

## A Proper Sufi Beating: The Science of Sufism: final presentation 20 minutes

Introduction: I am grateful to the Science of Consciousness for accepting my application to make a small presentation here. I graduated from the UA in 1969 with a minor in psychology, having been disappointed in the behaviorism psychology that was being taught. But two years later Transpersonal psychology came to my attention in 1971 when I first took LSD in Katmandu Nepal.

I took on this study of the transpersonal by attending conferences, reading books, and composing a class on this topic which Doctor Gary Schwartz for allowed me, in the fall of 2000, to present a three unit course at the UA entitled. The Psychology of Spirituality and Religion (see [www. psychod.com](http://www.psychod.com) for details), and publishing two papers in professional journals on the topic of transpersonal psychotherapy. I studied at ASU and became a licensed clinical social worker in 1984: of the 17,000 practitioners not PhD nor MD, my license is number"0011." I am still a psychotherapist, clinical supervisor, and OD consultant, now 50 years in practice in Tucson.

1. A Short introduction to Transpersonal Psychology<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Transpersonal theory proposes there are developmental stages beyond the adult ego: experiences of connectedness with phenomena considered outside the boundaries of the ego
  - b. Can engender altruism, creativity, intuitive wisdom
  - c. Clinicians can bring mindful attention to their client, therapeutic attunement, labeled ‘ “co-presence” in transpersonal terms
    - i. therapeutic explorations<sup>2</sup>: meditation, alone or with a group; differentiating psychotic states from altered states; understanding what altered states are telling us; mystical experiences; psychedelic states
    - ii. therapeutic use of altered states of consciousness
2. ‘Transpersonal’ is a term introduced by William James in 1902, ‘The Varieties of Religious Experience’
3. Seen in the work of Carl Jung: higher states of consciousness, transcendent experiences are accessible to everyone, and cross-cultural observations included; eastern mysticism, Native American religions, etc.
4. Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, 1945
5. Abraham Maslow, self-actualization and self-transcendence
6. Stan Grof, *LSD Psychotherapy*
7. Ken Wilber book, ‘Transformations of Consciousness’ and his ‘spectrum of development’
8. R. D. Laing “What Was Therapeutic about That?” (see my paper witnessing his live work with a woman diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic, off her meds, in Phoenix in

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<sup>1</sup> Kasrow, M.C & Scotton, B.W. A Review of Transpersonal Theory and Its Application to the Practice of Psychotherapy. *The Journal of Psychotherapy Practice and Research*, 1999, Winter; 8(1): 12-23.

<sup>2</sup> <https://meridianuniversity.edu/content/what-is-transpersonal-psychology>

1984<sup>3</sup>) in the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology; an example is what is now referred to as “co-presence”

9. Charles Tart, Francis Vaughn, Seymour Boorstein, MD editing Transpersonal Psychotherapy (1980), Anthony Sutich, PhD; Roger Walsh MD & PhD; Arthur Deikman, MD
10. dealing with accessing developmental stages beyond the adult ego, fostering higher human capacities
11. Note formal inclusion in 1968 to the DSM-Four ‘religious or spiritual problem’, and roots in the deliberate use of psychedelic drugs
12. Involves a deepening one’s states of connectedness with self, community, nature, or the cosmos
13. “meditation” is a generic term for prayer or concentration in these traditions
14. Since the mid-1980’s I have invested many hours in a form of Sufi meditation called in the Sufi tradition, dhikr, which means ‘remembering God’ by the repeating of a phrase, or word, thousands of times in a row... in my own case, that prayer is ‘la illah ill-Allah,’ meaning, ‘there is no god but God.’

## SO WHAT IS SUFISM?

The earliest Sufi references to the transpersonal that I have found are in the works of Ja’far al-Sadiq (d.765), and then in the works of Al-’Ghalazi. They proposed that there were multiple interpretations of the Qur’an corresponding to the different levels of the listeners. Thus the Qu’ran lines (27:34) “When kings enter a city, they destroy it,” were rendered ‘when mystical gnosis enters the hearts of the believers, their desires and longings cease altogether, so that no place remains in their hearts for anything except God.” This material is now also referred to ‘neurotheology’<sup>4</sup>.

1. The science of Sufism (Integralworld.net)<sup>5</sup>
  - a. the inner path, the tariqua (practice or school)
  - b. the outer path is the sharia, the law, the Quran
  - c. Sufism is the mystical branch of Islam, ‘the inward dimension of Islam... ‘mysticism, the interiorization of Islamic faith and practice’<sup>6</sup>
2. The steps on the Sufi ladder
  - a. Sharia, the exoteric law, on paper or in theory, the Quran
  - b. Tariqah, esoteric law or esoteric practice

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<sup>3</sup> Clark, C. F. (2004). R. D. Laing: What was therapeutic about that? Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, Vol. 36, No. 2, 150-178.

<sup>4</sup> Sayadmansour A. Neurotheology: The relationship between brain and religion. *Iran J Neurol* 2014; 13(1): 52-5.

<sup>5</sup> Ishaq, Zakariyya. The Science of Sufism. see: <https://www.integralworld.net/ishaq2.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sufism>

- c. Marifa: intuitive knowledge [Gnosis] fruits of the practice \* a state \*
  - d. Haqiqa: Truth [Enlightenment] final destination; union with God; Reality
3. Sufism in general is reported to have emerged during the early Umayyad Caliphate (661-750 CE [Common Era], same as AD) 1300 years ago and grew as a mystical tradition in the mainstream of Sunni and Shia denominations of Islam
  4. practice involves a murshid, a guide or master, teacher of the order, usually founded in history by a recognized teacher
  5. I belong to a Sufi order in Morocco: Tariqa Boutchichiya Qadiriya on the very eastern side of Morocco; this Sufi order goes back Shaykh Abu Madyan (died 1198 CE)
  6. When I traveled to this order in July of 1999, the Sheik was Siddi Hamza; he passed away in 2017, and his replacement now is his son, Sidi Jamal; in our travels we were:
    - a. visiting the shrines of Sufi saints; learning and repeating the fundamental prayers; visiting graveyards; finally visiting the Tariqua and doing practices there
    - b. hours and hours of doing dhikr in groups at the tariqua itself, a group of large buildings housing hundreds people who come to study there
    - c. meeting for the five daily prayers
    - d. reading the Koran silently or out loud
    - e. chanting one of the 99 names of God; doing dhikr which means ‘remembrance’
    - f. a late-night event called Sama in which specific songs were sung by a few members with much talent, the rest of us singing along in some chorus that repeated
    - g. then, beginning in 2001, an annual meeting (until COVID) in America at which up to 100 members would live together for four days at a retreat center in eastern Virginia – near where most of these men and women lived on the east coast
    - h. My own language about all this: one can be in touch with the Divine through training in "**attentional stability employed in a sacred context.**"<sup>7</sup> This is the heart of the practice of dhikr

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<sup>7</sup> Mack, PhD, Beverly; Professor Emerita African and African American Studies at University of Kansas; email 12/28/23.

**Now I'll report on the event that has led me to present to this audience today.**

After the initial two week retreat in Morocco in 1999, I was traveling with a friend for a few days before coming home, when I awoke one morning in our hotel room:

First, I slowed way down in speed. I was thinking and moving and acting quite deliberately, quietly.

I began to have this very noticeable sensation of what I labeled "interiority" inside my body, the experience of being very hollow, simply empty.

It was more like emptiness without a container, in fact, but with a definitive organizing source inside that space.

The sensations were odd because they felt like really tangible space, experiential space, nothing that I'd known before.

They persisted for days after I returned from the trip, when all I could do was listen to Sufi chants around my house, no longer tolerant of the fast-paced music by the String Cheese Incident that I'd been playing before I left.

I found myself with a quiet little smile on my face, often throughout a day.

Gradually I came back to the 'speed' that is my ordinary life, which most of us would never notice. But the impact of that week of emptiness has not left me to this day.

I am told that the experience is known as "fath<sup>8</sup>," meaning 'an opening, a taste, one of the forms of direct knowledge by which Allah opens the door to the Unseen World'. It is the direct knowledge of Allah disclosing Himself to the heart, 'opening through tasting...'

In this Sufi order they refer to me as a "fakir," which means 'impoverished one', a reference to spiritual neediness<sup>9</sup>, a need for God; turns to face no direction except towards God, refuses everything that is other than God<sup>10</sup>

7. Fakir's are characterized by their reverence for the dhikr, a devotional practice of (in this case) repeating the phrase la illaha ill-Allah, over and over again, often ten thousand times in one sitting; using a tasbeeh (mala; prayer beads) to count the repetitions; the term fakir term is also used for non-Muslims, sadus, swamis, yogis; 'absolutely poor and seeing nothing but the truth of life'

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.almirajisuficentre.org.au/qamus/app/single/354>; Ali ElSenossi, Murshid F. A The Language of the Future, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fakir#:~:text=The%20Cambridge%20English%20Dictionary%20defines,%2C%20or%20a%20holy%20man%22>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn' Ata 'Allah Al-Iskandaria, The book of illumination. Translated from the Arabic by Scott A. Kugle, Fons Vitae, 2005, p, 349.q

8. Husayn ibn 'Ali, son of Ali ib Abi Talib, and grandson of Muhammad, is believed to have written a book on the subject of Tasawwuf, said to be the first book written on Sufism, but it was not allowed to be published.
9. Ibn Arabi explained Sufism and the faqir, in more details, more than 500 books on the topic; Sultan Bahoo, another Muslim saint, says 'Faqir attains eternity by dissolving himself in the oneness of Allah. When he eliminates himself from other than Allah, his soul reaches to divinity. '

So much for a brief outline on the science of Sufism, this came to be known in my own life as a "Proper Sufi Beating," after a colleague and I compared notes on the challenge of these practices in a group for some hours over some days at a time. Lots of chanting, little sleep.

At one of these retreats, we were told that we would discuss "Ya Sin," English: Oh Thou Human Being, said to be the HEART of the Koran.

As we were doing this, using the English 1980 version entitled Message of the Koran by Muhammad Asad<sup>11</sup>, it occurred to me that I might attempt to employ what I know to be transpersonal psychological references in what I was reading. This effort can be seen as an allegory, 'a representation of spiritual meaning through a concrete form'<sup>12</sup>.

So here follows Asad's English phrases in the Koran, followed by my attempt to use transpersonal understanding and terminology. I should note that my primary teacher in Morocco was pleased and posted this on our website, but when I offered it to a few of my Moroccan friends in the tariqua, they didn't respond. One, with a PhD in nuclear physics, told me that 'it made me frightened' to read what I had written, so he stopped reading it.

(here read the English, then the transpersonal version)

Line	Ya Sin Text	Transpersonal Suggestions
(3)	(oh humans) verily, thou art indeed one of God's message-bearers	truly you have within you the message of Divinity, a higher Self internally that is linked to the Transcendent
(4)	pursuing a straight way	you can pursue the practice of intentional awareness of your self and your world, mindfulness practice

<sup>11</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad\\_Asad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Asad)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/allegory>

- (5) by [virtue of] what is being bestowed from on high by the Almighty... mindfulness comes to you by Divine Grace, and by your remembering and practicing, by Grace, to become aware at this moment of what is inside and what is outside
- (6) so that thou mayest warn people... who had not been warned and who therefore are unaware so that your mindfulness informs you, alerts-warns you to this and that; one who is not mindful is unaware
- (8) ...around their necks We have put shackles... and We have set a barrier before them and... behind them, and We have enshrouded them in veils so that they cannot see you humans are conditioned, ensnackled by (and identified with) your individual personalities (nafs), your repetitive forms of thinking, feeling and behaving that bind you and blind you from being directly aware of yourself and your world
- (1) thou canst warn only him who is willing to take the reminder to heart you can warn (make aware, conscious) only if you are willing to become aware of, be witness to, your own blindness, deafness and conditioning; this increase in consciousness will move you toward more intentional actions, thoughts, decisions
- (12) We shall indeed bring the dead back to life the dead are the unaware; to begin to practice awareness by Grace is to come back to life
- (13) And set forth unto them a parable - [the story of how] the people of a township [behaved] when [Our] message-bearers came unto them this is what happens inside you when your personality ("the people") encounters information from the Transcendent manifested through your higher self or essence

- (14) We sent unto them two [apostles], and they gave the lie to both; and so We strengthened [the two] with a third the message bearers of Divinity are three: the human body, the human mind, and the human spirit (consciousness)
- (15) [the others] (the villagers) answered: "You are nothing but mortal men like ourselves... you do nothing but lie!" the ordinary human ego and personality ("the others, the villagers") challenge, reject the message of the Divine within, messages that are being generated in the body and mind, and are available by cultivating mindfulness
- (45) And when they are told, "Beware of all that lies open before you and all that is hidden from you so that you might be graced with His mercy..." [most men choose to remain deaf] no message of their Sustainer ever reaches them without their turning away from it humans are told to become aware of what is inside them and of what is outside them, their conscious doings and their unconscious motives, that they might be graced with mercy, that is, might dis-identify<sup>1</sup> from conditioned thoughts, emotions, and actions; humans are told all this but they ignore the suggestion to practice this, they remain deaf, unaware
- (55-56) those who are destined for Paradise shall today have joy in whatever they do - in happiness will they and their spouses on couches recline those who learn to practice mindfulness and the reconciliation of opposites ('their spouses') will dis-identify from their conditioning will be at peace in the present moment -- their internal opposites will relax (Jesus: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside... then will you enter [the Kingdom]"<sup>13</sup>)
- (60) did I not enjoin on you.. that you should not worship Satan - since verily, he is your open foe? [Satan, shaytan is derived from the verb shatana, signifying "he was remote [from the truth]"... thus impulses that offend against truth, reason, and the good are "satanic")<sup>14</sup>; the implication here is that the practice of mindfulness creates

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<sup>13</sup> Koester, H. and Lambdin, T. O. (1981). The gospel of Thomas (II,2). In Robinson, J. M. (Ed.), The Nag Hammadi Library (p. 121). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

<sup>14</sup> Asad, Muhammad. The Message of the Qur'an. Samanabad, Pakistan: Maktaba Jawahar ul uloom Publishers, pl 462.

in a human the capacity to become aware of impulses, thinking, behavior as they arise... and that the dis-identification (i.e. non-worship) from impulses and thoughts and emotions makes it possible to allow them to pass without acting on them (without worshipping them); one learns to struggle or dance with one's impulses rather than flee them, repress them, or follow them blindly

- (61) you should worship Me alone... this would have been a straight way      your efforts should be toward developing consciousness, toward the Cosmic Consciousness; this effort keeps you on the path
- (66) Now had it been Our will [that men should not be able to discern between right and wrong], We could surely have deprived them of their sight, so that they would stray forever from the [right] way      sight is what is to be developed, to cultivate discernment; sight means awareness, consciousness, attention, mindfulness, insight, so that one can note one is off course and can redirect oneself
- (67) And had it been Our will [that they should not be free to choose between right and wrong], We could surely have given them a different nature...      the capacity to choose is what is to be developed, to select this from that, to attend to one thing and not another
- (74) but (you) take to worshipping deities other than God, hoping to be succored by them      instead of cultivating conscious awareness and your link to the Divine, you worship wealth, security, youth, re-election, vengeance, fashion, piety, fame, enlightenment, status, jihad, power, rebirth

End with this:

*"When you arrive at the conclusion that nothing material is conscious, bizarre as this sounds, you make a tremendous breakthrough. "I am conscious" misstates the reality, which is "I am consciousness itself." In one stroke you enter a new world, one in which all of creation is*



*consciousness (as an absolute), morphing to create a universe where consciousness (in the relative sense) has a place to exist .... ." – Chopra, D and Kafatos, M. (April, 2024) Medium, "Why You Aren't Conscious and Never Have Been)."*

*Thanks again for listening: Questions? Comments?*

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# THE KORAN AND TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY: 36TH SURAH: YA SIN (O THOU HUMAN BEING)

Carlton F. "Perk" Clark, LCSW  
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# YA SIN

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# TRANSPERSONAL

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- (3) (oh humans) Consider this Qur'an full of wisdom: verily, thou art indeed one of God's message-bearers

- truly you have within you the measure of Divinity, a Higher Self internally that is linked to the Transcendent

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# YA SIN

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# TRANSPERSONAL

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- (4) pursuing a straight way

- you can pursue the practice of intentional awareness of your self and your world, mindfulness practice

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# YA SIN

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# TRANSPERSONAL

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- (5) by [virtue of] what is being bestowed from on high by the Almighty...

- mindfulness comes to you by Divine Grace, and by your remembering and practicing, by grace, to become in awe, at this moment of what is inside and what is outside

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# YA SIN

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# TRANSPERSONAL

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- (6) so that thou mayest warn people... who had not been warned and are therefore unaware

- so that your mindfulness informs you, alerts-warns you to this and that; one who is not mindful is unaware

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## YA SIN

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## TRANSPERSONAL

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- (8)...around their necks We have put shackles... and We have set a barrier before them and... behind them, and We have enshrouded them in veils so that they cannot see
- you humans are conditioned, ensnackled by (and identified with) your individual personalities (nafs), your repetitive forms of thinking, feeling and behaving that bind you and blind you from being directly aware of yourself and your world

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# YA SIN

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# TRANSPERSONAL

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- (11) thou canst warn only him who is willing to take the reminder to heart

- you can warn (make aware, conscious) only if you are willing to become aware of, be witness to, your own blindness, deafness and conditioning; this increase in consciousness will move you toward more intentional actions, thoughts, decisions



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# YA SIN

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# TRANSPERSONAL

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- (12) We shall indeed bring the dead back to life

- the dead are the unaware; to begin to practice awareness by Grace is to come back to life

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## YA SIN

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## TRANSPERSONAL

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- (13) And set forth unto them a parable - [the story of how] the people of a township [behaved] when [Our] message-bearers came unto them

- this is what happens inside you when your personality (“the people”) encounters information from the Transcendent manifested through your higher self or essence

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## YA SIN

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## TRANSPERSONAL

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- 14) We sent unto them two [apostles], and they gave the lie to both; and so We strengthened [the two] with a third

- the message bearers of Divinity are three: the human body, the human mind, and the human spirit (consciousness)

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# YA SIN

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# TRANSPERSONAL

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- (15) [the others] (the villagers) answered:  
“You are nothing but mortal men like ourselves... you do nothing but lie!”
- the ordinary human ego and personality (“the others, the villagers”) challenge, reject the message of the Divine within, messages that are being generated in the body and mind, and are available by cultivating mindfulness

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## YA SIN

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- (45) And when they are told, “Beware of all that lies open before you and all that is hidden from you so that you might be graced with His mercy...” [most men choose to remain deaf] no message of their Sustainer ever reaches them without their turning away from it

## TRANSPERSONAL

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- humans are told to become aware of what is inside them and of what is outside them, their conscious doings and their unconscious motives, that they might be graced with mercy, that is, might dis-identify from conditioned thoughts, emotions, and actions; humans are told all this but they ignore the suggestion to practice this, they remain deaf, unaware

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## YA SIN

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- (55-56) those who are destined for Paradise shall today have joy in whatever they do - in happiness will they and their spouses on couches recline

## TRANSPERSONAL

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- those who learn to practice mindfulness and the reconciliation of opposites ('their spouses') will dis-identify from their conditioning, will be at peace in the present moment -- their internal opposites will relax (Jesus: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside... then will you enter [the Kingdom]")

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# YA SIN

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# TRANSPERSONAL

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- (60) did I not enjoin on you.. that you should not worship Satan - since verily, he is your open foe?

- [Satan, shaytan is derived from the verb shatana, signifying “he was remote (from the truth)]”... thus impulses that offend against truth, reason, and the good are “satanic”); the implication here is that the practice of mindfulness creates in a human the capacity to become aware of impulses, thinking, behavior as they arise... and that the dis-identification (i.e. non-worship) from impulses and thoughts and emotions makes it possible to allow them to pass without acting on them (without worshipping them); one learns to struggle or dance with one’s impulses rather than flee them, repress them, or follow them blindly

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# TRANSPERSONAL

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## YA SIN

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## TRANSPERSONAL

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- (66) Now had it been Our will [that men should not be able to discern between right and wrong], We could surely have deprived them of their sight, so that they would stray forever from the [right] way

- sight is what is to be developed, to cultivate discernment; sight means awareness, consciousness, attention, mindfulness, insight, so that one can note one is off course and can redirect oneself

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## YA SIN

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## TRANSPERSONAL

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- (67) And had it been Our will [that they should not be free to choose between right and wrong], We could surely have given them a different nature....
- the capacity to choose is what is to be developed, to select this from that, to attend to one thing and not another

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## YA SIN

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## TRANSPERSONAL

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- (74)but (you) take to worshipping deities other than God, hoping to be succored by them

- instead of cultivating conscious awareness and your link to the Divine, you worship wealth, security, youth, re-election, vengeance, fashion, piety, fame, enlightenment, status, jihad, power, rebirth

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# YA SIN

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# TRANSPERSONAL

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- “I am conscious” misstates the reality, which is “I am consciousness itself.” In one stroke you enter a new world, one in which all of creation is consciousness (as an absolute), morphing to create a universe where consciousness (in the relative sense) has a place to exist .... .”
- – Chopra, D and Kafatos, M. (April, 2024) Medium, “Why You Aren’t Conscious and Never Have Been).”

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# YA SIN AND TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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- Science of Consciousness Conference  
University of Arizona
- Department of Psychology
- Tucson, AZ - April, 2024