

Epistemological and Ontological Elements of Transpersonal Human Development in the Qur'an

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## ABSTRACT

This study opens with an introduction to the transpersonal orientation, which Boucouvalas presents as a meta-framework of the transpersonal field that includes individual, group/societal, and planetary/cosmic domains. Three major theoretical perspectives of the field framed the study: the hierarchical stages of development, spiral path, and participatory. I offer a philosophical hermeneutic reading of the Qur'an to trace the development of human collective consciousness as a construct of the interaction between the autonomous and homonomous self at the individual, group, and cosmic levels on one plane of reality with the Divine on the other. This analysis, which utilizes Gadamer's conceptualization of philosophical hermeneutics as a research philosophy, concludes that this process of collective human development is comprised of three clearly distinct representations: familial, national, and cosmic/planetary. I articulate development and growth as a process of the expansion of collective consciousness. The cosmic/planetary human consciousness represents the ultimate reach of this expansion, for it assimilates the national and familial types while simultaneously transforming and transcending them within its reach.

Based on the historical development of human consciousness in the Qur'an depicted in this study, I propose that human collective consciousness has reached the domains of cosmic consciousness, which began at the time of the Qur'an being read by Muhammad. However, individuals and groups may still operate within the limiting boundaries of national consciousness in the form of religious, ethnic, racial, and nation states. The Qur'an, and possibly other religious texts, should be understood within this expanded cosmic/planetary consciousness reach because they represent humanity's collective heritage. Moreover, those individuals operating within a strictly national consciousness should not be entrusted with explaining these texts to humanity at large or imposing their own limiting understanding on the world. I conclude by outlining some implications for adult education as a process, a program and a movement. I presented the possible contribution of a transpersonal adult learning theory based on this study's meta-framework as a comprehensive worldview to adult education and learning combining multiple dimensions of being, including the rational, affective, spiritual, imaginative, somatic, and sociocultural domains through relevant experiences of body-mind-spirit.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Laszlo (2004/2007) stated, “There are many ways of comprehending the world: through personal insight, mystical intuition, art, and poetry, as well as the belief systems of the world’s religions” (p. 7). The purpose of this study is to explore elements of transpersonal human development and collective states of consciousness in the Qur’an, one of humanity’s most read books (second only to the Bible) that now represents a belief system to over 1.57 billion people or 23% of the world’s population according to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2009). The core research questions of this inquiry are: How does the Qur’an inform our understanding of transpersonal adult development? How does transpersonal theory and practice inform our understanding of the Qur’an? I utilized philosophical hermeneutics and the hermeneutic circle as described by Gadamer (2004) as a research approach to analyzing the Qur’an through a transpersonal disposition. According to Gadamer (2004), “The hermeneutical task becomes of itself a questioning of things and is always in part so defined” (p. 271).

#### **Background to the Study**

Our modern world is plagued with religious and ethnic conflicts that have resulted in many instances of mass killing and great human suffering, as detailed in Chua (2004):

In Rwanda in 1994, ordinary Hutus killed eight hundred thousand Tutsis over a period of three months, typically hacking them to death with machetes. Young children would come home to find their mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers on the living room floor, in piles of severed heads and limbs. In Jakarta in 1998, screaming Indonesian mobs torched and smashed hundreds of Chinese shops and homes, leaving over two thousand dead. In Israel in 1998, a suicide bomber driving a car packed with explosives rammed into a school bus filled with thirty-four Jewish children between the ages of six and eight. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Middle Eastern terrorists hijacked four American airplanes. They destroyed the World Trade Center and the southwest side of the Pentagon, crushing or incinerating approximately three thousand people. (p. 5)

On September 11, 2001, nineteen male Muslim adherents of a certain strongly held belief system and dogmatic ideology based upon a distorted interpretation of the Qur’an, which they

claimed to be the absolute truth, engulfed the world in a “war of terror” and ideology by their murderous actions (Gambetta, 2005). The perpetrators stated that their actions were justified by Islam (Blanchard, 2007). By locating their belief system and ideas in the Qur’an and Islam (Lansford, Watson, & Covarrubias, 2009), they hijacked the former’s innocence as a book of peace and wisdom in the minds of many Westerners, thereby setting in motion a course of actions that would result in vastly increased human suffering, the tragedy of war and financial loss (Aldis & Herd, 2007). Gorka and Sookhdeo (2012) stated, “Radical Islam, or Islamism, which has declared itself at war both with the West and with moderate or secular Muslims, is well organized, well-funded, and grounded in the authority of religious texts” (p. 9). The Qur’an itself, however, claims that it is a divine revelation sent to provide mercy and guidance to humanity at large, and that its message is meant to guide everyone to a peaceful life regardless of race, religion, and background (Al-Attas, 1995).

Following this tragedy, the United States and its allies unleashed their “war on terror” as a national security strategy to combat terrorism (Aldis & Herd, 2007) and other groups thought to be associated with the 9/11 attacks. The cost of this approach was in the neighborhood of 3 trillion dollars according to a study conducted by Noble prize winner of Economics Joseph E. Stiglitz. This was in addition to the greater tragedy of loss of life not only among the occupying armies, but also from the allies, not to mention innocent Iraqi and Afghan civilians. Stiglitz and Bilmes (2008) stated:

The decision to go to war was based on a number of false premises. One asserted a link between Saadam Hussein and the terrible attacks of 9/11 on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Faulty intelligence led to claim that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction even though the inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said there were none. Many argued that the war would be over quickly and democracy somehow blooms in Iraq. Finally, there was the notion that the war would cost little and pay for itself. In fact, the war turned out to be hugely costly in both blood and treasure. We estimate that the total budgetary and economic cost to the United States will turn out to be around 3 trillion dollars, with the cost to the rest of the world perhaps doubling that number again. (p. x)

Richard A. Clarke, who served under President Ronald Reagan (Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence) and President Bill Clinton (the first National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Counterterrorism), held this latter position until March 2003 under President George W. Bush. Despite an outcry by a Bush administration official, his *Against All Enemies* (Clarke, 2004) contended that the counterterrorism policy has failed:

Even worse, it is the story of how even after the attacks [means 9/11 attacks] America did not eliminate the al Qaeda movement, which morphed into a distributed and elusive threat, how instead we launched the counterproductive Iraq fiasco, how the Bush administration politicized counterterrorism as a way of insuring electoral victories, how critical homeland security vulnerabilities remain; and how little is being done to address the ideological challenge from terrorists distorting Islam into a new ideology of hate. (pp. x-xi)

According to Eck (2001), the United States has become one of the world's most religiously diverse nations, given the number of religions claimed by its population. The interconnectedness of the world has also, due to globalization, in many respects become an economic, social, and technological fact of life (Baylis, Smith, & Owen, 1998). The authors noted, "[A] globalized world is one in which political, economic, cultural, and social events become more and more interconnected, societies are affected more and more extensively and more and more deeply by events of other societies" (p. 2). They stated, "In many respects, technological innovation has caused people to become increasingly interrelated and interact with more immediacy now than ever before, thereby transcending differences in cultures, colors, ethnicities, and religions and across the borders of their respective nation states" (Baylis et al., 1998, p. 2).

In its broadest sense, transpersonal human development appeals to humanity's essential inclination for interconnectedness and interdependency. In his forward to *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*, Richard Tarnas (2002) described the transpersonal project as follows: "the underlying project of the leading transpersonal meta-theories has explicitly been to integrate modern science with the pre-modern religion" (p. 6).

Secularization theory, which in its most basic formulation predicts that religiosity—defined as both external (the gradual fading from public square), and internal (the internal

accommodation of traditional religions)—declines as societies modernize has historically, and since Weber's (1904/1930) popularization of the term, been the dominant paradigm in the study of religion (Stark & Finke, 2000). Over the last two decades, however, this thesis has received considerable theoretical criticism for lacking a firm micro-level foundation (Gill, 2001), and from an empirical standpoint for its perceived lack of support (Beyer, 1994). For example, according to Finke and Stark (2005), several scholars notably from the United States, have presented evidence that religion and religiosity (often measured by regular church attendance and similar measures) has not significantly decreased over time despite unprecedented levels of modernization. Berger in his more recent publication *The Desecularization of the World* (Berger, 1999) recanted his staunch support of the secularization thesis since his original (Berger, 1967) book *The Sacred Canopy*.

One can argue that as human species, our interdependency as people and nations in a globalized, de-secularized, religiously diverse, and religious world cannot be denied (Baylis et al., 1998). This inquiry argues that the transpersonal orientation in human development, as articulated by scholars in the field such as Wilber (1975, 1981, 1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1995, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007), Laszlo (1972, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2012), Grof (1976, 1985, 1988, 1998, 2012), Grof and Bennett (1992), Grof and Grof (1989), Washburn (1987, 1988, 1990, 1994, 2003a, 2003b), Ferrer (2002, 2008, 2011), Walsh (1977, 1990, 1993), Walsh and Vaughan (1994), Rothberg (1993, 1994), Kelly (1992), Rothberg and Kelly (1998), Cook-Greuter (1990, 1999, 2000), Miller (1994, 2000a, 2000b), Tart (1976, 2008), Zimmerman (1985, 1994), Murphy (1992), Wright (1989, 1994), Boucouvalas (1980, 1981, 1983, 1987, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2008, 2009), and others can provide an alternative orientation for peaceful and prosperous living for the human species among themselves and within a peaceful universal and cosmic existence.

The work of Boucouvalas, begun several decades ago (1980), offered a straightforward and helpful meta-framework for this study in providing an understanding of the range, scope, and depth of the transpersonal orientation and transpersonal development in individual, group/societal, and planetary/cosmic terms. Contributing to the further development of my organizing framework was her perspective of transpersonal development as an intertwined helix comprised of autonomy and homonomy as complementary trajectories of growth.

Acknowledging the fundamental contribution of Angyal (1941), she used this conceptualization (discussed in more detail later) to argue for the role that the transpersonal orientation can play in building civil society (1999b). Both the concepts of autonomy “separate independent self-sense” (p.211) and homonomy “meaning in life derived from feeling and being part of a greater whole,” (p.211) as explained by Boucouvalas (2000), can be applied not just to individuals but also to groups, societies, and nations, but while such collectives can develop autonomous identities it is important for them to understand that they are still part of a greater whole. She explains, “As individual ethnic, religious, cultural, and political identities are now being resurrected, an equal danger applies when such groups might truncate off in ignoring or devaluing the greater whole of which they are part-their homonomous dimension” (1999b, p. ii).

Such a caveat and conceptualization of the transpersonal orientation as outlined above could also serve as a conceptual framework for peace building among groups and nations, as well as worldwide, by creating a transpersonal worldview of a transnational dialogue of peaceful living and coexistence. To realize this goal, it would have to appeal to humanity’s innate interconnectedness through an approach based on the transpersonal worldview and vision. Laszlo (2004/2007) asserted, “While in a primordial condition humans possessed an instinctive knowledge of the sacred unity and profound interconnectedness of the world” (p. 3).

“There is another intriguing question that is central to both the development of the individual and the evolution of human species: how can transpersonal experiences be integrated into one’s life and developmental trajectory?” (Boucouvalas, 2000, p. 211). By treating the transpersonal phenomenon as an ontological one within a monotheistic epistemology, this inquiry attempts to provide a partial answer to this question. By re-orienting the religious dialogue, discourse, and experiences into a transpersonal realm, one may be able to offer a framework that can integrate the transpersonal awareness into people’s lives and thus yield a more peaceful and prosperous living for the human species.

In his attempt to articulate the integral approach, Wilber (2007) assumed that taking the commonalities found in all world religions, traditions, and wisdom would yield an integral orientation. In this regard, he asked the rhetorical questions:

What if we took literally everything that all the various cultures have to tell us about human potential-about spiritual growth, psychological growth, and social growth-and put it all on the table? What if we attempted to find the critically essential keys to human

growth, based on the sum total of human knowledge now open to us? What if we attempted based on extensive cross-cultural study, to use all of the world's great traditions to create a composite map, a comprehensive map, an all-inclusive or *integral* map that included the best elements from all of them? (Wilber, 2007, p. 16)

In his paper laying the ground for an ecumenical theory of spiritual intelligence based on grounded theory data analysis, Amram (2007, p.5) argued, "In contrast to perennial philosophy (Huxley, 1945/2009; Smith, 1987, 1992; Wilber, 1975, 2000), which presupposes a unifying cosmology across spiritual traditions, an ecumenical theory of spiritual intelligence does not necessitate such unified cosmology". Perennial philosophy is also present in Nasr's (1993) presentation of Islamic cosmology. In his *Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Nasr, 1993), he stated:

Greek philosophy was replaced by Near Eastern wisdom, and persistence of the basic construction of Near Eastern religious thought is nowhere more strikingly evidenced than by the new Sufi metaphysics. From the very dawn of articulated religious thought in ancient Sumer, the cosmos is regarded as one unified entity which embraces the whole of being, so that human societies but reflect the society of the gods. (p. xv)

Ferrer (2002) argued against Wilber's notion of *a priori ultimate* as a representation of perennialism in transpersonal thought by stating:

The view that the various spiritual traditions and insights correspond to different interpretations, dimensions, or levels of a single spiritual ultimate that is both pre-given and universal...I do claim that the kind of perennialism presupposed in most transpersonal works in an a priori position that has been uncritically taken for granted, that it is contingent upon questionable Cartesian presuppositions, and that it raises important obstacles for interreligious dialogue and spiritual inquiry. (pp. 4-5)

The other problem with the conception of a priori ultimate of a specific nature based on commonalities among many (epistemologically diverse traditions), is that of its rational and cognitively based approach. To discern commonalities in a priori ultimate among many epistemologically diverse religions and belief systems has to be based on a previously conceptualized frame of reference, which was not explained by Wilber but has to exist in order

for this system of thought to take place. This cognitively embarked process and its associated belief system does not lend itself to an ontologically based experiencing of the world since it may lack the faith element commonly associated with spiritual conceptions of particular orientation. For example, as noted by Boucouvalas (2000),

From a transpersonal point of view, it is important to not consider unfolding and maturation only as a process of becoming more intelligent in the cognitive sense, or more developed in the emotional or moral sense, and so on. More important is the quality of how one experiences the world and one's place in it. (p. 212)

As the transpersonal orientation from this perspective is of an ontological nature, it may not lend itself well to an epistemologically diverse disposition and an intellectual discourse of commonalities, regardless of how helpful this may be in providing us with what Boucouvalas (2000) described as a *healthy skepticism*: "Healthy skepticism helps us question the reality of something we may not have experienced" (p. 211).

The ontological nature of the transpersonal orientation, as described above, asserts that this orientation has been entrenched in human experience at the individual, group, societal, and cosmic levels (Boucouvalas, 1980, 2000). Accordingly, an experience and analysis of the Qur'anic belief system from this particular orientation and worldview may provide a supportive environment and a catalyst for such a trajectory of development and orientation among Muslims and perhaps among adherents of other faiths. According to Boucouvalas (2000), "These experiences benefit from supportive environments and relationships but can also atrophy or be led awry without such support, particularly during the incipient awakening and development" (p. 211).

Conversely, the transpersonal orientation may be enriched by the Qur'an's possible contribution. Braud and Anderson (1998) stated that:

From its inception in the late 1960s, one of the distinguishing characteristics of transpersonal psychology has been a keen desire, even an urgency, to integrate the learnings and spiritual practices of indigenous and ancient spiritual traditions, especially forms of shamanism around the world, Buddhism, and Hinduism. In more recent years, mystical and indigenous forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have also been

increasingly influential in shaping the transpersonal orientation to understanding human experience. (p. xxi)

A philosophical hermeneutic reading of the Qur'an using the transpersonal orientation as a framework may help provide a supportive environment for an alternative way of knowing and experiencing the world for those Muslims and non-Muslims who may be yearning for glimpses of light in ancient wisdom. As Krippner (1998) asserted, "One might disagree with the focus, assumptions, or epistemology of this field, [means the transpersonal] but one can no longer disregard it" (p. xi).

The questions that one could ponder in this endeavor include: can we, as a human species, realize our connections and dependency not only to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, but also to survive and overcome the evils that incited 9/11 and other acts of senseless killing described earlier by comprehending and experiencing the world through transpersonal states of consciousness? In addition, can this be accomplished by using several epistemologies, all of which are as different as we are as a human species, but leading to similar conclusions and thereby asserting our interdependency and connectedness to each other and the universe? Do we have to devise a framework based on an intellectual exercise, as Wilber and others have done, that joins together humanity's commonalities and shared wisdom despite people's different epistemologies and without a clearly defined frame of reference? If we do not do so, will we, as a human species, ever be able to accept this notion of connectedness and interdependency and ontologically experience the world through it?

### **Nature of the Problem**

The Qur'an has stood at the periphery and made only a very limited contribution, if any, to those intellectual processes that shaped the studies dealing with the transpersonal theory of human development and higher states of consciousness. The distinct exceptions to this generalization are the Sufi orders and Islamic mystics (Said, Funk, & Kadayifci, 2001). However, the Sufi interpretation of the Qur'an has never become part of mainstream interpretations, as its main concern was to uncover the text's underlying and hidden meanings and penetrate to its true core. Such an interpretation was, by definition, not necessarily meant to be accessible by ordinary individuals. According to Schimmel (1975/1994):

The mystics of Islam ...knew that a deeper meaning lies behind the words of the text and that one has to penetrate to the true core. It may be an exaggeration that an early mystic supposedly knew 7,000 interpretations for each verse of the Qur'an, but the search for the never-ending meanings of the Qur'an has continued through the ages. The Arabic language has been very helpful in this respect with its almost infinite possibilities of developing the roots of words and forming cross-relations between expressions. (p. 48)

A search in the scholarly literature for “transpersonal human development,” and “higher states of consciousness,” in the Qur'an, and similar subjects turned up very few relevant academic articles on the Qur'an's contributions to these areas either through a psychotherapeutic approach to the Qur'an for Muslims and/or selective readings of specific Qur'anic verses or chapters that the authors considered relevant and possibly supportive of a specific aspect of transpersonal psychology. Examples of this are present in several studies (such as: Alatreb, 1996; Alawneh, 1998; Aboul-el-Azayem & Hedayat-Diba, 1994; Chittick, 1983; Fadiman & Frager, 1997; Jafari, 1993; Kabbani, 2004; Khan, 1982; Mijares, 2003; Sedgwick, 2000). In contrast, I looked in this inquiry at the Qur'an as an epistemologically coherent document in order to discern an orientation for understanding the whole and the parts within the whole embracing Gadamer's (2004) philosophical orientation.

An investigation of the field of hermeneutics and interpretation of the Qur'an revealed no serious attempts to utilize the transpersonal as a paradigm. In the few cases in which this particular paradigm was used, the interpreters tended to use an exegetical approach to hermeneutics and literary interpretation. This approach differs considerably from the philosophical hermeneutical approach used in this study, as discussed in Chapter 3.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research study will help introduce the Qur'an, as an epistemologically and ontologically comprehensive and unified unit, to the field of transpersonal human development study and research. It will also help clarify our understanding of the Qur'an in light of what we have learned and know about transpersonal psychology and human development beyond the rational self. The relevant philosophy and literature will help us frame and ground the study. The study will enrich adult learning and development literature by adding a dimension that has not yet been explored in depth.

Ferrer (2002) noted, “The original impetus of the transpersonal movement: to present cogent visions of human nature and reality that honor the increasing interest and hunger for a deeper spiritual connection in the context of the philosophical and scientific discourse of modernity” (p. xvii). He also stated, “The birth of transpersonal psychology can be seen as emerging from the encounter of the modern self with the sacred dimensions of life and existence” (p. xviii).

Our currently globalized, more religious, and religiously diverse world presents adult educators and human resource development professionals with a worthy goal and agenda: to search for the transpersonal orientation in ourselves as individuals of a larger cosmic society, in our communities and societies, in the world community and the cosmos, to start the trajectory of a transpersonal planet. This inquiry argues that the transpersonal planetary state of development may not be reached by an intellectually and epistemologically diverse exercise of the integral vision (Wilber, 2006) and by applying the melting pot concept to the rest of the world. However, it might be reached by providing a conducive environment to adopting the transpersonal orientation as an ontologically experienced domains of consciousness, being, and experiencing of the world. Our mission, as adult educators and members of the adult education profession as both a movement and a field of study and practice is to create a supportive environment that can help put the world on this trajectory toward a humanity that lives in a condition of peace among all its members.

Ferrer (2002) asserted:

Transpersonal theory is not merely another academic discipline. The transpersonal vision is a way of thinking and living self, other, and that can be directly manifested not only in transpersonal states, but also in relationships, community, society, ethics, education, politics, philosophy, religion, cosmology, and almost any other area of human thinking, feeling, and action. Transpersonal theory, that is, can shed new light and transform virtually any phenomenon in which human beings participate. (p.7)

The transpersonal theory, which has been adopted in this study, is one that takes into consideration the whole person and human experience and in the process transcends the discipline into new uncharted territories. Boucouvalas (1999a) stated:

Perhaps it was bound to happen sooner or later. A psychology that takes into account the whole human experience begins to transcend the discipline itself. When all levels, states, and structures of consciousness are embraced, when the hallmark of maturation is no longer restricted solely to autonomous individual development, but tends equally to the homonomous human development trajectory (becoming a part of greater wholes), the antennae of other disciplines pick up on the signal and are called to attention, sensing their role in this realm. (p. 27)

The purpose of this study has been to examine how the Qur'an may inform our understanding of transpersonal human development and how the transpersonal orientation in theory and practice may inform our understanding of the Qur'an. The study also sought to examine the findings' contribution to adult education as a movement and field of study and practice. Relevant future research may include utilizing the transpersonal paradigm to promote world peace through transcending religious conflicts based on epistemologically coherent investigations of other world religions.

A world renowned scholar of Islamic studies at UCLA, Abou El Fadl (2002) declared, "When it comes to making sense of Islamic texts, there is a remarkable vacuum—a vacuum that is often filled by authoritarian agents who are able to appropriate the Divine Will in order to proclaim the death of discourse" (p. 13). This assertion highlights the need for a new hermeneutical discourse of the Qur'an that will enable Muslims in the United States and the West to integrate into the non-Muslim-majority societies in which they live, while enabling non-Muslims to acquire a transpersonal understanding of the Qur'an. Gadamer (2004) stated, "But the discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process" (p. 298)

The motivation behind this in-depth study was also spurred by my initial exploration of the Qur'an in light of my interest in transpersonal theory. My interest in having an understanding of the Qur'an grounded in an ontological experience while maintaining an academically grounded engagement led me to explore the Qur'an through a transpersonal lens. Growing up in an Islamic religious culture, I was frequently reminded by many people who claimed knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an—while interpreting the sacred text from what I had perceived at the time as narrow-mindedness—that Islam is represented by well-established laws of universal nature and these laws are applicable regardless of time and space. I was also reminded that these

laws and rules of what to do and not to do represent essentially what Islam is and to be a true Muslim, one has to abide by these rules regardless of how arcane some of them may be in order for me-as a young boy-to survive hellfire. My problems with this conception exacerbated as I moved to the west and exposed myself openly socially and academically to the ideas that shaped its societies. The two concepts underlying the aforementioned articulation of Islam and the legalistic interpretation of the Qur'an associated with it are; first, that there is an absolute truth which one need only to follow to avoid hellfire and live a prosperous life with divine guidance and this truth is crystal clear declaring in this process the death of discourse and second, the authority to understand the Qur'an lies within its historic jurists (authoritarians) who discovered this absolute truth in the sacred text long before I was born and one does not have to bother trying to figure it out for himself. Ironically, at the same time, I was always reminded of the benefits of reading the Qur'an in order to seek God's blessings and forgiveness. But what kind of reading would this be if all the meanings to be discerned from it are pre-0 given. In addition, one does not have to go far to read in the Qur'an its tremendous emphasis on embracing a rational approach to finding God in the creation of earth and heaven and to pursue an intellectual discourse for oneself to faith. Needless to say, this did not set well with a young man with intellectual curiosity living in the United States and trying to adjust to his newly? adopted home. I was hoping for this controversy to go away by ignoring it and putting it aside for several years to pursue a busy life in a business career. However, working and living in a small town in the Bible belt of the United States did not give me the break I was hoping for. I started attending Southern Baptist's church services with my colleagues, friends and acquaintances at the company I had worked for and soon after that, I realized the universal nature of the issues I was struggling with. I then realized that the answer must not be in the sacred texts or the adherents of these texts but in between, in the participatory events of both that would lead to an understanding of the texts within their contribution to human development individually and collectively. This study is the culmination of this lifelong journey of my intellectual pursuit to find a ground between the sacred and the profane.

The Qur'an's relevance to transpersonal theory can be found throughout the text via an initial survey of its content. The foundational and categorical presentation of humanity's unity as one family is immediately clear. According to the Qur'an, all the differences of color, race, dwelling, and even religions are accidental and thus not original to humanity's existence. I am

providing (although contrary to my research approach and philosophy of understanding and reading the Qur'an) a single Qur'anic verse literal translation into English to partially illustrate this point, despite my uneasiness with the English translation itself of the Qur'anic term "*taqwa*" in this verse as God-fearing (as I would translate it instead as God-awareness). In his English translation of the Qur'an, Hammad (2009) wrote:

Indeed, we have created all of you from a single male and female. Moreover, we have made you people and tribes, so that you may come to know one another. And, indeed, the noblest of you, in the sight of God, is the most God-fearing of you. (p. 904)

Such variations are supposed to contribute positively to a healthy sense of competition among individuals spurred by the desire to improve the entire cosmic family's collective wellbeing. In the words of the Qur'an, this seamless collaboration includes nature, from which humanity originated and to which it will return. This all-encompassing meaning includes every corner of the universe, as this concept of peace as humanity's ultimate existence will not occur if any part of the cosmos is engulfed in ruin, corruption, and pollution.

Using hermeneutics as a philosophy of interpretation, I explored the Qur'an taking into consideration its unique nature. My assumption here is that the Qur'an is one unit with different iterations of historic events aligned together without contradiction so that it can present these events within the context of the whole in order to guide humanity.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The transpersonal paradigm presented by Ken Wilber has its basis in his study of religion and its sacred books (Wilber, 2006), from which he devised a synthesis of many streams of world religions, wisdom, and systems of thought and philosophy. Wilber argued:

Knowledge itself is now global. This means that, also for the first time, the sum total of human knowledge is available to us—the knowledge, experience, wisdom, and reflection of all major human civilizations—premodern, modern, and postmodern—are open to study by anyone.... What if we attempted, based on extensive cross-cultural study, to use all of the world's great traditions to create a composite map, a comprehensive map, an all-inclusive or *integral* map that included the best elements from all of them? (Wilber, 2006, p. 1)

Wilber, however, never explained in some details his cross-cultural study which he had used to select the best elements of humanity's heritage. This approach is based on the assumption that one-through an intellectual exercise-is capable of sorting through human heritage to distill from it commonalities based on a pre-given criterion devised by the researcher to determine what is common from uncommon. If we differentiate between information, knowledge, and wisdom on a continuum of increased complexities; commonalities cannot be clear to anyone without the adoption of a pre-given paradigm which would yield to a qualitative ranking of human heritage based on this devised pre-given. Richard Tarnas argued in his forward to *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory* (Ferrer, 2002), "Transpersonal realities can never be adequately or accurately described by intellectually confident assessments and ranking of the multiplicity of humanity's spiritual pasts and perspectives measured against a single new integral reality" (p. xv).

In his successful attempt to deconstruct what he termed a reductionist approach of Ken Wilber and other transpersonal philosophers who had adopted similar stands, Ferrer (2002) described his own journey and struggle with the synthesis, good for all approach to spirituality which he termed perennialism defined as "the assumption that spiritual knowledge, spiritual liberation, and spiritual ultimates are most basically universal" (p. 2) by stating:

I soon realized that most of the proposed universalist visions in the modern West—I would argue that the East has not even started this debate—are reductionistic in that they tend to privilege certain human potentials and spiritual paths over others, subverting their explicit intentions of honoring all truths and often resulting in an oversimplification, distortion, or limitation of the vast and rich possibilities for human spiritual flourishing. Furthermore, I gradually became aware that these universalists visions are neither sensitive enough to the diversity of individual archetypal and spiritual needs, dispositions, and developmental dynamics, nor generous enough to the infinite creative potential of spirit. (p. xix)

The other problem within the modern transpersonal discourse identified by Ferrer (2002) is the honoring of inner experiences as an intrasubjective phenomenon within what he considered an empiricist approach to spirituality, which he defined as "the assumption that transpersonal inquiry needs to be empirically grounded" (p. 2). He contended, "These assumptions...have

become today increasingly limiting and problematic, and their value should therefore be restricted to certain aspects or stages of transpersonal inquiry” (p. 2). Furthermore;

Although higher and lower spiritual insights may exist both within and between religious traditions, I claim that these qualitative distinctions need to be elucidated through spiritual inquiry, interreligious dialogue, and the assessment of their emancipatory power for self, community, and world, and not determined from any overarching metaphysical scheme that tells us, in an a priori and doctrinal manner, which insights and traditions are superior or inferior. (Ferrer, 2002, p. 4)

My inquiry went beyond the synthesis problem of universalism to an in depth exploration of one tradition, looking at its original epistemologically and ontologically coherent source of religious knowledge, wisdom, and experience. This orientation of a unified reading allowed for a cohesive study epistemologically and ontologically as I did not need to create a haphazardly assumed a priori framework of universal value and impose it on my analytical philosophical hermeneutic reading of the Qur’an. The nature of this inquiry gives way to other studies from a more epistemologically coherent point of viewpoint than the one developed by Wilber in his integral vision conceptualization.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions are: How does the Qur’an inform our understanding of transpersonal adult development? How does transpersonal theory inform our understanding of the Qur’an?

## **Outline of the Study**

The study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1, the introduction, is followed by Chapter 2, the literature review of the transpersonal orientation focusing on several pioneering authors in the field including Grof and Laszlo and conceptualized as hierarchical-structural (Wilber), spiral path (Washburn), and participatory (Ferrer) followed by a discussion of a meta-framework that guided the study. A description of hermeneutics as a method and philosophy ensues, and lastly previous studies found in the intersection of the transpersonal and the Qur’an. Chapter 3 represents the research approach of philosophical hermeneutics as presented chiefly by Hans-

Georg Gadamer in his writings (1977/2008) and his seminal work *Truth and Method* (2004). In that chapter, I attempt to articulate his philosophy of hermeneutics. Chapter 4 represents the core of this inquiry: the philosophical hermeneutics of the Qur'an through an understanding of the transpersonal orientation as meta-framework as presented in the literature review chapter of the study to address this inquiry's main questions. Chapter 5, the synthesis and conclusion chapter, discusses the contribution of the previous chapter's findings to adult learning and development, as well as recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Laszlo (2004/2007) maintained that, ironically, the very technological revolution that Man considered the realization of his ultimate accomplishment denied him the realization of his truest and most profound aspirations. Moreover, in the process it destroyed humanity's absolute dwelling. Laszlo (2004/2007) stated:

Until recently, science gave a fragmented picture of the world, conveyed through seemingly independent disciplinary compartments. Scientists have found it difficult to tell what connects the physical universe to the living world, the living world to the world of society, and the world of society to the domains of mind and culture. (p. 8)

Laszlo (2008) described the world's current condition succinctly:

Had he lived today, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, would affirm with deeper conviction than ever: To be or not to be is indeed the question. It is not the skull of an individual human being that Hamlet would ponder, but this living blue-green planet, the home of humanity. How long will it support us? Will we destroy its delicate balances, or will we set out to heal the damage we have already inflicted? Will we manage to evolve as a conscious social and cultural species-or will we become extinct like the dinosaurs? (p. 8)

Tarnas (2006) echoed this sentiment:

No recital is necessary here of the many formidable pressing problems-global and local, social, political, economic, ecological-facing the world today. They are visible in every headline in our daily news, monthly journals, and annual state of the world reports. The great enigma of our situation is that we have unprecedented resources for dealing with those problems, yet it is as if some larger or deeper context, some invisible constraint, were negating our capacity and resolve. (p. xiv)

## **From Fragmentation to Integration**

Einstein once remarked that we cannot resolve problems by looking at them from the same mindset that had created them. To resolve the world plaguing problems mentioned above then, one has to wonder, what it would take to contribute to modify the view of reality that may have led to these problems! In addition, what are the general characteristics of this view of reality? Laszlo (2004/2007) noted:

Paradigm shift is driven by the accumulation of observations that do not fit the accepted theories and cannot be made to fit by the mere extension of those theories. The stage is set for a new and more adequate scientific paradigm. The challenge is to find the fundamental, and fundamentally new, concepts that form the substance of the new paradigm. (p. 15)

He continued to discuss the new paradigm's requirements where it must enable scientists to explain all of the new findings covered by the previous paradigm as well as the anomalous observations. A new paradigm must encapsulate all of the old one for, according to Kuhn, 1996), the interpretive enterprise can only articulate, not correct, a paradigm. Kuhn (1996) argued that both anomalous and congruent intuition related to a problem's solution are not logically linked piecemeal to particular items in the old paradigm; rather, they gather up larger portions of the experience that will thereafter be linked piecemeal to the new paradigm.

Until the middle of the sixteenth century, no Western scholar had seriously and systematically challenged Claudius Ptolemy's system: The planets, as well as the moon and the sun, orbited in a circular path around an immobile earth located at the center of the universe (Shapin, 1996). The cosmos spun around the earth, upon which humanity lived, Shapin stated:

The pre-Copernican cosmology was literally anthropocentric. Yet, that quite special place did not necessarily connote special virtue. Although human beings, and their earthly environment, were understood to be the unique creation of the Judeo-Christian God, compared with the heavens and the heavenly afterlife the earth and earthly existence were regarded as miserable and corrupt, and the actual center of the cosmos was hell....Moreover, after Adam's and Eve's original sin and expulsion from Eden, human

senses had been defiled, and the possibilities of human knowledge were understood to be severely limited. (p. 24)

This perception of cosmic reality shaped human knowledge and consciousness until the Copernican revolution (Kuhn, 1997). The stringent requirements of this new worldview require us, therefore, to examine carefully any proposition of a new vision of reality. They should be applied to our social construction and perception of reality just as well as any shift in scientific paradigm.

Bohm (1980/2002), a physicist and philosopher, articulated a holographic conception of reality. He contended that the one who thinks (the ego) is, in principle, separate from the reality that one thinks about and is observed, although it is firmly embedded in our conscious:

General experience of the sort described above, along with a great deal of modern scientific knowledge concerning the nature and function of the brain as the seat of thought, suggest very strongly that such a division cannot be maintained consistently. But this confronts us with a very different challenge: how are we to think coherently of a single, unbroken, flowing actuality of existence as a whole, containing both thought (consciousness) and external reality as we experience it? (p. xi)

Bohm (1980/2002) postulated that the ultimate nature of physical reality is an undivided whole in perpetual flux, “Not only is everything changing, but all is in flux” (p. 61), and that the best image of process is that of a flowing stream, the substance of which is never the same. Using quantum physics in a way to support his theory, he contended that our method of attempting to solve problems by dividing them into their smallest manageable components contributes to our fragmented vision of reality. The resulting world that we created made it impossible for us to see the wholeness in society, nature, and our own existence. Thus, according to him, the notion that all of these fragments are separately existent is clearly an illusion.

Bertalanffy (1969), describing the plight of fragmentation in modern time, and proposing a system theory of universal reality, stated:

The unifying principle is that we find organization at all levels. The mechanistic worldview, taking the play of physical particles as ultimate reality, found its expression in a civilization which glorifies physical technology that has led eventually to the

catastrophes of our time. Possibly the model of the world as a great organization can help to reinforce the sense of reverence for the living which we have almost lost in the last sanguinary decade of human history. (p. 49)

Laszlo (2006) described an integral vision of reality with sufficient scientific evidence from physics, biology, and cosmology. This vision argues for the coherence of the universe, of our body and mind, and of our mind-body relationship to the universe and to each other. Laszlo (2004/2007) articulated his theory of everything as one based on the premise of nonlocal forms of coherence discovered in the various domains of investigations in quantum as well as in the sphere of human consciousness. This coherence can be traced to a specific kind of field of information, namely, in-formation, the field that records and conveys in-formation in nature.

### **Transpersonal View of Reality**

Ferrer (2002) said that the transpersonal, as a meta-disciplinary and multi-paradigmatic movement and vision, can transform and bring forth a transpersonal world. Our perception of reality also determines what acceptable knowledge is. Tarnas in his forward to Ferrer (2002) noted that:

The pioneers and leading theorists of transpersonal psychology had two aims; they wished to legitimize their new discipline and the ontological status of spirituality in the eyes of empirical science, the dominant force in the modern worldview. Yet they equally sought to legitimize spirituality in their own eyes, which required them to satisfy those standards and assumptions of empirical science that they themselves had internalized in the course of their own intellectual development. (p. x)

To accommodate these new realities, psychology as a discipline went through several stages on its way from behaviorism to transpersonalism. The transpersonal orientation in human development theory and practice has its roots in the transpersonal psychology movement, which has gained momentum since Maslow's (1968) criticism of the first and second force in psychology. His major criticism of behaviorism, which led him to propose the humanistic approach as an alternative, was its reliance on animal experimentation that, in his opinion, could on its own expand our understanding of the higher human qualities that distinguish humans from animals and other creatures. He has also criticized Freudians for their biological reductionism

and greater reliance on biological aspects and response reactions. Despite humanistic psychology's popularity, its founder grew increasingly weary with the framework he had developed after he realized that he had left out an important dimension of the human psyche: the spiritual dimension as he found among the self-actualizers he studied, what he termed "transcending self-actualizers" who were motivated by matters beyond a purely "what is in it for me" orientation. Ferrer (2002) maintained:

The roots of the transpersonal perspective in the Western psychological tradition can be traced to Brentano's psychology of consciousness and emphasis on lived experience; William James's radical empiricism and studies of mysticism; Freud's formulation of the unconscious and concern with the oceanic feeling and evenly suspended attention; Jung's notions of the collective unconscious, the archetypes, and the individuation process, as well as his studies in Asian religions and Western esoteric traditions; Fromm's interest in Zen Buddhism and Vedanta; Assagioli's psycho-synthesis; Maslow's studies on meta-motivations, peak experiences, and self-actualization; and Grof's pioneering psychedelic research. (p. 6)

Quoting Sutich (1969), Braud and Anderson (1998) claimed that transpersonal psychology was conceived originally as the study of human experiences related to the:

Empirical, scientific study of, and responsible implementation of the findings relevant to, becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, B-values, ecstasy, ultimate meaning, transcendence of self, spirit, oneness, cosmic awareness, individual and species wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, sacralization of everyday life, transcendental phenomena, cosmic self-humor and playfulness, maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression; and related concepts, experiences and activities. (p. 15)

Braud and Anderson (1998) explained how the boundaries of the field have expanded to include a wide spectrum of professional endeavors. The authors stated:

As the field has matured, a more general study of the common boundary between spirituality and psychology has expanded to include the shared affinities between "the

transpersonal” and an increasingly wide spectrum of professional endeavors, including anthropology; sociology; medicine, and specially immunology; parapsychology; consciousness studies; philosophy; religion; yoga; the creative arts; and a variety of bodywork and healing practices. (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p. xxi)

Lajoie and Shapiro (1992), following a survey of the transpersonal field, defined it as “concerned with the study of humanity’s highest potential, and with the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness” (p. 91). According to Caplan, Hartelius, and Rardin (2003):

Transpersonal Psychology is the study, recognition, and use of the full range of human experience. Its central assumption is that humans are physical-psychological-spiritual beings and that one aspect can be fully studied only in the context of the other aspects. Transpersonal psychology integrates the accumulated wisdom and practices from the major spiritual traditions and psychological schools of thought with the insights from current research into genetic predispositions, cultural conditioning, and critical events in childhood and in adult life. (p. 147)

Hartelius, Rothe, and Roy (2013) in their survey for possible definition of the field stated:

Transpersonal psychology is a transformative psychology of the whole person in intimate relationship with an interconnected and evolving world; it pays special attention to self-expansive states as well as to spiritual, mystical, and other exceptional human experiences that gain meaning in such a context. (p. 14)

Walsh and Vaughan (1993) considered the transpersonal to be an overarching perspective to possibly study all human endeavors in order to find the transpersonal nature of ordinary everyday life experiences. While many have argued that the transpersonal is an interdisciplinary field of study and practice, others have suggested that the transpersonal field, as a discipline, is a subset of the general transpersonal perspective or orientation.

Wilber (1980/1996) articulating his conception of transpersonal human development, defined the levels of consciousness evolution as subconscious/preegoic, conscious/egoic, and super conscious/transegoic. Wade (1996) asserted:

Any discussion of consciousness presupposes assumptions about the nature of reality, and our ideas about the nature of reality are changing. Until recently, the dominant Western tradition assumed one reality, the Newtonian world of mechanical causality and of independent material practices existing in empty space. (p. 2)

To further ascertain her position to establish the relationship between our consciousness as a human species and in our efforts to theorize regarding human development and human nature, Wade (1996) characterized Piaget's work as a widely accepted theory of human development that operates predominantly within the Newtonian worldview, This characterization of Piaget has been under further consideration in recent times, as Dale (2013) contended:

Successful development involved more than the development of the logico-mathematical truths of representational cognition and science, for which he is well known; in fact, Piaget's interest in representational cognition was a subset of his interest in the development of experience of value (Chapman, 1988; Müller, Carpendale, & Smith, 2009). Piaget's early writing (e.g., 1918) was concerned with the reconciliation of truth and value in the individual and the reconciliation of their cultural forms—science and religion—in wider society. The ideal equilibrium that the individual could attain was the experience of ultimate value, which inspired religiously or mystically flavoured language. The Absolute or the Good constituted the realisation of ideal equilibrium in the individual. This wider concern situates Piaget more comfortably in the company of Plato, Kant, and Hegel than with other twentieth century psychologists including Skinner and Freud. (p. 119)

Wade (1996) further stated that, discoveries in the physical sciences (e.g., quantum physics, chaos theory, systems theory, and holography) are introducing new concepts of reality, ones that are more congruent with and accommodative of different states of consciousness development and spirituality. This new paradigm differs from the Newtonian paradigm of reality on the fundamentals, such as time and space, matter and mind, and science and spirituality. According to Wade, a cosmology that accounts for the phenomena of consciousness may be the correct paradigm for psychology, rather than the Newtonian reality of classical empiricism.

According to this view of consciousness, the intersection of a person's subjective interior world and an outside objective reality rely on the interior modeling of the outside world held in

one's memory (Wade, 1996). Bertalanffy (1981) noted, "The monopoly which man holds, which profoundly distinguishes him from other beings, is his ability to create a universe of symbols in thought and language" (p. 1). Memory is an integral part of consciousness, for it represents the continuity of individual and collective consciousness. Whether this consciousness is localized or spread depends on which point of view of what memory one would adopt and where it is actually located. According to this view of consciousness, our perception of reality is at the crux of consciousness development and transformation, regardless of whether it is collective or individual.

A leading voice in the transpersonal field theory and practice, Grof (2012) argued: The origin of consciousness from matter is simply assumed as an obvious and self-evident fact based of the metaphysical assumption of the primacy of matter in the universe. In the entire history of science, nobody has ever offered a plausible explanation as to how consciousness could be generated by material processes, or even suggested a viable approach to the problem. (p. 7)

He further stated to support the above mentioned argument:

There actually exists ample evidence suggesting exactly the opposite; namely that consciousness can under certain circumstances operate independently of its material substrate and can perform functions that reach far beyond the capacities of the brain. This is most clearly illustrated by the existence of out-of-body experiences (OOBEs). These can occur spontaneously, or in a variety of facilitating situations that include shamanic trance, psychedelic sessions, hypnosis, experiential psychotherapy, and particularly near-death experiences (NDEs). In all these situations consciousness can separate from the body and maintain its sensory capacity, while moving freely to various close and remote locations. Of particular interest are "veridical OOBEs," where independent verification proves the accuracy of perception of the environment under these circumstances. In near-death situations, veridical OOBEs can occur even in people who are congenitally blind for organic reasons (Ring & Cooper, 1999; Ring & Valarino, 1998). There are many other types of transpersonal phenomena that can mediate accurate information about various aspects of the universe that had not been previously received and recorded in the brain (Grof, 2000). (Grof, 2012, p. 145)

Ferrer (2002) however, reasoned that what makes transpersonal distinctly transpersonal is not their non-ordinary ecstatic character, but rather the type of knowledge they provide during an expansion of individual consciousness. I adopted this notion of expansion of consciousness in order to produce a certain type of knowledge as a theoretical framework for the expansion of human collective consciousness throughout history as presented in the Qur'an.

### **Conceptual Framework of Transpersonal Human Development**

According to Grof (2000), two attempts were made to integrate all of these dispersed elements of transpersonal psychology into a new vision of reality. He claimed that the first attempt was led by Ken Wilber who since the publication of his first book *Spectrum of Consciousness* (Wilber, 1977), has laid the foundation for an integral view of reality. The second attempt was made by Ervin Laszlo (2006, 2007, 2008), who has created a new comprehensive worldview of transpersonal psychology.

Several years later, Washburn (2003a) described three major theoretical orientations within the interdisciplinary transpersonal orientation itself; namely, the hierarchical-structural (generally associated with Wilber), spiral-path (Washburn), and the participatory (Ferrer). Accordingly, this discussion honors these three orientations (as represented by the key proponents), but also includes Laszlo as well as the pioneering work of Grof.

### **Hierarchical Structural Orientation**

Wilber (1995, 1998b) departed from the Jungian conceptualization of psychic structure by deploying what he termed the *pre/post fallacy* and positing that a return to the divine does not require one to regress to infancy. Wilber (1980/1996) contended that mysticism is not *regression-involution* (using his term) in the service of the ego, but an evolution that transcends the ego. The driving force behind this evolutionary process is humanity's attempt to gain an *atman* consciousness. As a transpersonal psychology theorist, he articulated a vision of transpersonal human development. He viewed human development as a process of the sequential emergence of levels and stages in a hierarchy or a basic structure. These basic structures are those capacities and abilities that can, at the same time, serve as the base and functional components of a higher-level basic structure. Thus, development is characterized by an ever-increasing structural complexity and inclusiveness that includes the lower levels and structures in

the higher levels and structures. He maintained that the prepersonal level's basic structure is preserved within the personal level and that the personal basic structure is, in turn, preserved and expanded to the transpersonal level's more complex structure.

Wilber (1980/1996) concluded that the psyche is an aspect of the cosmos, which contains the same hierarchical arrangement of wholes within wholes, reaching from the simplest to the most complex. He argued that the

Holistic evolution of nature—which produces everywhere higher and higher wholes—shows up in the human psyche as development or growth. The same force that produced humans from amoebas produces adults from infants. That is, a person's growth from infancy to adulthood is simply a miniature version of cosmic evolution. (pp. 1-2)

He articulated his integral vision in several books and articles (Wilber, 1975, 2001a, 1995, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2006, 2007). The essence of his *A Theory of Everything* (Wilber, 2000d) is that the universe is composed of *holons* (singular, *holon*), defined as a whole that is a part of other wholes and thus is composed of wholes. He then used the spiral dynamics model refined and popularized by Beck and Cowan (1996), who attributed its origin to Clare W. Graves, to conceptualize the four quadrant-four level or AQAL model (Wilber, 2000b). Wilber (2001a) articulated his conception of the world as a world without boundaries and non-dual.

For instance, Wilber (2001a) claimed that, biologically speaking, there is no foundation for any dissociation between mind and body, psyche and soma, ego and flesh, but that, psychologically speaking, it is epidemic. He claimed that the narrowed self-image we call the *persona*, which can be defined as that with which the individual identifies, has been restricted only by facets of our psyche as humans, as opposed to our whole psyche. He attributed many psychological problems to what he considers the gap between the map that people draw for themselves, which contains boundaries of every kind that represent their map of reality and consciousness and what they do not want. He used the term *shadow* to explain these self-imposed maps. Wilber did not claim that some are right and some are wrong; rather, he articulated his vision of reality as one with no boundaries. Transpersonal phenomena defined as the sort of process that is occurring in the individual but goes beyond the individual. He distinguished between *transpersonal* experiences and *unity consciousness*, which he considered

humanity's ultimate stage of development noting that they are somewhat similar but not to be confused. In unity consciousness, the person's identity is with the All, with absolutely everything whereas, in transpersonal experiences, the person is not quite expanded to the whole (Wilber, 2001a).

Wilber defined consciousness along a spectrum of identities available to individuals, a rainbow-like affair composed of numerous bands and levels of self-identity. Wilber (1984/2001b) identified five levels that can be subdivided into many more. These five levels, however, appear to constitute the basic aspects of human consciousness. He termed the ultimate level, the one on which the self and not-self become a harmonious whole, as "unity consciousness." The next level, where the boundary lines start to break up along the way to unity consciousness, is that of the transpersonal bands. Each level results from the different points at which people can—and do—draw their boundary. Each successive level of the spectrum represents a type of narrowing of what the individuals regard as their boundary. When the sense of individual identity narrows down from the universe as a whole to one particular facet of it, namely, his/her own organism, the individual descends from the level of the total organism (the "centaur") to one of its facets (the "ego"), and from there to an even smaller facet (the "persona"). Wilber asserted that these levels not only represent differences in self-identity, but also all of the characteristics directly or indirectly bound up with it (Wilber, 1996).

Although upon resolving the pre/post fallacy (Wilber, 1983b), which he explained as confusing the pre-ego with the trans-ego simply because both are non-ego, and adopting the "growth to goodness" model of evolutionary development, Wilber believed strongly in stage development. This perspective asserts that human development consists of predictable sequential stages of development that possess clear and concrete boundaries of change. And yet he still asserted that development is neither rigid nor a linear ladder, but a fluid and flowing affair that contains spiral, swirls, streams, and waves.

As noted earlier, Wilber (2000d) adopted the spiral dynamics model of development (Beck & Cowan, 1996) to articulate his integral vision of the cosmos. The authors proposed a system of human development that was validated and refined by subsequent research:

Far from being mere armchair analysts, Beck and Cowan were participants in the discussion that led to the end of apartheid in South Africa. The principles of Spiral

Dynamics have been fruitfully used to reorganize businesses, revitalize townships, overhaul education systems, and defuse inner-city tensions. (Wilber, 2000d, p. 7)

The spiral dynamics model proposes human development as proceeding through eight stages or *memes*, a basic stage of development that can be expressed in any activity (Beck & Cowan, 1996). The authors theorized that memes are not rigid levels, but flowing waves of existence characterized by a great deal of overlap and interweaving that result in a meshwork or dynamic spiral of consciousness unfolding. This particular model uses names and colors to refer to these different waves of existence. The first six levels, the “subsistence levels,” are marked by “first-tier thinking.” The remaining two levels, those of “second-tier thinking,” contain two major waves; yellow and turquoise. Beck and Cowan (1996) stated:

The same principles of Spiral Dynamics apply to a single person, an organization, or an entire society. Since it describes human nature in a universal sense rather than through personality types or racial, gender, and ethnic traits, the model provides common language for grappling with both local and global problems. It offers a unifying framework that makes genuinely holistic thinking and action possible. (p.30)

One has to be careful in using the *meme* term utilized by Beck and Cowan (1996) so as not to confuse it with what has been lately popularized by the general media. Beck and Cowan (1996) described a meme as:

A meme contains behavioral instructions that are passed from one generation to the next, social artifacts, and value-laden symbols that glue together social systems. Like an intellectual virus, a meme reproduces itself through concepts like dress styles, language trends, popular cultural norms, architectural designs, art forms, religious expressions, social movements, economic models, and moral statements of how living should be done. (p. 31)

As Wilber (2000d) simply defined it, “Development, for the most part, involves decreasing narcissism and increasing consciousness, or the ability to take other people, places, and things into account and thus increasingly extend care to each” (p. 18). He further explained the earlier stage of development contrasting his position against that of which he described as romanticism by stating:

The selfish stage is often called *preconventional*, because the infant and young child have not yet learned conventional rules and roles; they have not yet been socialized. They cannot yet take the role of others and thus begin to develop genuine care and compassion. They therefore remain egocentric, selfish, narcissistic, and so on. This does not mean that young children have no feelings for other[s], nor does it mean they are altogether amoral. It simply means that, compared with subsequent development, their feelings and morals are still heavily centered on their own impulses, physiological needs, and instinctual discharges. Although some Romantic theorists believe that the infant exists in a state of non-dual freedom and original goodness, what baby is truly free? At most, it appears that the infantile state is one of potentiality and openness, not an actual presence of freedom, since any state dominated by impulses, hunger, tension, and discharge cannot be truly free. In any event, studies consistently show that the infant cannot take the role of other, and thus it is not capable of genuine compassion, care of love. (p. 19)

Wilber (2000d) described the next stage of development as:

The care stage, which generally lasts from age seven to adolescence, is known as *conventional, conformist, ethnocentric, or sociocentric*—and it means just that, centered on the group (family, peers, tribe, nation). The young child steps out of his or her own limited perspective and begins to share the views and perspectives of others—so much so, that the child is often trapped in the view of others: hence, conformist. This stage is often called “good boy, nice girl,” “my country right or wrong,” and so on, reflecting the intense conformity, peer pressure, and group dominance that usually accompanies this general period. (p. 20)

According to Wilber (2000d), the third general stage of development occurs when:

All...begins to change in adolescence, with the emergence of *postconventional* and *worldcentric* awareness. This is yet another major decline in egocentrism, because this time one’s peer group is subjected to scrutiny. What is right and fair, not just for me or my tribe or my nation, but for all peoples, regardless of race, religion, sex, or creed? The adolescent can become a fiery idealist, ablaze with all the possibilities, a crusader for justice, a revolutionary out to rock the world. Of course, some of this is just an explosion

of hormones, frenzied at best. But good part of it is the emergence of the state of universal care, justice, and fairness. And, in fact, this is simply beginning of the possibility of developing a truly integral embrace. (p. 20)

In his attempt to come up with his own theory of everything and integral vision based on science, Laszlo (2004/2007) claimed that Wilber's *A Theory of Everything* (Wilber, 2000d), in which he speaks of the "integral vision" conveyed by a genuine theory of everything, offers no such theory. Instead, Wilber mainly discussed what it would be like, describing it in reference to the evolution of culture and consciousness as well as to his own theories. Laszlo's brief description of the integral vision illustrated this point:

An integral theory of everything would bring us closer to understanding the real nature of all the things that exist and evolve in space and time, whether they are atoms or galaxies or mice and men. It gives us an encompassing and yet scientific view of ourselves and of the world; a view that we very much need in these times of accelerating change and mounting disorientation. (Laszlo, 2007, p. 4)

As the human species advances in knowledge of the material world, the need to discover more ways to connect us as human beings who share this earth has never been more urgent, perceivable, and attainable. The transpersonal movement becomes more of a practice field and a movement, as well as a philosophy and an orientation that may at the same time influence and guide humanity's belief system.

### **Spiral Path Orientation**

Washburn (1988, 1994, 2003a) based his spiral path theory on the Jungian orientation, which stresses both the depth-psychological bases and the spiral path of human development. He argued that early in one's life, the ego separates itself from the deep psyche (what he termed the *dynamic ground*) only to come back later on and reunite with it in order to achieve a higher, whole-psyche integration (Washburn, 2003a). Washburn (1994) maintained that although this early ego separation is developmentally necessary, it nevertheless impedes growth and integration later on when one steps on the path to the transcendent self because it spirals downward to reunite with the dynamic ground.

According to his transpersonal path, life can be divided into three stages: the prepersonal (preegoic), personal (egoic), and transpersonal (transegoic). Washburn (2003a) adopted a chronological order for each stage: the prepersonal (from birth to about five-and-a-half years old), the personal (from five-and-a-half years old to middle adulthood), and transpersonal (from the time of spiritual awakening to full spiritual maturity). He stressed that this model emphasizes that the reality of hidden psychic depths, which is Jung's collective unconscious and his own dynamic ground, underlying the ego system. Washburn (2003a) stated that "the reality of hidden psychic depths underlying the ego system including not only a personal unconscious laid down over the course of a person's life but also a deep psychic core which is inherited and, therefore, universal to the species" (p. 1).

One major difference between Wilber's model as articulated in the previous section and Washburn's is that the former argued for what he terms the pre/post fallacy, whereas the latter contended that the dynamic ground has both prepersonal and transpersonal expressions. Another major point of contention is that of regression and progression. According to Hartelius, Rothe, and Roy (2013):

While Wilber argued that human development passes through various stages and sees transformation as an ascending process of evolution in which development is cumulative; others, such as Grof and Washburn, have imagined transformation as descending, as returning to recover aspects of self lost in earlier stages of evolution in an interdependent and evolving world. (pp. 12-13)

In short, Washburn maintained that the spiral has both a downward and an upward loop. Washburn's orientation was also embedded in an earthly Eden and embodied spirituality in a sacred world, for, "The sacred ground from which the spiral path takes leave and to which it returns is precisely this earth, and our shared, incarnate lives on earth" (Washburn, 2003, p. 4).

Despite these differences, Washburn (2003a) admitted to an inclusive "both-and" position with respect to the spiral and structural-hierarchical perspectives in order to clear away errors and make progress in mapping human development. He contended that "neither the spiral nor the structural-hierarchical perspective is based on a pre-trans fallacy" (p. 8) and that this is more of a problem for Wilber, as regards his conception of development as being unidirectional with no possibility of return, than it is an issue for the spiral dynamic perspective. Washburn

argued that the challenge now is for transpersonal theorists to explore how both perspectives might be brought into fruitful collaboration on matter of concern to transpersonal inquiry.

Drawing on observations from more than fifty years of research in many aspects of the transpersonal phenomena including non-ordinary states of consciousness that he calls “holotropic,” which, according to Grof (2012, p. 138) refers to “a large subgroup of non-ordinary states of consciousness that are of great theoretical and practical importance”. Grof (2012) contended:

In the last five decades, various avenues of modern consciousness research have revealed a rich array of “anomalous” phenomena—experiences and observations that have undermined some of the generally accepted assertions of modern psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy concerning the nature and dimensions of the human psyche, the origins of emotional and psychosomatic disorders, and effective therapeutic mechanisms. Many of these observations are so radical that they question the basic metaphysical assumptions of materialistic science concerning the nature of reality and of human beings and the relationship between consciousness and matter. (p. 138)

Grof (2012) provided evidence of the relationship between astrology and states of consciousness. He stated:

Over the last thirty years, Rick and I have jointly explored astrological correlations of holotropic states. My main task has been to collect interesting clinical observations from psychedelic sessions, holotropic breathwork workshops and training, mystical experiences, spiritual emergencies, and psychotic breaks. Rick’s main focus has been on astrological aspects of holotropic states of consciousness. This cooperation has brought convincing evidence that there exist systematic correlations between the nature, timing, and content of holotropic states of consciousness and planetary transits of the individuals involved. Transit is an astrological term for significant angular relationship between the position of the planets at the time of the experience and their position in the individual’s birth chart. The most important among these angular relationships are conjunction (0 degrees), sextile (60 degrees), square (90 degrees), trine (120 degrees), and opposition (180 degrees). (p. 160)

Grof pioneering work extended to two domains of consciousness development; namely, transpersonal and perinatal. Grof (2012) noted:

The first of these domains can be referred to as perinatal, because of its close connection with the trauma of biological birth. This region of the unconscious contains the memories of what the fetus experienced in the consecutive stages of the birth process, including the emotions and physical sensations involved. These memories form four distinct experiential clusters, each of which is related to one of the stages of childbirth. I have coined for them the term Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPM I-IV). BPM I consists of memories of the advanced prenatal state just before the onset of the delivery. BPM II is related to the first stage of the birth process when the uterus contracts, but the cervix is not yet open. BPM III reflects the struggle to be born after the uterine cervix dilates. And finally, BPM IV holds the memory of the emerging into the world, the birth itself. The content of these matrices is not limited to fetal memories; each of them also represents a selective opening into the areas of the historical and archetypal collective unconscious, which contain motifs of similar experiential quality. Detailed description of the phenomenology and dynamics of perinatal matrices can be found in my various publications (Grof, 1975, 2000). (pp. 145-146)

As regards the transpersonal, Grof (2012) stated:

The second trans-biographical domain of the new cartography can best be called *transpersonal*, because it includes a rich array of experiences in which consciousness transcends the boundaries of the body/ego and the usual limitations of linear time and three-dimensional space. This results in experiential identification with other people, groups of people, other life forms, and even elements of the inorganic world. Transcendence of time provides experiential access to ancestral, racial, collective, phylogenetic, and karmic memories. Yet another category of transpersonal experiences can take us into the realm of the collective unconscious that the Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung called archetypal. This region harbors mythological figures, themes, and realms of all the cultures and ages, even those of which we have no intellectual knowledge (Jung, 1959). In its farthest reaches, individual consciousness can identify with the Universal

Mind or Cosmic Consciousness, the creative principle of the universe. Probably the most profound experience available in holotropic states is identification with the Supracosmic and Metacosmic Void, primordial Emptiness and Nothingness that is conscious of itself. (pp. 147-148)

### **Participatory Orientation**

Hartelius and Ferrer (2013) noted that transpersonal psychology has always been characterized by two major philosophical paradigms: perennial (referring, among many, to the work of Wilber and Washburn) and participatory. Ferrer (2002) and Ferrer and Sherman (2008) presented the participatory philosophical paradigm and a context to understand transpersonal phenomena. Hartelius and Ferrer (2013) claimed, “In modern and postmodern contexts, spiritual and mystical processes are thought to occur entirely within the subjectivity of the individual—they are inherently private rather than relational, and therefore have no ontological reality” (p. 196). They stated:

Spiritual and mystical experiences are participatory events, co-created encounters with spiritual powers and presences that are ontologically real. They are not made up inside a private mind, but as something that happens in the shared world. Nor are these experiences something happening to the individual, but actions that world and self bring forth together—a process Ferrer (2008a) has called participatory enaction. Self and world, part and whole, shape each other reciprocally in an ongoing process of mutually transforming participation. (Hartelius & Ferrer, 2013, pp. 196-197)

Ferrer (2002) suggested that the promise of this participatory paradigm is that it might develop an alternative framework—he refrained from using *paradigm* in his earlier writings—for the transpersonal orientation, one that is no longer limited by the objectivist premise of the Cartesian subject/object reality and the individualistic and intrasubjective premises of experience. Ferrer (2002) characterized this as a “participatory turn,” which he defined as a “radical shift of emphasis from intrasubjective experiences to participatory events in our understanding of transpersonal and spiritual phenomena” (p. 115).

Ferrer (2002) also posited that transpersonal phenomena could be better understood as a multi-local participatory event: “i.e., emergences of transpersonal being that can occur not only

in the locus of an individual, but also in a relationship, a community, a collective identity, or a place” (p. 116). In other words, the participatory transpersonal event would precipitate within the individual what the experience would do. From this vantage point, the intrasubjective experience is the participatory event’s result and byproduct, not its objective. The ontology of the participatory event leads to the epistemology of the experience within the individual, and thus individual consciousness becomes a member of the participatory event. Ferrer’s (2002) participatory framework denies that transpersonal phenomena are essentially a human being’s inner experiences and label this as intrasubjective reductionism. Buber (1970) proposed that “spirit is not in the I but between I and you, it is not like the blood that circulates [within] you, but like the air in which you breathe” (p. 89), reiterating what Ferrer (2002) and other participatory authors of transpersonal studies have proposed.

The participatory framework also emphasizes the generative power and dynamism of all dimensions of human nature to interact with spiritual power in the co-creation process. According to Ferrer (2002), “The emergence of a transpersonal event can potentially engage the creative participation of all dimensions of human nature, from somatic transfiguration to the awakening of the heart, from erotic communion to visionary co-creation, and from contemplative knowing to moral insight” (p. 184). Since the participatory perspective views knowledge as ontological, it is inappropriate to talk about knowledge and liberation as causality—as one leading to the other—because, according to Ferrer (2002), they are the same. Knowledge cannot be possessed by the ego, for that may lead to spiritual narcissism. Ferrer argued that the possibility of the ego’s appropriation of spirituality, which has been thwarted by the nature of the participatory event, is one of the problems that may result from the experiential model of transpersonal knowing.

Participatory knowing is also enactive for, as Ferrer (2002) wrote, “knowing, then, is not a mental representation of pre-given, independent spiritual objects, but an enaction, the bringing forth of a world or domain of distinctions cocreated by the different elements involved in the participatory event” (p. 123). Elements of participatory events can be cultural, religious, archetypal, dispositions, and/or historical. Ferrer stated that transpersonal events have an integrative dimension and that participatory transpersonal knowing, rather than being transient experiences, can be lived as realizations that, once learned, has transformative power. In short, knowing is being.

## **Meta Framework for the Transpersonal Orientations**

Boucouvalas (1980, 1999) envisioned the transpersonal orientation in relation to adult education and lifelong learning to be a process, program, and movement. Within this conceptualization, her working outline of transpersonal psychology is comprised of three levels of analysis “to understand more fully the total human being in her/his external and internal worlds, without reducing complex behavior to simpler levels of analysis” (p. 40); namely, the individual, the group/societal, and the planetary/cosmic levels which is being used as a meta-framework for this study.

Boucouvalas (1980, 1981, 1983, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2008, 2009) offered a comprehensive conceptualization of this orientation as a vision and a movement in addition to it being a multi- and an interdisciplinary field of study and practice. I adopted her framework in my literature review of transpersonal theory and practice, as well as used it as a lens in my philosophical hermeneutical reading of the Qur’an.

Boucouvalas (2000) articulated the relational/participatory aspects of transpersonal orientation and argued that each level of the transpersonal has autonomous and homonomous aspects. Her conceptualization of the field clearly delineated the relationship aspects of transpersonal orientation at each level, in addition to the phenomenology of transpersonal inner experiences and their transformational power, as levels and states and/or structure of consciousness shift and development (Boucouvalas, 1999). As a framework, her conceptualization affords the possibility of serving as a meta-framework for the field’s three theoretical orientations as outlined earlier.

By viewing the separate-self-identity as only a partial version of what it means to be human, Boucouvalas’s framework acknowledges the need for the connected-self-identity at each level. Using this relational and participatory characterization at each level, while acknowledging the hierarchical-structural and the spiral dynamics embodied spirituality model (Washburn, 2003a), she addressed the fundamental issue with the embodied spirituality model of the transpersonal phenomena. Ferrer (2002) identified this issue as an experiential intrasubjective reductionism problem through the homonomous-relational by applying a definition-approach to transpersonal development. By identifying and acknowledging the importance and core position of the transpersonal orientation’s inner experiences and phenomenology, Boucouvalas incorporated the hierarchical-structural and the spiral dynamics orientation into her framework of

transpersonal development on the one hand, while, on the other, operationalizing the basic relational participatory approach to development represented by the homonomous individual, group, and cosmic connections. In the meantime, Boucouvalas's (1988, 1991, 2000) framework transcended the dichotomy of stage versus spiral by moving the autonomous and homonomous conceptualization of transpersonal phenomena into the individual, group/societal, and cosmic/planetary levels of analysis. She did this not only on the intra-level, but also on the inter-level analysis and connections.

Attributing the terms *autonomous* and *homonomous* to Andreas Angyal (1941), she described autonomous as “the separate self-sense” (2000, p. 213) and homonomous as “the meaning derived in life by feeling and being parts of greater whole” (p. 213) and stated that:

Just as the autonomous, separate self-sense has a developmental trajectory; likewise with the homonomous self-sense that focuses on the supra-individual unit with which one identifies. Manifesting throughout the developmental trajectory, it begins with the family, extends out to the group(s) to which one belongs, to one's culture, then moves towards an identity as a planetary citizen, and into the numinous (experience of the divine). (pp. 213-214)

By acknowledging the numinous as an experience of the divine, she avoided the pitfall of defining this ultimate as a “no boundaries” conception of reality and in ways that may relegate her conceptualization of the divine in the a priori ultimate definition of the divine, as articulated in Ferrer's (2002) criticism of the transpersonal orientation's hierarchical-structural model and/or the adoption of an Eastern philosophy. Experiencing the divine at the individual level may conform to the inner experience/conceptualization of transpersonal philosophy as articulated by Wilber and Washburn; however, when this concept moves up to the group/societal and cosmic/planetary levels, it conforms to Ferrer's (2002) participatory relational model as a process of experiencing the divine.

Boucouvalas (2000) noted, “Transpersonal orientation as a field of study and practice—in addition to being a movement and interdisciplinary orientation as have been acknowledged previously—contributes to the development of a knowledge paradigm that integrates both Eastern and Western ideas about humankind and the universe” (p. 214). Ferrer (2002) stated that the transpersonal orientation in its earlier stage had two ways of moving forward, both of which

were burdened by the experiential approach: the Jungian approach (utilized by Washburn) and the Eastern philosophy approach (championed by Wilber). Boucouvalas's framework combines both approaches to the psyche while maintaining its relational connectivity with society and the universe at the three levels identified earlier in her framework.

Boucouvalas (1999b) introduced a model of homonomous and autonomous conceptualization of transpersonal phenomena occurring at the individual, group/society, and the cosmic levels. The multilocal events in the participatory vision, which occur at different loci, is one of this framework's cornerstones. According to Ferrer (2002), "They [participatory events] can arise in different loci, such as an individual, a relationship, a community, a collective identity, or a place" (p. 116). Boucouvalas (1999b) proposed balancing the autonomous and homonomous self, society, and cosmic towards building civil society as an agenda of action and research for adult educators. By positioning the transpersonal framework at the heart of adult education as a program, process, and movement, she championed an agenda of changing society by introducing the transpersonal as a framework to building civil society. Ferrer (2002) supported the transpersonal orientation to change the world into a transpersonal world. Boucouvalas (1999) outlined an agenda to make this change possible by positioning the transpersonal orientation at the heart of adult education and lifelong learning programs, processes, and movement for change. .

### **Transpersonal Inquiry and the Validity of Knowledge Question**

What represents validity and valid knowledge in transpersonal studies? Do the transpersonal orientation research projects and inquiries necessitate different or expanded research methods to explore humanity's highest potential? In their seminal *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Braud and Anderson (1998) stated:

Because every scientific inquiry is an exploration into unknown territory, the sketchy maps left by previous researchers take us only short distances on the journey. If research does not feel enlivening and risky, perhaps it is best left for someone else to do. If the wonder is lost in the middle of the study, we can try resting more, and follow the procedures lovingly, as if tending a child. We need an imaginative, even outlandish, science to envision the potential of human experience and awareness, not just more tidy reports. (p. xxvii)

In its essence, “Validity has to do with whether one’s findings or conclusions are faithful or true to what one is studying” (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p. 213). White (1998) articulated the problem of validity of knowledge in the transpersonal realm by stating, “Usually, when scientists receive insights in non-ordinary ways, they set out to verify those insights by empirical data and rational inference” (p. 128). Grof (1998) noted:

The mystical traditions and spiritual philosophies of the past have often been dismissed and even ridiculed for being irrational and unscientific. This is an uninformed judgment that is unwarranted and unjustified. Many of the great spiritual systems are products of centuries of in depth exploration of the human psyche and consciousness that in many ways resembles scientific research. These systems offer detailed instructions concerning the methods of inducing spiritual experiences on which they base their philosophical speculations. They have systematically collected data drawn from these experiences and subjected them to collective consensus validation, usually over a period of many centuries. These are exactly the stages necessary for achieving valid and reliable knowledge in any area of scientific endeavor. (pp. 3-4)

He further argued:

Spiritual experiences, like any other aspect of reality, can be subjected to careful open-minded research and studied scientifically. There is nothing unscientific about unbiased and rigorous study of transpersonal phenomena and of the challenges they present for materialistic understanding of the world. Only such an approach can answer the critical question about the ontological status of mystical experiences: Do they reveal deep truth about some basic aspects of existence, as maintained by various systems of perennial philosophy and transpersonal psychology, or are they products of superstition, fantasy, or mental disease, as Western materialistic science sees them? (Grof, 2012, p.159)

Tarnas (2002) noted that theorists of transpersonal psychology have had two major aims, both of which have imposed self-inflicted limitations on the field: “to legitimate their new discipline in the eyes of empirical science and to legitimize it in their own eyes” (p.4). However, Ferrer (2002) argued, “It is common for transpersonal literature to assert that both the source and justification of spiritual claims should be sought in the intra-subjective experiential dimension of

transpersonal and spiritual phenomena” (p. 8). He claimed that this intrasubjective empiricism has sabotaged the transpersonal orientation from within, despite the theorists’ affirmation that transpersonal and spiritual phenomena provide important and valid knowledge about human beings and the world. He also contended that in a transpersonal event, knowing occurs by virtue of being, and rejected the idea of an objective reality that can be discovered by a participatory event or a transpersonal experience.

Ferrer (2002) continued his argument against the transpersonal orientation’s empiricism-based frame of reference by asserting that its focus on individual inner experiences perpetuated the modern marginalization of spirituality—used here interchangeably with transpersonal—to the private and subjective realm.

Despite the centrality of knowledge in transpersonal phenomena, discussion about its nature and justification were virtually absent in the literature....The lack of criteria for determining what could be considered as valid transpersonal knowledge was rendering transpersonal theory a free-for-all open to any form of metaphysical speculation. On the other hand, most transpersonal authors were working upon unexamined and outdated objectivist epistemological assumptions which severely undermined the very transpersonal orientation they championed. (p. 9)

He noted, “Transpersonal phenomena, I thought, are not individual inner experiences, but epistemic events” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 12).

Braud and Anderson (1998) laid out the ground for an expanded view of validity and offered numerous alternative research methods to honor the totality of human experiences. They summed this up as:

Transpersonal psychology reminds us that in addition to our faculty of intellect, we possess, as well, facets of body, emotion, spirit, community, and creative expression. Each of these facets supplies clues and suggestions about issues of validity, and the facets themselves provide a convenient organizational scheme for discussing these clues. In the area of intellect, the indicators and rules for determining validity have been developed with great sophistication. The well-established principles of deductive logic, inductive inference, statistical inference, and scientific method are familiar to researchers, and there

is no need to describe these here. By themselves, however, these methods are insufficient guides. The yields of these methods are dependent on the raw materials and considerations that go into them in the first place, and these inputs themselves may be incomplete, distorted, or erroneous. The history of science reveals vividly how the facts, predominant cultural tools (and, hence, the predominant intellectual and scientific analogies, metaphors, models, and theories), and intellectual habits of one period provide conclusion about reality that are found, in a later time, to be limited or mistaken. (pp. 214 - 215)

### **Philosophical Hermeneutics in Context**

In this section, I attempt to offer a context in which to position Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 2004), as I locate my own research approach in the larger context of hermeneutics and its evolution as both a method and a philosophy of understanding and interpretation.

According to Jasper (2004):

It is very important to have some sense of the *continuity* of hermeneutics from the earliest Christian times.... The story is a connected one, although at the same time one of continuous change as evolving worldviews shifted the way people not only saw the world but actually thought and, therefore, read. (p. 45)

Although he never published a formal written work and only left posterity with his handwritten manuscripts, Friedrich Schleiermacher is considered by many, according to Thiselton (1992), to be the father of modern hermeneutics and what later came to be known as romanticism in hermeneutics. Jasper (2004) noted that Schleiermacher's hermeneutics consists of two parts: psychological interpretation and grammatical interpretation. Psychological interpretation "is concerned with the interplay between the reader and the text," whereas grammatical interpretation "requires knowledge and the careful examination of the linguistic and syntactical structures of the text and its language" (p.85). According to Jasper (2004), anyone who seeks to interpret Schleiermacher "moves constantly between these two poles, the one always checking the other" (p. 85).

According to Jasper (2004), Schleiermacher believed that in our capacity as hermeneuts, we should be able to understand the text just as well, or even better than its original author. He asserted that to understand is to enter into the author's mind as it relates to our lives now. Moreover, he viewed the hermeneutic circle as the interplay between the whole and the parts of a text, where the reader starts by building a picture of the whole based on the particulars and then expands the particulars based on the new whole.

Porter and Stovell (2012) considered three possibilities of approaching a text: from behind, within, and in front of the text. The authors explained the first approach as that of basing oneself upon the author's mind when reading his/her text as, for instance, was shown above in Schleiermacher's approach to hermeneutics. It is an attempt to reconstruct the text's history, and possibly the author's socio-cultural tradition, in order to delve into his/her mind so we can understand the text as well as the author did. This approach does not stop at the linguistic and philological questions within the text, as I attempt to explore it further in the next section, but also locates the text within the context of time and space of its author.

Dilthey, another German hermeneut who followed in Schleiermacher's footsteps and line of thought, was primarily concerned with hermeneutics as a methodology of understanding and interpretation. He considered understanding to be the attempt and process of re-creation of the original author's intent and creativity. Jasper (2004) emphasized this point and summarized Dilthey's philosophy and approach to understanding as follows:

With him [means Dilthey] we have a genuinely universal hermeneutics; which embraces all of human life and experience. His key category is *life* or *lived experiences*, which he sees as that which is common to all of us, a weaving together of all human activities and experiences. The experience of humankind is universal across all possible cultural and historical barriers. For Dilthey, the expressions of our common understanding are in signs, symbols, speech, and writing. The interpreter gains understanding of the writer or text by a process of *re-living* experience on the basis of empathy. Thus we come to understand, and to understand ourselves, in the social activity of reading in interpretive communities, and not through solitary introspection. Learning about our differences from others, we come to learn about ourselves. This requires an act of the *imagination*, a transporting or *transposing* of oneself into the mind and the life of the other....Like a true hermeneut, he begins with the individual and the particular, but sees this within the whole

of culture, emphasizing the *connectedness* of all things.... For Dilthey, to understand a text is, in the first instance, a tracing back to the experience that first brought it into being. To gain understanding is then to move from the particular and to participate in a universal experience and share in broad patterns of intelligibility. (pp. 96-97)

The second approach, within the text, emphasizes the text's linguistic and philological characteristics as autonomous features of its interpretation and understanding. In other words, it is a form of literary criticism that looks exclusively at the text in order to understand it. According to Porter and Stovall (2012), this orientation evaluates a text from a poetic and literary quality standpoint, such as the use of character, setting, irony, metaphor, symbolism, and other literary tropes. The final approach, that of the in-front-of-the-text orientation in hermeneutics, argues for a reader-oriented approach and is well represented by the phenomenological and philosophical approaches used to understand Heidegger and his student Gadamer (Porter & Stovall, 2012).

A final word needs to be said about the hermeneutic circle. This ubiquitous concept, which is found in the work of the major philosophies of hermeneutics, has had many different meanings attached to it. These meanings are unique to each philosophy and can only be understood within the context of that particular philosophy.

Porter and Stovall (2012) opined that Schleiermacher viewed the hermeneutic circle as:

Primarily a matter of whole and part both at the textual or grammatical level and at the psychological or biographical level. But the grammatical and the psychological dimensions of interpretation are also in a circular relation. Our understanding of the author is shaped by our reading of the text and vice versa. (p. 72)

In the context of philosophical hermeneutics, this circle sorts out the good prejudices from bad ones but never eliminates them all together, for, in the words of Gadamer, doing so is not possible. According to Porter and Stovall (2012):

For Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, the hermeneutical circle is a matter of presuppositions in general and does not focus on the whole-part relation. The claim is that, in any domain where interpretation takes place, there is no such thing as presuppositionless thought. Since the latter ideal is typical of modern philosophy,

philosophical hermeneutics is a postmodern tradition, especially as it extends to the domain of interpretation from texts, to the social or human sciences, and even to the natural sciences. Understanding is relative to the presuppositions of the interpreter. If the interpreter adopts a particular method or strategy, that method, so far from rendering thought presuppositionless, is a systematic presupposition about the best way to understand the matter in question. (pp. 72-73)

### **Transpersonal Human Development and the Qur'an**

Philosophical hermeneutics, as defined by Gadamer (2004), of the Qur'an has been narrowly used to study human development as a field of study, and even less so as it applies to utilizing the transpersonal as an orientation. The epistemology of my study, along with its utilization of the Qur'an as a source of transpersonal insights as well as its transpersonal orientation vis-à-vis human development as a condition of understanding the Qur'an, gives it a special place in adult development literature at the crossroads of East and West. These respective philosophies of adult development and learning have acquired a significant relevance in our globally interconnected world as civilizations and their peoples are trying to understand each other. Learning from each other becomes imperative to us, as a human species, so that we can get to know each other not only for the sake of better understanding, but also for learning and transforming oneself and others regardless of humanity's cultural, linguistic, civilizational, and religious diversity.

A survey of the available English-language literature, one that consisted only of searching for similar and/or closely related studies on this topic, revealed very few dispersed studies that addressed relevant issues from the standpoint of Islamic history and philosophy defined narrowly in the context of Islamic civilizational historic outcomes. For instance Nasr (1981, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1993, 1996), who outlined the concepts of Islamic cosmology, addressed the issue of sacred and profane utilizing perennial philosophical worldview of universalism while exploring what Muslim philosophers have said about the matter.

The Qur'an claims to be a universal book that sums up the most important elements of shared human history coupled with the most important lessons derived from that history. It also affords a holistic worldview of humanity, the universe, and the creator in a coherent system of existence located within a conceptual framework of the cosmos (Nasr, 1987). Based on its own

claim, it provides a value system that combines globalism with particularism in a balanced manner, one that places both in a complementary—as opposed to a conflicting—setting based on a philosophical and methodological foundation of thought that overcomes people’s notions of conflict and contrariety.

My quest also led me to the concept of edification. The Qur’anic concept of edification consecrates such acts as nurturing life on earth and using its resources wisely, along with laying the foundations for constructing and perfecting the condition for human habitation, prosperity, and felicity as aspects of worship. This concept teaches human beings how to harmonize their external and internal selves and existence within a peaceful universe that is watched over by a divine reality. The Qur’anic construct of worship revolves around the concept of purification of the self. It entails that each person undertake the task of inner purification by means of distilling, purifying, and sublimating his/her thoughts, beliefs, and convictions and, after doing so, attempt to apply this new perspective to one’s relationship with his/her outward actions as regards the cosmos and humanity at large.

The Qur’an regards the basic unit of humanity to be that of the family of male-female pairs, as opposed to the individual being the building block of human society and the human species, for the family is essential to building the collective. In this sense, it overcomes the dialectical approach of male/female in the cosmos by combining them into one unit of ultimate union: that of stewardship on earth. This fulfilling of one’s responsibility to edify is what matters, not one’s responsibility for individual actions, for legal purposes as this should be left to human’s design in the Qur’anic approach. In this case, societal norms are developed mainly to safeguard and protect the family unit as the basic building block of society.

The holistic approach to the Qur’an consists of defining the Qur’anic concepts from within the text itself as they appear and re-appear in different places and in different contexts. This methodology of analyzing the Qur’anic text helped me to establish a theoretical framework to guide my reading of the text to establish the conditions of understanding. I have arrived to this point following a lifelong journey of tribulation in my attempt to reconcile the ancient text with modern time worldview of reality.

In this inquiry, I adopted the philosophical hermeneutics approach and the hermeneutics circle chiefly as presented by Gadamer (2004) in his seminal work *Truth and Method*. Furthermore, I embraced the transpersonal worldview, as framed mainly by Boucouvalas, to

guide the study and provide the conceptual theoretical framework of understanding. The Qur'an offers itself as a guide to humanity that not only extends beyond time and space, but also transcends the historicity of its own revelation. Krippner (1998) defined the term *transpersonal studies* as "the disciplined study of observed or reported human behaviors and experiences in which an individual's sense of identity appears to extend beyond its ordinary limits to encompass wider, broader, or deeper aspects of life or the cosmos-including divine elements of creation" (p. ix).

This inquiry attempts to point out specific aspects of the Qur'an that may have a bearing on the epistemological and ontological elements of transpersonal human development theory and practice. In addition, these aspects may contribute to informing our understanding of such transpersonal issues as humanity's relationship with the divine and the cosmos as part of the transpersonal states and levels of consciousness development.

One of my larger goals was to discover interpretive ways that will enable the Qur'anic perspective to contribute to a more comprehensive view of transpersonal cosmic reality as a movement for social change, religious conflict resolution, and world peace. In her work as a researcher at the Rand Corporation's national security research division, Bernard (2003) stated:

Contemporary Islam is struggling within itself over its values, identity, and place in the world, with rivals contending for spiritual and political dominance-as well as with the "outside" world. In the Western eyes, the ideal Islamic community would be democratic, economically viable, politically stable, and socially progressive and would follow the norms and rules of international conduct. (p. x)

My study makes clear distinctions among Muslims' contemporary plight, Islam as a religion, and the Qur'an as a book that claims to provide guidance to humanity. This inquiry is based on my philosophical hermeneutics of the Qur'an itself from a transpersonal perspective and did not utilize or reference previous countless attempts to interpreting the Qur'an as this was not within the scope of this study.

The other issue that may relate to the transpersonal human development field is the role of rationality and religiosity in developing a comprehensive transpersonal human development conceptualization. While rationality may crown an individual's personality, the latter is nothing

more than a composite. Moreover, there is nothing to assure that reason will prevail unconditionally in the metaphysical realm. On the other hand, according to Abou El Fadl (2002):

Muslims in the United States are plagued by the problem of authority. By this I do not mean political or social authority-although that is a problem as well-but rather, textual authority. The problem is not so much the lack of an institutional framework to channel the authority of the text. Rather, the problem is developing conceptual framework from which the text is approached, constructed, and presented. Muslims in the United States have not developed legitimate ways of understanding and interpreting Islamic texts. (p. 13)

He described this problem of Muslims in the United States with authority and authoritarianism:

The connections between the classical epistemological and hermeneutics heritage and Muslims living in the United States have been thoroughly severed. Muslims in the West are [a] disinherited bunch, and they are compelled to reinvent themselves without the collective wisdom of past Muslim generations. (Abou El Fadl, 2002, p.13)

In the metaphysical realm, transpersonal development theorizes the relationship of humans with transcendence as a major aspect of its discourse (Ferrer & Sherman, 2008). The medium of thought for the transpersonal realm is the cosmos and humanity as an integral part of it. The cosmos, with its infinite boundaries of smallness and largeness, yielded to human discovery and the scientific revolution because the industrial revolution occurred and Newtonian physics dominated both the physical and the social science paradigms. Scientific progress eventually resulted in Einstein's theory of relativity paradigm. In the midst of all of this, the theological approach and system of knowledge entered with its own path of salvation. God's words, as propounded by behind-the-text interpreters, reveal themselves to humanity without any regard for the historicity of these interpretations, which would, at best, restrict the relevancy of those absolute words of the eternal God to the movement of history.

I argue, based on Gadamer's (2004) discussion of the concept of historicity, that despite the theologians' best efforts, the traditions, customs, and cultures of their times will always prevail in their formulations of how to interpret and explicate the Qur'anic text and system of

thought. This theology has taken the absoluteness of Man and relegated humanity to a prison of its own making. The annexation of pure rationality by theological thought, and vice versa, represents a transgression on both sides to a realm of realities beyond their means. I claim that the realm of eternal transcendence and spirituality cannot be subjugated to any type of self-proclaimed pure reason that proclaims the end of history and the clash of civilizations as an ultimate reality of an absolute cosmos, including Man. Moreover, the realm of scientific discovery and reason cannot be relegated to absolutist theologians who confine their interpretation of the Qur'anic text to a specific historic period despite its claim of universality.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH APPROACH

Jasper (2004) articulated two types of understanding a text: reading it through the eyes of faith, which he called a “hermeneutics of faith,” and reading it through the eyes of caution and skepticism so that every claim and proposition will be tested. He called this latter approach a “hermeneutics of suspicion.” In this section, I outline my research approach as related to Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics of the Qur’an, one that is neither a hermeneutics of faith nor of suspicion, but rather one of dialogue between an inquirer with a contemporary transpersonal horizon, and familiarity and knowledge of the text’s original language (Arabic) and the horizon of an ancient text. I support my approach of philosophical hermeneutics, as was specifically used in this inquiry, with relevant literature in the field, specifically as presented by Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (Gadamer, 2004). My research approach is descriptive in nature, not procedural. Gadamer (2004) stated:

The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience, it is not concerned primarily with amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science-yet it too is concerned with knowledge and with truth. In understanding tradition, not only are texts understood, but insights are acquired and truths known. (p. xx)

Ferrer (2002) reaffirmed this notion by stating, “The idea of transpersonal and spiritual phenomena as participatory events is consistent with Gadamer’s (1990) notion of truth as an event of self-disclosure of meaning” (p. 118). He also affirmed that transpersonal knowledge is ontological in nature, despite its personal experience epistemology.

In regard to the Qur’an, I posit that romanticism in hermeneutics reading, as described by Gadamer (2004) and in this inquiry’s literature review section, has its merit only within the historicity of the text as it was revealed to Muhammad during a specific time in history. This is the traditionalist approach to interpreting the Qur’an. The concept of historicism was neither considered nor understood as a context for interpretation (Gadamer, 1977/2008).

Boucouvalas (1987) noted that hermeneutics is an example of a qualitative research approach that is interpretive and inductive, rather than explanatory and deductive: “The interpretive approach seeks understanding and the creation of meaning via the intertwining of a dialectic between the researcher and the ‘the researched’ to result in a skilled version of our understood meaning” (p. 85). She identified two main streams in hermeneutics literature: that of an interpretive method (reproducing meaning), and that of a way of thinking and knowing (producing meaning). My research approach is based mainly on the latter. Schwandt (2000) indicated:

Interpretive hermeneutics assumes that the researcher can leave behind his worldview and historical/cultural modes of perception and thinking in order to reproduce the meaning and intention of a text in action. In other words, one can understand the subjective meaning, yet do so in an objective manner. The meaning that the researcher reproduces is considered the original meaning of the action. (p. 193)

Philosophical hermeneutics, however, does not view meaning as some objective reality that is waiting to be discovered. Rather, meaning is negotiated through a dialogical encounter with what is not understood, and understanding is something that is produced during that dialogue.

Gadamer (2004) stated, “It is quite right for the interpreter not to approach the text directly, relying solely on the fore-meaning already available to him, but rather explicitly to examine the legitimacy—i.e., the origin and validity—of the fore-meaning dwelling within him.” (p. 270). He went on to deny the arbitrariness of the fore-meaning while further examining the text on the grounds that “all that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or text” (p. 271).

Meaning is not created out of nothing, but through an iterative process called a “hermeneutic circle.” In other words, we approach the text as new phenomenon and with general hypothesis about its nature, the latter of which would lead the search for an interpretation of details that, in turn, revises the hypothesis (Diesing, 1991). Accordingly, I conducted several readings of the Qur’an at different levels and depths of analysis, the first of which was designed to devise a general hypothesis that would answer my inquiry’s major questions. Each subsequent reading involved looking for more details and depth at each level of analysis that I managed to

reach within the whole. These iterations, utilizing the above-mentioned hermeneutic circle, allowed me to discern meanings from specific Qur'anic verses to support my major conclusions. However, these later iterations make sense only within the context of my initial reading and analysis.

I have identified a research philosophy and approach with no specific procedures to guide my inquiry. This approach consisted of tracing threads of repetitive and transpersonal nature in my dialogue with the text that formed my initial hypothesis in order to discern an understanding. These threads were the initial results of a two-pronged approach: humanity's relationship with the divine, and human beings' relationship among themselves and with the cosmos. The threads' validity was based on the fore-meaning and my understanding of the tradition, as defined by Gadamer (2004) and guided by my initial reading of the Qur'an. This approach enabled me to form an initial hypothesis that served as my guide while negotiating the Qur'anic text in an attempt to derive the transpersonal framework that I will lay out in the next chapter.

Gadamer (2004) also differentiated between those productive prejudices that facilitate meaning and understanding and those prejudices that hinder it: "The prejudices and fore-meanings that occupy the interpreter's consciousness are not at his free disposal. He cannot separate in advance the productive prejudices that enable understanding from the prejudices that hinder it and lead to misunderstandings" (p. 295). He went on to describe the hermeneutic circle, which is of great interest and relevance to this study, in the following terms:

The circle, then, is not formal in nature. It is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of the tradition and the movement of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to the tradition. But this commonality is constantly being formed in our relation to tradition. Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves. Thus the circle of understanding is not a "methodological" circle, but describes an element of the ontological structure of understanding. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 294)

This articulation leads to the essence of his philosophy of understanding Gadamer (2004), namely, the re-creation of the tradition that contributed to the text as well as the formation of the interpreter's own prejudices. He further asserted that this circle, which is fundamental to all understanding, has a hermeneutic implication. He characterized this as a "fore-conception of completeness" and considered it a formal condition of understanding and stated:

It is the play between the traditional text's strangeness and familiarity to us, between being a historically intended, distanced object and belonging to a tradition. The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between. Given the intermediate position in which hermeneutics operates, it follows that its work is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place. But these conditions do not amount to a procedure or method which the interpreter must of himself bring to bear on the text; rather, they must be given. The prejudices and fore-meanings that occupy the interpreters' consciousness are not at his free disposal. He cannot separate in advance the productive prejudices that enable understanding from the prejudices that hinder it and lead to misunderstanding. Rather, this separation must take place in the process of understanding itself, and hence hermeneutics must ask how that happens. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 295)

As regards prejudice as a condition of understanding, he wrote that

History does not belong to you; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgment, constitute the historical reality of his being. Prejudice is a condition of understanding. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 278)

Gadamer (2004) argued against two kinds of prejudices relevant to this inquiry: authority and overhastiness. He defined the latter as a predisposition to reject truths simply because they are old and attested to by the current authorities. He considered the Enlightenment's real prejudice to be the subjection of all authority to reason, for

When hermeneutics was freed from all dogmatic ties, the old division returns in a new guise....thus, acknowledging authority is always connected with the idea that what the authority says is not irrational and arbitrary but can, in principle, be discovered to be true. This is the essence of the authority claimed by the teacher, the superior, the expert. The prejudices that they implant are legitimized by the person who presents them. But in this way they become prejudices not just in favor of a person but a content, since they effect the same disposition to believe something that can be brought about in other ways-e.g., by good reason. (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 280-281)

By contrasting reason to tradition as a condition of understanding, an approach that I have adopted in this inquiry, Gadamer (2004) noted:

Tradition is still viewed as the abstract opposite of free self-determination, since its validity does not require any reason but conditions us without our questioning it....it seems to me that there is no such unconditional antithesis between tradition and reason...traditions need to be embraced, affirmed and cultivated and so it is a dynamic and ever evolving concept. The restoration of the old or the re-creation of the new traditions does not hold under the scrutiny of reason as the preservation itself is an act of reason....even where life changes violently, as in the ages of revolution, far more of the old is preserved in the supposed transformation of everything than anyone knows, and it combines with the new to create a new value...our usual relationship to the past is not characterized by distancing and freeing ourselves from tradition. Rather, we are always situated within traditions, and this is not objectifying process...an element of tradition affects the human sciences despite the methodological purity of their procedures, and element that constitutes their real nature and distinguishing mark, is immediately clear if we examine the history of research and note the difference between the human and natural sciences with regard to their history. (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 282-284)

Upon confirming his positioning of tradition as a condition of interpretation, Gadamer (2004) illustrated how to go about hermeneutical work in light of our belonging to a tradition at this point in history. The hermeneutic circle involves going from the whole to the parts and then

back to the whole in light of the wholeness of meaning contained in the initial hypothesis described above. Gadamer (2004) stated:

Let us next consider how hermeneutics goes about its work. What consequences for understanding follow from the fact that belonging to a tradition is a condition of hermeneutics? We recall the hermeneutical rule that we must understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole. The principle stems from ancient rhetoric, and modern hermeneutics has transferred it to the art of understanding. It is a circular relationship in both cases. The anticipation of meaning in which the whole is envisaged becomes actual understanding when the parts that are determined by the whole themselves also determine this whole.... The harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding. (p. 291)

In reading the Qur'an from this standpoint, I reflected upon the completion of my readings of the text and writing the conclusions of the next chapter in order to clarify my research approach as thoroughly as possible. I have clarified the conditions that guided my fore-meaning and understanding of the text: to identify with the Qur'an throughout the dialogue as a book of revealed nature that possesses an ontological perspective to knowledge. Gadamer (2004) asserted that hermeneutics "is not concerned with developing a procedure or methods of understanding, but with clarifying the conditions in which interpretation and understanding takes place" (p. 295).

Also relevant here is Gadamer's (2004) assertion "When we read a text we always assume its completeness, and only when this assumption proves mistaken—i.e., the text is not intelligible—do we begin to suspect the text and try to discover how it can be remedied" (p. 294). Accordingly, this study assumes that the Qur'anic text is a complete epistemologically and ontologically coherent unit that has both a beginning and an ending, and that its full meaning and understanding will be revealed only to those who recognize these facts and read it accordingly.

This notion is contrary to romanticism hermeneutics, which conceives understanding as the reproduction of an original production (Gadamer, 2004). Applying this approach to the Qur'an, without regard to its revelation's historicity in space and time, has imprisoned its text within a specific time and space despite its claim of universality and continuity across space and time. The importance of my study, based on the research approach articulated in this section and

the transpersonal framework of reference, is to transcend this imposed historicity in order to analyze what the Qur'anic text, according to its own words, was intended to create. Commenting on this particular issue, Gadamer (2004) stated:

Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text belongs to the whole tradition whose content interests the age and which it seeks to understand itself. The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience. It certainly is not identical with them, for it is always co-determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history. (p. 296)

He further asserted: "Time is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged because it separates; it is actually the supportive ground of the course of events in which the present is rooted" (p. 297). Understanding is productive, not merely reproductive, because the text's meaning goes beyond its author. This is not necessarily better, but it is different. He continued his argument by stating, "But the discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process" (p. 298). Accordingly, this work can never be completed because the conditions related to understanding it are never final and therefore no one can ever claim to have discovered the ultimate truth or to have the final word as to what this text has meant or will mean to future generations. All we can do is to understand it within our own time and space context and keep ourselves open to future possibilities. Such a perspective undermines neither the validity of my understanding, as outlined in this inquiry, nor the importance of its conclusions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

Framed and guided by a philosophical hermeneutic approach, results of my analytic interpretation of the Qur'an, as informed by the transpersonal human development orientation, are reported in this chapter. Discussed are my findings on how the Qur'an informs transpersonal human development and how that body of knowledge informs my philosophical hermeneutic reading and understanding of this sacred text.

In the opening page of *Up from Eden*, Wilber (1981) noted that it is best to view history not as chronicle of individual and national feats, but as a movement of human consciousness. Accordingly, he suggested several possible divisions of human societies and movement of consciousness in history. The overarching division that he devised for human societies and history was comprised of foraging, horticultural, agrarian, industrial, and information and knowledge societies. Yet this classification simply uses the means of production as an organizing principle. In this inquiry I use the collective human consciousness development that is conceptualized in the form of an autonomous and homonomous self along the individual, family/group/society and cosmic/planetary levels (Boucouvalas, 1999b, 2000). I analyzed these levels as the organizing principles of all human societies throughout human history, as presented in the Qur'an, in an attempt to answer the main questions of this inquiry namely; how does the Qur'an inform our understanding of transpersonal adult development? And how does transpersonal theory inform our understanding of the Qur'an?

Boucouvalas's conceptualization (begun in 1980) of the transpersonal field in terms of autonomous and homonomous development at the individual, group/societal, and cosmic/planetary levels is the most appropriate one here, for it reflects the collective as well as the individual consciousness at the three levels of expressing autonomous and homonomous selfhood. In other words, autonomy (separate independent self-sense) as well as homonomy (being part of a greater whole) can apply to individuals, groups, societies, etc. "When a group or society truncates itself off, however, forgetting or ignoring its homonomous identity of being part of a greater whole centrism can result in arrested development" (Boucouvalas, 1999b, 2009). Tracing the development of collective human consciousness throughout history, which the Qur'an expresses in terms of the relationships at the three levels on the one hand and with the

divine on the other, will serve as the organizing theoretical framework in my attempt to answer this inquiry's core questions noted above.

According to Boucouvalas (2000), "One hallmark of maturation is the development of a strong, independent, autonomous, separate self-sense...for the most part, Western psychology has almost exclusively embraced this conceptualization of self as a framework for theorizing and research as well as good practice" (p.209). Boucouvalas positioned transpersonal psychology as not only a Western but also a global movement in essence to overcome this limited rendition of selfhood gaining insights from ancient wisdom traditions as well as indigenous culture and philosophy.

The Qur'an speaks of this maturation process in a communion of basic independent/interdependent units of a sub-totality female and a male in all phases of development following the basic biological formation of human beings from matter and into body, soul, mind, and spirit. It defines human beings essentially as a unit created from one soul and then split into a male and a female consciousness during the earlier stage of existence and before their embodiment in an earthly form. This unitary division is also true for every living thing in the universe. In other words, the essential unit of every living thing is composed of male and female pairs.

This male/female unit, which exists on the same plane as the universe, is nevertheless independent from the divine plane of existence. According to the Qur'anic account of events, the divine's existence is eternal, which means that its presence both preceded every living thing, as well as the universe itself, and will continue beyond their existence because it has no beginning in space and time and thus no end.

Human existence and the universe, the latter of which I use interchangeably with cosmos, however, exist in absolute terms. The absolute nature of human existence means that although humanity's existence goes beyond its biological life and death in consciousness, this existence is limited to time and space. This is not the case with the divine's eternity, which does not conform to this realm's realities of time and space because it exists on a separate plane of existence.

This is contrary to the notion of ultimate unity, in which the divine plane serves as the ultimate objective of reality and peaceful existence. Huxley's (1945/2009) articulation of the essence of perennial philosophy defined the human psyche of each person in its farthest reaches

as being essentially commensurate with all of existence and ultimately identical with the cosmic creative principle itself. This latter principle represents the divine plane. Grof (1998) concluded:

Modern consciousness research has generated important data that support the tenets of the perennial philosophy. It has revealed a grand purposeful design underlying all of creation and has shown that all of existence is permeated by superior intelligence. In the light of these new discoveries, spirituality is affirmed as an important and legitimate endeavor in human life, since it reflects a critical dimension of the human psyche and of the universal scheme of things. (p. 3)

The distinction between the body, mind, soul, and spirit streams of perception, all of which give rise to a human being in different states of existence and consciousness, is that they represent different ways of perception. In other words, they correspond with Adam and his spouse's descent from their absolute formless being in Eden to the embodiment of their absolute nature in an earthly form created in the womb of earth. This embodiment was endowed with these four streams so this female/male unit could survive and adjust to the environment, which from then on would play a part in their new phase of existence. According to the Qur'anic account, the couple's absolute consciousness was now confined in a form (body), as opposed to its previous existence in formless consciousness, because they had eaten from the forbidden tree.

The Qur'anic worldview of reality does not consider this a divine punishment, for the Qur'an states that God accepted the couple's repentance and forgave their sin of disobedience. In fact, the divine's plan was to have them live on earth as its stewards, as seen in his asking the angels to bow down in respect of the human couple's acceptance of the burden of choosing good or evil. This stewardship may result—as was the case in Eden—in transforming the current form of existence into an earthly biological form that required them to hunt for their food and look for shelter. In other words, their formless consciousness existence, in which they did not feel cold and hunger, was replaced with an embodied consciousness that was separate from the earthly biological body. The Qur'an indicates that God placed them on earth to take care of it, an event that represented the opening of a new stage of existence characterized by this stewardship.

Given the creation's absolute nature and the divine's eternity, living on earth becomes a transpersonal participatory event, one that is co-created along with humanity's absolute cosmic reality within the universe and the divine. This participatory event between the individual and the

transcendence in the acts of worship is conceived of in the broadest sense as a civilizational act of edification that leads to spiritual phenomena and precipitation within the individual. Ferrer (2002) conceptualized the transpersonal phenomena as relational events with god, communities, and nature, and not as an individualistic intrasubjective experience of humanity's egocentric nature.

The absolute nature of humans in the Qur'anic conception starts with biological death and consciousness formless existence, and is followed by the manifestation of this absoluteness in biological living form. After this comes the death of the body or the biological form of human existence. This cycle of life and death led me to the position that there may not be a hierarchy that associates the soul as an essential component that maintains life for the human species, as distinguished from the spirit, which is associated with the higher order or stages of creation than mind and body. When I considered the absence of soul in a dead person, which the Qur'an describes as representing the major difference between life and death, this conclusion becomes more plausible. To illustrate this point, verse 28 of the second chapter in the Qur'an states (There will be no exact translation to follow the Arabic text quoted from the Qur'an in this study because the verbatim translation from another author may offer a confusing meaning compared to what I have offered in this study. This is usually because these translations of meaning-in many instances-take the approach of explaining each verse as an isolated unit in itself in order to provide textual translation of exegetical nature and my approach in this study has been to have a collective, epistemologically and ontologically coherent and unitary approach to the Qur'an looking at it from a transpersonal perspective):

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ۖ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

The Qur'an views the transformation of human nature from one form to another as a cyclical form of continuous motion and transformation that may, under certain conditions, shrink and expand. Each form has its own holistic patterns of being, without having to ascend or descend in a hierarchical stage-based form of existence. Different structures operate on the same plane and on the same level of existence. These structures, however, are not necessarily isolated or rigid in nature, for free movement from one form to another is possible. The river of life consists of streams that may carry different types of content, even though they originate from water that may have assumed different sizes, shapes, and waves but nevertheless continues to

flow freely and create different manifestations of life. An example of this would be my ability, when in the form of a living body that has a soul, to breath while asleep, a time when I am not utilizing all the faculties that I use when I am awake.

In this respect, human consciousness may exist in a form separate from the body that contains it. While death may represent the body's biological death, a human being's absolute nature would have to continue after that event. The absolute human reality in consciousness is equivalent to the absoluteness of the cosmos. The union, however, of the human body in earth with the universe, represented by biological death, is a return to the beginning of biological life in the womb of earth.

Bohm (1980/2002) conceived of the person as a body/mind amalgam existing as a relatively independent sub-totality of reality, an entity with a sufficient recurrence and stability of physical, chemical, and neurological processes that occur in a material form over a certain period of linear time. Thus, he opined that any given mind/body relationship is a lower-order, relatively temporary manifestation in explicit reality. Personhood, in a form that is neither mind nor body, exists in the Absolute order and gave rise to the human being. However, he also stated that the absolute order is present in its entirety, interpenetrating every point in space and time, so that all of eternity and the cosmos are wholly present right here and right now.

At some level then all:

The previous and future states of an individual-fetus, infant, child, adolescent, adult, corpse coexist with or without embodiment as we usually think of it (since embodiment can be construed as spatiotemporal representation in the explicit order) in the infinite space/time reality of the cosmic matrix. (Wade, 1996, p. 13)

Streams of perception in the Qur'an are in constant motion and are neither rigid nor linear. As the Qur'anic concept of development at this stage is both fluid and nonlinear, a free movement in the same two-dimensional plane with different combinations would occur. This movement does not take place in a third dimension of vertical magnitude higher or lower in a hierarchical form of creation, but actually on the same two-dimensional plane of cosmic existence. So the trajectory of development is nonlinear and may take different forms of lateral motion with different combinations.

The Qur'anic concept of development and growth is the result of an expansion process of oscillation among different possible combinations of the same components that we already possess in different combinations of matter, soul, body, mind, and spirit. Thus the process of expansion may lead to a transformation that may not resemble anything we have seen before. Wilber (1996/2000a) articulated this process:

It's not that there is a single, pre-given world, and we simply look at it differently. Rather, as the cosmos comes to know itself more fully, different worlds emerge. It is like an acorn growing to an oak. An oak isn't a different picture of the same unchanging world present in the acorn. The oak has components in its own being that are quite new and different from anything found in the acorn. The oak has leaves, branches, roots, and so on, none of which are present in the acorn's actual worldview or world space. Different worldviews create different worlds, enact different worlds, they aren't just the same world seen differently. (p. 5)

However, the acorn and the oak operate in the same plane of existence and are not hierarchically sorted. The oak is simply an expansion of the acorn utilizing that which it already possesses on the same plane of existence, whereas the transformation and change is a qualitative change.

According to the Qur'anic conception of living and life on earth, water is the major component of evolutionary life. The sacred text emphasizes that water is the makeup component of every living thing and that earth and heaven were originally one and then split apart during creation. This was mentioned in a verse that explains the divine's creation within the universe's natural laws without any sudden order and intervention. The insistence on water as matter and earthly component in essence referencing this process of orderly creation within nature and the cosmos not despite of it. In this regard, verse 30, chapter 21 states:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا ۗ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ  
كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ ۖ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٣٠)

The Qur'an provides the example of water's ability to maintain lives of plants of numerous shapes and forms, and even other types of creation, to explain the concept of the unity

of source and origin. Although it is the same water, it produces different outcomes and manifestations. Despite the unity of origin, the manifestation from this same origin may differ quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Verse 4, chapter 13 states:

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُتَجَاوِرَاتٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزُرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنَوَانٌ وَعَيْرٌ صِنَوَانٍ  
يُسْقَىٰ بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُفِضِلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (٤)

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُّخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهَا ۚ وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ  
جُدُدٌ بَيضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ سُودٌ (٣٧) وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالدَّوَابِّ وَأَلْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ  
أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَٰلِكَ ۚ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ (٢٨)

Modern science adopts a different approach as we move towards a new conception of a more integral world. As Laszlo (2008) described it:

The key insight coming from the new paradigm in the sciences is not technological. It is the confirmation of something people have always felt but could not give a rational explanation for: our close connection to each other and to the Cosmos. Traditional people have known of it and have lived it, but modern civilization has first neglected and then denied it. Yet genuine spiritual experience offers direct evidence of our links to each other and to all of creation, and now science confirms the validity of such intuitions. (p. 3)

Grof (1998) asserted that human beings can transcend the ordinary boundaries of the body-ego and identify with other people, animals, plants, or inorganic aspects of nature, as well as with various archetypal beings. He also argued that when we attain experiential identification with absolute consciousness, we realize that our own being is ultimately commensurate with the entire cosmic network, with all of existence. Grof referenced Arthur Koestler as the person who coined the term *holon*, reflecting that everything in the universe is simultaneously a whole and a part, as per its Greek root. This term also pertains to Wilber's articulation of his view of transpersonal human development (Wilber, 1980/1996).

The Qur'anic paradigm describes change in the universe and in social systems as a natural tendency to abide by preset universal and cosmic rules. Based on my understanding, this process of change is guided by principles created by a divine will, as opposed to a sudden change by divine order. Human beings perceive the transcendental aspect of this reality in the social or natural science fields in order to give those actions their absoluteness and continuity in space and time. This extension of human action in space and time integrates the spiritual with the material world, the science of the material world with the science of our social reality, and the world of matter with the world of spirit. All of this satisfies the absolute nature of human beings and the universe within which they act. Human action thus becomes universal and, in the absolute realm of reality, is not bound by biological life and existence.

This concept of integrating action with consciousness in the absolute realm of reality is, in essence, the Qur'anic approach to integration that is assumed to move the human species closer to its ultimate destiny in the cosmos. This is a characteristic of biological life on earth, for action is associated with the biological life of humans. In the Qur'anic worldview of reality, this integration is essential to establishing the relationship between death and life because action is only associated with life.

I argue that the Qur'an compares the creation of earth and the heavens to that of humans in order to make the connection in a spiritual sense, but also to establish a direct relationship of cause and effect between the natural laws of the universe and social phenomena in human societies. If this is true, then the social as well as the natural world abide by similar rules that manifest in different realms of reality, one in nature and the other in human societies. The perception of reality, which may be initiated in the realm of physical science, creates the paradigm of social phenomena. As human societies shift their perception of the world of nature from the Copernican to Einstein's theory of relativity, humanity's social reality pursues a similar trajectory of change.

The manifestation of the Divine in human consciousness occurs when one realizes that human existence on earth is two-dimensional: the actual material dimension that may reveal itself in any circumstance at any state of reality, as is the case in pure physical or social science, and the divine dimension that only reveals itself through a purification process of thought and becomes manifest through action.

## Familial Consciousness

Adam and his spouse's autonomous self were spousal in nature, and thus their homonomous familial consciousness developed in a relationship of a pair within a family structure. The Qur'an referred to this as the *names* that the divine taught Adam. This is our first glimpse of human consciousness at this stage of humanity's progression and development along the path of cosmic/planetary consciousness. I posit that this was the starting point of a structural transformation in human collective consciousness, a transformation from an individual consciousness that caused mischief and bloodshed on earth. The pre-Adam era did not have a familial human consciousness that could identify with the familial relationship symbolized by the names that the divine taught to Adam and his spouse. Bertalanffy (1981) asked, "What is unique in human behavior? The answer is unequivocal. The monopoly which man holds, which profoundly distinguishes him from other beings, is his ability to create a universe of symbols in thought and language" (p. 1). Adam and his spouse were created to serve as earth's stewards, a responsibility that represents the ultimate goal of their, as well as humanity's, existence upon it as these verses 30-37, chapter 2 from the Qur'an state:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۗ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٠) وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَٰؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣١) قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا ۗ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (٣٢) قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ ۗ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ (٣٣) وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٣٤) وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٣٥) فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ ۗ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۗ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ (٣٦) فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (٣٧)

The other plane of reality is the relationship with the divine both within and outside of the cosmic relationship with other humans and the universe at large. This relationship with the divine within the existing reality of the familial human consciousness was direct and featured immediate gratification and punishment. It was seen as the consequence of the couple's disobedience, as well as in the divine's acceptance of the sacrifice made by one of Adam's sons and his rejection of that of the other son. The end result of this, according to the Qur'an, was that the latter son killed his brother. This was a direct relationship with the divine, and the immediate consequences were based on the divine's direct orders. Verses 27-31, chapter 5 state:

وَآتُوا عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقْبِلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ  
 قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ ۗ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٢٧) لئن بَسَطْتَ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِي مَا أَنَا بِبَاسٍ  
 بِيَدَيْ إِلَيْكَ لِأَقْتُلَنَّكَ ۗ إِنَّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٨) إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبُوءَ بِيَأْتِيكَ وَإِنَّمَا كُنَّ  
 مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ ۗ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢٩) فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ  
 الْخَاسِرِينَ (٣٠) فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُؤَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ ۗ قَالَ يَا  
 وَيْلَتَىٰ أَعَجَزْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَذَا الْغُرَابِ فَأُوَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِي ۗ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ النَّادِمِينَ (٣١)

The familial consciousness of the autonomous/homonomous self is also clear in the membership relationships within a familial social structure. The names that Adam and his spouse were taught are the abstract symbols of these familial relationships: this is a mother, this is a father, that is a sister, and so on. I theorize that the Qur'anic reference to this act is meant to teach Adam the familial relational symbolism that would form the basic unit of human society. This description represents the initial stage of humanity's collective consciousness on the path of the planetary/cosmic consciousness. This stage symbolizes the inner core of a widening and expanding circle of consciousness, a movement toward realizing humanity's full potential as regards attaining a cosmic/planetary consciousness. This core is always present in the development process, for it represents the core developmental stage of the autonomous/homonomous self as a human species involved in expanding one's human consciousness from this smallest circle of core presence to a wider circle of national/societal consciousness, a process that will end in realizing our ultimate reality and the widest circle of cosmic/planetary consciousness.

This expansion process engages all human dimensions from the body to the opening of the mind and spirit. According to Ferrer (2002):

Although transpersonal events may involve only certain dimensions of human nature, all dimensions can potentially come into play in the act of participatory knowing, from somatic transfiguration to the awakening of the heart, from erotic communion to visionary cocreation, and from contemplative knowing to moral insight, to mention only a few. (p. 121)

Ferrer (2002) posited, “What makes transpersonal phenomena distinctly—transpersonal—(as well as interesting, provocative, and transforming) is not their non-ordinary or occasional ecstatic character, but the character of the knowledge they provide during an expansion of individual consciousness” (p. 9). Buber (1970) proposed: “Spirit is not in the I but between I and you, it is not like the blood that circulate[s] within you, but like the air in which you breathe” (p. 89). Mendes-Flohr (1989) stated, “The real of the between...is the locus of God’s realization” (p. 115). The place of spiritual reality is not only within the individual, but also within the space in between. Moreover, at this stage of human consciousness it is in the familial space of relationships as well.

Humanity’s core familial consciousness is not only an inner spiritual experience that strengthens a person’s narcissistic tendency and egoic concerns, but also manifests this consciousness in action. Ferrer (2002) stated:

A basic issue here is that, as it has often been stressed in the religious literature, the goal of the spiritual quest is not to have spiritual experiences, but to stabilize spiritual consciousness, live a spiritual life, and transform the world accordingly. (p. 37)

The divine plane outlined in the Qur’an is not a passive observer, but a caregiver whom the text literally describes as the one who planted seeds and watches them grow. Hence, the basic structural attempt to energize the inner core of the familial level manifestation of human consciousness into a wider manifestation at the national, and eventually at the cosmic/planetary, level is done via an interplay with the divine plane of eternal existence as a transpersonal participatory event.

In his attempt to resolve what he called the pre/post fallacy and romanticism, Wilber (1980/1996) argued that the romantic view of development confirms that there once was a type of golden age, a Garden of Eden, an earthly paradise, in early humanity's collective experience. This could be said to resemble the infancy of a newborn child. This Eden was supposedly the place where all things and beings were one with nature and therefore lived in a state of bliss. The subsequent "Fall of Man" in disgrace was usually considered to be the result of increasing knowledge, separation, and a consequent egoic alienation symbolized by the original couple's expulsion for eating from the tree of knowledge (Reynolds, 2004). Wilber suggested:

This romantic view was caused by the confusion of prepersonal ignorance with transpersonal bliss, so that when men and women finally evolved up and out of Eden it was mistaken for a (fall) from heaven. In other words, according to the historical record and the paleoanthropological evidence based upon fossils and archeological artifacts, the Eden of the earthly hominids (protohuman) was actually the bliss of ignorance, not transcendence, since it was the peace of prepersonal ignorance, not transpersonal wisdom. (Reynolds, 2004, p.34)

For Wilber, the empirical evidence of Darwin's theory of evolution could not be philosophically or practically ignored. Human evolution and individual development, at least according to recent scientific and empirical evidence, was actually a story that recounted or reconstructed the historical move up from Eden, as opposed to the "fall" from heaven. After applying this type of reconstructive science, Wilber's (1981) thorough review of anthropology and its associated evidence led him to realize that he must include this irrefutable fact:

Eden was simply the period of the subconscious, prepersonal, preegoic, and subhuman stages of evolution, up to and including that of early or protohumans (Australopithecus, Homo habilis, and so on). It was paradisaical in a crude sense because protohumans, being preegoic, had no capacity for self-reflective thought, and thus no capacity for real anxiety, doubt, or despair. (Reynolds, 2004, pp.34-35)

In this case, as Wilber (1981) would go on to demonstrate, each stage of collective human development, including the move beyond the biological and into the cultural, added its own novel emergent (or higher order unities) as humanity evolved. But, as he noted, this

increased complexity also brought about an increased potential for corruption or pathology. Therefore, evolution is far from an easy or sweet affair; rather, it is extremely complicated and difficult, not to mention even quite harrowing at times. He clearly admitted as much in his opening page to Eden, where he wrote, “There is a price to be paid for every increase in consciousness, and only that perspective, I believe, can place mankind’s evolutionary history in the proper context” (Reynolds, 2004, p. 35).

The markers between what is in the absolute realm of reality and the awareness of human nature and the universe, and what is in the eternal realm of divine transcendence, are not meant to establish barriers between these two realms of reality, but rather to define the nature of the relationship. The Qur’an emphasizes that everything returns to the divine and that the divine is closer to humans than the main artery in the body. This relationship is not one of subject to object, or of a god who created the world and then left it alone. Rather, it is one of an absolute to an eternal, of an entity bound by time and space but an absolute reality extending from the beginning to the end of time, an eternal entity that works outside the realm of space and time and is not bound by it. The boundaries are not necessarily obstacles to universal consciousness, but actually are instruments in that direction so far as humanity and the universe are concerned. The separation of the self and non-self is in their functionality, not in the nature of a person’s awareness and consciousness. The universe is created the same way, as male and female pairs, as one unit attached to the other. So the notion of “liberation from the pairs” as per Wilber’s *No Boundaries* (1979/2001a, p. 43) does not conform, I argue, to the Qur’anic concept of pairs as the essential unit of creation. However, this does not negate their complementarity in the continuum of the self-oscillating between the two ends. But the self is part of the universe because its original bodily form was peeled off—in the Qur’anic expression—from the universe. The clay represents this process and the return to earth in a bodily form after death represents this reunion, despite the difference in functionality with nature and the universe.

The Qur’anic concept is that of “unity in diversity,” a reality in which the dual nature does not necessarily lead to conflict, but rather to a homogeneity in a diversity that exists despite the differences at the extreme ends of the continuum of existence. The concept of bonding in the homonomous realm is omnipresent in the Qur’an; however, unity is rarely presented as a state of homonomous consciousness in human reality and/or in the universe. Harmony and bonding, on the other hand, represent this “unity in diversity.”

Development is homonomous and participatory as regards the autonomous self and its social system, community, group/society, and the cosmos. It is also an inner and autonomous process that is intrasubjective in nature, except when it functions in the service of the whole.

### National Consciousness

A distinct transition to an expanded state of collective consciousness in the group/societal/national realm took place during Moses's time. He grew up in an environment that had a god/goddess for every occasion: the Egyptian god of creation (Amun), their god of the dead (Osiris), their god of wisdom (Thoth), and their god of earth (Geb) (Mishlove, 1975/1993). Growing up in Pharaoh's house, the infant Moses survived Pharaoh's wrath and his order to kill every male Israelite child: His mother placed him in a basket and set it adrift on the Nile. His destiny was to lead his people—the Israelites—to use their feelings of national unity to triumph in the form of establishing a kingdom over which David and Solomon would eventually rule. This is illustrated in several places in the Qur'an, an example of which are verses 7-21, chapter 28 state:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْبَيْمِ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي ۗ إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكَ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٧) فَالْتَقَطَهُ آلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا ۗ إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِبِينَ (٨) وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرَّتْ عَيْنِي لِي وَلَكَ ۗ لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٩) وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَارِعًا ۗ إِن كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِي بِهِ لَوْلَا أَنْ رَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٠) وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهِ ۗ فَبَصُرَتْ بِهِ عَنْ جُنُبٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (١١) وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ نَاصِحُونَ (١٢) فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۗ وَلِتَعْلَمَ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٣) وَوَلَّمَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَاسْتَوَىٰ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا ۗ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٤) وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَىٰ حِينِ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ هَذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ ۗ فَاسْتَغَاثَهُ الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَىٰ الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَوَكَرَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَقَضَىٰ عَلَيْهِ ۗ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ (١٥) قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغَفَرَ لَهُ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

(١٦) قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَاهِرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ (١٧) فَأَصْبَحَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي اسْتَنْصَرَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِحُهُ ۗ قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّكَ لَغَوِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ (١٨) فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْطِشَ بِالَّذِي هُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَّهُمَا قَالَ يَا مُوسَىٰ أَتُرِيدُ أَنْ تَقْتُلَنِي كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا بِالْأَمْسِ ۗ إِن تُرِيدُ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ (١٩) وَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ مِّنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَىٰ قَالَ يَا مُوسَىٰ إِنَّ الْمَلَأَ يَأْتَمِرُونَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوكَ فَاخْرُجْ إِنِّي لَكَ مِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ (٢٠) فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ ۗ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

The divine's plane interactions with the universe took place through Moses and his people. This reading of the plane of reality was only meant to give human action on earth its eternal divine extension and magnify its effect in the world of things and people. According to my understanding of the Qur'anic conception of reality and consciousness, this reading plays its role only on the second plane of reality and consciousness: the eternal divine plane of existence.

At this state of human history, Moses and his people represented the force of good, and Pharaoh and his troops represented the force of evil. Moses had to deal with the prevailing perception of reality at that time, and thus his intervention had to operate within the same paradigm but somehow transcend it so he could initiate a wider perception of this reality. The anemic mind at that time assumed that life was represented in every part of nature and that the spirit of the gods/goddesses controlled and dominated every aspect of all living things. The idea was that God was this great and enormous power that controls everything in the universe directly and subjugates humans to its will by force. In order to work with this mind, Moses had to interact with his people and Pharaoh to prove the authenticity of his mission within the same paradigm of reality, as verses 1-5 and 36-43, chapter 28 describes his experience:

طسّم (١) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (٢) تَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِ الْمُبِينِ وَفَرَعُونَ بِالْحَقِّ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٣) إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَسْتَضَعِفُ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يُدْبِحُوا بِأَنبَاءِهِمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (٤) وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعَفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ (٥)

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّفْتَرَىٰ وَمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي  
 آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ (٣٦) وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَن جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ وَمَن تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ  
 الدَّارِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٣٧) وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرِي  
 فَأَوْقِدْ لِي يَا هَامَانَ عَلَى الطِّينِ فَاجْعَلْ لِّي صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ إِلَىٰ إِلَهِ مُوسَىٰ وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ  
 الْكَاذِبِينَ (٣٨) وَاسْتَكْبَرَ هُوَ وَجُنُودُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُم إِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ  
 (٣٩) فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ ۗ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٠) وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ  
 أَيْمَةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ ۗ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يُنصَرُونَ (٤١) وَأَتْبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً ۗ وَيَوْمَ  
 الْقِيَامَةِ هُمْ مِّنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ (٤٢) وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَىٰ  
 بَصَائِرَ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٤٣)

Moses's mission was to transform this perception of reality into a sense of a unity of the gods/goddesses in one almighty God. To succeed, he had to attribute all of his “miracles” to his one God and simultaneously convince his people and Pharaoh of his mission: leading his people to freedom and building the kingdom and the nation of Israel. The initial step was to defeat Pharaoh and lead his people toward the unity of gods/goddesses in the one and only God. As the Israelites were just emerging from a long period of subjugation and bondage, Moses had to do most of the work. This stage also represented the manifestation of Moses's God via direct intervention in the universe through visible miracles that could only be attributed to this God—the one and the almighty, who is above all of Egypt's gods/goddesses.

According to the Qur'anic account, Moses was God's first student, because he was still the product of this perception of reality and of his environment and culture at this specific space and time in history. Accordingly, God set him on a journey with “the righteous man” who gave him a guided tour through the Divine's presence in the universe via the latter's actions. The divine's presence was revealed to Moses to let him know that the road to universal consciousness and the philosophy of peace in the cosmos are certain. Moses and the Israelites were to understand the divine's presence behind the action as a manifestation of his existence in the unseen realm located behind the universe of manifested reality or using Bohm's (1980/2002) term explicit order. The type of knowledge that Moses was able to recognize was “didactic

knowledge,” and therefore the righteous man’s teachings to him took this form. The righteous man explained to Moses the divine’s intentions and presence in the actions that Moses witnessed and related why they would not have appeared so strange if Moses had just taken the time to ponder them and to reflect upon his own life up until that point. Verses 60-82, chapter 18 illustrate this story:

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِفَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْصِيَ حُقُبًا (٦٠) فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنِهِمَا نَسِيًا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا (٦١) فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتَاهُ آتِنَا غَدَاءَنَا لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبًا (٦٢) قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوْبْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْحُوتَ وَمَا أَنسَانِيهِ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أَذْكُرَهُ ۗ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا (٦٣) قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبِغُ ۗ فَارْتَدَّآ عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا (٦٤) فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا (٦٥) قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِي مِمَّا عَلَّمْتَ رَسُولًا (٦٦) قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا (٦٧) وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا (٦٨) قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا وَلَا أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا (٦٩) قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ أُحَدِّثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا (٧٠) فَانطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا ۗ قَالَ أَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ أَهْلَهَا لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا إِمْرًا (٧١) قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا (٧٢) قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا (٧٣) فَانطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ قَالَ أَقْتَلْتَنِي نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُكْرًا (٧٤) قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا (٧٥) قَالَ إِنْ سَأَلْتُكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا تُصَاحِبْنِي ۗ قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَدُنِّي عُذْرًا (٧٦) فَانطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتِيَا أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ اسْتَطَعَمَا أَهْلَهَا فَأَبَوْا أَنْ يُضَيِّفُوهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقُصَ فَأَقَامَهُ ۗ قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَاتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا (٧٧) قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ ۗ سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا (٧٨) أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسَاكِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدَتْ أَنْ أَعْيِبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَاءَهُمْ مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا (٧٩) وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَخَشِينَا أَنْ يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا (٨٠) فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِنْهُ زَكَوَّةً وَأَقْرَبَ رَحْمًا (٨١) وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا

فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ ۗ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي ۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا (٨٢)

Moses's consciousness passed through the state of didactic knowledge and into the sphere of revealed knowledge, in which the divine's presence in the universe was not manifested directly through human actions, but was rather an extension designed to satisfy the absolute nature of the universal existence in humans and the cosmos. This reading differed from the one that Moses had been used to, and so he had to undergo this learning experience in order to understand the events of his own life within the cosmic reality of the divine's presence.

The fact that Moses did not completely realize God's presence behind the actions in the unmanifested reality of an implicit order, as well as the nature of his presence in the universe, is clear: When God ordered him to announce his mission to Pharaoh in person, he requested that his brother be allowed to go with him in order to provide some support. In other words, God's assurance of ultimate support and protection for him was not enough. Moses wanted someone from his sphere of the materialistic and sense-based world, someone whom he could touch and feel and, within his consciousness, realize and be assured of his god's support and protection. In other words, Moses did not fully realize God's presence behind the action in the unmanifested world of eternity and the stewardship of the universe. Verses 33-35, chapter 28 states:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ (٣٣) وَأَخِي هَارُونُ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسِلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي ۗ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ (٣٤) قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا ۗ بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْتُمْ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْغَالِبُونَ (٣٥)

Despite this, Moses asked God to enable him to see god in the explicit and manifest order. God replied that he would never be able to see the divine's face and told him to look at a mountain. When he did, the mountain crumbled in front of his eyes. The same was true of the Israelites, who asked Moses to have his god be present in their manifest order of reality so they could look at him directly. Moses even asked God to take him to the unmanifested reality so he would be prepared to look at his god. The Israelites, who had not yet reached the state of Moses's perception of reality, asked Moses to bring his god to their presence and sense of reality. This journey, which was designed to enable Moses to perceive a different reality, was working,

but the challenge to bring his people up to this state of consciousness was still a work in progress. It was difficult for them to comprehend the lesson at their current state of development, and so their journey of learning would have to continue. Verses 142-143, chapter 7 states:

وَوَاعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ ثَلَاثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتَمَمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرِ فَتَمَّ مِيقَاتُ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ۗ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ  
لِأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (١٤٢) وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ  
لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ ۗ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَاني وَلَكِنِ انظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ  
اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَاني ۗ فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا ۗ فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ  
قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٤٣)

The Qur'an also asserts that the two realities—the cosmic and the divine—inhabit two separate planes of existence and reality in the absolute presence of humans and the universe. In addition, god the eternal cannot manifest in the absolute realm of cosmic existence. Thus, the relationship between these two realities has to be made clear. The Qur'an presents it as being as close enough to be called intimate, but still located in different planes of reality. The absolute human consciousness cannot contain the eternal divine plane, but it can establish a relationship with it via the messengers sent by God. Otherwise, operating from the same plane of reality the limitation of both will be imposed on each other, and there could not be an eternal existence of the divine with superseding qualities from those manifested in humans and the universe.

This stage of humanity's consciousness required a direct relationship with the divine, for it is a mental consciousness with a natural tendency to believe only in the presence and manifested reality (viz., in the Israelites' asking Moses to bring God into their presence). They were not yet prepared to see God's presence in his creation in the unmanifested reality in the implicit order. Nor were they used to the idea and conception of a reality in which the divine's presence was to be read as an extension of humanity's action on earth. At that point in time, human consciousness worked on the assumption that God manifested itself in every action in nature and was a great power that subjugated all creation to God's will.

This perception can be traced back to Abraham who, dissatisfied with his people's idols, began looking for God in the stars. When they disappeared, he looked at the moon and said "This is my lord." When it disappeared, he saw the sun and said "This is bigger than both of them. This

is my lord.” He searched for God in nature and assumed that bigger is better. He was looking for his god in the perfection of shape, so when that shape was distorted either by its disappearance or various cycles, he kept on looking until he found his god in the unmanifested reality of the unseen God behind the universe in a realm that was beyond his own realm of reality. In describing this experience, verses 74-81, chapter 6 states:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ أَرَزَرًا أَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا آلِهَةً ۗ إِنِّي أَرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ  
(٧٤) وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ (٧٥) فَلَمَّا جَنَّ  
عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا ۗ قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي ۗ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أَحِبُّ الْآفِلِينَ (٧٦) فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ  
بَارِعًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي ۗ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ (٧٧) فَلَمَّا  
رَأَى الشَّمْسَ بَارِعَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ ۗ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ  
(٧٨) إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا ۗ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٧٩)  
وَحَاجَّهُ قَوْمُهُ ۗ قَالَ أَتُحَاجُّونِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ ۗ وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ  
رَبِّي شَيْئًا ۗ وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٨٠) وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا  
تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا ۗ فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ ۗ إِن  
كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٨١)

Abraham’s perception of this reality changed when he was placed in fire and God commanded the fire not to burn him. This event, which dealt with the fire’s characteristics and not its shape, encouraged him to start looking for God behind his creation in the unmanifested world, the implicate order of reality, the divine’s plane of existence. At that particular time and space in history, human beings were creating idols not because they believed that they were gods/goddesses, at least according to the Qur’an, but because they believed that this was how God willed to be represented in their manifested and material world. In other words, their perception of their reality was the here and now. Verses 61-72, chapter 21 states:

قَالُوا فَأْتُوا بِهِ عَلَىٰ أَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ (٦١) قَالُوا أَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِالْهَيْتِنَا يَا  
إِبْرَاهِيمَ (٦٢) قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ (٦٣) فَرَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ

فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٦٤) ثُمَّ نَكِسُوا عَلَىٰ رُءُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنطِقُونَ (٦٥)  
 قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ (٦٦) أَفِ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ  
 اللَّهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٧) قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ (٦٨) قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي  
 بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (٦٩) وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ (٧٠) وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا  
 إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ (٧١) وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً ۗ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا  
 صَالِحِينَ (٧٢)

The battle of David and Goliath was another experience designed to expand humanity's consciousness towards the divine's unmanifested, but intimate, watchful, and caring reality. God made it look like a road to disaster, for this battle defied all that the Israelites knew about winning a battle of this nature and magnitude. First, only a small number of warriors were getting ready to fight. Then, God orders this small group not to drink from a nearby river because those who do so will be denied the honor of participating in this battle. This obviously added to the already bleak prospect of winning. God also ordered them to choose a leader; however, they could not agree on one and this had yet another negative impact on the battle's outcome.

The idea is, of course, to have those left to fight witness God's action in the manifested explicit order of reality. The people had reached a point where disaster was, according to all accounts, certain. A small number of weakened and thirsty Israelite soldiers were supposed to defeat the powerful Goliath and his troops, who outnumbered them ten to one. This is a representation of God's action from the unmanifested divine reality into the explicit manifested reality, for the winning will ultimately be in the hands of the people without the divine's direct intervention except through their own actions. The human acts of preparation and the Newtonian laws of physics were not at work, but in this case the Divine was nowhere to be seen directly. For example, he did not part the sea and leave Goliath and his troops to drown. So from something that looked like a trap but turned out to be an Israelite victory, a new state of consciousness was born: The divine plane of reality manifested itself, but only as extension of their own actions.

David leads the triumphant Israelites to establish their own kingdom and build a nation. This is the stage of national consciousness' ultimate triumph, and a new era of moving towards a

cosmic/planetary consciousness would now take shape. Verses 246-252, chapter 2 describes the details of this story:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَاِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذِ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّ لَهُمْ ائْبَعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ ۗ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ اَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوْا ۗ قَالُوْا وَمَا لَنَا اَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ اُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَاَبْنَانَا ۗ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْهُمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ (٢٤٦) وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوْتَ مَلِكًا ۗ قَالُوْا اَنْتَ اِيْكَوْنُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ اٰحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِّنَ الْمَالِ ۗ قَالَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ وَاَسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ (٢٤٧) وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ اِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيْكُمُ النَّابُوتُ فِيْهِ سَكِيْنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَى وَاَلُ هَارُوْنَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ۗ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لآيَةً لِّكُم اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (٢٤٨) فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوْتُ بِالْجُنُوْدِ قَالَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُبْتَلِيْكُمْ بِنَهْرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّيْ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَاِنَّهُ مِنِّيْ اِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ ۗ فَشَرَبُوْا مِنْهُ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْهُمْ ۗ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهُ قَالُوْا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوْتَ وَجُنُوْدِهِ ۗ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ يَظُنُوْنَ اَنْهُمْ مَّلَاقُوُ اللّٰهِ كَمْ مِّن فِتْنَةٍ قَلِيْلَةٍ غَلَبْتَ فِتْنَةً كَثِيْرَةً بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ (٢٤٩) وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوْا لِجَالُوْتَ وَجُنُوْدِهِ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا اَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ اَقْدَامَنَا وَاَنْصُرْنَا عَلٰى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِيْنَ (٢٥٠) فَهَزَمُوْهُم بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُوْدُ جَالُوْتَ وَاٰتَاهُ اللّٰهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ ۗ وَلَوْ لَا دَفَعُ اللّٰهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَّفَسَدَتِ الْاَرْضُ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلٰى الْعَالَمِيْنَ (٢٥١) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللّٰهِ تَنْتَلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ وَاِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ (٢٥٢)

Ferrer (2002) articulated his vision of transpersonal phenomena transforming the world. Although realizing and admitting to the variety and lack of consensus of a transpersonal paradigm, he suggested an overarching transpersonal vision as a unifying aspect of the variety of transpersonal paradigms.

Transpersonal theory, however, is not merely another academic discipline. The transpersonal vision is a way of thinking and living self, other, and world that can be

diversely manifested not only in transpersonal states, but also in relationships, community, society, ethics, education, politics, philosophy, religion, cosmology, and almost any other area of human thinking, feeling, and action. Transpersonal theory, that is, can shed new light and transform virtually any phenomenon in which human beings participate. When I say that the transpersonal vision can transform the world, I am not talking in poetic or metaphoric terms. What I am suggesting is that the final intention of any genuine transpersonal vision is not the elaboration of theoretical models to understand transpersonal phenomena, but to midwife an intersubjectively shared reality, a transpersonal reality. The ultimate aim of the transpersonal vision is to bring forth a transpersonal world. (p.7)

From this perspective, Moses's transpersonal vision was one of national and societal magnitude. Its root is in a national human consciousness connected to a divine will. This vision would change the world and lead a nation towards a spiritual path of direct connection with the divine. This transpersonal vision of reality hinged on the participatory experience of a nation with direct divine intervention.

Ferrer (2002) argued:

Spiritual and transpersonal phenomena, we are told, do not provide any form of valid, reliable, or real knowledge about human beings or the world. The transpersonal vision, in contrast, holds that transpersonal and spiritual phenomena do have epistemic value. And this conviction is, I believe, the unifying glue that connects the different transpersonal paradigms: the unifying feature of the transpersonal vision is its commitment to the epistemic value of transpersonal and spiritual phenomena. (p. 9)

This epistemic value is realized at this stage of human history, based on the Qur'anic account of these events, by aligning the matrix of national/societal participatory experience with direct divine intervention in order to realize the ultimate national vision of building the kingdom of Israel as a prelude to a national/societal human consciousness.

After surveying more than two hundred definitions of transpersonal psychology, Lajoie and Shapiro (1992) concluded that this field "is concerned with the study of humanity's highest potential, and with the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and

transcendent states of consciousness” (p. 91). Rothberg (1993) pointed out that all religious and spiritual phenomena were automatically relegated to the individual subjective world and invariably regarded as not meeting the standards of the valid, objective knowledge characteristic of natural science (e.g., the public nature of observation, repeatability, verifiability, etc.) (as cited in Ferrer 2002, p. 17). Ferrer (2002) argued, “This experiential account-inner experience-, although once indispensable and perhaps even salutary, has become unnecessary, limiting, and counterproductive” (p. 21).

Accordingly, the Qur’anic version of the participatory transpersonal event to establish the Kingdom of Israel under Moses’s leadership and with divine direct intervention, care, and guidance is an acceptable way to validate and explore the nature of societal/national transpersonal phenomenon, which is parallel to the inner and personal experiential account of spiritual phenomena. However, the relationship with the divine in these transpersonal events was direct, in order to facilitate the vision, and assumed the form of a subject/object relationship, which colored this human collective experience in Cartesian dualism.

The other aspect of this phenomenon is the process of interaction between the autonomous and homonomous self as aspects of this participatory transpersonal event. The autonomous self, I believe, is being dominated in service of the homonomous towards the transpersonal vision of the participatory event to establish the nation of Israel. While such a situation may lead to destruction in the service of the group, in this particular experience the divine’s intervention is direct as well as an active element in this participatory event that kept the experience on course so that the mission would be fulfilled.

The absorption of the autonomous self in the service of the homonomous was clearly manifested in an absolute order of obedience, which appeared to violate common sense and natural causality, as was the case with David and Goliath. This is obviously a specific time and circumstance in human history with direct intervention from the divine in order to fulfill the specific mission related to this event. However, as these specific circumstance were alleviated and passed, a balance between the autonomous and homonomous self was needed.

### **Cosmic/Planetary Consciousness**

The stage was now set for the third phase of human collective consciousness development. It began where Moses and the Israelites left off and was characterized by a distinct

and clear separation in order to represent the dawn of a new era and a new history. In other words, this new development required a distinctly different state of human consciousness, one that would be characterized by a universal and cosmic vision.

The battle of Badr, which took place in the Arabian Peninsula in 624 C.E., was similar to the battle of David and Goliath. However, it has a qualitatively different orientation: Muhammad and his companions used everything they had to prepare to defeat those who opposed Muhammad's message of replacing their idols with a monotheistic god. The two battles have elements in common, such as the forces of good, represented by David and Muhammad, were less equipped and fewer in number than their opponents. However, David defeated Goliath by the divine's design and intervention, whereas the idea of the divine's support was seen not in the manifested order of reality, but as represented in the Muslims' consciousness as an abstract idea that extends human action beyond its limited means and roots it in the depth of the eternal divine's care and design of an absolute universe. Muhammad's role was that of a military leader who consulted his troops to devise military (e.g., the placement of warriors) and other strategies (depriving the other side of food and water) that would ensure victory. Thus this was a careful human-designed triumph. In addition, Muhammad and his troops were not the aggressors, for the Qur'an describes it as one of self-defense.

The main feature that distinguished Badr from the one fought by the Israelites under Moses is that, in the latter case, the divine ordered Moses to establish the nation of Israel. This direct order transcended human action, from the parting of the sea to enable them to reach safety, to the defeat of Goliath and the establishment of their kingdom. In the case of Muhammad, however, the divine's presence was characterized by an abstract concept of God initially explained via a few Qur'anic verses that Muhammad claimed had been revealed to him by God. This abstract concept of the divine's presence in human life was meant to give human civilizational action its depth and extension in space and time beyond its limited place in the here and now. This was in addition to the essential position of the Qur'an itself in this experience to guide Muhammad as a leader of his young community, which represented the cornerstone of this human experience. Muhammad was a human leader guided by the divine only through the Qur'an. In fact, the Qur'an continually insists that he is human in every other aspect of his leadership.

I argue, based upon my understanding of the Qur'an that this point in time represented a transitional period between that of the Israelites and their national consciousness and that of our own time of planetary/cosmic consciousness. This stage of human experience, one led by a transmitter of the divine's guidance without any personal interpretation (except as seen in Muhammad's actions and personal example) after his death enabled the Qur'an to fulfill its role as the divine's method of guiding humanity into the cosmic/planetary state of consciousness.

The historicity of Muhammad's experience as being no more than the transmitter of the divine revelation's movement from the eternal order of reality within the divine's realm of existence and into an absolute universal and cosmic reality within human's absolute presence and experience was clearly marked by a particular event. This event was the Qur'an's reorganization shortly before Muhammad's death into its present form, which is completely different from the order in which he received it during the twenty-three year-period of its revelation. The Qur'an identifies Muhammad as God's last prophet to humanity and thus proclaims a universal message throughout its text. These numerous verses begin with "O humanity." I contend that in many respects Muhammad's experience as a transpersonal participatory experience of universal orientation represents a stepping stone towards contemporary humanity's experience in space and time from a cosmic/planetary consciousness orientation. This human experience assimilated the earlier familial and national consciousnesses, but nevertheless remained within the cosmic/planetary consciousness and Qur'anic guidance as part of future human transpersonal participatory events in the manifested realm of reality.

Ferrer (2002) argued that the participatory vision conceives transpersonal phenomena as the following:

1. Event, in contrast to intrasubjective experience;
2. Multilocal, in that they can arise in different loci, such as an individual, a relationship, a community, a collective identity, or a place; and
3. Participatory, in that they can invite the generative power and dynamism of all dimensions of human nature to interact with a spiritual power in the cocreation of spiritual worlds. (p. 117)

I would add "a sacred book" to the second characteristic for the following reason: In the case of Muhammad's human experience, as well as any extension of that experience beyond its

historicity in space and time, the Qur'an is part of the equation that represents the divine's dimension in any human experience rooted in the Islamic tradition. However, it should be bound within a cosmic/planetary consciousness and orientation. I base this assertion on the analysis provided earlier that the Qur'an needs to be understood within a cosmic/planetary consciousness that contains within its vision the familial and societal/national consciousness and orientation as seen in the cases of Adam and his spouse and Moses and his people.

If the Qur'anic claim of universality were to be valid, it must remain an element of any transpersonal participatory phenomenon that emerges from the belief system of which it forms a part. However, its hermeneutics need to start within the historicity of our own age and within the cosmic/planetary consciousness if it is to be considered part of the overall process of progression and development. Any attempt to limit the Qur'an's hermeneutics by restricting them to a national or familial orientation of human consciousness would engender a regressive process that would limit its hermeneutics to the historicity of a specific time and place. Such a development may not be suitable for our current circumstances, given the current state of affairs and collective human consciousness.

I argue that this cosmic/planetary consciousness is the a priori requirement for participating in the transpersonal phenomena and the mystery of life based on the Qur'anic vision. The divine's message, as transmitted through Muhammad, sought to liberate the consciousness of his people from the limitations imposed by the national consciousness state of collective human condition and to assimilate this state within the new parameters initiated by the cosmic/planetary state. Otherwise, there would have no need for his message and/or the Qur'an as a continuation of a tradition that started with Adam and his spouse.

This progression is an expansion from the familial consciousness to the cosmic/planetary consciousness via the national/societal consciousness. This growth and development process does not follow the path of stage development, meaning the progression from a lower and less complex to a higher and more complex level, for the older is assimilated into the modern through tradition.

Gadamer (2004) argued this point clearly:

Time is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged because it separates; it is actually the supportive ground of the course of events in which the present is rooted. Hence temporal distance is not something that must be overcome. This was, rather, the naïve assumption

of historicism, namely that we must transpose ourselves into the spirit of the age, think with its ideas and its thoughts, not with our own, and thus advance toward historical objectivity. In fact, the important thing is to recognize temporal distance as a positive and productive condition enabling understanding. It is not a yawning abyss but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which everything handed down presents itself to us. (p. 297)

This conception of development as an expansion of consciousness and an ontological process within the historicity of the human species' collective consciousness departs from Wilber (1980/1996), whose approach is that of stage development from lower to higher and more complex stages with no possibility of regression (what he called involution). It also departs from Washburn's (1988, 1994, 2003a, 2003b) conception of development as a spiral in which individuals have to revert to the pre (the dynamic ground) in order to advance to the post and unite with the ground.

The liberation aspect of transpersonal experiences and events was meant to be a cocreation process among humans, the Qur'an, and nature. Ferrer (2002) explained the nature of this process of transformation and cocreation as it occurs in nature mysticism:

The natural world can be drastically transformed and unfold with an exalted quality of depth, pregnant meaning, profound numinosity, luscious life, and sacred mystery. In the context of the participatory vision, this transfiguration of the world is not seen as a mere change in our individual experience of a pre-given world, but as the emergence of an ontological event in reality in which our consciousness creatively participates. In other words, it is not so much our experience of the world that changes, but rather our experience-and-the-world that undergoes a mutually codetermined transformation. (p. 118)

The multilocal nature of the transpersonal phenomena within the vision of the Qur'anic experience consists of individual experiences embedded in communal, societal, national, and cosmic/planetary loci. In this regard, the cosmic/planetary realm represents the overarching locus of inner experience, be it familial, communal, societal, or national. These participatory experiences are then guided by a cosmic/planetary ultimate understanding of the Qur'an as an

element within these participatory experiences and events, the nature of which is characterized by specific ways of knowing. These ways of knowing are ontological, transformative, and enacted outside the historical period of the Qur'anic revelation, but nevertheless remain within the parameters of a cosmic/planetary consciousness. Given this understanding, there can be no regression to national and familial consciousness in isolation and separate from the cosmic/planetary vision.

Ferrer (2002) explained that the transpersonal ways of knowing through participatory events can be categorized as presential, enactive, and transformative. He defined presential as knowing that occurs by the virtue of being and that is cocreated without regard for a knowing subject and a known object. Ferrer (2002) clarified enactive by stating that “participatory knowing, then, is not a mental representation of pregiven, independent spiritual objects, but an enaction, the bringing forth of a world or domain of distinctions cocreated by the different elements involved in the participatory event” (p. 123).

Arguably, the Qur'an participates in transpersonal phenomena as neither an object to be known nor as a subject with ultimate and predetermined understanding; rather, it does so as an enacting element of a transformative nature in the participatory experience of the mystery of life and living. It does this in order to recreate and transform the world, as well as our actions within it, and to be created by it within a cosmic/planetary consciousness and vision of reality of the human race at this time. Ferrer (2002) asserted, “If transpersonal phenomena can occur not only in the individual, but also in relationships, communities, collective identities, and places, then their confinement to the realm of individual inner experience must be both inadequate and erroneous” (p. 124). He has also acknowledged that “understood in terms of participatory knowing rather than of transient experiences, transpersonal events can be lived as realizations that, once learned, transform how we see ourselves and guide our actions in the world” (p. 125).

This concept does characterize Qur'anic knowledge and understanding by suggesting a priori cosmic/planetary consciousness of participation; however, it is also present in other religious traditions. McGinn (1996) argued that for Christian mystics, knowledge of God involves a profound love for God, creation, and humanity.

Ferrer (2002) denied any need for an a priori conception or vision of the participatory transpersonal event, which he understood as the “participation of an individual consciousness in a transpersonal event” (p. 126). The Qur'anic conceptualization of transpersonal experiences and

events is that which takes place within the limitless boundaries of cosmic/planetary consciousness and possibly beyond in the future in order to overcome the possibilities of confining these events within the earlier states of human consciousness (the familial and national) as a datum of human consciousness.

Ferrer (2002) trapped himself in the view that transpersonal phenomena are completely unstructured and unconstructed at every level, which means that the only authenticity it has lies within the genuine process of participation itself. To overcome this problem, he argued that this should not concern us, as most contemplative traditions are emancipatory in nature. However, Boucouvalas (2000) argued for a balance between the autonomous and homonomous self to reach an ultimate transpersonal experience at any level, be it individual, societal, and cosmic/planetary. This balance should not be considered an a priori structuring and limiting factor in the participatory transpersonal phenomenon. This balance was preserved during the battle of Badr, where the egoic state of many individual Arabs as autonomous participants was recognized, as opposed to being concealed, in the service of the group's homonomous identity, as was the case during the battle of David and Goliath (the divine intervened directly to direct this experience towards its ultimate purpose). Also, in the case of Mohammad, the divine participated through the Qur'an as it was being revealed.

Spiritual participatory events and experiences represent a substantial part of one's life and actions in the world. Ferrer (2002) stated:

Human beings are—whether they know it or not—always participating in the self-disclosure of spirit by virtue of their very existence. This participatory predicament is not only the ontological foundation of the other forms of participation, but also the epistemic anchor of spiritual knowledge claims and the moral source of responsible action. (p. 121)

Accordingly, I argue that the cosmic/planetary consciousness is a necessary element of participatory events that lead to plausible action and positive participation in the mystery, but not in the sense of an a priori epistemic conception; rather, it has a larger purpose: to serve as an element in the ontologically transformative participatory event. This conception does not deny the accessibility of familial and national consciousness to human participation in any transpersonal participatory event. However, the enactment and activation of participation at these levels of consciousness would be plausible only if this enactment were to take place within the

cosmic/planetary boundaries of consciousness, for only that would give human civilized action its depth and breadth beyond its now-and-then effect and the historicity of the action in space and time. As Ferrer (2002) stated, “Because of the dynamic nature of the mystery, as well as our historically and culturally situated condition, this knowing is never final, but always in constant evolution” (p. 169).

Ferrer (2002) also articulated another reason—the doctrinal ranking of traditions—for his objections to any a priori vision for participatory events or suggestion of characteristics of an ultimate or referent: “[O]ne of the obvious problems of approaching interreligious relations from a developmental or hierarchical perspective is the justification of criteria for the ranking of spiritual traditions, and experiences” (p. 103). This is also why he opposed Wilber’s human development model, as can be seen in his lengthy deconstruction of the latter’s conception of the non-dual ultimate. However, Ferrer offered no convincing argument by which one can resolve the problem of qualitative distinctions among traditions and/or spiritual anarchy other than his general assertion that “in spiritual matters, as in anything else, anything does not go and everything matters” (p.167). The real question, however, is how can we resolve qualitative distinctions among spiritual traditions without reverting to either a haphazardly predetermined criterion and value based one or a priori ultimate?

Ferrer (2002) characterized the problem of an a priori ultimate as follows:

Since all religions have been imagined to aim at the same spiritual end, the diversity of religious accounts of ultimate reality is not only perplexing, but also conflicting and problematic...diversity of spiritual claims is a problem only when we have previously presupposed that they are referring to a single, ready-made spiritual reality. However, if rather than resulting from the access and visionary representation of a pregiven reality, spiritual knowledge is enacted, then spiritual truths need no longer be conceived as conflicting. Divergent truth-claims are conflicting only if they intend to represent a single referent of determined features. (p. 166)

The cosmic/planetary consciousness, however, is of ontological nature and may provide a proper understanding of the Qur’an—and possibly of any other sacred spiritual tradition—not as a priori ultimate but as an element in the participatory transpersonal events whether at the individual or the societal/group level. This conception is not ready-made, in the sense of the full

exploration of an all-encompassing characterization of it as an epistemologically valid source of transpersonal knowledge, but rather as a participant in the participatory transpersonal event to provide the necessary assurances for civilized action to occur and to transform the world, as well as to be transformed by it within the direction of the earlier-defined Qur'anic perspective of growth and progress. I am not referring to an ultimate god with predefined characteristics, as is the case with Wilber's perennialism that Ferrer (2002) referred to and refuted, but to a type of consciousness that can approach the transpersonal participatory event and provide the quality assurance problematized by Ferrer without offering a proper argument or solution. Ferrer (2002) stated: "It cannot be stressed strongly enough that to reject a pre-given spiritual ultimate referent does not prevent us from making qualitative distinctions in spiritual matters" (p. 168). However, his ensuing argument provided no answer.

Within the cosmic/planetary consciousness, the characteristics of the whole are carried within the part. This is not a quantitative, materialistic, compounding relationship, but rather one of re-creation. Water is no longer a combination of hydrogen and oxygen, but rather a source of life to all plants and human beings. This is the extension within the universe that produces prosperity with peace. This is the law of regenerating and extracting life from death and death from life. This is the extension that will take human development beyond its own space and time and fulfill humanity's absolute nature as a human species.

In my attempt to answer my above-mentioned research questions, I undertook a critical review of the major transpersonal theories developed by Wilber, Washburn, and Ferrer based upon a philosophical hermeneutic reading of the Qur'an. My understanding of the Qur'an was informed by Boucouvalas's conception of the transpersonal orientation as a meta-framework of the field. I followed through by having three scholars of the Qur'an read my understanding to confirm that it is within the reach of the Qur'anic text. In the next chapter, I will discuss implications of my study to further research in the field of adult education and learning conceptualized as; a process, program, and movement.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

This inquiry was an attempt to answer my research questions; namely, how does the Qur'an inform our understanding of transpersonal adult development? How does transpersonal theory inform our understanding of the Qur'an? I positioned its significance primarily within the areas of world peace and religious tolerance. World peace and harmonious planetary living cannot be the fruits of any type of military or ideological warfare. Such realities should be the result of peace within us and with each other, as a human species, and with the planet, as reflected in a cosmic/planetary human consciousness.

The literature review provided a context for the study of transpersonal orientation in theory and practice. The section on hermeneutics offered a context in which Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics could be located within the field's historical and philosophical development.

In Chapter Four, I addressed my research questions by articulating a transpersonal perspective derived from a transpersonal reading of the Qur'an and then returning to the relevant literature to both confirm this understanding and inform the field. This process enabled me to analyze both research questions simultaneously in a complementary manner, rather than in an isolated manner that would involve addressing each one independently.

The transpersonal orientation derived from the Qur'anic perspective is grounded primarily on Boucouvalas's conceptualization of the field as a meta-framework composed of the individual, group, and planetary/cosmic. The inquiry was further informed by other major authors in the field. I concluded by adding the Qur'an as an element within the participatory transpersonal phenomena based on two qualifications that: (a) any sacred scripture can be used to study other spiritual tradition and/or religion's sacred book(s), and (b) based mainly on my reading of the Qur'an, the Qur'an proves its own relevance to human existence at any time and space outside the historicity of its revelation. To do this, I embraced its collective and complementary approach to human consciousness development. I also concluded that the Qur'an—as understood in the light of the perspective of this inquiry—has embraced and transcended every human experience mentioned within it, including the period of its own revelation, and positioned them within their own historicism in space and time in order to maintain its relevance up to the present time and beyond. By tracing the development of Islam's

sacred text vis-à-vis the collective human consciousness as an ontological element in each stage of transformation, I realized that in our present time it is the cosmic/planetary consciousness that should provide the ontological element of understanding and living the Qur'an both personally and collectively at the group and societal levels.

Growth and development were perceived to be a process of expanding from the familial and national and finally into the cosmic/planetary collective consciousness. This process was meant to include the first two human domains of consciousness, but only if they are perceived within a cosmic/planetary consciousness. In other words, neither of these domains can serve as an ultimate conception of reality within their own specific domains. These two domains are no longer stages of development of collective consciousness, but rather an assimilated part within the whole of the cosmic/planetary consciousness. They do not have an identity in and of themselves except as they serve as part of the cosmic/planetary collective consciousness and within its worldview and conception of reality. In his *System View of Man*, Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1981) stated:

A system, whether it be, an atom, a cell, a gestalt pattern, or an integrated universe of symbols, has holistic properties that are not found separately in its parts. Rather, these properties arise from the relations taken on by the parts in forming the whole. (p. xv)

I argued that this conception of the transpersonal could be used to understand any spiritual tradition (in this case Islam) within the givens of that specific tradition. This framework promises to overcome the difficulties with Ferrer's model; namely, negating any conception of an a priori referent, and also the problems of perennialism and stage development found in Washburn and Wilber's orientations. This inquiry suggests that the cosmic/planetary consciousness referent is potentially malleable enough to be accepted as an a priori domain of consciousness to any participatory transpersonal event. In addition, it may also satisfy the perennialists' contention that anything goes when an a priori referent is absent.

One could certainly ask if this conception of the transpersonal phenomenon as outlined above means that one has to locate the world within the cosmic/planetary consciousness in order to participate in transpersonal phenomena. The transpersonal participatory phenomena presented in this inquiry were characterized in one aspect as a movement to change the world and to be changed by it (Boucouvalas, 2000; Ferrer, 2002). Accordingly, I would argue that such events

cannot take place within a sub-consciousness of the prevalent collective human consciousness at a specific time and space of human existence.

I also theorized that by integrating the Qur'an—or any other sacred text—as an element in the participatory event, we can avoid the pitfalls of excluding spiritual traditions with sacred books and a priori referents from participating in the transpersonal phenomena. This would also provide for the dynamic interaction with ancient wisdom for spiritual insights, but within a cosmic/planetary consciousness as a safeguard for a peaceful planet.

The transpersonal conception of autonomous-homonomous balance at the individual, group, and cosmic levels as was presented in this study provided an ontologically grounded worldview not only to understand the Qur'an-or any other sacred text-but also to experience it. This conception of reality, I argued, departed from the traditionalist approach in reading the sacred text and may yield to experiencing it in a way which would help to bring about a state of cosmic human consciousness as a step towards this condition of human development.

My inquiry led me to the position that there may not be a hierarchy in human existence that distinguishes between soul, spirit, mind, and body. Human existence and consciousness persists in the manifested/explicit and unmanifested/implicit realities in different combinations of these elements. From this perspective, transformation of human nature from one form to another is seen as a cyclical form of continuous motion and transformation that may, under certain conditions, shrink and expand.

Human consciousness may exist without embodiment in a form separate from the body that contains it. While death may represent the body's biological death, a human being's absolute nature and existence in space and time would have to continue after that event in order for this conception of life and death as presented in the Qur'an to hold true. The absolute human reality in consciousness is equivalent to the absoluteness of the cosmos because of the unity of origin and unity of the end.

Based on my understanding, I took the position that the process of change in the cosmos is guided by principles created by a divine will, as opposed to a sudden change by divine order. Change in the universe and in social systems is seen as a natural tendency to abide by preset universal and cosmic order.

Human beings perceive the transcendental aspect of this reality in the social or natural science fields in order to give those cosmic actions their absoluteness and continuity in space and

time and its transcendental connections beyond their presence in the material world. This extension of human action in space and time integrates the spiritual with the material world, the science of the material world with the science of our social reality, and the world of matter with the world of spirit. All of this satisfies the absolute nature of human beings and the universe within which they act. Human action thus becomes universal and, in the absolute realm of reality, is not bound by biological life and existence.

Based on my understanding in this study, water is the makeup component of every living thing, and that earth and heaven were originally one and then over a long period of time split apart during the process of creation. The significance of this is the manifestation of unity of cosmic origin and also the orderly manner of creation in contrast to a sudden divine's order. This paradigm of creation describes change in the universe and in social systems as a natural tendency to abide by preset universal and cosmic rules. This process of change is guided by principles created by a divine will, as opposed to a sudden change by divine order of change. My inquiry also led me to the position that the Qur'an compares the creation of earth and the heavens to that of humans in order to make the connection in a spiritual sense, but also to establish a direct relationship of cause and effect between the natural laws of the universe and social phenomena in human societies. Moving along with this logic, I concluded that the social as well as the natural world abide by similar rules that manifest in different realms of reality, one in nature and the other in human societies. The perception of reality, which may be initiated in the realm of physical science, creates the paradigm of social phenomena. As human societies shift their perception of the world of nature and the physical world, humanity's social reality pursues a similar trajectory.

My reading of the Qur'an led me to the position that the names associated with Adam as per the story of the sacred text are the symbols of familial relationships which represented a structural change in human consciousness. The reference to the names was made in conjunction with symbolism to a complex relationship not things. I concluded that this was the starting point of a structural transformation in human collective consciousness, a transformation and departure from an individual consciousness that caused mischief and bloodshed on earth referenced clearly in the Qur'an depicting previous times preceding the Adams. My understanding was that the pre-Adam era did not have a familial human consciousness that could identify with the familial relationship symbolized by the names that the divine taught to Adam and his spouse.

There are two planes of reality, one is the cosmic reality represented by the relationship among humans and their environment as part of the cosmos. The other plane of reality is the relationship with the divine both within and outside of the cosmic relationship with other humans and the universe at large. This human reach symbolizes the inner core of a widening and expanding circle of consciousness, a movement toward realizing humanity's full potential as regards attaining a cosmic/planetary consciousness. This core is always present in the development process, for it represents the core developmental reach of the autonomous/homonous self. However, these two planes do not necessarily represent boundaries of subject/object Cartesian nature between the two realms of realities but two different overlapping manifestations, one as it relates to humans and the cosmos in the absolute realm and the other in eternal realm.

Based on my study, I was also led to the position that the space of spiritual reality is not only within the individual, but also within the space in between. It is in the relationships and in the in-between space whether among individuals, groups, nature, place and/or a sacred text. Its intra and inter nature is determined by the balance between autonomy and homonomy at every level. Within this understanding, the separation of the self and non-self is in their functionality, not in the nature of a person's awareness and consciousness. Accordingly, this position negates the hierarchical approach of qualitative differences to reality

In this study, I was led to the position that Muhammad's experience as a transpersonal participatory experience of universal orientation represents a stepping stone towards contemporary humanity's experience in space and time from a cosmic/planetary consciousness orientation and should be interpreted within this worldview. This human experience assimilated the earlier familial and national consciousnesses, the cases of Adam and his spouse and Moses and his people.

I also considered adding sacred books to the basic definition of Ferrer's (2002) articulation of transpersonal participatory events. However, I also suggested that the participation of a sacred text in these events should be bound within a cosmic/planetary consciousness and orientation. In this regard, the cosmic/planetary realm represents the overarching locus of inner experience, be it familial, communal, societal, or national. These participatory experiences are then guided by a cosmic/planetary ultimate understanding of the text as an element within these participatory experiences and events, the nature of which is characterized by specific ways of

knowing. These include all aspects of human existence body, mind and spirit. I concluded that the sacred text participates in transpersonal phenomena as neither an object to be known nor as a subject with ultimate and predetermined understanding; rather, it does so as an enacting element of a transformative nature in the participatory experience of the mystery of life and living.

The *priori* concept suggested in this reading of the text in a collective experience and understanding is cosmic/planetary consciousness of participation. This feat is done in a balance of autonomous and homonomous relationship as a safeguard for groups and societies not to truncate off. This would also represent the qualitative distinction and measure of how close a transpersonal event would lead us towards emancipation and disclosure of the mystery.

In conclusion, the transpersonal orientation may serve as a framework for peace and peaceful living at the cosmic level. Each of the many spiritual paths and traditions should serve, in its own way, as uniting elements within a collective peaceful human experience.

This inquiry perceived adult education as a program, a process, and a movement. It is intriguing for those who are active in the field to envision attaining world peace, resolving conflicts, and building civil societies worldwide as a vision for the next millennium. As adult educators struggle to position the field in a way that will enable it to meet future challenges, this vision has the potential to rejuvenate it by a new wave of scholarly research and practice anchored in the transpersonal development and learning worldview.

The movement towards a transpersonal orientation may also enrich our understanding of the nexus between adult development and learning. Adult development, when viewed from a transpersonal perspective and consciousness development, contributes to a different paradigm of learning that does not depart completely from current perspectives of adult learning. In fact, they may add a new dimension that may have been neglected or overlooked.

Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) asserted the growing importance of the spiritual dimension in adult education programs and agencies stating:

Interest in the topic is manifested in bookstore titles, continuing education courses, and solidly conservative agencies such as the National Institute of Health and the American Medical Association, both of which are investigating how spiritual practices such as meditation, yoga, and prayer can affect physical health. Spirituality has become a popular topic in even as unlikely a site as America's profit-driven corporate world. (p. 199)

Future research may involve the exploration of emerging learning-as a process-in adulthood theories based on the transpersonal perspective beyond the role of spirituality in learning as a discrete, separate, and auxiliary dimension. From a transpersonal perspective, learning, following the UNESCO conceptualization of “pillars of learning” may include; learning to do, learning to think (transpersonal knowing included), learning how to be, learning how to live together (as opposed to the clash of civilizations notion), and the more recent addition of learning how to transform self and others. Transpersonal learning engages the whole person as a multi-dimensional being of body, mind, and spirit. Although current programs in adult education seem to focus primarily on growth as acquisition of skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for career and workforce development, an emerging trend towards what Kegan, Lahey, and Fleming (2014) called “deliberately developmental organizations” (DDO) has been growing in importance and presence. The authors stated:

When we hear people talk about struggling to maintain work-life balance, our hearts sink a little. As one executive in a high-performing company we have studied explained, “If work and life are separate things—if work is what keeps you from *living*—then we’ve got a serious problem.” In our research on what we call Deliberately Developmental Organizations—or “DDOs” for short—we have identified successful organizations that regard this trade-off as a false one. What if we saw work as an essential context for personal growth? And what if employees’ continuous development were assumed to be the critical ingredient for a company’s success?...Being part of such an organization is not always easy, but the environment created by a focus on development in the workplace that is *universal* (across all ranks and functions in the organization) and *continuous* (and therefore habitual) unleashes some surprising qualities: compassion alongside tough-minded introspection and organizational solidarity that comes from collective work at self-improvement. This creates a different kind of vitality at work: a work and life integrated rather than balanced against each other. (par. 1-2)

If we view developmental trajectories as an expansion of consciousness, how might we change formal, informal, non-formal learning programs? If we see that along these paths people might attain better balance between their autonomous and homonomous self, what specific actions might we take to enhance their progress or remove barriers to it? What conditions are

needed in people, organizations, communities and society at large to enhance such development? Do societies and communities want to take this pathway? Is the focus on the transpersonal too “far out” for too many? Are there intermediate steps which we can take as adult educators that may make this progress towards the transpersonal planet possible?

Hartelius, Rothe, and Roy (2013) stated,

Interest in the whole person has resonance with the personal growth industry, which promotes cultivating a balanced life; it is also consistent with the alternative health field’s emphasis on treating the whole person. Whole-person transformation is in harmony with some popular notions of spirituality, and consideration of one’s intimate connection with the world may promote ecological sustainability. (p. 13)

The expanded orientation of the transpersonal presented in this inquiry and in other relevant studies may serve as a unifying vision for adult education combining diverse interests in the field ranging from environmental adult education (Hill & Clover, 2003) to transforming communities (Hayes & Yorks, 2007). It may also contribute to a new wave of interreligious dialogue, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding studies utilizing a perspective similar to the one presented in this inquiry which may also produce information that is relevant to adult education as a movement. Embracing the Qur’an as a resource to enrich the transpersonal human development orientation may bring to the fold a new dimension that may have been neglected or ignored in the past, which in turn would yield a better understanding of this ancient text.

This study and my personal growth and development as a result of it have been the fruits of a long and enjoyable journey of intellectual curiosity and persistence. It was initially characterized by my own awareness of the importance of “dialogue among civilizations” in contrast to the notion of “clash of civilization.” However, I attributed the dialogue to a transformational process characterized by a rational discourse of shift in worldview in self and others that may result in change in attitude and actions towards others and how we-as human societies-define otherness. I was then intrigued by the epistemology of otherness in human societies and how we come to define it within ourselves, groups, communities and the world at large. Having been introduced to the literature in transpersonal psychology and human development, I immersed myself in the field to realize then that, although the epistemological issues as they relate to the notion of otherness are of crucial importance, what was missing in this

regard is how this epistemology would be in the service of ontological change and transformation at not only individual level but also group, societal and cosmic. The transpersonal model of this study provided me with a framework which enabled me to combine the epistemological and ontological aspects of the transpersonal phenomenon at individual, group/societal, and cosmic levels to analyze one of the most problematic sacred texts of our modern time.

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