

TRANSCENDING WITHOUT TRANSCENDENCE: AN INQUIRY INTO THE SOLITARY AND SPIRITUAL LIBERATION WITHOUT EXTERNAL INFLUENCE.

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Abstract

This research utilizes the hermeneutic method to inquire into the concept of transcending without transcendence, focusing on the possibility of solitary and spiritual liberation without external influences. The study aims to explore the anthropocentric quality inherent in this notion and examine its implications for personal growth and understanding. The objectives of this research are to understand the concept of transcendence and its association with spiritual liberation, investigate the potential for solitary transcendence independent of external influences, and analyze the findings to provide recommendations for individuals seeking spiritual liberation without transcendence. Through an in-depth exploration of philosophical, spiritual, and psychological perspectives, this research uncovers the paradoxical nature of transcending without transcendence. The findings reveal that solitary transcendence challenges traditional notions by emphasizing the individual's capacity for spiritual growth and transformation without reliance on external sources. It highlights the significance of introspection, self-reliance, and personal spiritual experiences in the pursuit of liberation. The research recommends individuals interested in solitary and spiritual liberation without external influence to engage in practices such as self-reflection, meditation, and contemplation. It encourages the cultivation of self-awareness and a deep exploration of personal beliefs, values, and experiences. The study also emphasizes the importance of integrating solitude with a sense of connection to others and the broader world suggesting the need for an ongoing dialogue and exploration of solitary transcendence within spiritual communities and academic circles. It calls for the consideration and recognition of diverse paths to spiritual liberation beyond traditional transcendent frameworks. The findings encourage individuals to explore the potential of solitary transcendence, while acknowledging the importance of balanced perspectives and the recognition of the interconnectedness of all beings.

Keywords: Transcendence, exploration, solitary, interconnectedness, spiritual, liberation

Introduction

Transcending without transcendence is a concept that challenges traditional understandings of spiritual liberation by exploring the possibility of achieving profound personal growth and transformation without ascending to higher realms or states of being. This inquiry delves into the paradoxical nature of solitary transcendence and its potential to facilitate spiritual liberation without external influences. Drawing upon the hermeneutic method, this research aims to explore the anthropocentric quality inherent in transcending without transcendence and examine its implications for individuals seeking spiritual liberation.

Transcendence, in the context of spirituality and philosophy, has long been associated with the notion of surpassing ordinary human experience and attaining higher levels of consciousness or existence. Historically, the concept of transcendence has been deeply intertwined with various cultural and religious traditions. It often implies a departure from the limitations of the self and the mundane world, leading to a union with the divine, cosmic, or ultimate reality, (Bellah, 1970). However, the idea of transcending without transcendence challenges this traditional understanding by proposing an alternative path to spiritual liberation. At its core, transcending without transcendence questions the assumption that external influences, such as religious practices, gurus, or rituals, are necessary for spiritual growth and transformation. It suggests that there might be an inherent capacity within individuals to embark on a solitary path towards liberation, independent of traditional transcendent frameworks. This notion raises intriguing questions about the nature of personal spiritual experiences and the potential for self-reliance in the pursuit of spiritual growth, (Galtung, 1999).

Transcending without transcendence emphasizes the human ability for introspection, self-realization, and self-transcendence, which makes the anthropocentric nature of this idea clear. It recognizes the importance of the person's individualized experiences, beliefs, and values as crucial elements of the

spiritual journey. Transcending without Transcendence rejects the notion that obtaining spiritual emancipation requires the support of outside authorities or prescribed practices by focusing on the human perspective. The concept of solitary transcendence, however, also raises concerns regarding its viability and possible restrictions. Can individuals truly achieve spiritual growth and transformation without any external influences or guidance? Is it possible to embark on a solitary path towards liberation while still maintaining a sense of connection to others and the broader world? These questions serve as starting points for this research, which aims to explore the paradoxical nature of transcending without transcendence and shed light on the possibilities and challenges of such a path. Through the hermeneutic method, this research will engage in a comprehensive examination of philosophical, spiritual, and psychological perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of transcending without transcendence. By analyzing texts, theories, and personal narratives, we will unravel the complexities surrounding solitary transcendence and its potential for facilitating spiritual liberation. This inquiry ultimately seeks to contribute to the discourse on spiritual growth and understanding by exploring alternative paths that challenge traditional notions of transcendence.

In the following sub-sections, we will delve into the definitions of transcendence and non-transcendent practices, examine the anthropocentric quality of transcending without transcendence, and explore the potential implications and recommendations for individuals seeking spiritual liberation without external influence. Through this research, we aim to shed light on the multifaceted nature of spiritual experiences and open avenues for further contemplation and inquiry.

Historical Perspectives on Transcendence and Spiritual Liberation

To "transcend" is to move past one's current situation and its constraints. The Latin phrase "transcendere," which means "to ascend, to elevate oneself above, to scale, pass, or exceed," is where transcendence originates. The Anthropos, or man, is at the centre of everything, and since the beginning of time, man has been driven to advance beyond his current situation. Man is referred to as insatiable because of this. He keeps working because he is unhappy with his current situation. Until the day of his death, man will continue to push himself. Transcendence has been viewed historically from the majority of religious-cultural backgrounds (Asian, Western, and African) as a movement, an ascent from the matter of the physical to the matter of the spiritual. The early man; in the middle *palaeolithic* period, believed to have entered a transcendent state, in which they could experience other worlds, through music, singing and dancing. In this state of transcendence, there is a merging of the self with others (Tarr, et al., 2004). Those who were believed to have achieved transcendence were the Shamans. These Shamans, were believed to have special powers of healing, communion with the spirits, in such a way that they could tell the future. Asia, with its ancient spiritual traditions, offers profound insights into transcendence (transcendence is closely tied with spiritual enlightenment). The concept is deeply rooted in religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism.

Therefore, in Hinduism, when a person achieves *moksha*, which stands for absolute emancipation from the cycle of birth and death, they have transcended. It is the acceptance of one's own inherent divinity and the release of the soul from the constraints imposed by the body. The *Upanishads*, ancient Hindu writings, stress that realising one's identity and achieving unity with the divine (the Brahman), surpassing the bounds of the ego-bound self, are the prerequisites for ultimate transcendence. (1986; Vivekananda). The Bhagavad Gita talks about the practice of meditation (Dhyana Yoga) and the path of selfless action (Karma Yoga) as ways to go past the boundaries of the ego-bound self. In Buddhism similarly, transcendence has to do with achieving *Enlightenment or Nirvana*. According to the teachings of Gautama Buddha, individuals can transcend suffering and attain liberation by extinguishing desire and attachment. Transcendence in Buddhism involves transcending the illusions of self and gaining insight into the true nature of reality. The teachings of Gautama Buddha emphasize transcending desires and attachments to attain liberation from suffering. The Noble Eightfold Path, comprising practices such as

right understanding, mindfulness, and meditation, provides a framework for achieving transcendence (Sangharakshita, 1990). In Taoism, transcendence is about aligning with the natural flow of the Tao, the underlying cosmic principle. Lao Tzu, in the Tao Te Ching, exhorts individuals to embrace wu-wei (non-action) and transcend the ego-driven desires to harmonize with the Tao (Lao Tzu, 1993). Taoist transcendence involves letting go of attachments and finding unity with the greater cosmic order. Transcendence, in this framework, involves living in harmony with nature and cultivating a state of effortless flow.

In the Western cultures, shaped by Jewish-Christian traditions, have their own conceptions of transcendence. In Christianity, transcendence has to do with the belief in an all-powerful, all-knowing and everywhere-present being; who is perhaps called; “God” in Christian understanding. This being is a powerful spirit, who exists beyond the material world. According to Christian teaching, one can transcend themselves and achieve oneness with the divine being (God) by having faith. Therefore, attempting to communicate with, relate to, and eventually unite with God is transcendence in the Christian faith. Christianity says that people can achieve spiritual emancipation and eternal life by having faith in God and accepting Christ as their Saviour. People can escape the confines of the body and discover a method to establish a connection with God, all thanks to the belief in transcendence. (1265–1274, Aquinas, p. 32).

In furtherance of this notion but not limited to religion, Plato presents transcendence as the soul breaking away from the shackles of the body and attaining truth in the world of forms. According to Plato, true knowledge lies in transcending the world of appearances and accessing the eternal and unchanging realm of Forms. (Plato, 380 BCE,). For Immanuel Kant, transcendence is a movement beyond the confines of sensory experience to access universal truths through reason. People can transcend the boundaries and restrictions of sensory knowledge by actively seeking for transcendent knowledge. (1781, p. 389). On the other hand, Nietzsche (1886, p. 20) advocates the notion of immanent transcendence while criticising conventional ideas of transcendence. He contends that people may overcome social constraints and embrace their own special power and potential. The primary themes of Nietzsche's notion of transcendence are self-overcoming and the affirmation of life's inevitable struggles.

In Africa, there are so many traditions and belief systems, each of them, offering its own various perspectives on transcendence. Traditional African religions emphasize the interconnectedness of humans, ancestors, and deities. In Yoruba cosmology, for instance, transcendence involves establishing a connection with the *Orishas* (deities) through rituals and offerings and communing with the divine, individuals can transcend the material and seek guidance and blessings from the spiritual realm, (Parrinder, 1969, p. 72). Transcendence in Bantu-African thought, involves recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings and embracing a collective ideas beyond individual ego and selfishness. It therefore, emphasizes interconnectedness, communal harmony, and the recognition of the inherent dignity of all individuals. Transcendence, here, involves transcending individualistic ego-centered perspectives and embracing community peace through forgiveness. (Tutu, 1999).

The many cultures under investigation show that transcendence revolves on the spiritual realm and that transcendental frameworks depend on extra-religious practices. For instance, Hinduism, as seen in Vivekananda's ideas, practices a variety of rituals, meditation, yoga, study of sacred books, and devotion to moral and ethical standards. These extraneous factors act as cues for spiritual discipline and to foster conditions favourable to transcendence. Buddhism, on the other hand, places an emphasis on personal initiative and firsthand encounters. While meditation, mindfulness, and observance of ethical precepts are considered important, they are seen as means to develop awareness and insight rather than as ends in themselves. The ultimate goal of practitioners is to independently realize the essence of reality and become enlightened. A closer examination of Taoism reveals that it also promotes people to follow the Tao's natural flow and places a strong emphasis on inner development and harmony with nature. Taoism emphasizes the need for people to be spontaneous and live in harmony with the cycle of life. While it

does incorporate some practices like meditation, breathing exercises, and physical disciplines like Tai Chi. Simply put, internal transformation is prioritized over rigorous exterior routines.

Christianity mostly relies on religious doctrines, teachings and dogmas as means to reach transcendence. These may include; prayer, contemplation, and participation in sacraments, penance and observance religious rituals. The mystics often emphasize the importance of surrendering the ego and cultivating a deep relationship with God through these practices (Underhill, 1911, p. 65). In Platonic philosophy, the method for achieving transcendence is based on philosophical inquiry and having intellectual dialogues. While external teachings and dialogues play a role in guiding individuals towards transcendence, there is strong emphasis on engaging in intellectual dialogues, questioning assumptions, and exploring the realm of pure knowledge. In the wisdom of Mbiti, African traditional religions typically involve external practices and rituals that serve as a means to establish a connection with the divine or ancestral spirits. These may include offerings, ceremonies, divination, and communal rituals. These external practices are seen as essential in engaging with the spiritual realm and seeking transcendence.

While according to some of these religions and cultures, achieving transcendence is based on some kind of spiritual help, for others, direct experiences and individual efforts are required. What forms the basis of this topic, is that man, as an individual is the measure if all things, and that with or without spiritual help, he should be able to transcend.

Defining Transcending Without Transcendence

Initially, the idea of transcending without transcendence may appear counterintuitive because transcendence often entails surpassing constraints, frequently in order to achieve a higher state of being or level of understanding. The typical idea of "transcending without transcendence," which questions conventional notions about transcendence and the requirement for having a precise endpoint or reference point for transcendence, exists in some philosophies, though. It implies that one can transcend without purposefully aiming for or already having attained a certain level of being. Instead, it implies that transcendence occurs when a person overcomes a certain problem or goal, rather than when they inevitably attain a pre-defined state of being. It also entails transcending restrictions or boundaries without directly referring to or going via conventional frameworks or techniques for transcendence. It promotes the idea that since man is the standard by which all things are measured, he can transcend constraints without having to follow spiritual norms. Man could employ approaches such as cognitive behavioural therapy, transformative therapies, or self-improvement routines that seek to progress beyond constraints and towards higher levels of awareness or being.

The idea of "transcending without transcendence" has resonance in Eastern philosophy, particularly in Buddhism, which places a strong emphasis on direct individual experience and awareness in the present (being in the now). The idea that transcendence can be attained by appreciating the beauty of the present moment and putting an end to the various chatter that continues to occupy the mind (pains of an unsatisfactory past and the unsettling fear of what the future might hold) is presented in the influential work of (Eckhart, 1997, p. 25). In this situation, transcending without transcendence denotes a preference for the method above the result. It involves letting go of attachments to future results or external goals and immersing oneself fully in the present experience. By doing so, individuals can access a state of transcendence, free from the confines of ego-driven desires and the limitations of past and future thinking.

Some existentialist strands also relate to this idea. Existentialists like Sartre (1943, p. 32) emphasize the value of individual agency and accountability in forging meaningful identities and overcoming constraints. Accordingly, "transcending without transcendence" could be interpreted using Satre's existential philosophy as people surpassing themselves and rising above their physical bounds in their own unique ways to decide who they are and what they want (achieving their essence) independent of spiritual or religious influences. This idea is also present in Friedrich Nietzsche's art. He suggests avoiding religious

regulations since they weaken "man's will to power" and make him sluggish. His work emphasizes Protagoras that man is the measure of all things and therefore likens the state of transcendence as becoming one with oneself and thus knows oneself; one who transcends the limitations of conventional morality and societal norms. One who has overcome the influence of herd mentality and are no longer constrained by the concepts of good and evil as dictated by others. One who creates their own values and live in accordance with their individual will and self-affirmation. One who embraces life's complexities, struggles, and contradictions, finding joy in the full affirmation of existence and living authentically in the present world. (Nietzsche, 1884).

The idea of "transcending without transcendence" has several implications for spiritual liberation, such as the freedom to let go of rigid views of what spiritual liberation looks like or what happens when it is attained in favour of focusing solely on the process of transcendence, allowing for a more fluid method of transcending. It also emphasizes living in the present, which enables people to concentrate on the here and now rather than on the past or the future. After letting go of their former attachments, people might discover happiness and freedom in the present rather than looking forward to it. The concept also encourages for individuals to focus on personal growth and inner self. One can choose work more on himself, through personal evaluation; which is evident for spiritual liberation so that they can take charge and control of their transcendence journey. In order to build a sense of self-esteem, confidence, and empowerment, it promotes people realizing that their personal liberation is accomplished based on the decisions they make. In addition, it promotes for people to view their Transcendence journey as a process of self-discovery rather than a goal to be attained. Finally, it attempts to unravel all forms of self-discovery. Therefore, it encourages people to discover their true self, go inside of themselves, and learn more about their values and purpose. The emphasis on self-discovery enables people to develop a more comprehensive and integrated strategy for spiritual emancipation.

By putting more emphasis on the process than a set objective or external reference point, the idea of transcending without transcendence challenges accepted ideas of transcendence. People can encounter a kind of transcendence that is inherent in the act of going beyond boundaries by living fully in the now, letting go of attachments, and accepting personal responsibility. This understanding incorporates ideas from existentialism, various Eastern philosophies, and mindfulness techniques. Despite the counterintuitive appearance of the idea, it offers a significant viewpoint on development as a person, mindfulness, and the search for inner freedom. A deeper sense of authenticity, presence, and purpose in life can be developed by transcending without the need for a predetermined destination. The underlying concepts, objectives, and methodology of traditional transcendence frameworks and non-transcendent approaches to spiritual development are different. It has its roots in a number of theological and philosophical traditions and places a great emphasis on things that go above and beyond ordinary human existence and constraints in an effort to achieve a better state of being, a closer relationship with God, or the understanding of ultimate truths. The search for moksha in Hinduism or the union with God in Christian mysticism is two examples. While the non-transcendent path to spiritual liberation places a greater emphasis on current spiritual practices such inner change, self-realization, and personal development. Instead of attempting to move beyond the regular components of human life, these perspectives place an emphasis on finding fulfilment within them. Traditional frameworks often involve specific religious or spiritual practices and rituals, which are believed to help in the transcendence process. These practices may include meditation, prayer, devotional acts, asceticism, or adherence to ethical principles. The methodologies are most times structured and prescribed within the context of a particular tradition or belief system. While non-transcendent approaches may encompass a wide range of practices, methodologies, and disciplines. These may include various forms of self-inquiry, mindfulness, contemplative practices, psychotherapy, creative expression, or personal development techniques. There is no specific method, to achieve transcendence; methods are created by individuals, tailor-made to fit their style. (Korac, 2002).

The value of the present moment may be acknowledged by traditional frameworks, but they frequently place more emphasis on something larger and higher than what is on earth. While non-transcendent approaches frequently place a significant emphasis on embracing and finding significance in the present moment, transcendent approaches emphasize emancipation from the constraints of the present life and the achievement of a higher state of being or connection with the divine. They emphasize the value of mindfulness, self-awareness, and being totally present in the moment. Without merely attempting to transcend it, the emphasis is on developing a better knowledge and appreciation of the present experience.

We may summarize with (Von, 2010), that traditional transcendence frameworks and non-transcendent approaches to spiritual growth differ in their underlying principles, goals, methods, and emphasis. Traditional frameworks tend to emphasize a specific transcendent goal, external practices, and the existence of a higher reality, while non-transcendent approaches prioritize personal growth, self-discovery, and inner transformation within the present realm of everyday existence.

Anthropocentric Nature of Transcending Without Transcendence

Solitary transcendence is an enigmatic and profound phenomenon. It offers individuals a means to transcend the limitations of their everyday existence, seeking a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. However, in transcendence lies an inherent anthropocentric quality that cannot be overlooked. Here we will look at the intricate relationship between solitary transcendence, focusing on the role of human subjectivity and personal experience in shaping one's transcendental journey, (Dahlberg, 2007). Before examining the anthropocentric quality, of transcending without transcendence, it is essential to comprehend the concept of solitary transcendence. In the context of solitary transcendence, the term "transcend" typically refers to going beyond one's ordinary state of consciousness or the limitations of the ego-self. It involves a deeper interconnection with the self, allowing individuals to better understand themselves or experience a sense of connection with something greater than themselves. While as already stated, the term "transcendence", traditionally implies a movement towards a higher or spiritual realm, it is important to note that solitary transcendence does not necessarily require a belief in or experience of a separate metaphysical reality. Instead, it can involve a transformation in one's subjective consciousness, to lead to a change in one's perspective and the world.

In this sense, solitary transcendence can be seen as a process of transcending certain mental or emotional limitations mainly by introspection, meditation and through other personal or independent means. It emphasizes the individual's capacity to go beyond their ordinary experiences, thought patterns, or self-identifications, leading to personal growth and self-discovery. Therefore, within the framework of solitary transcendence, it is possible to transcend aspects of one's being or consciousness without necessarily involving the traditional concept of transcendence. The focus is on the transformative journey of the individual rather than adherence to specific metaphysical beliefs or experiences. However, one could be influenced by external, metaphysical frameworks in one's transcendence journey in the notion of solitary transcendence, (Vaughan, 2002). Due to their same basic premise of transcending without any awareness of conventional transcendence procedures, the terms "transcending without transcendence" and "solitary transcendence" are frequently used interchangeably. But to be clear, the difference between "transcending without transcendence" and solitary transcendence is in their context and emphasis. Solitary transcendence emphasizes the necessity to transcend through introspection and meditation, whereas "transcending without transcendence" emphasizes the idea of transcending without the influence of external and traditional frameworks. While engaging in solitary transcendence, one can be affected by external and religious practices, but they wouldn't be adhered to strictly. Instead, he would create his own transcendental path based on those that had affected him. (We would see an example under the subtopic; personal life and experiences in the life of the Buddha). In solitary transcendence, the emphasis is on the self and the capacity of the individual to grow. Be that as it may, this work encouraged solitary

transcendence side by side as the notion of transcending without transcendence hence, the reason for the sub-topic under discourse.

The Anthropocentric Nature of Solitary Transcendence

Despite having a somewhat spiritual quality, solitary transcendence have deep origins in human subjectivity. Most of the time, it is constrained by human limitations, perceptions, subjective experiences, beliefs, and cultural orientations. As a result, there is a discrepancy between the interpretation or understanding of transcendence and the transcendental experience. It is difficult to understand the genuine nature of transcendence because of its subjectivity; it is analogous to saying that one cannot understand a thing's true nature if there are competing concepts, claims, or theories about it. Our concept of solitary transcendence is greatly shaped by cultural and personal bias. In his writings, James makes the case that religious and cultural traditions have a significant impact on how we see the transcendent. (James 1902). These cultural lenses force human-centric narratives and interpretations onto the transcendent experience, which limits our potential to transcend our human subjectivity innately. The anthropocentric nature of solitary transcendence is further increased by our individual experiences and prejudices. Our subjective assessments of transcendent experiences are significantly influenced by our unique origins, aspirations, and expectations, according to Deikman's theory. It is impossible to have an objective grasp of the transcending dimension since each person's assessment of their personal, solitary transcendence experience is viewed through their own subjective spectacles. While solitary transcendence is anthropocentric (man-centered), it is crucial to acknowledge the impact that human subjectivity and unique life experiences have on how each person understands the world and pursues transcendence, (Deikman, 1982).

Subjective experiences are the foundation upon which individuals construct their understanding of what is transcendent. The deep personal encounters individuals have during solitary transcendence journey, shape their worldview, moral values, and sense of purpose, influencing their subsequent actions and contributions to society. Personal experiences of solitary transcendence serve as a foundation for making experiences that has a subjective meaning. (Wilber, K. 1996), tends to explore this concept of self-development in his book, showing how transcendental experiences could connect individuals to something greater than themselves. These experiences offer a sense of purpose and fulfillment, even though they would remain subjective in nature. Solitary transcendence, through personal experience, has the potential to foster transformative growth. Capra in her work discusses how transcendent experiences can lead to insights, resolution of inner conflicts, and increased self-awareness. (Capra 1996). This subjective transformation can positively impact personal relationships and contribute to the collective well-being. Change starts from particular to universal. The personal experience one gets from his transcendence journey, could spur him to bring about changes in the world. In the same way, one's personal experience can help him choose the path of transcendence he wants to take, attuning himself to a part suitable for him.

The anthropocentric characteristics of solitary transcendence are inextricably tied to human subjectivity and unique experiences. The importance and relevance of human subjectivity and personal experiences should not be discounted, even while cultural influences and personal biases may be part of what makes anything human-centric. Subjective interactions before, during, and after the transcendental experience have the power to influence people's lives, promoting personal development and providing an alternative route to self-discovery. We can work to deepen our awareness, confront our biases, and pursue transcendence with a more inclusive mindset by critically analyzing the anthropocentric aspect of solitary transcendence.

Introspection, Self-reflection and self-transcendence are important tools in the notion of “transcending without transcendence”, its significance to this notion is what would be looked at subsequently. Introspection, or the act of examining one's own thoughts, emotions, and mental processes, lies at the

heart of the concept of transcending without transcendence. The notion of turning inward to explore the complexities of one's consciousness is not a new concept; philosophers and scholars throughout history have recognized its importance. One such scholar is William James, who in his book, emphasized the significance of introspection as a fundamental method to understand the human mind. (James, 1890). People can learn more about the patterns of their cognition, emotional inclinations, and behavioural habits by engaging in introspection. This self-awareness promotes personal growth and development and provides for a greater understanding of oneself. Additionally, it improves our capacity for empathy, cultivating awareness of how our perceptions and biases influence our reality and paving the way for going beyond constricting preconceptions and ideas. However, there are some negatives. Most of the time, ruminating which entails dwelling over things and allowing thoughts to constantly cross one's mind could be substituted for introspecting. This can, instead of transcending, have negative effects on one's mind. It is best to understand how to introspect and questions to ask oneself when introspecting to avoid ruminating instead.

Self-reflection follows after introspection, where individuals critically assess their experiences, actions, and beliefs; in self-reflection, one processes what he has learned through introspection. Donald Schön emphasized the significance of self-reflection in professional practice, arguing that it leads to continuous learning and improvement (Schön, 2008). The same principle can be applied to the concept of transcending without transcendence. When individuals engage in self-reflection, they enter into a dialogue with themselves, questioning their values, motivations, and intentions. This process of self-questioning is essential for personal growth, as it helps to take away some bad habits and behaviors, cultivating a more profound sense of authenticity. By confronting our flaws and shortcomings, we open ourselves to the possibility of change, allowing us to transcend our previous limitations.

A key component of the idea of transcending without transcendence is self-transcendence. It entails letting go of the ego's limitations and embracing a more holistic, interrelated perspective on life. It is the highest level in the hierarchy of needs, according to Abraham Maslow's exploration of the concept of self-transcendence, (Maslow, 1954). Introspection and self-reflection frequently culminate in self-transcendence. Through these procedures, people come to see the transience of their selfish ideas and transition to a more altruistic interconnected viewpoint. This sense of interconnectedness with others, nature, and the universe can lead to a profound sense of purpose, meaning, and fulfillment.

Solitary Transcendence and Self-Reliance

Solitary transcendence emphasizes introspection, self-reliance, and self-discovery, as was covered in the previous subtopic. It promotes people to communicate with their spiritual nature directly, without the assistance of religious organizations or spiritual authorities. By selecting this route, seekers want to go above social conventions and find a deeper, more intimate relationship to the divine or spiritual world. For individuals who desire a more individualized and genuine spiritual experience, the solo route to spiritual freedom is of utmost significance. It enables people to escape the restrictions of religious doctrines, which frequently may not coincide with their own personal ideas or experiences. By rejecting outside influences, spiritual searchers can explore spirituality with greater flexibility and openness, drawing from a variety of traditions to design a special and individualized spiritual path. Additionally, the solo method encourages people to take charge of their spiritual development. Those who follow the solitary transcendence road frequently understand their own discoveries, resulting to a greater sense of autonomy and personal responsibility, rather than relying on external authority to interpret particular spiritual truths.

In the solitary path towards spiritual liberation, self-reliance and a belief in oneself, have an important role. Solitary transcendentalists must build on their strength to face their fears, doubts, and uncertainties without external validation or reassurance. This kind of self-reliance enables individuals to navigate the complexities of their spiritual journey, embracing both the light and dark aspects of their being. With self-

reliance and belief in oneself, solitary transcendentalists, would trust themselves and their instincts, without relying on external validation. With this, they can make authentic decisions and choices that align with their ideals and nature. Self-reliance also nurtures resilience, as individuals learn to navigate obstacles with inner strength and determination.

(Brightman, 1995), observes that as interesting as solitary transcendence may be, it is not without limitations. Individuals that engage in this path may become biased and selfish, misinterpreting what is supposed to be spiritual growth, (as spiritual growth mainly involves getting rid of negative – evil desires), The apparent positive effects of enlightenment can be misunderstood in different ways. I reached wisdom here in this gloomy cage; if you want something, you take it by all means required, as in the following excerpt, for illustration. From the sample, it appears that the speaker has gained enlightenment in a perfectly acceptable manner, but due to his or her subjective prejudice, this form of enlightenment could be construed to suggest that one can kill, cheat, or swindle to get what they desire. It is therefore important to note that spiritual liberation should not push one to negativity, instead, any enlightenment that is gained from a transcendence journey, should lead one to affecting their society positively.

The lonesome path to spiritual emancipation necessitates self-reliance and self-belief. It puts up a novel and difficult idea of a strategy for achieving spiritual liberation. Individuals begin on a very introspective and self-reliant journey when they rely on their internal autonomy rather than on outside affirmation. The solitary path demands fortitude, tenacity, and discernment. This lonely path has the ability to lead to spiritual emancipation and better self-awareness. Though the solitary path may not be for everyone, the concept of solitary transcendence serves as a reminder that spiritual liberation (transcendence) is a journey with many paths. By exploring alternatives outside of rigidly established religious structures, people can encourage a broad and inclusive concept of spirituality and growth.

Non Transcendence Practices and Spiritual Liberation

Having explored the idea of individuals embarking on the solitary path to spiritual liberation, we shall now explore the non-transcendent practices and their potential to facilitate spiritual liberation. These non-transcendent practices are practices that would aid the solitary transcendentalists, in their path to spiritual liberation.

One of those practices is meditation which is a practice that involves focusing or clearing one's mind, using a combination of mental and physical techniques. The practices of meditation are thousands of years old and there are different forms of it around the world, but they all share a common goal of creating a profound connection to oneself and the world. To someone on the outside, meditating may look like doing nothing; just breathing in and out or repeating the same phrase or sound over and over. However, it is more than that. Modern science shows that meditation has a great effect on one's brain and mental health. In the context of spiritual liberation, meditation can be seen as a means of self-discovery, leading individuals to confront their true nature beyond what the society has conditioned them to be and selfish desires. In the book; *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, shows how meditation can help people transcend the limitations of their minds and connect with the interconnected nature of reality. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1975). He further asserts that:

By engaging in meditation, individuals may gradually break free from the constraints of their ego, experience a sense of self-connection and experience a sense of unity with the world. The practice of meditation fosters a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings and the universe, which can bring about a great change in the journey towards spiritual liberation.

For (Rodriguez, 2016), Meditation, “expands on the power of the present by focusing on you just being”. Meditation can shift one’s attention from the problem one is currently facing and make one focus on the present; on what he can control and what he cannot, on the beauty of what exists now in the present. Through meditation, we can come to reflect on ourselves and particular things of the world; asking ourselves questions about how we intend to solve issues. The enigmas we face could often times answer themselves, if we give them enough space and time to appear. When we calm ourselves and mind, solutions to various issues begins to present itself. This meditation, silence and reflection, could lead to a calm heart and mind, leading to personal growth, especially for those who have anger management issues.

Another practice is; Mindfulness which basically means living in the moment. It means being fully engaged in the things that is happening in one’s surroundings and an acceptance of one’s present situation without judgement. According to professor Mark Williams; former director of the Oxford mindfulness center, mindfulness is about “reconnecting with our bodies and the sensations they experience”. It means an appreciation of the sounds, smells and taste of the present moment. By focusing one’s attention to the present moment, individuals, can disengage from the endless stream of thoughts, in which they are trapped in. (These thoughts could be a dwelling on the past, or “building castles in the air” kind of thought. Anyways, these thoughts acts like invisible chains and cages that hold one down). Individuals instead, can choose to embrace the reality of their present existence, finding the beauty in it, helping to mitigate greed, lust and jealousy; bringing about a sense of contentment. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a renowned mindfulness teacher, emphasizes the transformative power of mindfulness in his book, (Zinn, 2009, p. 17). He suggests that through this practice, individuals can cultivate self-awareness, enhance clarity of thought, and develop a deeper connection with their inner selves. Mindfulness, allows practitioners to embrace the impermanence of life and find peace within the present moment, which can be instrumental in the pursuit of spiritual growth.

It is also very important to look at the practice of contemplation which involves a deep thinking and reflection about a particular subject or topic. Unlike meditation, which requires a clearing of one’s mind, contemplation is more analytical and reflective. Thomas Merton’s book, *the seven storey mountain* shows a classic example of contemplative literature. Merton's work details his spiritual journey, which involves wrestling with complex questions about identity, meaning, and the purpose of life. Although his method to reach his own spiritual liberation is grounded in Catholicism, his quest begins with his introspection and contemplation on the meaning of himself and life, as he struggles to find his place in life. It is from this contemplation, that he began his journey to spiritual liberation; which in his case, converting to Catholicism, joining the Trappist monks and following their teachings. (Merton, 1948). From this assertion, one can deduce that:

When one seeks a release from fixed set of doctrines or rigid beliefs, contemplative practices could provide that platform for a more personalized and subjective approach to spirituality. As individuals grapple with deep questions, they could free themselves and open up their minds to different paths to spiritual growth, thereby being free from rigid doctrines and dogmas.

These practices, therefore, emphasizes immanence, groundness in the moment and a kind of personal connection with oneself. With mindfulness, individuals can learn to accept their present reality and from there find ways to improve it or sustain it. This could lead to the cultivation of contentment, with individuals finding freedom and peace within the present moment. With meditation, a means of inner exploration and introspection is provided; offering a connection with oneself, leading to the dissolution of

the ego and a deep sense of unity with the universe. With contemplative practices, an opportunity for critical reflection, is presented, leading to individuals freeing themselves from rigid doctrines and embracing the broad mysteries, the universe has to offer.

The Feasibility and Limitations of Solitary Transcendence

Throughout the course of this work, we have been discussing the notion of “transcending without transcendence” (solitary transcendence). However, an important question arises, is it feasible? Can it be practiced? What are the potential limitations that one who tend to venture into this path will face? Here, we will try to do justice to these questions.

The solitary path towards spiritual liberation, involves courage and introspection. It holds significance, to individuals who seem tired of the rigid laws and dogmas religion stipulates, and attempts to find a different pattern as opposed to the one religion places on them (taking a cue from the epistemological anarchism theory of Paul Feyerabend), as these religious doctrines most times do not resonate with the individuals personal and subjective beliefs. By rejecting these external influences, individuals can take control of their own spiritual path, having a more flexible, open-minded exploration of spirituality, drawing from various traditions to create a unique and personalized spiritual path. Moreover, it is already established that the solitary path empowers individuals to take ownership of their spiritual journey. Rather than relying on external authorities to guide and interpret spiritual things, solitary transcendentalists, must comprehend their own insights, leading to a deeper sense of autonomy and personal responsibility but there are various challenges individuals who venture on the solitary path may face. One of these challenges is the lack of guidance. Solitary transcendence is highly subjective, and without guidance, individuals can have a wrong comprehension of spiritual things or have the wrong notion of having transcended.

From the work, *The spiritual discipline: Solitude and Silence* it appears that most times, solitary transcendentalists could tend to avoid diving deeper into themselves, as they may seem afraid to confront their inner self, afraid of what they might find, sometimes, during introspection they might be distracted by their selfish thoughts for the grudges they hold against someone. Without someone to guide and encourage them, they may stop halfway, not fully achieving the transcendence they seek. Those on the solitary path may face feelings of isolation, boredom, lack of motivation and uncertainty, as they must rely solely on themselves. Without as sense of community or audience, kind of like an external affirmation that an individual is doing well in his path, solitary transcendentalists may begin to have a lack of motivation to continue in the path, while dealing with the boredom that comes with doing things alone. The solitary path towards spiritual liberation requires courage and introspection. Individuals embark on this personal quest for transcendence, must be courageous, disciplined and self-reliant. While the solitary path offers profound opportunities for self-discovery and personal growth, it also poses challenges in terms of isolation and the absence of structured guidance. However, for those willing to embrace it, the solitary path could lead to a deep and fulfilling spiritual liberation.

Personal Experiences and Testimonials

There are individuals, who have embarked on this solitary transcendence journey, without external influence. Their motivations and practices, is what we are going to explore. The Buddah; Siddhartha Gautama, is among the most influential figures. Born into a wealthy family but renounced his family's wealth and chose to pursue enlightenment. His journey started at age twenty-nine after he made four trips outside the palace grounds. He encountered an old person, a sick person and a corpse, all for the first time in his life. On his fourth trip, he encountered a wandering ascetic, whose practice inspired him to follow a similar path in search of freedom from suffering and the eternal cycle of birth, death and re-birth. From

the wandering ascetic, he learnt the practice of meditation and began to engage in meditation, in an attempt to conquer the pleasures of the flesh. After he almost died due to his rigorous fasting, he discovered that the harsh disciplining of the flesh is not a means to achieve spiritual liberation. He later gained enlightenment under the pipal tree (in a place now named Bodh Gaya meaning an enlightenment place) during his all night meditation. He then became Buddah, meaning the enlightened one; continued to meditate beneath the tree and began to teach people the enlightenment he gained, which is called the “middle way”; advocating for balance rather than extremism. Buddah's motivation for choosing a transcendent path was to seek for a path to freedom from human suffering. He once followed the guidance of some fellow ascetics, who believed that extreme ascetism (turning away from all pleasure and embracing pain), could lead one to freedom. After starving himself and almost dying, he then chose to form his own path, which was the middle path of balance. (Olendzki, 2020). His meditation led to the enlightenment that suffering comes from three emotional toxins; greed and hatred, which keeps us from being content and delusion, leading us to believe that the world is stable and material things last. Buddah shows us that when we react to external impulses, due to the prompting of those three emotional toxins, we harm ourselves and others.

Another person is Eckhart Tolle. He puts down his journey to spiritual enlightenment in his book, titled; *The power of the now*, published in 2010. Tolle writes that he was struggling with depression and a sense of emptiness, growing up with parents that always fought and later separated, playing in buildings that have being bombed out, he describes growing up in post-war Germany as painful; according to him, “pain was the energy field of the country”. At age twenty-nine, he claimed to have achieved enlightenment, discovering that all his depression and anxiety about the past and the future has disappeared. He says:

A question arose without an answer: who is the ‘I’ that cannot live with the self? What is the self? I didn’t know at the time that what really happened was the mind-made self, with its heaviness, its problems, that lives between the unsatisfying past and the fearful future, collapsed. It dissolved. The next morning I woke up and everything was so peaceful. The peace was there because there was no self. Just a sense of presence or ‘beingness’, just observing and watching.

Eckhart Tolle's practice involved observing his thoughts, and developing a state of mind that recognizes only the present moment, freeing himself, from the constant chattering of the mind. He then posits that; “Only after regaining awareness of being, liberated from Mind and intensely in the Now, is there Enlightenment.” (Morris, 2017).

The personal experiences of these individuals examined, highlights the uniqueness and authenticity of their enlightenment. Their stories are one of courage, determination and belief in oneself; highlighting the significance of introspection, meditation, reflection and mindfulness. It shows that spiritual liberation is a personal journey that one can choose to undergo on their own without external religious dogmas dictating how to go through with it.

Conclusion

The concept of transcending without transcendence challenges traditional notions of spiritual liberation by exploring alternative paths that emphasize individual capacity, immanence, and self-reflection. Through an inquiry into solitary transcendence and its potential for spiritual growth and transformation without external influences, this research has shed light on the multifaceted nature of spiritual experiences and provided insights into the implications and recommendations for individuals seeking such liberation.

By examining the historical perspectives on transcendence and its association with spiritual liberation, we have recognized the dominant influence of traditional transcendent frameworks. These frameworks often rely on external influences, such as religious practices or teachings, to guide individuals towards higher states of consciousness or union with the divine. However, transcending without transcendence challenges this dependency on external sources and suggests that personal growth and transformation can be achieved through self-reliance and introspection. The anthropocentric nature of transcending without transcendence becomes apparent when considering the emphasis on human subjectivity and personal experiences. As individuals engage in self-reflection, meditation, or contemplation, they tap into their own inner wisdom and inherent spiritual capacities. This anthropocentric perspective shifts the focus from external authorities to individual agency and self-transcendence as integral components of the spiritual journey. Non-transcendent practices, such as mindfulness meditation, contemplative practices, or embodiment practices, have emerged as valuable tools for individuals seeking spiritual liberation without transcendence. These practices cultivate immanence, grounding individuals in the present moment and fostering a deep connection with oneself and the world. By engaging in these practices, individuals can develop self-awareness, expand their consciousness, and experience profound spiritual insights. While solitary transcendence offers a compelling alternative, it is essential to acknowledge the feasibility and limitations of this path. Achieving spiritual growth and transformation without external influences or guidance may pose challenges, particularly in navigating the complexities of the inner journey. It is crucial for individuals to develop a balanced approach that combines self-reliance with openness to learning from others and seeking support when needed. Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be made for individuals interested in pursuing solitary transcendence. Firstly, cultivating practices of self-reflection, meditation, or contemplation can support personal growth and self-transcendence. Regular engagement in these practices enables individuals to deepen their understanding of themselves, their beliefs, and their connection to the world.

Lastly, it has been established that the inquiry into transcending without transcendence has illuminated the potential for solitary spiritual liberation without reliance on external influences. This anthropocentric approach challenges traditional transcendent frameworks, emphasizing the importance of individual agency, self-reflection, and personal experiences in the pursuit of spiritual growth. By embracing non-transcendent practices, individuals can cultivate immanence, groundedness, and connection, ultimately fostering profound personal growth and self-transcendence.

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