



LUND UNIVERSITY

Foreword. Charles Tart: A Noetic Prilgrim's Progress

Cardena, Etzel

Published in:
Charles T. Tart

2025

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Cardena, E. (2025). Foreword. Charles Tart: A Noetic Prilgrim's Progress. In *Charles T. Tart: Seventy Years of Exploring Consciousness and Parapsychology* (pp. 5-10). White Crow.

Total number of authors:

1

Creative Commons License:

Other

General rights

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

JEFFREY MISHLOVE



NEW
THINKING
ALLOWED
DIALOGUES

Charles T. Tart

*Seventy Years of
Exploring Consciousness
and Parapsychology*

Foreword¹



Charles Tart: A Noetic Pilgrim's Progress

**Etzel Cardeña, PhD.,
Thorsen Professor of Psychology, Lund University**

Charles Theodore Tart has been a central figure in the study of altered states of consciousness (ASC), transpersonal psychology, and parapsychology for more than half a century, shifting from mostly being a researcher and theoretician during the first decades to also becoming a pedagogic thinker later. His vast output includes books, articles, and this important series of interviews. In a previous homage, I compared him to an agile hummingbird who pollinated various fields of study that had mostly been left bereft since the towering contributions of William James, who mapped the development of a comprehensive study of the mind, a goal discarded by behaviorism. These 16 interviews by Jeffrey Mishlove represent the breadth of interests and preoccupations of Tart. They include, among other topics, the impact of the characteristics of the experimenter and the experimental setting, the unquestioning allegiances to one or another position about consciousness and reality, the relation (mostly conflictual to him) of science and religion, the differential benefits of different states of consciousness, the relevance of some of the teachings of the esoteric guru Gurdjieff, and how to initiate a meditation practice.

¹ This foreword is partly based on Cardeña (2023).

Tart and Altered States of Consciousness

A whole generation in the 60s, 70s, and 80s encountered a cornucopia of new possibilities to explore changes in consciousness, including visiting the Esalen center to take courses on human potentials, ingesting psychedelics, or starting a then-mysterious practice of meditation. The potential positive or negative outcomes of such adventures were covered, often in sensationalistic and uninformed ways, in newspaper headlines and the TV news, as well as in movies like *Altered States* (1980) by the brilliant director Ken Russell, in which Tart and others were mentioned. Academic books such as Robert Ornstein's *The Nature of Human Consciousness* (1973) and Charles Tart's epoch-making anthology *Altered States of Consciousness* (1969) became bestsellers and textbooks for courses in psychology. Ornstein's 41-chapters book (with two chapters by Tart) criticized a narrow, semi-rational view of science and consciousness, proposing instead "two modes of consciousness" (partly based on research on the two brain hemispheres) and encouraging meditation and Sufism. Tart's book reprinted various scientific articles including an all-encompassing discussion of altered state by Ludwig (1966), and papers on the hypnagogic state, dreaming, meditation, hypnosis, psychedelic drugs, and the psychophysiology of some altered states.

Although Tart's anthology has been by far his most influential book, in my view his most valuable book was *States of Consciousness*, masterfully covering the literature and presenting a system view of how to consider and induce ASC (Tart, 1975a). In my work as editor of two journals on consciousness (*Journal of Anomalous Experience and Cognition* and *Psychology of Consciousness*) and reviewer for other journals, I deplore coming across many papers about ASC that confuse concepts, disregard individual differences, and exhibit other mistakes that had been already clarified in Tart's book.

Besides the books mentioned, Tart conducted many landmark studies, among them a phenomenological study of marijuana intoxication (Tart, 1971); a proposal to create state-specific sciences, published in the bastion journal of mainstream science, *Science* (Tart, 1972); studies of out-of-body-experiences (e. g., Tart, 1998); and studies on dreaming, lucid dreaming, mindfulness, and meditation.² Particularly important

² See <https://blog.paradigm-sys.com> for a list and description of many of his works.

for me were his early studies on transpersonal experiences during deep hypnosis (e.g., Tart, 1970), which inspired my doctoral work and other studies (e. g., Cardeña, 2005; Cardeña et al., 2013).

Tart: Transpersonal Psychology, and Parapsychology

In its official definitions, Transpersonal Psychology has emphasized alterations of consciousness, particularly those in which people experience themselves as part of a larger whole, and initially prioritized empirical research, although that emphasis was lost later (Cardeña, in press). Tart was perhaps the foremost researcher of this movement, partly launching it through another important anthology, *Transpersonal Psychologies* (Tart, 1975b). Cunningham (2023) discusses what he considers Tart's six most important goals for Transpersonal Psychology:

- developing a psychology of mind and spirit
- a critical view of mainstream reductive materialist psychology and its implications,
- adopting an empirical, non-dogmatic approach to religions as spiritual psychologies,
- creating a state-specific science of extraordinary human experience
- grounded in the scientific foundation of experimental parapsychology
- and developing a psychology to assist human growth.

This list, to a large degree, provides a roadmap for the various interviews in this book. I discuss now the fifth point within the context of Tart's contributions to parapsychology (psi). A major thrust of his approach has been to empirically investigate extraordinary claims related to ASC and anomalous experiences, such as out-of-body experiences in which people experience observing from high above their bodies. He mentions in the interviews studies he carried out with two people who could regularly induce such experiences (e.g., Tart, 1998) and proposes that we have to investigate the consensual validity of such claims rather than automatically dismissing (as is wont from a "scientist" perspective) or accepting (as some experients do) them, distinguishing between anomalous experiences and events (Cardeña et al., 2014). Although not all or probably even most such experiences can offer measurable evidence,

a relevant finding is that surveys and controlled psi experiments have found a relation between experiencing alterations of consciousness and being successful in psi tasks (e.g., Cardeña & Marcusson-Clavertz, 2020).

Two other major contributions of Tart to parapsychology include his collaboration with Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff in the development of remote viewing (RV). His own striking RV example reminded me of an anecdote of my own, in which Elisabeth Targ (the late daughter of Russell Targ) led me through an associative remote viewing session to try to predict a job outcome. My imagery and related drawing matched very well the target for the desired future event, although that event did not come to pass.

Another important contribution was the application of learning theory, particularly the importance of feedback, during psi experiments. In one of the interviews, Tart describes how he invented two machines (he mentions his technological experience and know-how) to test his theory about feedback. His is still a valid proposal although I think that his complaint about other researchers in the field not investigating it further has more to do with investigators generally wanting to advance their pet theories than someone else's.

All Roads Lead to (Altering) Consciousness

At the end of the road of this foreword, I spell out a few similarities and differences in how Tart and I arrived at our interest and understanding of ASC and related issues. We share a few things: a very religious grandmother, although his cast a much larger, loving shadow on his life. Like he, I was also homebound for a couple of months because of rheumatic fever.

The background differences, though, are more noticeable. He was brought up in a U. S. household with, I surmise, not much influence from his parents, about whom he mentions very little in the interviews. From an earlier age he was interested in electronics, became a radio ham operator, and went to MIT. In contrast, I grew up in a Mexican intellectual family in which language, the humanities, and the arts were of greater interest than technology, and even as a child I was exposed to conversations between my parents on parapsychology and hypnosis (my father was a psychoanalyst who championed hypnosis).

These different backgrounds partly explain why for Tart analogies to systems and circuits pervade his early thinking about ASC, whereas

I have developed more the connections of altering consciousness, arts, and the humanities (e.g., Cardeña & Winkelman, 2011). Also, I arrived at my interest in ASC via my experiences in an experimental theater group (Cardeña, 2023), whereas his interest seems to have sprung from the pages of books.

Perhaps the biggest difference, as he makes clear in a number of the interviews, was his goal to somehow resolve the conflict he sees between science and religion. In contrast, religion was never a particular concern for me despite (although I suspect "because") the fact that I went to a Catholic school, in which I observed the obtuseness and hypocrisy of most of the priests in charge of discipline. For him, a world without spirit or the possibility of survival might make life meaningless, whereas for me, values, ethics, and the quest to improve oneself and others can be justified without recourse to them (cf. Nagel, 2013).

Yet, despite these differences, we have arrived at similar destinations, including criticizing fundamentalisms of the pro- and anti-psi stripe (e.g., Cardeña, 2011), and taking a pluralist approach to the ontology and usefulness of ASC. The latter was one of the many extraordinary insights that James arrived at much earlier (James, 1902/1958). At this crossroads of our respective life roads, I hope that Charley (as he likes to be called by his friends) will not find in this foreword that: "his words come limping back from his pupil's mouth" but that "philosophy [study of consciousness in our case] is not a tool which can be passed about like a mason's rule; it is a fire struck from the glows of minds in search of truth. Without that fire, it is nothing" (Renault, 1966, pp. 49, 99),

References

- Cardeña, E. (2005). The phenomenology of deep hypnosis: Quiescent and physically active. *International Journal of Clinical & Experimental Hypnosis*, 53(1), 37-59. Doi: 10.1080/00207140490914234
- Cardeña, E. (2011). On wolverines and epistemological totalitarianism: Guest editorial. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 25, 539-551.
- Cardeña, E. (2019). What the Taller de Investigación Teatral revealed to me. In N. Núñez, *Anthropocosmic theatre* (pp. 215-218). University of Huddersfield Press. <https://doi.org/10.5920/anthropocosmic.09>
- Cardeña, E. (in press). Altered consciousness and transpersonal psychology. In G. Hartelius (Ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of transpersonal psychology*

- Cardeña, E. (2023). A festschrift for a consciousness hummingbird: Charles T. Tart [Editorial]. *Journal of Anomalous Experience and Cognition*, 3(2), 222–227. <https://doi.org/10.31156/jaex.25346>
- Cardeña, E., Jönsson, P., Terhune, D. B., & Marcusson-Clavertz, D. (2013). The neurophenomenology of neutral hypnosis. *Cortex*, 49, 375–385. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2012.04.001>
- Cardeña, E., Lynn, S. J., & Krippner, S. (2014). *Varieties of anomalous experience*. (2nd Ed.). American Psychological Association.
- Cardeña, E., & Marcusson-Clavertz, D. (2020). Changes in state of consciousness and psi in ganzfeld and hypnosis conditions. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 84(1), 66–84. Doi: 10.30891/jopar.2020.01.07.
- Cardeña, E., & Winkelman, N. (Eds.) (2011). *Altering consciousness: Multidisciplinary perspectives*. Two volumes. Praeger.
- Cunningham, P. (2023). A transpersonal festschrift to honor Charles Tart on his 85th birthday. *Journal of Anomalous Experience and Cognition*, 3(2), 228–247. <https://doi.org/10.31156/jaex.24308>
- Ludwig, A. (1966). Altered states of consciousness. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 15(3):225–34. doi: 10.1001/archpsyc.1966.01730150001001
- Nagel, T. (2013, November 21). Ronald Dworkin: The moral quest (A review of *Ronald Dworkin*, by Stephen Guest). *The New York Review of Books*. <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2013/11/21/ronald-dworkin-moral-quest/>
- Ornstein, R. (1973). *The nature of human consciousness: A book of readings*. W. H. Freeman.
- Renault, M. (1966). *The mask of Apollo*. New English Library.
- Tart, C. T. (1969). *Altered states of consciousness: A book of readings*. John Wiley.
- Tart, C. T. (1970). Transpersonal potentialities of deep hypnosis. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 2(1), 27–40.
- Tart, C. T. (1971). *On being stoned: A psychological study of marijuana intoxication*. Science and Behavior Books.
- Tart, C. T. (1972). States of consciousness and state-specific sciences. *Science*, 176, 1203–1210.
- Tart, C. T. (1975a). *States of consciousness*. E. P. Dutton.
- Tart, C. T. (1975b). *Transpersonal psychologies: Perspectives on the mind from seven great spiritual traditions*. Harper & Row.
- Tart, C. T. (1998). Six studies of out-of-body experiences. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 7(2), 73–99.

Introduction³



Charles T. Tart

There's no question in my mind that essential science has the potential to help us understand spirituality and perhaps make it more effective. *But* (and this is a very important but), I haven't participated in these interviews simply as a scientist.

I was raised to be religious, a Lutheran. My grandmother, who was a source of unconditional love for me, took me to Sunday school. What was good enough for her was good enough for me! I believed what they taught me in Sunday school, I tried to be good (it wasn't that easy!), and at age twelve was confirmed as a church member.

One way it wasn't easy was that when I was eight, my grandmother died unexpectedly, just dropped to the sidewalk from a heart attack.

Not long after, I came down with rheumatic fever. In those days there wasn't really any good treatment for it other than bed rest and hope. Most kids who had rheumatic fever got permanent heart damage and died of heart failure sometime in their 20s. With the wisdom of hindsight, partially gained through an enormous amount of work on spiritual growth and psychological understanding work for me, I realized that my world had come to such a tragic end with my grandmother's death, that I wanted to die—of a broken heart, no less, rheumatic fever!—and go to heaven to rejoin my grandmother.

As an adult, I can see how illogical that was, and yet I have a deep respect for my earlier self who loved that much. I was intrigued by

³ This introduction is partly based on Tart (2017)