be given up for dead and a new aspect of the self allowed to “burst forth unaided” and become incorporated as part of the whole (Varieties, 172).
Self-surrender of a more abrupt and marked nature distinguishes Starbuck's second type of conversion. James argued that "life is but a mass of habits" and that to gain dominance over the homeostatic state of the mind, one set of ideas or emotional overtone must, for a split second, displace and supersede the usual status quo (Talks, 64).

Then the whole scheme of our customary values gets confounded, then our self is riven and its narrow interests fly to pieces, then a new centre and a new perspective must be found (Talks, 241).

This occurs, he thought, because either an opposite emotional tone breaks over the self and overpowers it, or the struggle to maintain the status quo simply becomes too exhausting and is abandoned. In either case, James described the resulting event as one that is "frequently sudden and automatic, and leaves on the Subject an impression that he has been wrought on by an external power" (Varieties, 99).

James postulated that the underlying process of the conversion experience took place in the subconscious. Consciously, a human may strain toward a religious ideal which is in essence an abstraction, but there are no concrete dimensions or patterns to look to. The virtues we aspire to, faith, charity, etc., might be described differently by each individual. On the subconscious level, motivation and maturation of desires may configure themselves in arrangements far different than those of which the person is consciously aware. When these irrupt into consciousness it is as if from a totally different source than the person herself (Varieties, 186).

Because this sudden conversion happens to one and not another person, and the perception of the intrusion of the Divine is present in both cases, abrupt and gradual, James began to ask what it was about the individual that predisposed him or her to one
particular type of conversion. He decided that

in the recipient of the more instantaneous grace we have one of those Subjects who are in possession of a large region in which mental work can go on subliminally, and from which invasive experiences, abruptly upsetting the equilibrium of the primary consciousness may come (Varieties, 191).

James cites Coe's findings that note that persons of more emotional temperament, subject to automatisms, (unaccountable impulses or inhibitions, or even hallucinations) and susceptible to hypnotic suggestion, are most likely to experience conversion of a sudden nature (Varieties, 194).

James described the condition of the person at the time of the actual transformational experience as a “state of assurance” (Varieties, 198). Most often, but not always present, was the earlier mentioned sense of higher control, the experience of a power coming from outside of the person. A loss of worry, ultimate peace, (James quotes Wordsworth “The Prelude” where he speaks of “thankful blessedness”) harmony and a passion of willingness prevail (Talks, 245). Subjects sensed that they now had an understanding of truth and an awareness of newness and beauty of the world, but often were unable to express their feelings in rational terms. “The most characteristic of all the elements of the conversion crisis . . . is the ecstasy of happiness produced” (Varieties, 203).

It would be argued, James knew, that the change occasioned by conversion is not necessarily total or enduring in character, but this in his opinion did not diminish the value of the experience. The issue of permanence James argued, “misses the point of serious interest” (Varieties, 205). He believed that the importance of the event is that a
human person is aware, for no matter what duration, of the potential available in
becoming more fully human, and the significance of that awareness is the justification
for its personal value.

Whether the conversion is sudden or gradual, it is agreed by all that it leaves no
trace of its presence outside of the transformation of the character of the person who has
had the experience. James insisted that the subject's own perception of being over­
whelmed was intensely personal and could not be compared or contrasted with that of
another.

If a flood but goes above one's head, its absolute elevation becomes a
matter of small importance; and when we touch our own upper limit and
live in our own highest centre of energy, we may call ourselves saved, no
matter how much higher some one else's centre may be (Varieties, 192).

James argued that the ultimate meaning which the experience is given depends not on the
volubility of the subject or on the intensity or duration of it's defining criteria, but on the
actual practical and behavioral changes by which the transformed personality is manifest
(Varieties, 194). He was more interested in the practical outcome of the experience than
that it fit in any specific categories. Transformation as ongoing process was not actually
precisely set down in the work of James, but he laid the groundwork for it by insisting
that it was repeatable and revealed the potentiality of the growth of the self.
Further work on changing the paradigms by which we determine moral behavior from absolute principles to a recognition of process was addressed by John Dewey in 1948. In *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, John Dewey demanded of our society that we adopt the principles of process and dynamism demonstrated by the scientific study of reality and apply them to philosophy. His concern was that philosophy was dependent on the underlying belief system of Western civilization before the advent of scientific method, and that this handicap prevented philosophy from having a practical effect in the area of moral behavior (xiii). He stated that

its profession of operating on the basis of the eternal and the immutable is what commits it to a function and a subject-matter which, more than anything else, are the source of growing popular disesteem and distrust of its pretensions; for it operates under cover of what is now repudiated in science, and with effective support only from old institutions whose prestige, influence and emoluments of power depend upon the preservation of the old order. . . . (xiv).

Dewey insisted that we study and investigate the area of morals as scientifically as we did the physical environment and the physiological systems in and by which we live. He regretted the fact that in the area of moral behavior, principles of the absolute still have authority although there is certainly no consensus among moral theorists or theologians exactly which of the many principles are absolute (xl).

Because of the ancient division between religious and poetic beliefs and the practical understandings of the mechanics of daily life, Dewey held that these two ways of understanding became linked with two different classes of society. The upper classes,
or the rulers, were the keepers of the religious, political and social traditions, while the workers and craftspersons possessed a matter-of-fact knowledge that lacked prestige and authority (13).

Dewey cited the fate of the sophists and Socrates as an example of the way that matter-of-fact knowledge was held to be inferior and in need of control. This controlling higher knowledge of the philosophers claimed a superior ability to reveal ultimate reality than either positive science or practical experience (23). Dewey asked that this position of superiority linked to the ancient times be relinquished in hopes that philosophy and its contribution to life could become more realistic.

One move toward becoming more realistic, Dewey insisted, was to acknowledge the changed conceptions of experience and reason. Throughout recorded history the predominant value conferred on these two ways of learning has shifted from one extreme to another and back several times. Plato viewed experience as subordination and dependency on the past; only by the use of reason could we become free to choose. By the time of Bacon this understanding had reversed to the point that experience was seen as the factor that liberated one from the domination and conservation of reason which stifled the daily revelation of truth inherent in our lives (92). Dewey called for a mediation between the dualism which would lead to more appreciation for the roles of both reason and experience in the human search for truth.

Historical conceptions of the real and the ideal have also been, Dewey argued, stumbling blocks in this search for truth. The ideal, based in immutability and perfection, and understood and "known" only by contemplation, has prevailed in moral
philosophy despite the scientific evidence "that knowledge is power to transform the world" (112). The understanding of changing reality empowers the human to participate in the processes of life rather than simply contemplating and observing them. To admit the errors in which philosophy has participated, Dewey asserted, regarding changlessness and ideals that are possible apart from reality, would only be of benefit to human beings.

In the area of moral concepts, Dewey stated that all schools of moral thought have had a common premise: "that there is a fixed and final good" (162). He argued that to give up this premise would locate the responsibility for moral activity with the actor, who by exercising intelligence and compassion in the immediacy of the situation has the best chance of coming to a good decision. Dewey called for an end to the distinction between moral goods and natural goods (172). He insisted that when the sciences contribute to the understanding of and the amelioration of human misery they become moral (173). As with all human institutions, Dewey thought that the supreme test "shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of society" (186).

This plea for a more balanced understanding of reason and experience as cooperative mediators of truth continues to be echoed by the moral theologians of our time. Traditional absolutist positions clash with more experiential arguments for the individual moral agent's responsibility on countless issues that Dewey never conceived of. Although he did not use the term paradigm, his arguments, nevertheless, provide a basis for the more open-ended paradigms of the scientific world that continue to beckon toward process understanding in traditional religious thought.
Thomas Kuhn, in his 1962 book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, first introduced the term paradigm to refer to achievements that “provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research” (10). There are some actual practices, he thought, that retain their influence on scientific thought and color the nature and direction of the research that follows them, sometimes for years after the original practice. There are two characteristics that Kuhn insisted these paradigms share: their achievement was revolutionary enough to draw other scientists away from competing modes of scientific activity, and, in addition, there were enough unknowns left as a result in the shift of thinking to give all the scientists attracted to the new paradigm plenty of questions to answer (10).

Kuhn felt that from the vast pool of knowledge obtained from casual observation and experimentation, one or two schools of thought emerge which emphasize a particular part of all the information available. This narrows the range of future experimentation by setting up parameters in which “both fact collection and theory articulation became highly directed activities” (18). Those who rigidly retain their allegiance to the earlier thought and practice are gradually cast off from the newly defined discipline and ignored. The study continues, with the scientist grounding his theory on the previously proven body of thought that the paradigm provides.

Three classes of problems, Kuhn asserted, describe the body of scientific knowledge: “the determination of significant fact, matching fact with theory, and the
articulation of theory" (33). Some small highly significant scientific work falls outside of these areas, and it is from that source that new paradigms come.

These new findings, experienced first as anomalies, are initially resisted, until it becomes obvious that there is a pattern to the anomaly that bears investigation. A crisis ensues that the old paradigm is unable to address adequately. Experiments are designed that transform the anomaly into an anticipated result, and it becomes, in fact, a discovery (64). Kuhn stated that after

\[\ldots\] recognizing the process, we can at last begin to see why normal science, a pursuit not directed to novelties and tending at first to suppress them, should nevertheless be so effective in causing them to arise (64).

As long as the paradigm supplies an explanation of anticipated result for the experimentation that springs from it, challenges do not arise. It is only when the paradigm fails to provide the framework by which problems can be solved, and an alternative paradigm is available, that the comfort level falls low enough to displace the status quo and demand the adoption of a new paradigm (76). The out-of-date theory, although it provides the basis from which the new theory develops, must be transformed in the light of the new paradigm to be recognized as contributory (103).

After grounding his theory of paradigms on the readily observed historical past in the scientific world, Kuhn broadened the application of his theory to perception in general and insisted that "\ldots something like a paradigm is prerequisite to perception itself. What a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon what his previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see" (112).
But the transformation of a paradigm shift cannot be reduced to perception alone. Too often flashes of intuition or even dreams, out of the realm of conscious control, transform the perceiver. Because the physical characteristics that are observed are not totally static and the previous perception of them is not all-encompassing, the perceiver “finds them transformed through and through in many of their details” (121).

Paradigms, as Kuhn made apparent, “provide scientists not only with a map, but also with some of the directions essential to map-making” (108). Therefore, people using competing paradigms never completely see eye-to-eye; they may be looking at the same things, but they see them in different relationships. Because of this incompatibility, Kuhn insisted

the transition between competing paradigms cannot be made a step at a time, forced by logic and neutral experience. Like the gestalt switch, it must occur all at once (though not necessarily in an instant) or not at all (149).

What, in the end compels a paradigm shift? Kuhn asserted that aside from solving problems there is an aesthetic value that will appeal personally to enough scientists to attract attention. The new theory satisfies common sense, being “simpler, more suitable than the old” (154). It is often based on faith and hope in the future rather than on proofs from the past and often becomes apparent without the benefit of a fixed goal. In other words, the concept of paradigms fits an open-ended world view with reality unfolding in ever-new and more complex disclosure of mystery.
ABRAHAM MASLOW

Abraham Maslow, in his studies of the nature of the human person, also argued for process understanding. He did not use the paradigm concept, but the theories that he espoused were actually a paradigm shift away from the traditional understanding of the theory of psychology (5). Although in his 1962 book, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, he asserted that there is an ultimate value toward which human persons strive, he believed it to be the open-ended unique potential of each individual (145).

Maslow claimed to be the first to have studied and hypothesized a theory of psychology based on the healthy human personality outside of the accepted disciplines of behavioral and Freudian psychology. He theorized that psychology could be more helpful to the culture and that psychologists could assist more fully in the transformation and growth of their unhealthy clients by understanding scientifically, and measurably, the goal of self-actualization as manifested by a small minority of the population who had become transformed in this direction (5).

Maslow's jumping off point was the theory of existentialism. He felt that to begin with the actual experience of people gave to psychology a firm basis or "foundation upon which abstract knowledge is built" (9). Existentialism could provide psychology with an "underlying philosophy" which was missing, and thus solve the chasm between "what the human being is, what he would like to be, and what he could be" (10). He feared that without the study of people who had reached the goal of self-actualization, the designation of "normal' in psychology is really a psychopathology of the average, so undramatic
and so widely spread that we don't even notice it ordinarily” (15).

After observing and interviewing clients over 12 years of psychotherapy and after studying and researching personality development for 20 years, Maslow concluded that there are two types of motivation by which the individual grows. Deficiency motivation is the process by which the human person tries to meet the needs that are felt experientially in life (safety, belongingness, love, respect and self-esteem). Growth motivation takes place conditionally, when the formerly mentioned needs are met, and spurs the person toward goals of self-actualization (creativity, unity and integration) (23).

Maslow contended that most theories of need-gratification and motivation considered these states to be negative, conditions to be rectified and dispensed with (25). He argued that in cases where motivation was stimulated by a desire for growth, however, “these impulses are desired and welcomed, are enjoyable and pleasant, that the person wants more of them rather than less, and that if they constitute tensions, they are pleasurable tensions” (26).

If, otherwise, human beings are only seeking relief of these tensions, how would we ever develop beyond the point of homeostasis, comfort and rest? As in the physiologic responses of bodily tensions, Maslow thought that there must be parallel psychological processes which prepare us for challenges, and call us to growth, and they must in themselves, be “rewarding and exciting” (28).

The effects of the gratification of these two types of motivation, Maslow found, were different enough to be considered scientifically measurable. Deficiency motivation gratification produced relief of illness: needs were short-term and limited in duration,
dependent upon others or the environment of the person for satisfaction, self-conscious, and were to an extent, shared by all humans. Growth-motivation gratification produced positive mental health: needs were less pronounced in urgency, more uniquely personal, less dependent on others and the environment, and more ego transcendent (29). Rather than interpersonal therapeutic methods, Maslow insisted that growth-motivated individuals dealt with personal problems by a process of “peeling away inhibitions and constraints and then permitting the person to 'be himself' . . . to allow his inner nature to express itself” (37). This idea seemed directly opposed to traditional Freudian concepts in considering the unconscious to be the repository of health rather than of illness, or our lower brutish natures; a source of creativity waiting to be tapped, and available to aid in the human perception of and response to reality.

Maslow differentiated between the established tendency to describe states of self-actualization as static and forever accomplished and his understanding of self-actualization as a continuing process of growth and development. He grounded his theory in the observation of the process of growth, becoming while being, of healthy infants and children, and insisted that “exploring, manipulating, experiencing, being interested, choosing, delighting, enjoying can all be seen as attributes of pure Being, and yet lead to Becoming, though in a serendipitous way, fortuitously, unplanned, unanticipated” (43).

Growth opportunities, then, just happen in the course of our lives. We all have qualities (curiosity, boldness, etc.) within us which draw us into the next experience, toward the next moment of challenge. Maslow then postulated that if these qualities reside in all normal healthy children, they must also have within them capacities which
inhibit and preclude that growth.

The choice for growth, he insisted, ever present in the life process, can be taken up or denied on the basis of the response of fear or of courage to every new situation encountered. If basic needs have been met and the courage needed to experiment in a new situation can be mustered, the choice will be for growth, and the process will continue. If basic needs have not been met and fear overcomes the delight of an opportunity for growth, the process is stunted and growth is given up for the sake of safety. Maslow was quick to state that this "[d]efensiveness can be as wise as daring; it depends on the particular person, his particular status, and the particular situation in which he has to choose" (52).

The fear that prevents growth can come from both external sources and internal sources, Maslow found, and be both a fear of knowing and a fear of not knowing. The fear of knowledge he saw portrayed in all the great myths of our society, reflecting the awe with which we perceive our own godlike qualities (58). The challenge to fulfill our almost limitless potentials brings with it the burden of responsibility, and fear can keep us frozen in a comfort zone.

Creativity also challenges the status quo in the society risking societal censure, and fear of the opinions of others can threaten us enough to keep us in line. On the other hand, knowledge can bring a sense of familiarity and thus comfort in facing a new situation. In most people, Maslow asserted, the interplay between fear and courage continually influences growth and development throughout life (64).

In the interests of identifying composite characteristics common to self-actualized
people who manifested healthy behaviors and lived out of self-imposed value systems, Maslow interviewed college students and other individuals for data on peak experiences (67). The values elicited were “in direct and flat contradiction to one of the basic axioms that guides all scientific thought, namely, that the more objective and impersonal perception becomes, the more detached it becomes from value” (79).

Because peak experiences were always felt to be good and never experienced as evil, Maslow came to the conclusion that “the whole of Being is only neutral or good, and that evil or pain or threat is only a partial phenomenon, a product of not seeing the world whole and unified, and of seeing it from a self-centered point of view” (77). When perceived from a nonutilitarian posture, that is, not out of their own neediness, people experienced reality as a whole, as valuable.

The experiences were reported to be unifying and demanding of full attention. They called the participant to a state in which his own human concerns were considered to be of secondary importance, but at the same time were experienced as one-with and interrelated to the reality of the moment. Time and space were suspended, with some people reporting that the experience seemed simultaneously a split-second and to last indefinitely.

That this incorporation and fusing of the paradoxical was also a hallmark of the peak experience led Maslow to a redefinition of self-actualization. Rather than the static and stable state, he described it as episodic and dynamic and thought that self-actualizers simply participated in more frequent states with characteristics of peak experience (92). Was their receptiveness to these states the result of their level of self-actualization, or did
the experiences themselves contribute to their personality development?

Maslow found both to be the case and theorized that during peak experiences while people had glimpses of their most real selves, they were also moments of self-transcendence. They felt more integrated, and unthreatened by union with reality outside themselves.

During the experience, Maslow's subjects felt at the peak of their powers of creativity and yet effortless and at ease in their actions. Self-determination and freedom from inhibitions made people in peak experiences more spontaneous, more creative, more trusting, more joyful and more grateful. Because of these characteristics which he called godlike, Maslow came to the conclusion that

The goal of identity (self-actualization, autonomy, individuation . . . ) seems to be simultaneously an end goal in itself, and also a transitional goal, a rite of passage, a step along the path to the transcendence of identity. This is like saying its function is to erase itself. Put the other way about, if our goal is the Eastern one of ego-transcendence and obliteration, of leaving behind self-consciousness and self-observation, of fusion with the world and identification with it . . . then it looks as if the best path to this goal for most people is via achieving identity, a strong real self, and via basic-need-gratification rather than via asceticism (108).

Maslow recognized that being-cognition, which he called that characteristic of self-actualizing people that allows them to be totally immersed, captivated and appreciative of the present moment, is not without its hazards. He found that “the main danger of B-cognition [B=being] is of making action impossible or at least indecisive” (110). To be totally immersed in the "is-ness" of things would lead one to an incapacity to even desire change. He also thought that this condition would make one less responsible for the evils that beset other human beings; things perceived as good-as-it-can-be do not
need to be rectified, corrected or improved. Fatalism and undiscriminating acceptance could result from too deep an appreciation of the essence of the present moment. Although acknowledging these dangers, Maslow insisted that even highly self-actualized people spend the vast majority of their day-to-day existence in normal practical aspects of living and that the being-cognitive experience was “exceptional” (118).

In spite of the normalcy of day-to-day life, Maslow found that another characteristic predominant in the self-actualizer was creativity. Self-actualizing creativity had much less to do with productivity and output than with the way in which things were done (129). He asserted that this form of creativity was more spontaneous, childlike, and integrating than “special talent creativeness” (129).

Maslow's subjects were open to the mysterious both in the present moment and in the future. Being unfrightened by change they could see unique possibilities more easily than the average person. Being less dependent on the existing paradigms of the culture around them, they were more open to the integration of culturally paradoxical poles. He likened self-actualized creativity to something “emitted' like radioactivity” that spread throughout all of life (136).

Maslow was convinced that the effects of these qualities in self-actualizers must have repercussions in the areas of human values. He cited scientific studies on free choice to shore up his belief in the innate goodness (or at least neutrality) of the human person. The healthy person deserves a greater degree of trust in making decisions, Maslow asserted, and to be pessimistic about the obvious results of all the humans who make poor choices was simply the result of averaging in unhealthy choosers with the
good ones. In order to gain an understanding of what was actually possible, in a therapeutic situation, Maslow insisted that the best possible specimens should be held up for examination (143).

When the value systems of these self-actualizers were studied, Maslow came to the conclusion that

we can solve the problem that philosophers have struggled with ineffectually for centuries. For one thing, it looks as if there were a single, ultimate value for [humans] . . . . this amounts to realizing the potentialities of the person, that is to say, becoming fully human, everything that the person can become (145).

He was delighted to find that contrary to popular belief, this was not some far-off unattainable goal; there were people who time and again actually experienced moments of such completion that by their own assessment, it didn't get any better than this.

Maslow took as confirmation of his findings the aspirations apparent in the belief systems of the majority of religions. If people naturally yearned toward the qualities experienced by self-actualizers, then they were “pressing toward what most people would call good values, toward serenity, kindness, courage, honesty, love, unselfishness and goodness” (147). Rather than worrying that our deepest needs should be repressed and civilized, Maslow's study convinced him that at our healthiest, our natural tendencies would be toward good and true activities, which would be rewarded by delight and enjoyment (150).

If this is actually the case, Maslow wondered why so many people do not evolve to states of self-actualization. He postulated that the two sets of opposing forces at work in each individual, fear for safety and courage for growth continue to play against each
other throughout our lives. The fact that these forces are recognized and that the power that they wield over a personality is appreciated can elicit therapeutic presence that will allow the courage for growth, the healthy response, to dominate (156).

Maslow's studies showed that self-actualizers valued not only truth, goodness and beauty, but also what he called the "regressive, survival and/or homeostatic values of peace and quiet, of sleep and rest, of surrender, of dependency and safety, or protection from reality, and relief from it . . ." (162). He found that the regression to seek satisfaction of these lower needs continued to be a reality, returned to again and again.

The implication of this fact, he believed, was that the attainment of the so-called higher values was dependent upon the satisfaction of these more pressing "basic needs." The constant interplay between these forces was the crucial understanding for Maslow. The state of self-actualization is never fully accomplished, but always in a state of becoming; the higher values flow out of and become inclusive of the lower needs (164). The therapeutic process of the discovery of unmet needs could then empower unhealthy individuals to the courage for growth.

Maslow saw adjustment to present cultural reality as a possible stumbling block to the attainment of psychological health (168). If "normal" is limited to a relatively immature and underdeveloped criteria, then therapy could well make a person less healthy. It is the duty of the profession of psychotherapists to also hold up the best possible of responses to a reality that may not be the most healthy. For this reason, Maslow considered the continued study of the psychologically healthiest of human beings to be imperative.
Maslow's new paradigm of the psychology of the self, a more optimistic, dynamic understanding of the process of self-actualization was published in 1962. About the same time, Gordon Allport was developing his theories of the organization and patterns of the process of growth. He published his ideas in *Pattern and Growth in Personality* in 1965.

All organisms, Allport insisted, are dedicated to the process of using the resources at their disposal toward integration of what they are intended to be. The trees of the forest and weeds of the fields maximize the available components of nature to become all that they can naturally be. Humans, in addition to this process, incorporate and advance toward goals and images of the future (85). This process of integration, and differentiation, also called self-actualization, is the result of lifelong learning. Allport, in his study, searched for an understanding of the learning process that would account for the organization that he felt was intrinsic within the total personality (109).

By nature, Allport believed, the understanding of the self by the human person is *sensed* and *felt* rather than *defined*. This self-awareness develops and emerges during various stages of life. He described seven aspects of self-awareness (bodily awareness, self-identity, self-esteem, self-extension, self-image, rational agent and propriate striving) that function sometimes simultaneously in our daily experience (137). This self-awareness is dependent on our consciousness and how it is related to our perceptions of the past, present and future.
Although the organization of these aspects of learning about the self are hierarchically arranged toward integration, and proceed at rates limited by the physiology of organic growth, the continuing differentiation of the total system creates a constant interplay between the above-mentioned functioning aspects, in our responses to the reality we perceive around and within us (108). Earlier learned responses are most often available on some level, to be called into play when more developed responses are unavailable.

Because we are conscious of only a fraction of the reality in which we exist, Allport stated that “we have no alternative but to say that most of what goes on in our personalities belongs in some way to a nonconscious stratum” (140). The most famous of the theories of the strata of the personal consciousness is Freud's, but Allport insisted, with Maslow, that this theory falls short as a formula for the healthy personality (163). Although Freud's ideas are insightful in the presentation of ego-defense mechanisms, Allport felt that in the healthy personality, balancing mechanisms of self-insight and humor exist which Freud did not address adequately.

Allport asserted that the factor of greatest importance in shaping the conscious and unconscious aspects of the personality is culture (165). Behavior and thinking in a child develop within the constraints of the initial social structure of the family and proceed to accommodate various, more extraneous systems. The basic personality can be transformed throughout life by traumatic or extreme situations, but for the most part, responses are limited to a personally acceptable range which allows for flexibility and adaption to the circumstances of life (195).
These characteristics of adaption and flexibility, in Allport's view, are dependent on motivation which he defined as "any internal condition in the person that induces action or thought" (196). He found unacceptable theories of motivation which postulate that all behavior and thinking are determined by unchanging instincts and drives, and insisted that "[t]hey fail to allow for the extensive transformation in motives from infancy to maturity, or for the extreme diversity of motives that we find in adulthood" (218). Because of this belief, Allport postulated a theory of functional autonomy.

The primary characteristics of Allport's functional autonomy theory were the acknowledgement of the importance of the present moment in the motivational factor, and the admission of the many varieties of motivations that can be operative in any choice (221). He cited Maslow's theory of deficit and growth motivations to bolster his claim that motivations of childhood will differ immensely from those of adulthood, and that motivations of the less psychologically healthy person will not be the same as those of the healthy, mature individual.

Allport also stressed that humans shape their motivations through a constantly changing process of intention, thinking and evaluation which may or may not be connected with basic drives and instincts, but is rather a function of interest (222). These interests lead to motivations that are expressed concretely, Allport insisted, in a way that is unique to each individual. He went on to define functional autonomy as the process which "regards adult motives as varied, and as self-sustaining, contemporary systems, growing out of antecedent systems, but functionally independent of them" (227).
Allport went on to describe two levels of this functional autonomy. Preservative functional autonomy designated those motivations for thought and behavior which somehow perpetuate themselves, as in the case of animal instinct, addiction, feedback, need for closure, and the need for ritual or familiarity (230). Propriate functional autonomy is distinct from the preservative in that its processes “confer more unity on personality than disparate preseverating systems can do” (234). Allport continued that propriate autonomy takes over when ability is transformed to interest which has a determining power over the choices that are made. These choices are manifest in the total and unique self-image and lifestyle of the individual and in the incorporation of new goals which extend beyond those of the previous motivations (244).

Allport argued against a homeostatic theory and insisted that it is these goals and desires that move a human beyond the satisfaction of his drives that are the “most conspicuous feature of human personality” (230). To the degree that functional autonomy happens as a result of these goals and desires, Allport believed, it can be seen that the organization of energy levels, principles of mastery and competence, and the patterning of motives consistent with the self are characteristic of that autonomous state. By this patterned process, the totality of the self, manifested in the present moment, moves toward integration in the process of becoming (252).

Allport acknowledged that changes in the personality are for the most part gradual and contiguous. There are traumatic transformations with which most people are familiar, and Allport described them in terms of the overall pattern of the growth process. Preservative traumas freeze fears and limit growth, and propriate traumas
change the direction of growth (255).

In Allport's view, an ongoing process continues all throughout life to transform the healthy human into a more unique and honest individual. At the same time, he agrees with Maslow that the autonomous individual will have a widely extended sense of self, thereby transcending the narrow limits of individual self-interest. For both Allport and Maslow, the transforming process of self-actualization involved an expansion of individual boundaries and the development of a more inclusive view of reality.
This same inclusivity is a hallmark of the work of Carl Jung. In *Jung to Live By*, Eugene Pascal stated that according to Jung, “the human psyche is interconnected, interrelated and in a continuum with all other manifestations of Nature” (12). The integration of opposites, melding of polarities, and the discovery of the unconscious by the conscious, were for Jung the tasks of each individual. These tasks facilitate our individual participation in the wholeness of the transpersonal reality of the Self. To the degree that we do not do this inner work, the disparate parts of our individual self can become roadblocks in our journey toward wholeness.

June Singer, in *Boundaries of the Soul: The Practice of Jung's Psychology*, asserted that Jung's perception of the complexes that have the power to dominate and transform the conscious personality can be more easily understood “if one can admit to being open-minded enough to allow for the possible existence of demons” (33). She described the complex as a dynamic with two related aspects. The nuclear element she likens to “a magnet” and there are “clusters of associations that are attracted” to it (33). The nuclear element, according to Singer, is determined both by the basic structure of our genetic inheritance and by our relationship to our environment. Both nature and nurture contribute.

Psychic trauma occurs, Singer thought, when at some point in life, the individual confronts in the experience of environment, an episode that cannot be integrated with the
basic structure determined by genetic inheritance. This wounding of the “vital, pattern-forming elements of the psyche, the elements which Jung has called the archetypes,” is the magnet around which the pattern that is manifested as a complex emerges (34). Singer felt that Jung determined the energy of the complex and its ability to affect ordinary life by the amount and intensity of emotion connected with the nuclear wounding. If there is high emotion related to this magnetic quality, many of the experiences of daily life will be drawn into the complex. If there is less emotional involvement, it may be that only occasional experiences will participate in association of the complex.

Conscious awareness of the nuclear element, Singer insisted, is the key to being able to live in a relative state of mental health with the complexes that affect our behaviors. If you are aware of the aspects of your basic personality which are most vulnerable, you may either structure your life so as to avoid situations which contribute to the production of excessive psychic tension or, if that is not possible or desirable, you may learn how to deal with the tensions that the complex-laden situation produces (34).

Singer likened this process of becoming aware of the nuclear element of complexes to the diffusion of a bomb—“its component parts are there, but it is not now so dangerous” (34).

If, on the other hand, the nuclear elements are completely unconscious, the individual is at the mercy of the unconscious forces. Pascal quoted Jung's assertion that these complexes are psychic entities which are outside the control of the conscious mind. They have been split off from consciousness and lead a separate existence
in the dark realm of the unconscious, being at all times ready to hinder or reinforce conscious functioning (60).

Singer illustrated her theory that the experience of the complex may be likened to that of demonic possession by recounting the case study of a patient, Paul. The presenting symptoms of profound depression and lack of vitality were justified by Paul as the deserved result of a past life of sin, but the airing of these offenses, which may in the presence of the accepting therapist, have brought Paul to a more inclusive state of self-forgiveness, did not alleviate the symptoms. An explanation came in the form of a dream which Paul shared. He experienced, Singer insisted, “a punitive element coming from a source outside himself” (52).

In exploring Paul's childhood, Singer found that he had been raised in a strict Catholic home and that he had understood God as an authoritarian tyrant who would observe offenses and determine and dispense retribution. Later in his life, when Paul was no longer associated with the church,

The 'eye' [of God] lost whatever benevolence it might once have had for him. It became the eye of a demon, with whom he might sometimes bargain but who would always exact his due. The demon would drive him, the demon would get in his way, the demon would watch him (54).

The behavior elicited by this wound in the archetype was experienced on the conscious level as an entity completely outside of Paul's own personality.

Jung's discovery of complexes was inadvertent, Singer insisted, and the result of the recognition of a pattern of a failure of the ego to react because it had been “disturbed by the autonomous behavior of the psyche” (55). This understanding reinforced Jung's determination that it was impossible to isolate a psychic process, because of the inextri-
cable interconnections of the archetypal bases of the personality.

Singer insisted it is obvious that conscious behavior is overdetermined and influenced by multiple and many-faceted unconscious factors because of the disparity between what we will consciously to happen and what actually occurs in our reality. The complex could be so powerful, that, as Singer quoted Jung,

it has its own wholeness and, in addition, a relatively high degree of autonomy, so that it is subject to the control of the conscious mind to only a limited extent, and therefore behaves like an animated foreign body in the sphere of consciousness. The complex can usually be suppressed with an effort of will, but not argued out of existence, and at the first suitable opportunity it reappears in all its original strength (56).

Pascal insisted that Jung determined the unconscious as consisting of “various layers, each reaching farther and farther down away from a personal level into an area that is utterly impersonal” (57). Pascal felt that we are more apt to accept revelations of our personal unconscious than revelations of the collective unconscious. He quoted Jung as saying that the collective unconscious “had a purposive-ness of its own, intentionally warding off the occasional one-sidedness of our egos and directing things toward the completeness and wholeness of the psyche in general” (59). Singer agreed that “all social movements could probably be understood from the standpoint of the factor which Jung has called ‘the autonomous complex arising out of the collective unconscious’” (72).

Singer explained that, in Jung's theory, the persona is not actually a reflection of the individual. Because it is an adaptation for the sake of being accepted and belonging to the culture as a whole, in essence it is defined by the culture (187). She quoted Jung
as saying the persona is “a mask that feigns individuality, and tries to make others and oneself believe that one is individual, whereas one is simply playing a part in which the collective psyche speaks” (187).

The shadow is the darker side of the personality, and according to Pascal, Jung differentiated between the personal shadow and the collective shadow (123). The collective shadow consists of all the unacceptable traits of humankind as a group and is projected on minorities or foreigners. Pascal uses the projections of the Nazis as an example. In our own time the “genetic cleansing” of the wars in southern Eurasia demonstrate the power of this unconscious projection.

The personal shadow which Singer asserted consists of “all those uncivilized desires and emotions that are incompatible with social standards and with the persona” is that part of the personality that we do not allow ourselves to express (192). It is perceived by the ego as negative, but contains abundant energy that is untapped and requires further expenditure of energy to keep under cover. Singer stated that Jung perceived the shadow, despite its lack of acceptance on a conscious level, as ultimately necessary to the integrated personality, providing the contrasts of which the whole is comprised (192).

What happens when the unconscious forces that have been repressed finally break into consciousness? Singer asserted that “the predominance of unconscious influences, together with the associated disintegration of the persona and the deposition of the conscious mind from power, constitute a state of psychic disequilibrium” (199). From this state, she said, Jung determined several possible outcomes. If the person becomes completely dominated by the unconscious he of she may take refuge in psychosis, or a
complete retreat from reality. Another possibility is that the person may become convinced that he or she is privy to certain cosmic truths and become devoted to these at the cost of the real relationships in life. A third type of response is that of the person who returns to a lifestyle similar to what was familiar before the psychic break, but never again is willing to take the risks involved in living life to the fullest, and settles for a life of mediocrity in the interest of safety.

The process of coming to know the shadow is lifelong, according to Singer.

Every situation in life which carries for an individual a charge of strong affect, which makes him excessively angry or anxious or even delighted, must be considered in terms of the possibility that the extra investment of energy may be coming from the unconscious in the form of a shadow projection (200).

The form of the shadow may change under different circumstances and at different stages of life, and even when discovered it may not be resolved. But to recognize it diminishes it's power over the conscious and over behavior itself.

This constant process of coming to awareness of the individual self is a requirement if the culture as a whole is to begin to recognize the nature of the collective shadow. The biblical injunction to remove the beam from your own eye before trying to take the mote from another's gives voice to this principle. It is the person who is determined to uncover and take responsibility for his own flaws who will be most apt to tolerate and understand those flaws in another. Singer insists:

the person who commits himself to a life of continuing confrontation with the unconscious within himself, will also confront the unknown in the world at large with an open mind, and what is more, with a heart of wisdom (202).
Another great complexity in the process of transformation, called individuation, is presented by Jung in his theory of the unconscious masculine and feminine soul images. Pascal stated that Jung named the dynamic of the Logos principle in the female as \textit{animus}, and the dynamic of the Eros principle in the male as \textit{anima} (155). Individuation, Pascal insisted, "intimately involves 'marrying' of the qualities of the two sexes within ourselves" but he went on to say that "very few males and females ever attempt to consciously integrate the contrasexual in themselves, simply because they do not know it is there" (156).

In her understanding of Jung's theory of the anima and animus, Singer described "three sets of factors which contribute to the development of a contrasexual element within the psyche: the archetypal, the biological, and the sociological" (205). The archetypal element recognizes the mythic separation of primordial chaos into two opposites which come together in the creative. These mythic opposites are present also within each human person, but are largely repressed in response to the roles which we determine to be culturally appropriate.

Jung's biological element, combined with the archetypal, Singer quoted as a yearning for union of the male and female realities, both conscious and unconscious that is as much a part of our nature as the biological need "for a quite definite world where there is water, light, air, salt, carbohydrates, etc." (204) In addition, the third element, the sociological, incorporates our childhood highly emotionally-charged perceptions of the qualities that are displayed as male and female by our parents. Singer insisted that the same sex parent becomes the model of masculine or feminine development and the
opposite sex parent becomes the masculine or feminine ideal (204).

Because the animus and anima remain for the most part unconscious, they are experienced largely in the form of projection onto the opposite sex. Singer asserted that they “endow relationships between the sexes with a special quality of strength that transcends nearly all other human feeling” (205).

Singer claimed that the crucial primordial image for both the man and the woman is the Great Mother.

Both sexes experience this archetype as the reality of an all-powerful, numinous woman upon whom they are dependent for all things. She precedes the awareness of the personal mother who, with her own distinct personality, emerges for the child as his ego develops and begins to interact with hers. Furthermore, throughout his life, the archetypal image of The Mother continues to stand behind the conscious perception he calls “my mother” (206).

The personal experience of womanhood gives to the female more conscious access to the archetype of the Great Woman. Singer enumerated four distinct transformations, directly and intimately experienced by women, “which in their essence elude full awareness of men” (206). The cyclical courses of menstruation, conception, birth and lactation, connect a woman intimately with her body and make her instinctively relational to other. The choice to bear children, knowing that the temporal commitment can be a lifetime, usually impacts the female much more than the male. Even if she decides not to have children, Singer insisted, the woman must remain acutely conscious of her decision if she is not to become trapped in an unwanted pregnancy. A man’s involvement in all this may also be intense, but rarely to the same degree as that of a woman (207).
One wonders if the historical oppression of women by the patriarchal system is reflective of a sense of paranoia and jealousy at the exclusion of the male from these embodied connections with the power of the reproduction of life itself. This is evidenced well by a quote from Cato which feminist historian Gillian Clark cites in her article on "Roman Women":

Our ancestors decided that women should not handle anything, even a private matter, without the advice of a guardian; that they should always be in the power of fathers, brothers, husbands . . . . Call to mind all those laws on women by which your ancestors restrained their license and made them subject to men: you can only just keep them under by using the whole range of laws. If you let them niggle away at one law after another until they have worked it out of your grasp, until at last you let them make themselves equal to men, do you suppose that you'll be able to stand them? If once they get equality, they'll be on top . . . (90).

The need “of man to dominate his woman,” Singer stated, “arises out of his basic fear that he will not be able to control her if she ever realizes the power that she has within her” (210). The integration of the unconscious, feminine side of the man, empowers him, in Singer's words, to be “more sensitive to woman and to her need to exercise those qualities of her own which resemble his cherished ‘masculinity’” (209). This may be the part of the transformation of the cultural shadow that the feminist movement is an attempt to address.

According to Singer, the role of the anima is to invest meaning for man, in his relationships, and to inspire and challenge the man to become all that his potential self holds. The corresponding animus, in the woman, is the “masculine drive which enables her to break through the limitations that being a woman has imposed for centuries on end” (214). Thus, in the process of growth and transformation that Jung called individuation...
ation, the conjunction of the opposites, the union of self with other, will result in the living out of the greatest potential of the human being.

We deny or repress these unconscious yearnings for integration at great peril to our relationships and our very selves. Singer stated that Jung believed “every man-woman relationship is really a partnership of four” (214). The negative potential of the unconscious to control behavior can be destructive of relationship and the unknowing victims of the denied and repressed animus and anima may never know what happened. Jung insisted that it is the unincorporated opposite aspects of the self that become the demons that mark the state of disequilibrium, and the source of disintegration in the personality. This explains his belief that, in Pascal's words,

when our ego engages in “intimate relations” with the opposite sex deep within ourselves, an “al-chemical” transformation takes place. A “child” or whole new state of consciousness, is born that transcends the old opposites of ego and anima/animus (170).

Singer insisted that the projections of the anima and animus are necessary because “they serve the purpose of bringing the unconscious into view” (223). However, she stated,

My own feeling is, in the light of Jung's anima-animus concept, that if more attention were paid to the unconscious components of the sexual and social commitment which individuals make to one another, they would be better able to find fulfillment in the marriages they have... This then takes the pressure off a relationship, and enables one to let it live and grow on its own terms, with mutual respect of each partner for the other (225).

Beyond this facilitation of relationships, though, Singer asserted that the inner marriage is necessary to bring into integration the personal self. “The human psyche,”
she insisted, "is the microcosm which reflects in ways both known and unknown to us, the macrocosm that Jung has termed the Self" (238). It is integration that allows us also to participate in that more inclusive reality.

Kathleen Fischer, in *Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction*, states that "we find God in the otherness of the other" (44). She quotes Virginia Mollenkott, in *Goddess*, to remind us that

God's presence has always appeared to the people in the form of the other. When it was daylight, God was in the darkness of the pillar of cloud. During the darkness of night, God appears in the brightness of the pillar of fire. It is then dangerous, she says, for us to reject what is opposite to what we think ourselves to be . . . . In fact, God’s presence may be waiting for us precisely there (44).

So this process of transformation toward integration of the self with the Self, both requires and elicits the universal creativity from which the embodiment of the material world, and all that is in it, springs. But in which direction does this transformation go?
Robert Jay Lifton would say that because we are survivors of life, the possibilities are endless and the potential is infinite. In the early pages of *The Life of the Self: Toward a New Psychology*, Lifton wrote that “one can no longer speak of ‘recovering’ or ‘remembering’” a dream that one has had (15). Because everything that presently affects the mind that is trying to remember must be included in the process, he believed that the best that we could hope for was to “get in touch with the flow’ of structure and meaning” (15). These words could offer a synopsis of his new paradigm for a psychology of the self. He insisted that in order to respond therapeutically to the cultural crises of our times, the psychological sciences required an understanding of the Protean nature of the human person: the everchanging, versatile, and dynamic options for response to the stimuli present in our selves and in our environment.

Lifton asserted that the dominant themes of psychology in the last century, issues of sexuality and morality responded to by Freud, had now become less important than the issues of technological violence and absurd death which face human beings in our times. The increased bombardment of our psyches by the media portrayals of violence, both actual and fictional, are not without effect. As with all of life that does not become extinct, Lifton believed that the field of psychology had to shift to remain relevant (24).

To establish a scientific basis for his demand for a new paradigm, Lifton studied the after effects of severe trauma in the personalities of survivors of Hiroshima, the Cultural Revolution in China, and the war in Vietnam. He felt and observed that because
of the nature of the threats which we now pose to our own survival as a species, humans can and do undergo “new dimensions’ of reality” in response to the threat of death. He saw death as a complex symbol: not only as an “organic and psychological destiny perceived through imagery of termination and nothingness,” but also in its psychological dimension as loss of feeling that he terms “psychic numbing” (19). The most therapeutically important and, he felt, most neglected aspect of death he called the “element of creativity and renewal” (20). By confronting these fears of death and mortality, Lifton felt that people he studied significantly deepened and enriched the meaning of their lives.

Lifton defined three types of psychological approaches to death. Freud's approach Lifton called “rationalist iconoclastic” because Freud did not consider “the symbolic significance of the idea of immortality as an expression of continuity” (30). Jung's theories considered the idea of immortality to be of great importance, and Lifton quoted him as saying that to refuse to deal with our ultimate mortality is psychically unhealthy. He called Jung's approach “hygienic-mythical” (30).

Lifton's own approach to the issue of death he termed “formative symbolic” (31). He believed that our feelings regarding death are ambiguous because of a “compelling universal urge to maintain an inner sense of continuous symbolic relationship, over space and time, with the various elements of life” (31). This desire for connection and immortality is manifested in five general modes: the biological, living on and through one's offspring, through theological ideas of afterlife, through creative accomplishment, through the eternal survival of nature, and through what he called “experiential transcendence,” or a state of continuous present (34).
Lifton felt that because of both our isolation from each other and the visible threats of war and pollution, more and more people attempt to find ultimate meaning through experientially transcendent states, sometimes initiated by sexual love, exercise, artistic creativity or drugs, and resulting in a symbolic reordering or transformation after which life is never again the same (36). This transformative experience, has been rediscovered because of the lack of effectiveness of the other four modes in our present culture.

The life-giving connections with others, past and present, for which we search, have been linked by Lifton with Erikson's concept of basic trust (40). Lifton saw this trust expressed, however, as a secure feeling of connection, integrity and movement or growth orchestrated by the self as a response to the anxiety produced by the thought of death.

Symbolically, Lifton asserted, life is experienced in three polarities: connection vs. separation, integrity vs. disintegration, and movement vs. stasis. He was convinced that these issues were symbolically reconfigured at each developmental stage throughout life. The lack of resolution of these ongoing issues, or the inability of the self to find the courage to release the former and now inappropriate symbol, Lifton thought, contributed greatly to mental illness (41).

Lifton insisted that death anxiety and some forms of guilt are manifestations of the unresolved issues of separation, disintegration and stasis. Symptoms of psychic numbing, by which people turn off to life and cannot feel their experiences, either painful or joyful, and a lack of trust in the basic goodness of life, in Lifton's opinion,
were contributing factors for much of neurosis (41). In character disorders, different types of stasis or its opposite, the exaggerated movement of compulsions, form barriers to protect the self from the anxieties of the real lived experience (45). Lifton saw the “formative symbolic” paradigm linking the bodily manifestation of symptoms with the history of the developmental deficiencies in coping as crucial to a psychotherapeutic response.

Lifton described three fundamental tenets of this paradigm. It is motivated around issues of life (form) and death (formlessness), involves continuous transformations in the symbol system and meaning of both individual and cultural experience, and it emphasizes a pattern by which boundaries are also considered as bridges (50). In his theory, Lifton insisted that all of life experience was a continuum or flow in which the self had the opportunity of an infinite variety of responses on levels both proximate and ultimate (51). He found in his studies of holocaust and transformation that “the unifying principle is the ordeal of the individual death encounter with its possibilities either for stagnation or for renewal” (59).

The essence of Lifton's psychodynamic process is the understanding of the self as malleable and capable of adaptation to all of life's challenges. His image-model of the human person is that of a “survivor” (62). Rather than speak of instincts for mere physical survival, however, Lifton postulated that humans have instead, an inclination or direction toward activity that will allow for *psychic* survival which is intrinsically linked with meaning (63).
Because of his view of life experience as a continuum between polarities, Lifton defined the healthy state as centered (71). All of the issues between the polarities of connection vs. separation, integration vs. disintegration, and growth vs. stagnation are dealt with initially on a physiological level by infants and children. As the self develops, these issues become less physiologic and increasingly symbolic, displayed in myriads of relationships between the self and others, the self and its environment, and the self and its own motivations, ideals, and aspirations.

This centering activity Lifton perceived as occurring on temporal, spatial and emotional levels simultaneously (71). The ordering of experience on a temporal level involves bringing symbolic understandings of the past to bear on the present. Lifton states that humans

never simply receive a bit of information nakedly. The process of perception is vitally bound up with the process of inner re-creation, in which one utilizes whatever forms are available in individual psychic existence (27).

On a spatial level, Lifton describes ordering as a process consolidating the proximate, including bodily responses, with the more distant understandings of ultimate meaning. A third process of ordering, on the emotional level, consists of determining the place of the present experience in relation to the core of our self or to more peripheral passions. Lifton insisted that when an ordered balance is achieved we feel most alive and are most fully functional as human beings (70).

Centering is possible, Lifton asserted, only if the self also has the ability to decenter. There must be a freedom to allow the new to displace the old in order to re-create more appropriate symbols. The courage from which this freedom springs has its
source in the grounding of the self (72). This grounding connects the self with its history, both individual and communal. The ability to recall or re-create through remembrance or tradition provides the self with the safety net necessary to nurture growth.

Lifton found his theory of centering/decentering compatible with traditional understandings of mysticism which speak of the "losing of the self." He interpreted this phrase to mean the temporary state of disequilibrium experienced in decentering when a part of the symbol system that is no longer appropriate has to be released (74). Within this process of centering and decentering one can, Lifton claimed, become experientially transcendent. "In that sense," he continued, "transcendent or 'peak' experiences epitomize the combination of ordering and flexibility ideally present in the 'ordinary' flow of psychological experience" (74).

The image is the prime component of this flow, for Lifton defined it as the "immediate link" between the nervous system and the environment. "Form" is more essential and complex, contains many images and is more enduring than an image. Both these components represent in the self, a way of knowing about the self in relation to itself and the not-self. Lifton found in his work with holocaust victims that either the blockage of the process by which images coalesce into forms or the absence of important images can cause a loss of grounding, and ultimately, desymbolization (78).

The result of this loss of the ability to form symbols by which we recognize meaning in our experience is "widespread desensitization or psychic numbing" (79). A feeling of deadening, loss of the emotional aspect, or rage can all be manifestations of this dysfunctional state, but it is also on a continuum and can be helpful to the medical
person who must treat patients with painful procedures, or the parent who has to disengage their care so that it does not become caretaking.

Lifton defined a survivor as "one who has come into contact with death in some bodily or psychic fashion and has himself remained alive" (114). He found survivors in his studies characterized by five psychological patterns. The first he called a "death imprint" or an experience of death that cannot be erased. This is often, he claimed, accompanied by a loss of a sense of invulnerability. The second pattern Lifton termed "death guilt" in which the survivor wonders why he was spared while others around him suffered death. Lifton theorized that this pattern comes from an organic social balance in which the survivor's life is maintained because of the loss of another's. The third pattern, "psychic numbing," is a necessary protective mechanism in a holocaust, but when retained can prevent the movement back toward life. The fourth pattern that Lifton discerned was that of a "death taint" or condition of mutual distrust of other survivors and a radical denial of any need of help. The fifth pattern encompasses all the others and constitutes a struggle to find meaning and significance in the death experience. The experience gained from this struggle, Lifton insisted, is of benefit not only to the survivor, but to the culture in which he lives as well (115).

In our culture, Lifton discerned patterns of reconfiguration of the communal symbols of immortality by which we generally make connections between our experience and meaning. The biological mode has been altered by new forms of community and family, and by new cultural definitions of male and female roles. This he took for a biological base for protean transformation (138). Theological modes are altered by the
interest in “new religions” which are most often rediscoveries of ancient truths. Lifton also noted the “passing over” of people from one religion to another and back again in the search of truth (140). The third mode, creative works, Lifton found being examined by both educational and political institutions in an effort to determine the significance of work to human enterprise (142). The natural mode of immortality Lifton linked with the passions of ecologists who he believed seek to bring nature back into the human imagination (144). The final mode of the search for immortality is that of experiential transcendence. Lifton found a desire for “awareness” of one's experience widely demanded.

A form of ecstasy and oneness is also necessary to the experience of immortality in all of the previous modes. The psychological reordering necessary for individual transformation comes only, Lifton asserted, by touching the “center of his being” or “the zone of the sacred” (145). The life or part of our self that is lost in the process of reforming our symbols “cannot be restored, but only re-created” (145).

Lifton believed that “the ultimate task of transformation is the re-creation of the adult self” (147). He stated that all of our adult work is tied to larger spiritual principles in an effort to “cope with our own mortality” through lasting structures (148). In the end, Lifton insisted that “we must experience our annihilation in order to prevent it, that we confront and conceptualize both our immediate crises and our long-range possibilities for renewal” (149). By releasing and reconfiguring symbol systems Lifton believed that human beings can become more than products of their pasts and mere heirs of cultures. Our protean possibilities preclude any set of limitations that we can imagine in the present.
Paul Pruyser also theorized about the ways that different symbol systems can shape one's understanding of the numinous and ultimate meaning. He believed that these symbol systems, originating out of dualistic imagery of the Greek fathers, are learned “by osmosis” from our culture, and it is from within them that we interpret reality (118). In *A Dynamic Psychology of Religion*, he describes three theories of atonement that can mirror conflicts between the conscious and the unconscious and thus inhibit a sense of freedom coupled with social responsibility (300).

The ransom theory, in Pruyser's thought, posits the existence of foreign, death-producing powers, either cosmic and external (Satan), or unconscious and internal (the seven deadly sins), and is based on cosmological myths about the power of good and evil. Guilt is based on the anxiety of impending death (319).

Pruyser asserted that the salvation theory is based in both the sacrificial systems of the Old Testament and the Roman judicial system, and portrays God as supreme judge and lawgiver. Humans are described as violators of rules who stand in need of punishment and correction. Guilt, in this symbol system, is based on incorrect conduct (320).

The moral influence theory is based on the understanding of God as guardian of the social order with mercy necessary and justice optional. Pruyser described it as a much more hopeful system of thought, which views as its goal, atonement by identification with and discipleship of a loving example. Shame, rather than guilt, is an effect of the inability to meet the demands of the ego ideal (321).
The power of these symbol systems, Pruyser insisted, is that although they are not necessarily consciously chosen, they influence all other aspects of life in that they are associated with specific fragments of the liturgical year, often emphasize different sacraments, and stress different teachings of the tenets of the religious tradition (324). Throughout the process of transformation toward self-actualization then, the conscious and unconscious understandings that we have of ultimate meaning, Jung's archetypes, Lifton's symbol systems, and Pruyser's theories of atonement all present parameters within which we make our choices. These factors can either limit or unleash our potential, and none of these theorists would advocate an inflexible, positively determined approach to try to predict the developmental pattern of the unique personality.
In his article “Psychologia Perennis: The Spectrum of Consciousness,” Ken Wilber asserted that there is a “universal view as to the nature of human consciousness” which incorporates the theory of all of Western schools of psychological thought (105). He described consciousness as a configuration of levels of self-awareness or Self-awareness.

The core of consciousness Wilber called the level of Mind, wherein man is identified with all of the universe, or in the only real state of consciousness. The transpersonal bands are areas in which man is identified neither with Mind nor the individual organism, but can experience phenomena beyond individual existence. On the existential level man is linked to space and time in his personal organism. The ego level, Wilber insisted, displays an organism split into two parts, itself and its self-image, and identified with the self-image. In the area of the shadow level, the psyche is reduced even further to only those parts which are acceptable to the ego. The spectrum begins at the broadest, most inclusive level and becomes more and more narrowed, not only in its characteristics, but also in its ways of understanding.

The different levels exist, in Wilber's opinion, because of the basic tendency of the human mind to distinguish between the self and the non-self, or between subject and object. This dualism, he insisted, “is illusory: it appears to exist but remains devoid of reality” (“Psychologia,” 111). As soon as this dualism is set up, it not only separates man from Mind, but creates space (experienced as otherness) and time (experienced as being
Wilber agreed with Freud's assessment that the ego comes into being because man cannot accept the fact of his own unavoidable death. Seeking refuge from a mortal body, he flees to his "seemingly undying idea of himself" ("Psychologia," 112). Finally, he may reject even parts of that and live in only partial awareness of his partial awareness. Wilber believed that an understanding of these levels of consciousness could integrate all of the disciplines of psychological thought both of Eastern and Western civilizations. Each, he thought was concerned with a different level of consciousness, but each offered "complementary insights" ("Psychologia," 115).

Therapies have in common, Wilber asserted, the belief that pathology occurs as a result of a breakdown in communication between the conscious and the unconscious ("Psychologia," 115). He quotes a textbook definition that pathology occurs when the self-image is distorted. The parts of the personality that are rejected are externalized, according to Wilber, in the process of projection. The goal of ego-level therapy is to bring to conscious awareness these cast-off parts and thus "heal the split between the egoic conscious and unconscious" ("Psychologia," 116).

Existential-level therapies attempt to integrate the process of "being" of the organism. To understand the self as embodied, and not just as "mind," and to try to heal the mind/body, life/death and subject/object split is the goal of this type of therapy which, Wilber stated, includes Gestalt, logotherapy and somatic approaches. Biosocial-band therapies address the impact of the cultural milieu on the self, and attempt to resolve distortions in awareness that occur in the social context. Mythological imagery,
which Wilber felt would suspend dualism, is therapeutic at this level. He stated that to recognize the extension of the self beyond the personal sometimes allows a healing perspective. Mystical experiences that are part and parcel of most religions, Eastern or Western, are extensions into this transpersonal level.

Wilber saw level of Mind therapies as truly mystical in nature. The primary dualism, self/other, is nonexistent at this level, he insisted, “and the collapse of dualism between subject and object is simultaneously the collapse of the dualism between past and future, life and death, so that one awakens, as if from a dream, to the spaceless and timeless world of cosmic consciousness” (“Psychologia,” 125).

Wilber posited a hierarchical system which is arranged in directional evolution, and follows the linear model, say the behavioral, for the exterior individual, from atoms and molecules, through basic life forms, to those developing neural systems, and then to those with an increasingly complex neocortex. He asserted that hierarchy is crucial and argued at one point that “hierarchy and wholeness, in other words, are two names for the same thing, and if you destroy one, you completely destroy the other” (Sex, Ecology, 16). But the question here is who arranged (or discerned) the hierarchy? Were the prokayrotes consulted as to the place and value they were assigned?

Transformation can obviously be misrepresented. Everything changes continuously. Sometimes the pace of change is so slow that it is imperceptible. Sometimes so fast that we are left breathless by it. But as self-aware and rational creatures, we move toward a future undetermined except by our participation. Any other possibility flies in the face of the very catholic belief that we are unique creations and that our greatest
contribution to life comes from living honestly to our fullest potential.

How is it that we can cooperate with the process of life that presents us with opportunities for growth? How do we find the courage to 'get in touch with the flow' as Lifton put it? Working with people who face death has convinced Michael Kearney that there are methods by which we may be able to assist in our transformation.
In the book *Mortally Wounded: Stories of Soul Pain, Death and Healing*, Kearney argued that it is our refusal, both as individuals and as a culture, to do the work entailed in exploring the unconscious, that contributes to the form of human suffering that he calls ‘soul pain.’ The ego, Kearney believed, is profoundly threatened by the aspect of approaching death.

In a frantic attempt to survive, the ego may project its fear of death on to the deep and unconscious aspects of the mind, the 'soul', seeing in its unfamiliar and unpredictable depths a microcosm of death itself. In a reaction aimed at ensuring its survival, our panicking ego then flees from soul, thereby alienating itself from all that is deepest in us and leaving us feeling isolated and terrified in a wasteland of meaninglessness and hopelessness - soul pain (13).

He asserted that there are appropriate responses to this condition which can both ease the suffering of the person who is dying and the sense of inadequacy felt by the caregiver of the person who is in the midst of inconsolable suffering. Kearney was convinced that “if we can find a creative way of responding to soul pain it may open up a path to the very heart of living, even in the shadow of death” (15).

Kearney found, in his work with dying patients in hospice, that the alleviation of pain and other symptoms coupled with open and honest communication with patients and their families could allow the process of dying to become a time of personal growth and integration. But to facilitate the quest for inner wholeness, sometimes more is required than external care and compassion. Kearney quoted the archetypal psychologist James Hillman that the direction that the quest must take is “downward” (16).
Kearney was quick to point out that the soul is aggressive in its efforts to aid the healing in the dying process.

It is as though this bottomless pool, so despised by the terrified ego, not only contains a healing balm in its black depths, but is waiting with longing to apply this to our mortal wound, if only we allow it to do so. If the dying person even begins to attend to soul, soul responds a thousand-fold (17).

Stories of the actual experiences of dying patients illustrate the principles Kearney espoused. Because of the differences in the manner of their deaths, he began trying to analyze what it was, in the individual, that allowed for the transformation from restlessness, agony and terror to peaceful acceptance and participation in the process.

Kearney found that imagework helped his patients connect with their deep unconscious and express the emotions that they found hidden there. If this buried emotional energy, often only expressed in unrelievable pain, could be vented through images, Kearney felt that it could allow the healing aspects of the soul to function (30).

There are two models, one mythological and one psychological that Kearney found helpful in responding to soul pain. The mythological model is based on the story of Chiron, the wounded healer. Chiron was a centaur, born of the union of mortal and immortal when his human mother was raped by one of the gods who had turned himself into a horse. Rejected at birth, because of his ‘lower parts’, Chiron was saved by Apollo who raised him and taught him all that he knew. Legendary for his intelligence, Chiron became a mentor for other Greek heroes. Hercules, Chiron's favorite among all of those he mentored, accidently wounded Chiron with a poisoned arrow. The wound was not mortal, but was painful and would not heal, causing Chiron to withdraw in isolation from
the society in which he had been so successful.

After years, during which Chiron learned the art of healing everyone except himself, Hercules returned and said that if Chiron agreed to give up his immortality for the sake of Prometheus he could be freed of his suffering. Chiron consented, died, and remained in the darkness of the underworld for nine days. Zeus, aware of the sacrifice that Chiron had made, restored his immortality by making him a constellation of stars.

Kearney described two underlying paradigms in the myth. The heroic paradigm corresponds to Western medicine in that it looks for a "return to the status quo (cure)" (44). The second paradigm is the way of descent which calls for a shift from the goal of status quo to the acceptance of the possibility of a "new order of reality" (46). Making this shift required that Chiron give up his very self.

Both paradigms are essential to the process of dying, Kearney insisted. To struggle against the wound is necessary to assure that there is no way to cure it. The heroic paradigm also "helps to create the emotional conditions that facilitate the essential paradigm shift. . . . When, at this moment, such individuals let go of their struggle and let themselves go with the pull of inner gravity, the new paradigm, the way of descent, has already begun" (47).

Kearney felt that the psychological model was necessary to connect the mythological model to the everyday experience of his readers. He based his "surface/depth model" on the work of Jung (54). The surface mind was described by Kearney as the rational, literal facet. The deep mind described the unconscious, intuitive facet, that we learn about in dreams. It holds a reservoir of buried hurt and pain, but also of great
resources. Kearney insisted that the deep mind corresponds with what Jung called the Self (56).

The word soul, for Kearney, meant in a classical sense, psyche. He quoted Hillman that soul is “that in us which experiences and is experienced imaginatively, emotionally and physically rather than rationally grasped or understood” (57). By this link of soul to experience meaning is elicited. Kearney states it poetically:

Soul is a dynamic entity, often personified in feminine form, which, while being at home in the deep mind, is constantly moving back and forth between the surface and the deep, weaving a web of images in a restless longing to bring depth to all that is superficial and to bring what is superfi­­cial into depth. Soul is the living connection between the surface and the unfathomable and meaning-rich depths of who we are (59).

Surface work, Kearney described as palliative and compassionate care which begins the movement toward depth. Depth work, to bring the individual to an experience of soul, can include dream work, art and music therapy, bodywork (massage) and some forms of meditation. These practices can allow the soul to actively heal the terror and suffering of the ego that senses its impending demise (64).

Kearney learned to interpret the cries for help of his dying patients not only from the medical model, but from the mythological model as well. He described as “intolerable” the experience of viewing a patient's request for help to die only from a medical model, for a caregiver in the heroic mode may come to the conclusion that the only way to end the person's suffering is to kill him or her. This logic is “dangerous, with the danger, as Hillman reminds us, lying ‘not in the death fantasy, but in its literalism’” (91). He insisted that we can help the patient to die metaphorically, without killing them, so
that they can be released to the healing of their own depth of soul.

One of the requirements of the shift of paradigms is that the caregiver be willing to move from the role of powerful healer to that of wounded healer. This, Kearney asserted, "blurs" the usually apparent professional boundaries, and it becomes less apparent who is the teacher and who is the patient.

Although Kearney wrote his book about the potential for growth and change at the very end of life, he insisted that a central fact which emerged for the living was the necessity for each person to begin, before it is too late, to "befriend" and begin to trust the soul (138). He encouraged his readers to somehow find "a ritual way of crossing from the surface to the deep levels of our experience and of becoming familiar with depth" (141). The way is not some new path to be conquered by the ego or apt to be as accelerated as it may be at the time of death. It can be fraught with danger, as Kearney quoted from Jung: "There are those who go digging for an artesian well and come instead upon a volcano" (143).

Success was not promised by Kearney. It remains to be seen whether starting on an inner journey before that last moment eases that ultimate transformation, but, as Sri Madhava Ashish put it in the afterword of the book, "It is an invitation to die a meaningful death with dignity by virtue of finding one's self-identification with what does not die. . . . a part of a lifelong preparation for entry into a meaningful existence" (180).

The journey towards what Kearney calls the ultimate transformation, transcending the personal self and entering fully into the mystery of the unknown, is inextricably bound to day-to-day experience. Can an understanding of these theoretical constructs clarify and enhance our perceptions of reality and thus shed light on the process?
PART III

CONCLUSIONS

There are many commonalities in the works of these authors that shed light on the understanding of human transformation. Dewey's insistence on process and dynamism contributed much to the language that moved us from the dualistic argument between the roles of reason and experience as mediators of truth. His plea for a more balanced understanding of the cooperative ways in which they contribute to our understandings of reality continues to be echoed by moral theologians of our time. Kuhn's theories of paradigms assist in our efforts to understand that perception is influenced by not only what we see, but what we have been taught to see. The theoretical construct of paradigms points to the potential contribution of each unique human perception of reality to the apprehension of the whole, and to the role of the aberrant, that one piece that doesn't quite fit, in calling us from the known into the mystery of the unknown.

The theory of a dynamic process towards authenticity is reflected in all of the work of these authors, even though they often come from different paradigms and use different language to speak of it. James concentrated more on the individual experience, but saw the manifestation of the growth process in the practical and behavioral outcomes apparent as a result of it. He acknowledged that these experiences were repeatable and
revealed the potential of the self. Maslow's developmental understanding moved toward a release of creativity and, ultimately, self-transcendence. Allport too, stressed the development of integration and the organization of patterns of response, with his emphasis on the variability and adaptability of motivations. Jung recognized integration of the personality as key to the individual's participation in the wholeness of the transpersonal reality of the Self.

Wilber saw the growth process as an increasing awareness of the participation of the self in the recognition and communication with deeper more transcendent levels of Mind. He posited a kind of linear evolutionary process by which he saw all of creation moving in the direction of identification with all of the Universe. Lifton, Pruyser and Kearney spoke more in terms of images and symbol systems formed as a result of actual experience than of development. This more open-ended (Lifton called it protean) understanding of the self may reflect a shift in paradigm occasioned by an overflow into the field of religious psychology of the scientific understandings of quantum physics, and the breakdown of traditional language when addressing concepts formerly understood as distinct and separate (i.e. the self and the not-self).

My own experience confirms that transformation is a dynamic process toward becoming more fully human. The dynamism perpetuates itself. As we become more fully functioning, more able to apprehend and appreciate the mystery of life, all further experience becomes richer and potentially more revealing. I began the journey at a point of dogmatic absolutism from which I rejected all of reality as unacceptable. The irruption of grace, most often manifested in the form of other people, invited me into a
process of coming to know myself and all of reality as imperfect, but acceptable. Now, in my most fully human moments, I can not only accept, but celebrate and be grateful for the reality which surrounds me.

I resonate with Craig Dykstra’s understanding of imaginal transformation in *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator’s Alternative to Kohlberg*. He described transformation as having two movements; one of discovery and one of verification (81). The movement of discovery is characterized by 3 stages, and is occasioned by an internal or external conflict presented by our experience. The first stage Dykstra called “conscious struggle,” and it is at this point that we can choose to participate in the process of growth, or shrug off the experience and thus “the possibility for movement and growth is aborted” (82).

Dykstra’s second stage was described as an “interlude in the struggle” (82). It is the period during which we take time to permit a new awareness surfacing from deep within us, to displace the familiar and comfortable concepts that have ruled our thinking and feeling processes and, thus, our behavior. It is a surrender of the old to make a place for the new. Dykstra described the third stage as that of insight; “a creative reorganization of the imagination” in which all the elements of the conflict form new and different relationships, allowing us to see in a different manner. “The insight is a revisioning of what was there before. We respond differently now because we see differently” (84).

The second movement of transformation is the movement of verification when “what one has discovered is now explored, explained, connected with other things one
knows, and communicated to others and tested in the public domain” (81). Dykstra noted that this movement is the one usually accented in juridical ethics which present specific moral problems and search for solutions. Both movements are crucial, Dykstra insisted, and “are quite often exactly those experiences that give our lives their particular shape and quality” (87). This understanding of actual experience as the source of conflict that triggers transformation appeals to me. It feels like it fits. Then, the whole of our being is a response to the reality that we encounter. But can we really be so malleable as that?

In science today, the paradigms of stability that we postulated for years are breaking down at an enormous rate of speed. Quantum physics has reconfigured our understanding of what we took for the building blocks of the material world. Even the paradigms of our own bodies are shifting. There are now experiments that show that transformation is central to the life process, even on the cellular level. I include this article to show that the traditional language of self/not-self is itself undergoing transformation.

This research is discussed in the April 1996 issue of Discover magazine in an article by Sarah Richardson, entitled “The End of the Self.” Immunological theory has long held that the integrity of the human organism is managed by a defense system that recognizes everything with which it comes into contact as either self or not-self. Scientists are now beginning to question the accuracy of this assumption.

T-cells that identify and destroy invaders are responsible for the process by which the human body protects itself from viral and bacterial invaders. It was believed,
Richardson asserted, that the system “rather than being fixed in our genetic makeup, is
learned while the immune system is still developing in the fetus,” but after that fetal
period, the system becomes relatively inflexible (82). The T-cells recognize alien cells
by means of genetically coded markers on the outside of the cell walls.

Those T-cells as a part of their developmental process, pass through the thymus
gland. If, at this time, the protective cell shows any inclination to attack the cells of the
self, it is immediately destroyed. Experimentation shows, however, that if, during the
fetal stage foreign cells are introduced into the system, the system can be induced to
behave as if the foreign cells were indeed part of the self, and the foreign cells will be
allowed to live. Theorists continued to postulate that the system functioned without
changing from the point of early fetal development until the death of the organism. But
there were lots of holes in the theory.

A scientist named Polly Matzinger, Richardson reported, questioned this long-
held immunological assumption regarding the distinction between the self and non-self
and came up with some new theories. She wondered why, when “change is a hallmark of
life, “the immunological system would not have a better capacity for adaptation (83). Or
did we just not understand that it did adapt? She wondered why natural states of
transformation in the organism, like pregnancy or lactation would not set off an immune
reaction. There were ideas surfacing in the scientific community that perhaps another
signal besides the markers on the cell walls, was at work.

The nature of this second signal remains a mystery, but it is presently believed
that it comes from macrophages, which cleanse the body of dead cells and bacteria,
dendritic cells which are scattered throughout all living tissue. But how could these secondary signal cells, that didn't go through the thymus' test for the reaction to the cells of the self, be prevented from starting an autoimmune reaction? Richardson reported that another young scientist, Ephriam Fuchs, helped Matzinger to come up with a theory.

Together, the two decided that the immune system actually behaves in a way that is much less absolute than currently held theories would expect. The organisms in the human gastrointestinal tract are foreign, but they are necessary to our lives, and are not attacked as invaders. "In general, Fuchs argued, infection is not always a bad thing; a virus for instance, might provide us with helpful genes we would otherwise never acquire" (84). So how could the immunological system best function within its own natural parameters?

One possible solution to the problem, Matzinger theorized, would be an immune system that could be stimulated by the presence of abnormal cellular destruction. "When a cell dies normally," Richardson insisted, "it shrivels up and displays signals that invite a macrophage to eat it" (85). Abnormal cellular destruction causes the cell to dump its contents into the intercellular fluid and announces to the surrounding area that a traumatic cell death has occurred.

The dendritic cells, earlier mentioned as suspected of playing a role in the secondary signal that sets off the immune reaction, were perfectly fit for the job of hunting for the abnormal cellular destruction. Matzinger believed that as they move through the tissues they pick up markers on their cellular walls which not only trigger the T-cell reactions, but also announce that these foreign invaders are causing traumatic
death in the organism. The double signal jump-starts the whole immune reaction and the problem is neutralized. In the absence of the second signal of danger of death, the triggered T-cells die and leave the organism free to incorporate a possibly beneficial new entity. "The self, in other words," Richardson stated, "is constantly being defined anew—which is another way of saying that it doesn't exist at all" (86).

Matzinger's model is, on the cellular level, much more flexible and adaptive than the self/not-self model, and illustrates a fundamental principle of the evolutionary process. The ability to adapt, to take in and incorporate new information by way of experience, and then alter responsiveness in light of it, enhances the life process and thus the viability of an organism. So on the level of the cell, or the organism, or the community, or the culture, or the universe, this capacity for transformation is a gift of the Sacred Mystery in which we find our being. We are transformed by our experiences, which in turn transform the reality that we experience!

Most of the authors agreed that transformation involved coming to a new way of looking at reality. James spoke of a "higher vision of an inner significance in what, until then, we had realized only in the dead external way" (Talks, 242). Maslow called the experience one of unity and interrelatedness. Allport saw this new reality as transcending the narrow limits of individual self-interest, and Singer used the language of viewing reality with both an open mind and a heart of wisdom. Lifton's survey of survivors convinced him that confrontation with an experience of annihilation helped one to preclude any set of limitations of the protean possibilities of the self.
Wilber's thought indicated that the participation in the core consciousness that he called the level of *Mind* is the only real state of consciousness, and that all other levels are only temporary states of being on his evolutionary scale. Kearney's new reality involved an appreciation for the richness and depth of all experience that is enlivened by input of the soul. This new way of looking at reality, paradigm in Kuhn's language, in turn, invokes new responses that sustain the momentum of the dynamic.

I have a suspicion that Maslow's "peak" experiences or James' moments of conversion are available all the time, but we just don't get it. It could be that in any experience, in any environment, a certain percentage of the people are having a peak experience. What changes except us? Does Sacred Mystery become more or less available? Can it be that the environment changes that radically? The experience can be the same a thousand times and then one time it is exceptional. But our attitude and availability can be radically different each of those thousand times. Is it just that life will not be categorized; that it will always be a surprise? Do we have any part at all to play in this process?

Most of the authors acknowledged some form of self-surrender as a part of the process of transformation. James wrote of allowing new aspects of the self to "burst forth unaided" and believed that the process was often consciously conceived of as having been imposed from some external source. Maslow acknowledged that the growth process can happen only in conditions where the courage to let go of the status quo can be mustered. Allport described this same function of self-surrender in his understanding of the personal response to preservative traumas which freeze fears and limit growth and
propriate traumas which change the direction of growth. Singer depicted Jung in a more pro-active stance in the movement toward the integration of the self, but it seems that the active incorporation of those parts of the self that are unacceptable to the ego could be described as a form of self-surrender.

Lifton addressed self-surrender in terms of the ability to release presently inappropriate symbols in order that they could be reconfigured more appropriately. Pruysen did not mention self-surrender except for a cursory reference to a loss of self-control happening during some moments of religious experience. This may be because of his emphasis on Freudian psychology which trusts less in the fundamental goodness available in the unconscious. Wilber’s ultimate identification with the Universe seemed to involve the actual dissolution of the boundaries between self and non-self as a goal of evolution. For Kearney, self-surrender took the form of being willing to risk a journey away from conscious control into the mysterious depths of the soul. For Dykstra, the time of self-surrender was in the second stage of the movement of discovery when “old patterns that have coalesced in consciousness have to be relaxed” (82).

So did I ever surrender myself to this process? It is hard to answer that question. For most of my life, I was trying so hard to control it that it doesn’t really look as if I did any surrender. But if I believe that it is part of the process, and that the process does go on in human life then somehow self-surrender was there. What could it have looked like?

At an earlier time in my life, in a much more rigid paradigm, when prayer and praying were a totally different experience than they are now, I read countless books on
contemplation and meditation, and devoted endless hours to the process of growth that would make my life come out like all the books said it was supposed to. I would have a room to myself, a candle burning, turn off the phone and sit comfortably to relax. I'm not sure that I ever really relaxed, waiting as I was to feel all the things that were talked about in the books. But they never happened, and I was pretty sure that all that I ever really accomplished was putting off lots of housework.

It could be that Paul Tillich offered an explanation in an article called “The Right To Hope”:

The more seriously the great religious men took their own transformation, using their will to achieve it, the more they failed and were thrown into hopelessness about themselves. Desperately they asked, and many of us ask with them, Can we hope at all for such inner renewal? What gives us the right to such hope after all our failures? Again there is only one answer: waiting in inner stillness, with posed tension and openness toward what we can only receive. Such openness is the highest activity; it is the driving force which leads us toward the growth of something new in us. And the struggle between hope and despair in our waiting is a symptom that the new has already taken hold of us (1066).

So transformation has to sneak up on me. Sacred Mystery's sense of humor is apparent in the process. I try to surrender more honestly at this time of my life. Having children was for me, probably the most redeeming of life choices. 25 years into it, when two of the three children are out and autonomous I am finally beginning to figure out what it means to be a parent. And self-surrender is a huge part of it.

My 27 year marriage has called me to growth in self-surrender, too. The blessing of being in a committed relationship with someone who spontaneously chooses risk over security is that Jim takes me with him into the Mysterious unknown where I would never
be brave enough to go alone. As a result, I have a fund of graced experiences to remind me, in my weaker moments, that taking the risk and trusting the Mystery is what this life is all about.

For many of the authors I read, the process of transformation involved the acknowledgment of paradox. Both James and Maslow noted that transformation of the self led to less self-conscious states. James described the conversion experience as one of connectedness, and Maslow's self-actualization became self-transcendence. Allport termed this a more extended sense of self and saw the symbol system as one which both conceals and reveals. Lifton saw the most mature self as having had to experience self-annihilation in order to prevent it.

Religion remains for me both a blessing and a curse. I am unable to reconcile the experience of Sacred Mystery in my life with the dogmatic and institutionalized behaviors that constitute much of the religion that touches me. Symbols that should embody the experience and remind me of it often seem stark and cold. I work endlessly, it seems, in my community, to try to promote the atmosphere in which the meaningful experience can take place, but Mystery cannot be managed, and too often we as a community confound it. J. Barrie Shepherd says it better than I can in "Anointings."

Those tongues that thronged
on Pentecost have never ceased,
have hardly taken time to swallow,
draw one gasping breath since then.
They sound forth in each and every throbbing
wavelength gathered in by human ears even,
probably, by dogs and bats, persuading,
ever persuading one and all to be
persuaded they are absolutely right.
But that bright descending fire
that melted hearts to kindness and sent them
out across all gulfs to spend themselves for
others' sakes, what put it out? Or why has it
flamed fainter, ever fainter with the years?
Is there a sacred oil can yet rekindle such a spark?
Or are we doomed to batter one another with
the truth through the encroaching dark?

My community of faith has grown to include people of many religions, and it is
no longer easy to say that I belong to a specific denomination. I look at the stance of
traditional Catholicism and wonder if it is even familiar anymore. But I am Catholic in
every cell of my being. The paradoxical truth is that in the presence of all that makes me
so wildly rebellious, this tradition has brought me to where I am today and I am grateful.

I am learning to appreciate the Mystery revealed by all religious traditions. The
ones to which I have been exposed have given me a perspective about my own tradition
that I desperately needed. I have learned to take it all less seriously, and have become
both more estranged from it and more attracted to it.

Along with paradox, the concept of the integration of opposites emerged as a
hallmark of transformation. Maslow described a constant interplay between fear and
courage. Allport used the language of ranges of acceptability and flexibility. For Jung,
the integration of opposites was mirrored in the understanding of the awareness and
acknowledgment of more and less acceptable parts of our personalities and the incorpo-
ration of both the masculine and feminine aspects. Lifton insisted that all of life is
experienced in the polarities of connection vs. separation, integrity vs. disintegration and
movement vs. stasis. While he saw the process of centering as the healthy state, he
recognized that it is only possible when the self also has the ability to decenter and thus create a space for the new. Kearney’s description of the soul that moved back and forth between the surface and the deep connecting these aspects of ourselves illustrated his idea of the necessity of integration.

My relationships with my self, my family and my friends illustrate the integration of opposites in my experience, and have taught me the sacred gift that diversity is. While many in my community share the same values, they are expressed so uniquely by each person that it requires work to recognize them. Searching for the common ground among us demands honest and open communication. Finding a centered place within myself is an even bigger job.

Because I react so instinctively with my gut, the introduction of the measured response by an intellectual choice has tamed my personality significantly. But at least I can appreciate the passions that burst from inside now that age and wisdom have made me less a victim of them. I will probably never have a happy medium, but if I had to give up the intensity of the joy and pain that I feel to get it, it probably wouldn’t be happy anyway. I appreciate the presence of the creative tension between the extremes as generating many of the most sacred moments of life.

The possibility of transformation as a process of the unleashing of the creative was affirmed by most of the authors. James saw it manifested in practical, behavioral ways. Maslow thought that the pleasurable tensions calling us toward growth were in themselves rewarding and exciting, and that the subconscious had great creative potential. Allport described this same creative potential in terms of motivating interest and
passion. Jung, in his theories of animus and anima, held that the union within the self of these two archetypes corresponded with the mythological principle of the creation of order out of chaos.

Lifton, like Allport, saw the creative potential in the new inclinations and directions that opened to a person who has survived an experience of self-annihilation, and for Kearney the creativity of the soul was a healing of the wound of mortality itself. Wilber’s entire theory of the Spirit of Evolution would seem to point to a final level of utmost creative potential. Dykstra insisted that the revelation provided by our experience exposed us ever more deeply to the mysteries of life.

While at the University of Dayton, I have participated in those motivations of desire, passion and interest that Allport argued for. I grew because I was invited and nurtured. I have met people at all stages of their journeys in life, always ready to stop and be present, and to share their understandings. They have constantly challenged and comforted me, but also provided a haven of safety where the questions could be lived on a day-to-day basis. I have been blessed with the opportunity to help develop and promote a program of study that would offer that same safe place for countless others to come and grow. As I near the end of my time here it seems that this will be a tough act for reality to follow. But I’ve felt this way at every milestone, and the boundless creativity of life never ceases to surprise and amaze me. As long as I remain open to the new, I can count on it to show up!

A significant strand of commonality in the readings on transformation was this requirement for participation of some kind on the part of the person in the process of
transformation. This is closely aligned, it seems, with the concept of self-surrender already discussed, but is worth mentioning because an attitude of openness, or disposition toward the acceptance of the struggle seems a prerequisite. James postulated a subliminal predisposition while Maslow insisted that conscious assent would be made on the basis of resources of courage. Jung, too, posited a concerted effort toward growth and self-awareness as essential if the unconscious is not to overwhelm the conscious.

Lifton also called for a conscious effort in his understanding of the “adult work” that is tied to larger spiritual principles (148). In Kearney’s studies, he insisted that the central fact which emerged for the living was the necessity of each person to befriend the soul. Dykstra’s description of the two basic movements of imaginal transformation definitely called for engagement in the process. This assent to growth seemed crucial to most of the authors even though they disagreed as to whether it takes place on a conscious or unconscious level.

I wondered if it was just my need for control that made me want to have some input into this process. But attitude and awareness make a difference in everything else. What goes through my mind is the Francis Thompson poem, “The Hound of Heaven.” He wrote about running from God his whole life and then figuring out in the end that he never had to run away. My experience is the reverse of that. I have spent my whole life running to try to find Sacred Mystery and have only on very occasional spectacular moments been able to see that Sacred Mystery is not to be found, it just is!

There to rest in, fall into, be caught up in, whatever the metaphors are: for me it has had much less to do with the usual frenetic searching, and more with a Mystery just
waiting in ambush for the unsuspecting moment when I would surrender enough to be
knocked into my real senses from the superficial level where I usually operate. The
surrender of self is only a part of the process, but it is the part that I have always had the
most difficulty with. That explains the use of the word in the title of this paper. What I
found the most problematic is what I thought the whole process was about. Letting go
and trusting that the net is there. But since it is always just there, on ordinary days and in
ordinary places, doesn't it follow that if I would just surrender to it, not have my mind
filled with a thousand trivial things, and acknowledge the beauty and grace that surround
me every moment that the feeling of connection and gratitude would be the norm? Isn't
that the richness that comes with being more fully human? Isn't that what participating
more fully in the mystery means?

Each of the authors emphasized the role of the mysterious in the process of
transformation. James and Maslow called this entity the “subconscious” which corre­
sponded to the “unconscious” in Allport and Jung, Wilber and Pruyser. Lifton referred to
the “center of being” and “zone of the sacred,” and Kearney’s language was that of the
“soul.” However it is described, this quality sets the process of transformation apart
from the cognitive dimension of the self and ushers in the element of surprise.

This awakening to the presence of the Sacred Mystery that surrounds me is like
the net under the tightrope walker. It doesn't lessen the challenge of the journey, but
gives me a security for which I have longed all my life. In a thousand ways everyday I
am cherished. I may no longer believe in the personal God of my childhood, but I have
given Him up for a Sacred Mystery which enmeshes me in the universe and connects and
discloses itself at every moment of my life. I no longer have to search for that connection; I just get to rest in it. Instead of changing the world, my family and my friends, I can now see them, in my more integrated moments, as a source of endless delight, and that too, feels like Sacred Mystery when I allow it to happen. T. H. White, in *The Book of Merlyn*, writes, “...it is no good trying to tell about the beauty. It was just that life was beautiful beyond belief, and that is a kind of joy which has to be lived” (90).

Not all of the authors that I read mentioned specifically the role that a supportive community can play in the process of transformation, but it was inferred by many of them. Maslow claimed that growth motivation takes place conditionally only when more basic developmental needs have been met. Jung’s archetypes are largely formed during the early years of our childhood when we are most dependent. Lifton saw the life-giving connections with others, past and present, as redeeming of the anxiety produced by the thought of death. Kearney agreed that a supportive family can help to make the dying process a time of growth and integration. Dykstra saw communities as pointing to realities that individuals cannot see alone.

My experience confirms the nurturing effect of a supportive community in the process of transformation. To be able to share one’s journey may be the most life-giving part of having one to share. The joy multiplies when someone laughs with you, and in the words of a popular song, “dividing up the sorrow makes it easier to bear.” Maybe that is what the process of writing this paper has been about. In an article in *The Reconstructionist: A Journal of Contemporary Jewish Thought and Practice*, Marc Margoliou wrote that “In becoming conscious of the connections between the fragments of our existence,
and in weaving them into a narrative that reveals their coherence, we effect a *tikkun*: we “fix” the brokenness of our reality. The integrative process brings us into a profound encounter with God” (37). My supportive community here, before it sends me on my way, invited me to do the thing of which I was most afraid, to risk another plunge into Sacred Mystery, and in doing so, has contributed to the transformational process.

My lived experience has confirmed what I have learned about the theoretical constructs of human transformation. The richness of the experience, of course, far exceeds my ability to express it in words. That is, I believe, why we have poets among us who can come closer to expressing the mystery. In her poem, “God Eats Cafe,” Margie McCreless says it well.

**G O D E A T S C A F E**

The sign was supposed to say:
GOOD EATS CAFE.
But instead, it advertised an act of God
there on the street
for us to ponder.
Why would God eat a cafe?
Was this some sign of judgement,
a lesson in divine wrath
against our own leisurely consumption
of the world?
Or was it love?
God taking in our ordinary life,
Our chrome and catsup.
Accepting as sacrifice
our hamburgers and fries
along with our souls and bodies.
God, to be God,
must want it all.
And as for us, I trust,
to be consumed by God
must, in the end, be good.
Works Cited


