

The Unfolding Self: Varieties of Transformative Experience

By Ralph Metzner

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A classic and perennially relevant book, written by one of the world's foremost authorities in the field, The Unfolding Self Varieties of Transformative Experience Back to Titles The Unfolding Self examines in detail the transformations which an individual undergoes in the process of their expansion of consciousness. Referencing ancient and modern cultures from around the world, Dr. Metzner accomplishes what only a great teacher can do; conveying subtle concepts and fascinating breadth through an engrossing tapestry of myth, allegory, cross-references and historical context. Drawing upon 50 years as a pioneer in the study of consciousness, beginning with his triune collaborations with Dr.'s Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert at Harvard University in the early 1960's, Dr. Metzner brings unique experience and sagacity to this most important of inquiries. Now required reading in a number of progressive psychology courses, The Unfolding Self promises to provide its reader with valuable tools to become "wise, impartial judges" in their process of transformation into a more integrated and fulfilled person.

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Editorial Review

Review
Rich in folklore and psychological insight, The Unfolding Self explores the obvious meanings and hidden meanings of those central metaphorical ideas we use to describe our most profound spiritual metamorphoses: stepping from darkness into light, for example, and the image of being set free from inner captivity, of dying and rebirth, of being cleansed in the heat of a purifying fire. The restored chapters treat the metaphors of integrating the inner wild animal, and unfolding the Tree of Life.

"The book is really about the idea of psycho-spiritual transformation," Metzner summarizes, "and the way people experience it according to the classical traditions. The new chapters are the kind of ecological themes that have become much more central a part of my focus in the time since the book was written." -- *By David Templeton, Sonoma County Independent*

"... describes the universal metaphors for transformation that one can encounter in a spiritual journey." -- *Angeles Arrien, Ph.D., author of The Fourfold Way and Signs of*

"For years I've followed a principle: Read anything Ralph Metzner writes. The Unfolding Self confirms that I am still correct. This book is a valuable guide to the farthest reaches of consciousness."-Larry Dossey, M.D., author of Prayer Is Good Medicine -- *Larry Dossey, M.D., author of Prayer Is Good Medicine*

"For years I've followed a principle: Read anything Ralph Metzner writes. The Unfolding Self confirms that I'm still correct. This book is a valuable guide to the farthest reaches of consciousness." -- *Larry Dossey, M.D., author of Prayer is Good Medicine*

"Genuine breadth of vision in this revelatory book restores magic and depth to a subject too often reduced to banality and unreality by self-improvement gurus. ...Harvest the riches from a lifetime of intrepid and discerning spiritual research. Drawing upon an enormous store of works, the author provides a thorough, scholarly and vivid description of images and experiences." -- *Publishers Weekly*

"Myths, legends and magic sparkle in this coherent work that describes the various avenues of the heroic journey to awareness." -- *Independent Publisher*

"This book is a treasure house of ancient and modern wisdom offering a wealth of stories and metaphors that nourish the soul. Metzner's breadth of knowledge and rare gift for insight make this book an extraordinary contribution to our understanding of inner realities." -- *Frances Vaughan, Ph.D., author of Shadows of the Sacred*

Mapping Out Life's Terrain: An Interview with Ralph Metzner

Sandra Sarr: In your book, The Unfolding Self, you present 12 universal metaphors for self transformation. How did you come to recognize these metaphors and that they would be useful to people in times of change?

Ralph Metzner: It came to me that there is a universality to the human experience that spans culture, religion, and time. As a therapist and a teacher I heard people--not only philosophers, saints, swamis or Zen masters, but ordinary people, too--describe their experiences using the same metaphors and language as others who

had gone through similar experiences. Based on what I was hearing, there seemed to be universal structures that put words to experiences that otherwise would be very hard to name. I began to compare how different people have mapped out life's terrain.

SS: Why does personal transformation so often involve a spiritual component?

RM: Because persons are spiritual beings. If you don't involve a spiritual component, you're leaving something out. It would be analogous to leaving out the body when approaching transformation. We are body-mind-soul-spirit. So if you are involved in transformation you have to talk about all aspects of the human experience. This is what I try to do in my work.

SS: Does the self unfold spontaneously or must one invoke will and intention?

RM: Some patterns of transformation seem to happen by themselves and others are the result of disciplined efforts and intention. Both happen. The kind of deep psychospiritual transformation of self that I talk about in the book doesn't happen casually. There seems to be a law of inertia in psychology just like there is in physics. The law of inertia says do everything the same, business as usual, just keep habitual patterns going. But people do have spontaneous awakening experiences and spontaneous mystical revelations. There may be a trigger like falling in love or having somebody die or taking a drug or watching a sunset or listening to a piece of music.

SS: The spontaneous experience suddenly changes the way people see things?

RM: It suddenly can change everything. Evelyn Underhill, who wrote a lot of books on mysticism, said these spontaneous experiences do happen, but most often they occur in people who have been doing a lot of preparation over time. So it's really both. Transformation can happen to us in dreams or in waking life. Freud said dreams are the royal road to the unconscious. Actually I think he should have said the dreams are the commoners' road to the unconscious because everybody can go. You don't have to be a king. Everybody has dreams. Everybody can have a mystical experience of the most profound sort. And it does happen. -- *By Sandra Sarr, The Spire, May 1998*

Ralph Metzner, psychotherapist, academic, seeker and author of six books, shares his lifetime of research and experienced realizations in The Unfolding Self. The title says it all; the transformational aspects from various cultures is explained and brought alive with Metzner's even handed and thoughtful writing. He describes the unfolding of the self from the symbolic to the real. Myths, legends and magic sparkle in this coherent work that describes the various avenues of the heroic journey to awareness. In the chapter "Captivity to Liberation" he writes, "We must realize that we are in a trap or a labyrinth; that our character and body are armored and constricted; that there are knots and nets in various areas of our consciousness and our life. If I don't perceive my imprisonment, my boundedness and limitation, there is really no motivation for change." He writes of the reward waiting, when we are motivated to change, "When, through the process and practice of transformation, we no longer experience ourselves as victims of our fate, we can become masters of our destiny." In the end, Metzner reveals the unity of myths, beliefs and traditions characteristic of the ultimate transformation, which is wholeness and connectedness to all things. He has explained the journey and shown us the signposts. All we have to do is pack! -- *From Independent Publisher*

From the Publisher
Ralph Metzner long a distinguished leader in the study of the transformation of consciousness provides a brilliant cross cultural exploration of the powers of metaphor for characterizing and stimulating psycho-spiritual transformative experiences. -Michael Harner Ph.D. New School for Social Research Ralph Metzner explores the varieties of religious experience through tpsychodynamic investigation of imagery. I found his

book intriguing informative and at times illuminating

From the Back Cover
In The Unfolding Self Dr. Ralph Metzner unveils the dynamics and archetypes of transformative experience-offering seekers reliable guidance along their own inner path. No comparable psychology of spirituality exists that draws from such a rich lifework of scholarship, experiment, and spiritual practice. Drawing from multiple disciplines and ranging across the world's cultures, Dr. Metzner goes beyond his roots in transpersonal psychology to uncover universal structures of spiritual transformation. Readers who immerse themselves in these masterful descriptions can catalyze their own process of evolution.

Users Review

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Jack Evans:

The book The Unfolding Self: Varieties of Transformative Experience can give more knowledge and also the precise product information about everything you want. So why must we leave the great thing like a book The Unfolding Self: Varieties of Transformative Experience? A few of you have a different opinion about guide. But one aim this book can give many info for us. It is absolutely appropriate. Right now, try to closer with the book. Knowledge or facts that you take for that, you can give for each other; you can share all of these. Book The Unfolding Self: Varieties of Transformative Experience has simple shape however, you know: it has great and massive function for you. You can appearance the enormous world by start and read a book. So it is very wonderful.

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Derrick Tompkins:

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Robert Bryant:

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