

## Research Essay

# Channeling as an Altered State of Consciousness in Transpersonal Psychology Therapy

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## Abstract

Transpersonal Psychology considers that the psyche is multidimensional and that there are several "levels of consciousness" and each has different characteristics and is governed by different laws. The main goal of transpersonal theory is to integrate the spiritual experience within a broader understanding of the human psyche. The most used tool by professionals in transpersonal psychology is the use of transpersonal experiences through altered states of consciousness for self exploration such as the holotropic therapy developed by Stanislav Grof. Channelling is a parapsychological phenomenon which is considered an altered state of consciousness, although there are many differences of opinion as to whether channelling, is really true, what is known is that in many cases this phenomena can be attributed to the very psyche of the individual who manifested this phenomena and so could be used in psychology to know more about the inner subconscious of the individual.

**Keywords:** Transpersonal psychology, channelling, parapsychology, altered state of consciousness

## 1. Introduction

Parapsychology research focuses on seemingly anomalous experiences. The three main areas of parapsychological research are: extrasensory perception (ESP), and psychokinesis (PK). These two are often called 'psi phenomena'. The third main area is the survival hypothesis, the notion that some element of human existence survives death (Irwin and Watt, 2007).

Musso (1994) suggests that the phenomena of ESP and PK are transpersonal in nature and part of parapsychology. A new paradigm of psychology is Transpersonal Psychology. Transpersonal Psychology considers that the psyche is multidimensional and that there are several "levels of consciousness" and each has different characteristics and is governed by different laws. Transpersonal psychology does not deny other schools of thought as psychoanalysis and it does not arise as opposed; the right thing to say is that it attempts to go further. For the transpersonal vision, Freud developments have been of fundamental value in the development of a psychological science to include the idea of the unconscious in a discipline that was tied to the positivist rationalism. Although psychoanalysis opened the possibilities of understanding of the human psyche, transpersonal psychology goes further by promoting the inclusion of the spiritual dimension of the human being. The main goal of transpersonal theory is to integrate the spiritual

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experience within a broader understanding of the human psyche.

The most used tool by professionals in transpersonal psychology is the use of transpersonal experiences through altered states of consciousness for self exploration such as the holotropic therapy developed by Stanislav Grof. Channelling is a parapsychological phenomenon which is considered an altered state of consciousness, it is the aim of this article to discuss the usefulness of the channelling in transpersonal psychology that studies man from several dimensions including what is unseen but is manifested in our reality.

## **2. Altered states of consciousness and transpersonal psychology**

The human being experiences different altered states of consciousness. Consciousness can be altered in different ways; we find pathological states of consciousness as in the case of severe depression, especially in the case of psychosis, states of consciousness as deep hypnosis produced by hallucinogenic drugs like mescaline and LSD, and even altered states of consciousness that are common in the practice of yoga and in the case of mystical ecstasy. It would be quite impossible to give a concrete and precise definition of the so-called altered states of consciousness (ASC).

For many, it is an unclear term, too ambiguous. The scientific community itself is divided over the definition of their functions, location, objectivity, etc. However, even with the added constraints of language, we try to be as objective as possible, but, as everyone knows, as the general principles of quantum theory state, we must be aware that we can only know a part of the reality that, in any case, will always be "the reality" of the observer.

Traditionally, psychology described two states of consciousness: waking and sleep. However, the great psychologist William James (1985) stated, in his time: "I am sure that, between the two extreme states of consciousness as we know, there are many other states that do not have to be pathological". These were prophetic words indeed, because now we have identified many of these states and many of them are beneficial to humans.

Stanley Kripner (2000) defines ASC as mental states that can be recognized by an objective observer other than the individual who experiences it as differences in mental functions; the normal state of the individual, the alertness and the waking. In fact, twenty states have been provisionally identified, with considerable overlap, as worthy of further study.

The ASC may be spontaneous or caused by many different methods. Among them we can highlight hypnosis, meditation, psychedelic drugs intake, hearing some music, colors or perfumes, sensory isolation, electronic stimulation of the brain by a brain synchro energizer (Ossebaard, 2000), etc.

In general terms they can be defined as mental states likely to be recognized by an individual (or an objective observer of the individual) as different as it relates to normal psychological functions of the individual alert. Of all the ASC, the best known and widespread is the meditation practice that is currently carried out in universities, colleges, schools, etc. Already in the era of the caverns individuals realized that focusing on a single stimulus, sounds, breathing, etc., a special type of consciousness is generated. Hardt & Kamiya (1978), observed that in the subjects who practiced meditation, the alpha activity was more pronounced in the frontal regions, and top of the head, because normally these wave trains are more common to find in the occipital region. Another known way of inducing ASC is with neurological rhythmical stimulation of the brain, this is with a repetitive quality of sensory stimuli that begins to generate a synchronous pattern of brain waves that is known as the Monroe effect (Monroe 1982). Ornstein (1973) tells us of a similar phenomenon that is known as the Ganzfeld effect, which is caused by looking at a white screen or by placing on the eyes two devices similar to half balls of the type used in the ping-pong game, which, after about 20 minutes, the subject blocks his or her sense of sight while an electroencephalogram (EEG) detects an increase in frontal alpha waves.

Through these and similar studies, it has been possible to establish that meditation increases the blood flow and causes decrease in oxygen consumption, both effects due to a profound change in metabolism. Also, it increases the electrical resistance of the skin, giving an index of the state of relaxation of the subject. For information only we can point out that after several hours of sleep the electrical resistance of the skin arrives doubled, while after a few minutes of meditation is reached it quadruples its value (Hafner 1982).

Meditation also produces a rapid reduction of blood lactate level-a product of the cell's metabolism, possibly because it is combined with calcium, which is essential for the transmission through the nervous system. In fact, a high level of blood lactate is associated with panic disorder (Hafner 1982).

Our brains mathematically construct concrete images by interpreting frequencies from another dimension, a realm of primary reality, significant, scheduled and that transcends time and space reality. In this sense, the brain can be described as a hologram interpreting a holographic universe, and in such a context the ASC may be due to a literal harmonization with the invisible matrix that generates concrete reality (King 2012).

In this scheme, if events come in a holographic representation of frequencies that transcend space and time they do not have to be communicable, as they are potentially simultaneous and available everywhere. David Bohm (1990), described that the universe is a hologram that would seem to be a range of frequencies that give the illusion of immediate and tangible apparently creation. The most harmonious and coherent states of consciousness come into harmony with this primary reality. David Bohm (1990) affirms that whatever is manifested by nature has "n" dimensions, is timeless and cannot be handled in any way.

Abraham Maslow (1969), known psychologist in transpersonal psychology, through its observations concluded that the climax experience involves an individual merger of facts and values in conflict resolution, loss of anxiety, the discovery of the true self, a sense of unit, detachment, generosity, happiness and love. Stanislav Grof one of the founders of transpersonal psychology, is a psychiatrist of Czech origin, who worked most of his career in the United States. He was professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, and his last work was at the Esalen Institute and the center of transpersonal psychology for many years. Grof has studied the effect of LSD in a particularly extensive and profound way. In the sixties he directed about three thousand sessions with the drug and had access to about two thousand case histories of other cases that he had not spoken personally. Then, as the ban on held LSD in the United States, he started practicing holotropic therapy, with which can also be used to induce a similar altered state of consciousness.

Holotropic therapy has been practiced by Grof (1994) along with his wife Cristina as a way to produce an altered state of consciousness without drugs. This is done with Hyperventilation making an individual to take a deep and rapid breath for several minutes. Grof, with this technique, caused a pulmonary hyperventilation, this is also accompanied by music and some verbal guidance from who leads the session. The subject remains lying down, eyes closed, in order to facilitate the alteration of consciousness. This technique produces a decrease of carbon dioxide in the blood, which must also have a level neither too high nor too low. This sharp decline in the level of carbon dioxide in turn causes a neurological crisis, and through the brain acts in a similar way to a drug. This causes a crisis that leads to an altered state of consciousness, and allows the psychologist to study the consciousness of the individual from that new state. Stanislav Grof (1994) uses the experiential healing power of this new state of consciousness.

### **3. The phenomenon of parapsychological "channeling" in altered states of consciousness as a tool for transpersonal psychology**

The channelling is a parapsychological phenomenon which is considered an altered state of consciousness that can also lead to the exploration of the inner self and the transpersonal psychoanalysis in a similar way as holotropic therapy does. Channelling, as defined by Jon Klimo (1988), it would be receiving information through paranormal sources.

According to Klimo (1988), channelling, is the communication of information to a physically embodied human being or their intermediaries, from a source that is said to exist in some another level or dimension of reality other than the physical plane as we know, and not from the conscious mind of the channeller. Another definition of channelling which identifies the process by which a person transfers messages from a source presumed not embodied and external to their consciousness. Channeling often uses trance that does not stop being a form or aspect of mediumship.

Chandley Margo (1986) in his doctoral thesis, believes that this non-physical energy is an intrinsic part of every human being, and that the reason why the label as being with personality is located outside of us. Channelling would, in this context, be the only way to communicate with that energy in a form of transpersonal psychoanalysis using the paranormal phenomenon of channeling.

Scott Rogo (1975), established differences between mediumship and channelling. According to Rogo, serious mediumship is the art of attracting the spirits of dead people with the specific objective to communicate with their families, while channeling would try to attract some undefined nature of intelligence for the purpose of promoting and encouraging education spiritual and philosophical discussion. However, we must exclude from channelling what is known as ESP (ie telepathy), which would be the transmission of information between two embodied people, since in channelling the source or transmitter is at some other level of different reality from perceiving it.

Huston Smith (1965), rather than entities, prefers to use the term psychic centers, and thus encompasses a variety of types of living beings individualized that could function as a communicators through the channeling process. We would also consider, to talk about channelling, there are other levels, dimensions or planes of reality where only the physical would be one more of these realities. Other parallel planes exist where the various doctrines or different movements have their place, and could be listed in terms of astral plane, mental plane, causal plane, etc.

Throughout history there have been various entities that came to enjoy some popularity; according to Cunningham (2012), the Seth entity manifested through a medium called Jane Roberts. Seth says that we are multidimensional in nature and exist outside of time and space as part of a wider reality and will be evolving within the universe. We create our own reality projecting energy outward and thus form the physical world in which we learn our creativity. This ongoing work is what makes the universe is constantly developing, and to modify our personal world we must change ourselves, so that we change what we project or express.

Seth's teachings include reincarnation, although we are contemplated as relatively immortal beings we cover many physical incarnations. Jane Roberts had the first conduit through automatic writing in 1963, which lasted until 1984, the year of her death. Jane Roberts, described the process as a situation as if she had taken an hallucinogen drug and in this situation she had an avalanche of great new ideas that flooded her mind, making it a receiving station messages. Jane Roberts (Cunningham (2012)), suggested that individualized energy is materialized within our physical existence, to learn to create energy and ideas to make physical parts. We project these ideas into an object so that in this way we can relate to us; in this context, the object is materialized thought, the idea has obvious similarities to certain areas of the Buddhist philosophy and some modern cosmological theories.

Jane began receiving channeling from Seth in a clairvoyant way, then she moved to a deep trance in occasions. Seth described himself as an individual consciousness, energy personality essence, no longer limited by physical reality. Jane Roberts always wonder if this phenomenon was real, or Seth belonged to a part of her own psyche. Seth, on the other hand, seemed to reveal an alleged absolute knowledge, and the explanation that it gave Jane is that our current figures could be aspects of a broader which distant consciousness, the individual is only a part, albeit In the case of an inviolable and unique part. Our personalities would be composed by many other aspects, and each of them would be dominant in other realities.

Besides Seth, Jane Roberts channeled also two other sources, a French impressionist painter of the nineteenth century, Paul Cezanne, and the famous American psychologist William James. Roberts believed that she perceived the personality of James Williams as a construction formed unconsciously as an automatic process. Seth let the material is very prolific, and its main contribution is that each of us are able to create our reality through our own beliefs and desires, that is, we would live this our present life as one of the many personalities experience, each within their respective level of reality and another as part of a broader nature also learns and evolves. The level of the texts left by Jane Seth dictation are philosophically very high, although debatable, as well as expressing general concepts, answering all a person of high scientific, philosophical and humanistic preparation.

Usually, the first idea that comes to mind is that the neophyte channels are people with psychological pathology, if not worse, and that basically is all a sham. We must admit that, at least in part, such an opinion has some justification given the authentic falsehoods and scams that have come to mount on the issue.

Myers (1895) speaks of subliminal in the phenomenon of channeling as it was a part of the mind that transcended the control of consciousness and was wider and deeper faculty. So through this subliminal, one could access the mysteries of a broader universe of a superior spirit with more energy and possibilities. This concept of subliminal could help to explain the channeling phenomenon and its use in psychoanalysis to the transpersonal level.

Russel Wallace speaks of the existence of higher powers in the context of a hierarchy of spiritual nature in creation; He said that there must be an invisible world of the spirit that causes changes in the world of matter. The evolution of this planet must be guided and assisted by upper and invisible intelligences, to which man, as a spiritual being is exposed. Furthermore, it would be likely that these beings of superior intelligence lived in a hierarchy above ours. In addition, Wallace adds that these spiritual beings could communicate with us via telepathy. This could provide a gateway to the acquisition of universal knowledge through parapsychology (Kottler 1974).

Thomson J. Hudson (1904) expounded his theory of objective mind, which would deal with

everyday experience, and a subjective, which would be oriented inward, would control our inner being and would live in the deepest levels of the self with the powers employed sewers and other paranormal experiences.

Richard M. Bucke (2009) also differed less than our simple awareness of higher consciousness or cosmic. He worked with subjects who practiced the channelling and admitted that was natural in all of us, that would be related to the exact extent that we consciously realize our oneness with eternal life and open ourselves to the divine energy. He thought that we had in ourselves the properties and powers of eternal life, and we constitute channels through which they can act in intelligence and power.

All these theories are against the tide with respect to traditional psychology that believes that the unconscious is as a closed system and therefore impossible to communicate with the mental or spiritual universe. Current theories of the psyche propose that we each have a conscious part, would work within the limits of normal perceptions, individual memory and an unconscious part that would be a deposit of perceptions and memories are still not ready to emerge into consciousness . This unconscious mind would be responsible for channelling and therefore this could be seen as a tool to explore the unconscious mind and the true self of the individual.

The current experimental systems are strongly based on behaviorism; behavioral psychologists believe that learned behaviors are based largely unconscious associations structures built in the mind by various environmental stimuli and internal configurations. Behaviorists believe that ignore the fundamentals of much of our own conduct, which apparently work in a field based on conditioning beyond the control of consciousness.

The most important type of conduct in channelling: the individual hears a voice that seems to come from him or herself or anyone around him or he, but uses its vocal cords to speak, or notes with surprise that someone who is not then uses his or her hand to write. Based on the theories of conditioning, these situations can be interpreted as functions of certain structures of associations formed unconsciously by memories, mental game configurations and combinations of creativity. Sigmund Freud (1964), talked of the paranormal phenomena related to channelling although his whole life was skeptical about this phenomena. He said that this type of behavior would be sought to recover by "supernatural" means the lost illusion in this world. Channeling was for Freud the result of dissatisfaction desires and manifestations of repressed material in the unconscious; voices, visions and expressions of repressed material would be channeling the unconscious and seek a way out.

Jung (1936), said that the psyche is not an indivisible unit, but a divisible whole, in fact more or less divided, and was composed of many complex psychic materials. The ego would be the characteristic center of our psyche, but only one among others. Jung also thought that the existence of a communication from disembodied spirits can be justified through these complex materials, that are repressed and away from the usual conscious perception. These are complex,

he said, could be designed in a configuration perceived by the individual as alien to him or herself.

Jung said the spirit, seen from a psychological perspective, is an unaware complex autonomous psychic material that appears as a projection because it has direct contact with the ego. Moreover, he also believed that grim appearance of the spirit is the dark side of everyone, the less evolved and understood, sometimes part that could manifest in the form of something or someone outside the self. He also gave another possible explanation based on what he called the collective unconscious. Its components are not personal but collective, that is, not belonging to a single individual but a group of them, an entire nation or even all mankind. These components are not acquired during the life of the individual but are innate products and configurations, the fundamental concepts that have always been the basis of human thought, the full circle of mythological themes.

The channelling has also been compared with hypnosis, with trance and dissociated states. It's hard to grasp the relationship may have channelling with hypnosis, as is the fact that subjects that are more easily hypnotized in turn are the ones most likely to be channellers, although it is possible that the latter are self hypnotized to exercise channelling.

The hypnotic state would be easier to access channelling messages. Through hypnosis the subject, the channeller breaks his mindset and prejudices aware making it much easier to channel. It is also true that the subject would be well disposed to suggestions more easily, since it can induce the hypnotic state channels through to deeper stages of hallucinations.

Charles Tart (1972), when he was studying hypnosis, perceived that he could generate in a subject an entity with an apparent independent existence of the subject. The subject perceived as if someone was speaking from outside, that is, that although some cases may be due to channelling if manipulation, this does not mean that all channelling cases are related to hypnosis. In effect, for example, we find burnt trees in the countryside, still standing, and that happens when lightning strikes on him during a storm; that does not mean that all charred trees still standing that we find are in the fields and forests have suffered a lightning strike. There are multiple causes that can produce a similar effect.

There are diseases that resemble channelling such as delusions and hallucinations, identity disorders, schizophrenia, behavior simulation, depersonalization and dissociation, multiple personalities, etc. However, we should develop more detailed and careful studies before putting labels of mental disorders to those who act as channels.

Parapsychology has also contributed to the explanation of the channelling phenomena, especially in what has been called psychical research. Parapsychology has studied the ESP (Extra-Sensory Perception, information acquired by unusual channels) with what would be an explanation of



channelling. With respect to the channels of the person that seeks from a medium to communicate with another person now deceased, we must be careful that the medium is not telepathically capturing the information contained in the subject who has attended to query. We must also mention that not only telepathy could capture the information, but also through other information area that Teilhard de Chardin (1965) proposed as lying around Earth, an evolving field of knowledge, which they called noosphere. Clearly, any of these options connects with the collective unconscious of Jung.

It exists in the annals of parapsychology an anecdotal event that may be relevant, in 1973 a group of people created a fictitious entity that gave the name of Philips. This being manifested by strokes, realizations, voices, etc. In previous times when Philips figure was created, each attendee at the meeting incorporating personality traits, professionals, etc., distinct and integrated a story that were supposed to be those of the body, soon appeared a presence that began to respond to questions from the group and attended by the name Philips. This event is brought to prove that, despite speaking seriously and with sufficient rigor, what could be considered an authentic channel was merely the result of individual and unconscious of those involved in the experience minds.

Aldous Huxley (1945) also talked that each of us has a high potential of mind, a mind without restrictions, but in our quality of animals we have above all the instinct to survive. In this sense, a mind without restrictions should be targeted in any case, through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. Some people, however, seem to be born with a kind of detour that bypasses the pressure reducing valve. In other words, temporary shifted can be purchased, either spontaneously or as a result of deliberate retreat. Grof (1994) cites the transpersonal concept holds that there is a broad spectrum of altered states of consciousness, and one of them is useful in power and specific in their functions. Some of these are true higher states. Since each state of consciousness reveals his own vision of reality, we can deduce that reality as we know it (and this is the only way we know it) is only relatively real, in other words, is to hold genuine psychosis in a single reality.

The father of transpersonal psychology, Stanislaw Grof, was the first to carry out such channeling experiences under the influence of drugs, particularly LSD, whose composition has many similarities with serotonin. Grof (1973) explains:

"The subject affected by LSD can, for example, suddenly enter into a trance-like state of a medium. His appearance and his gestures are alien, and his voice changed completely. You can speak foreign languages or write texts through automatic writing, you can have encounters with spiritual beings or astral bodies of people killed even have many of the characteristics of the so-called spirit possession. "

Grof has used the experiences of channelling as a tool for self-exploration of the individual to

find possible causes of psychological problems such as depression and psychosis.

Persinger (1983) is skeptical about the paranormal origin of channelling and gives an explanation of physiological origin. In one experiment, he stimulated the current low level of the temporal lobes of the brain in order to induce channelling experiences in the subject of study. After an initial feeling of floating in the air, the individual felt 'out of body'. Then the experiments recreated experiences that varied from one subject to another, but whose constant is to describe their feelings with cosmic and spiritual meanings. Persinger says "Often intense listening experiences in which the person feels that some messages are communicated to occur. This transmission is perceived by the individual through a kind of feeling of "knowing what happens" without being able to necessarily say that hears a voice" .

Persinger suggests that people with epilepsy (ie temporal lobe dysfunction), has been found to possess a kind of constant form of channeling. Another novel contribution to the possible explanation of channelling was carried out by physicist Frank Barr (1983), who has issued a whole theory based on the peculiarities of the organic compound called melanin, and the brain equivalent neuromelanin. It is a substance that would act between mind and brain, as an intermediary. According to Barr, filamentous cells have bumps called glycocalyx antenna that could act in strong overlap with neuromelanin. Thus they transform the received waves of a variety of lengths and frequencies, including light in mechanical impulses and vice versa.

Vibratory waves, once inside the cells would move through these through-called microtubules to melanin, which is capable of converting light into sound and sound into light. From this pattern, it is evident the possibility of transforming inner voices emissions received as waves in the brain, and vice versa. However, Frank Barr does not stop here but also extrapolated that there may be different standards of living at different levels of wave frequencies, inhabited by beings of difficult objective understanding from our usual physical reality.

Despite the different views of the phenomenon of channeling, the truth is that it is possible to use it as a tool for exploration of subconscious. Although some cases are unexplained, many of these appear to be manifestations of the individual's own unconscious and could reveal information that could help a patient to understand the origin of their own psychological problems.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In this article, the altered state of consciousness of channeling was presented as a tool for analysis and self exploration that is basic to the transpersonal psychology.

Although there are many differences of opinion as to whether channelling, is really true, what is known is that in many cases this phenomena can be attributed to the very psyche of the individual who manifested this phenomena and so it could be used in psychology to know more about the inner subconscious of the individual.

The article was meant to open the eyes of the reader about the usefulness of parapsychology in transpersonal psychology. Believe it or not, parapsychology offers a wider horizon of possible applications to the transpersonal psychology for better understanding of the human mind.

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