

Shrink Rap Radio #34, April 23, 2006. Forty Years of Consciousness Research

Dr. David Van Nuys, aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Dr. Charles Tart
(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Kerstin Sjoquist)

Excerpt: *“Other intelligent men and women were going through this same kind of crisis, and they realized science was right in a lot of ways – there was a lot of nonsense in religion, but was it all nonsense? And they came up with the brilliant idea of: can we apply the method of science? Not the particular findings at any moment, but the method to investigate various phenomenon – spirituality, religion – and begin to separate out what was true and important, and what was false and superstitious. That was an inspiring vision for me, and basically that’s what I’ve been doing the last 50 years. ”*

Introduction: Those were the words of Dr. Charles Tart who has long been one of the worlds leading researchers on consciousness. In 1969 he edited a groundbreaking book titled *Altered States of Consciousness*. That book had a large impact, making it legitimate for many others, including myself to conduct their own research into such areas as mutual dreaming, lucid dreaming, out-of-the-body experiences, meditation, psychedelic experiences, and other such phenomenon that have long been off the beaten path.

For most of his career Dr. Tart was Professor of Psychology at the University of California at Davis, where he now holds the title of Professor Emeritus. Since leaving UC Davis, he has joined the faculty of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California. His list of publications and presentations runs into the hundreds. I’m very excited to bring you this interview. While we’ve long been aware of one another’s work this was our first opportunity to speak. Here’s the conversation.

Dr. Dave: Dr. Charles Tart, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Tart: A pleasure to be here, David.

Dr. Dave: OK. We’ll you’ve had such a rich career, covering such areas as consciousness, transpersonal psychology, and parapsychology, and I feel like I’m sitting at this great buffet and I hardly know where to jump in or where to start. I guess –

Tart: Oh that's all right. I hardly know where I'm going next most of the time.

Dr. Dave: (laughs) OK.

Tart: That's awfully rich.

Dr. Dave: OK! I do have one burning question, and it relates to the fact that your career has been devoted to exploring very non-traditional areas in psychology, yet somehow you were for most of your career a professor at the University of California at Davis. Now UC Davis strikes me as a very traditional institution for such a non-traditional guy. How did you pull that off?

Tart: Oh well, that wasn't easy! (laughs)

Dr. Dave: I'll bet!

Tart: As one of my colleagues there used to frequently remind me, he's say, "You're a pioneer, Charlie, and a pioneer is somebody with a lot of arrows in his back."

Dr. Dave: Yeah, exactly. Wow.

Tart: (laughs) I think I basically got my job there to begin with because I was doing sleep and dream research back in the 60s when that was a very hot new area.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmm.

Tart: And of course I had physiological equipment which made it seem very respectable.

Dr. Dave: OK.

Tart: And they knew I had some weird interests but they sort of hoped I'd outgrow them. Their hope wasn't met that way.

Dr. Dave: It always puzzled me because I thought, "How is this guy flying under the radar?"

Tart: Well you know, part of it too, was that the departments budget depended on how many students they taught in their major, and my altered

states of consciousness class usually drew several hundred students which helped the budget department considerably.

Dr. Dave: Ah, that's great; that explains it. Well I can just imagine, having come up through academia myself, the kinds of political challenges that you might have faced.

Tart: Oh yeah, the politics drove me crazy some times.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Tart: Wasted a lot of time.

Dr. Dave: Right. Now it's hard to believe... You know, you mentioned your book *Altered States of Consciousness*, which I know had a profound impact on me – I was already sort of headed down that track and then when I saw the book it was like, for me it was mind blowing. It was like, "Oh this is exactly what I'm interested in."

Tart: Well good! That was exactly my intention.

Dr. Dave: Yeah! And it's hard to believe, I guess, it's close to forty years now since that book came out.

Tart: 1969 it came out. Yeah, it's getting on towards forty.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, and in that –

Tart: But you know what's terrible? You know what's terrible about that, David, what's terrible is that it's still one of the best books on altered states around forty years later.

Dr. Dave: Hmmmmmm.

Tart: And because you know my hope was that it would stimulate an enormous amount of research on all sorts of aspects altered states, and that happened in a few areas but not in a lot of others. So unfortunately it's not outdated.

Dr. Dave: Wow.

Tart: That's a disappointment.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah, I could see... well, it's a good thing and it's a bad thing. And also is it true that the book's out of print?

Tart: Yes, the book is out of print, yeah.

Dr. Dave: And that is a sad thing. I'm surprised that nobody's been motivated to bring it back in print.

Tart: Well, I've thought about it but when I remember all the work I had to do to get all the copyright permissions for all those different chapters in there it discourages me.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Yeah. You know, in that book, you know, I urged my listeners to go out and find it. I mean you can find used copies out there somewhere I'm sure.

Tart: Oh yeah.

Dr. Dave: Sure, if you hunt around enough or go to libraries.

Tart: You look for it on Amazon, used copies will come up no problem.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. And in that book you pull together a diverse set of articles. It really launched a whole new field of study – or at least I thought it did (laughs). Evidently, not as much study followed on the heel of it as you had hoped for.

Tart: Well that was my hope, but it worked pretty well, you know. Because I had very unusual interests I knew that there were a fair number of descent writings on various altered states like hypnosis or meditation scattered around. But because they were so scattered they had almost no impact because no one person would ever come across any significant number of them. So my hope was that by putting them together in that altered states book it could make people realize, "Oh yeah. Consciousness *does* undergo radical changes and they're important, and we ought to study them and use them." And it worked for a while.

Dr. Dave: Right. And also by studying altered states of consciousness it helps us to understand "normal" consciousness better.

Tart: Yes. In fact I joke sometime that after years of looking at exotic states like hypnosis and meditation or drug induced states I may be getting

ready to take on that *really* mysterious state, so-called ordinary consciousness.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, (laughs), exactly.

Tart: So what we think we understand, but don't understand much about at all.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, exactly. We're like the proverbial fish in water, that are unaware of the water in which they swim. What is it that got you – this may be a personal question, but I dive in anyway – what got you interested in altered states of consciousness in the first place?

Tart: That's a perfectly reasonable question, actually. And it's also good in a sense of teaching purposes in that people like to hear a personal slant on things.

Dr. Dave: Definitely.

Tart: It makes the material less abstract. I'd say all this started when I was a teenager, and going through a religious conflict crisis that I think an awful lot of people go through.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmm.

Tart: I was raised in a conventional religion, my grandmother took me to church and Sunday school, you know. This was my *grandmother*, the source of love. It was good enough for her; it was good enough for me. And I was very deeply involved in that kind of Lutheranism. But then as a teenager I started to think for myself. And of course like most teenagers I started noticing the hypocrisy of the adults around me. These people didn't practice their religion [that] they preached very well. And I became more and more aware of science and started thinking for myself. So I began to see this so-common conflict between religion's claims on one hand and the scientific data that seemed to say that this religion was all nonsense and superstition.

Now, when I look back with the wisdom of hindsight I see there are two major ways people deal with this kind of conflict. In one of them, they convert to science and say, "Right. Religion is all a lot of crap. Let's forget all that kind of stuff." Yet as a psychologist I know that something important is being lost about our spiritual potential when somebody does that.

The other common route I saw was that people sort of compartmentalize themselves. You know: religion was something for Saturday or Sunday and then you didn't think about it the rest of the week, and apparently avoiding conflict that way. But that kind of dissociation has a high psychological cost too.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Tart: I was very lucky in my reading because I came across the old literature on psychical research, as it was called back in the 1890s and so, where other intelligent men and women were going through this same kind of crisis, and they realized science was right in a lot of ways – there was a lot of nonsense in religion, but was it all nonsense? And they came up with the brilliant idea of: can we apply the *method* of science? Not the particular findings at any moment, but the *method* to investigate various phenomenon of spirituality and religion, and begin to separate out what was true and important, and what was false and superstitious. That was an inspiring vision for me, and basically that's what I've been doing the last 50 years.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Tart: Trying to separate out some of what's true and vital about spirituality from what is indeed just old superstition.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, that's great –

Tart: And it's been fun!

Dr. Dave: (laughs) That's great background. Now, this, you know, this book came out at the tail end of the 60s, so I have to ask: did you experiment personally with psychedelics?

Tart: Well, as a matter of fact, I can make a very unusual claim. I was given psychedelics on quite a few occasions by, or rather, under the auspices of the CIA.

Dr. Dave: (Laughs)

Tart: It's true!

Dr. Dave: Oh, wow!

Tart: I was a research subject for research done by psychiatrists while I was in graduate school, and years later I found out that the foundation that had funded and sponsored his research was one of the front foundations the CIA set up to promote research on psychedelics.

Dr. Dave: Oh, wow.

Tart: Now, of course, I don't think they got the results they really wanted and I do mean to keep sending my thank you letter to the CIA, although I haven't gotten around to it, because I certainly have a lot of insights into psychological factors that way that I might not have had otherwise.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, I was curious about that. What your, you know... what relationship those experiences, what bearing they might have had on your subsequent career.

Tart: Oh yeah, they really brought things home for me. OK, now, a lot of people talk about having psychedelic experiences and their framework for looking at the world changed drastically. I wasn't that my framework changed so much. I was already interested in altered states and parapsychological stuff. I had a much wider framework than most people. But it was kind of all in my head. So for instance I mentioned the word "dissociation" a while ago in terms of how some people deal with religious conflict. I knew what it meant intellectually, but I really had no experiential feel for it, you know. That was a weird idea that happened to other people.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Tart: So I can remember one of my first psychedelic experiences where I was asked to do a very boring kind of psychological test and I kind of had to do it because it was an experiment and I'd agreed to cooperate and all that, but I wasn't interested in anything so boring.

Dr. Dave: (Laughs) Yeah, really!

Tart: And much to my amazement I saw part of my mind dissociate and do the psychological test stuff while *I* went off and had more interesting adventures somewhere else.

Dr. Dave: Interesting.

Tart: I realized, "Oh. *That's* what dissociation is."

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. OK, that's great. Your experience matches mine somewhat because that certainly was one of the factors that – as you say, I was already on this track but it certainly helped me to understand it in a very different way.

Tart: Yeah! Or beauty is an example. I knew the word “beauty.” I used it all the time in ordinary conversation, but it was only when I had sort of the hyper-beauty kind of experience that psychedelic drugs can induce that I really understood this stuff in depth, instead of just a conventional word.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Right. Right. Now you've sort of already foreshadowed this a bit, but I'll ask it anyway, and the question that I had to ask was: what's happened in the field of altered states of consciousness since your book came out?

Tart: Well initially there was a very positive response. A lot of courses were set up, for instance, to study altered states. And –

Dr. Dave: I taught one, by the way.

Tart: Yeah! And they haven't lasted too much, but that was very good for broadening people. And a few areas more research was done. So for instance, if I were re-doing the section on lucid dreams in my *Altered States* book now, that's something where there's a lot of new and exciting stuff that's come in.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmmm

Tart: On the other hand, the section on psychedelic research, that I had, that's one of the things that's not outdated, because about the time the book came out basically psychedelic research was legally stopped.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Tart: And all sorts of important research questions just didn't get researched any more.

Dr. Dave: Right. Right.

Tart: Meditation research, of course, has expanded enormously.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Tart: In 1969, when I published the *Altered States* book, I bragged in my introduction to the section on meditation that I was reprinting two-thirds of the English language scientific literature on meditation, which sounded pretty impressive, until you realized that it was two of the three studies that existed.

Dr. Dave: (Laughs) Right. Right.

Tart: Now there are hundreds and hundreds of studies on meditation because people found some physiological correlates which legitimatise the thing.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmmm.

Tart: But still, the real meditation research largely remains to be done, OK. Most of the hundreds of research studies that have been done have been on kind of meditation as a stress-reducer. And it is a stress-reducer, but so is taking a nap, or taking a walk, or something like that. We're only now really beginning to get into what meditation is about – of promoting spiritual growth.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmmm. Interesting. Your website – which I'll put a link in our show notes to –

Tart: Yes, thank you.

Dr. Dave: – is a wonderful resource that really just allows a person to branch out into lots of different directions and there are links to the many books that you've written, and to the articles you've written, and to lots of cassette tapes so that anybody who wanted to learn more about any of these areas certainly that is a great jumping off place.

Tart: Yeah. Well, the cassette tapes are temporarily unavailable now, unfortunately.

Dr. Dave: Oh really? That's too bad.

Tart: My daughter who was running that ordering business for me is in school now and we've had to put a stop to that. But there are lots of articles and stuff there.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Now I have a listener in Bagdad who asked me some questions just very recently about reincarnation, and he told me that

reincarnation is not part of the Islamic faith, but still he was curious about it. And I noticed on your website some references to research on reincarnation and survival after death. Perhaps you can give us a brief overview of the current state of research into those areas.

Tart: (Deep breath) Well, it's only one of the most important questions in the world, but sure –

Dr. Dave: (Laughs)

Tart: – a brief overview, what the heck! I mean I think most people, if they knew for instance that there was a lot of evidence that says we survive death in some form, versus a lot of evidence that says, “No, death is the end; that's it,” it would make a big difference in the way you'd lead your life.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmm.

Tart: Like my personality: if I know I'm probably going to be stuck with the effects of my personality for a long, long, long time, I'm going to act differently than if I think, you know, “Oh what the heck. Ten more years or so I'm dead. What difference does that make?”

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Yeah.

Tart: What most people don't realize is that you *can* research the question is there some kind of survival after death. It doesn't have to be a matter of believe it or don't believe it, it's just sort of arbitrary – there is research on that. And to summarize a hundred years of research (laughs) in a sentence or two –

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmmm.

Tart: – there are enough positive and interesting findings from research from post-mortem survival to say that it *may* be real, and so we certainly should be researching extensively instead of –

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmmm

Tart: What – I'm one of the most knowledgeable people on the planet about it and I've done almost zero research on it. That's ridiculous. That's shameful. As far as the specific reincarnation aspect of it, the main impressive body of research is that of the psychiatrist Ian Stevenson at the

University of Virginia, and his colleagues in his laboratory there – Bruce Grayson, Jim Tucker, people like that – and again, they have enough cases of little kids who spontaneously start talking about previous incarnations, that I'm very impressed. I mean any body who just dismisses reincarnation is ignorant. There's evidence that it might well happen. It certainly deserves a lot of research.

Dr. Dave: Wow, I have to confess –

Tart: OK, so there's a hundred years of research!

Dr. Dave: (Laughs) That's great. I have to confess I've not read that literature. I've heard Ian Stevenson's name, and seen references to it –

Tart: Oh Stevenson is a very careful researcher. His stuff is well worth reading.

Dr. Dave: OK.

Tart: Yeah, and I say, "there's a hundred years of research" and that sounds like a lot but actually compared to the importance and complexity of the question very little has been done in that hundred years.

Dr. Dave: OK.

Tart: Almost nothing is being done now. Gary Schwartz at the University of Arizona's doing some interesting research with mediums. There's a little bit of mediumistic research going on in England, but generally... You know I have a discussion group on the internet that I've run for ten years now with most of the active people, the people who really know this literature, and most them are not active researchers, they're just scholars who can devote a little of their time to thinking about what's been done in the past.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmm.

Tart: That's crazy, you know. I think the question of whether or not we survive death is a lot more important than curing the common cold.

Dr. Dave: Do you think it might relate to research funding, that there's no money available?

Tart: There's no money available, and there's enormous prejudice against doing it, OK? Any orthodox researcher that announced that she wanted to start investigating the possibility of survival after death might well lose her job.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Definitely. Well –

Tart: That's just some of the arrows in the back that the pioneers get.

Dr. Dave: (Laughs) Right, right. So we're already sort of started to touch on parapsychology, and I know that there are a number of links on your site to readings on parapsychology as well. Tell us a little bit about your own work in this area. You've done some parapsychological research in the past haven't you?

Tart: Yeah, I used to devote about a third of my time active parapsychological research, you know, with the rest kind of on aspects of consciousness, and I was particularly interested in the question of how do you make parapsychological things like telepathy work more effectively. They don't work very effectively most of the time, you know, they happen spontaneously to people some times or you get these laboratory effects where they are sort of statistically significant but people are just guessing and imaging most of the time. So I've spent a lot of time trying to apply basic learning theory to it. I said, you know, if you tell somebody "read my mind" how are they supposed to interpret that, right? It's different if you say, "lift your hand up and turn it over." That's a little variation on something you already know how to do and are very well practiced in, but what do you do to read somebody's mind? So I did a number of exploratory experiments where people were in a telepathy testing kind of situation, but they'd keep immediate feedback on how they were doing, and the idea was that eventually you could start figuring out correlations, you know: If I feel this way, I'm usually wrong – I probably should keep my mouth closed and wait until the feeling goes away. Whereas if I feel this other way, I tend to be right more than just chance, so let me try to understand and explore that. And I got enough initial positive results to encourage me that I was going in the right direction, but I couldn't get the research support I needed to really explore that thoroughly.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmm, um-hmmm.

Tart: And also there was a big sea change in parapsychology at that time. The remote viewing style of doing parapsychological research came along which automatically incorporated this kind of immediate feedback, and

some people seemed to keep up their abilities quite well with remote viewing, or get better at it.

Dr. Dave: Interesting. So is anyone doing credible work on parapsychology currently?

Tart: Oh yeah, there's a few people doing it, but they're largely away from the traditional university setting, you know. Again, that's a real career killer, to be interested in, much less do, parapsychological research. The prejudice against this is very strong and very irrational.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah. Now you're currently on the faculty at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology in Menlo Park, California.

Tart: Right – Palo Alto, actually.

Dr. Dave: Oh, it's in Palo Alto, OK. And what's the state of transpersonal psychology today? I ask these tiny little questions, you know (laughs).

Tart: Well, the state in one way is very good and in another way is very bad. It's very good in the sense that transpersonal psychology exists at all. I mean, here's a branch of psychology dedicated to taking the spiritual seriously. Not to, you know, naively believe in everything that's labelled "spiritual" – again there's a lot of this idea that in the long run we need to separate out what's real and vital about spiritual ideas, versus what's, you know, sort of traditional but maybe just superstition. That's the good side of it – that we exist at all. And, you know, we graduate a lot of students each year, [who] go out and become good therapists and the like. The poor side of it is that an awful lot of research needs to be done, you know. At this stage it's a kind of a "borrowing" from historical spiritual systems and the like, mixing with some modern psychology, but we need to do that research to separate the wheat from the chaff, and we have almost no money to do research.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah.

Tart: Our faculty has very heavy teaching loads because it's the tuition that runs the school and all that, so we're not getting anywhere near as much research done as we need to do.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmm, um-hmmm.

Tart: One of my main causes, at this stage in my life, is trying to find research endowment kind of money to enable the faculty at ITP and other places to do more solid research in this area. I want to know, for instance, how do you teach spiritual practices so they are effective? You know, if you think about it people are given all sorts of spiritual practices in all sorts of traditions, and most people stop doing them after a while because they don't get any results. That's terrible.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Tart: I mean, how can we work out what's effective for people in our modern day and age – that's where research comes in.

Dr. Dave: OK. You've studied spiritual traditions, and you've written books on mindfulness and meditation. Not long ago I heard you give a talk on enlightenment. Can you tell us anything about your own views on spirituality and enlightenment, your sort of "post-Lutheran" perspective?

Tart: (Laughs) Yeah, I felt I had a lot of chutzpah to give a talk on enlightenment, actually. I'm clearly not enlightened, whatever enlightenment is. But, the topic is too important – I mean, put that more generally: the topic of spiritual growth – it's too important to leave in the old authoritarian mould that there are a few people who are fully enlightened and we simply do whatever they say.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmmm.

Tart: Maybe that will help, but they don't produce that many enlightened students, so clearly the system's kind of inefficient. We need to look from the ground up: what is spiritual growth? What kind of technique is effective for what particular kind of person? You know, the fantasy I have is that someday we'll get an issue of *Consumers Reports* and it will be the issue devoted to different spiritual paths, and it will talk about what kind of warranties different spiritual paths carry, what kind of risks and so forth, and what's best for a particular person. We could research that, but at the moment it's a lot of hit or miss and it's very inefficient.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah.

Tart: I mean, just to take a personal example, for instance. I tried to learn how to meditate starting, what, thirty-, forty-years ago, and it didn't work. And I long ago decided that whatever talent it took to be a meditator I didn't have it. I had to do other kinds of things.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah.

Tart: And then fifteen-, twenty-years ago when I met Shinzen Young, particularly, I got taught it in a way that resonated with me, and oh, I could make some progress on this, you know. Maybe I do have some of the talent, I could make a little progress. But why didn't we know that more efficiently forty years ago so I wouldn't have wasted my time doing methods that simply didn't work for me?

Dr. Dave: What did you say *did* work for you?

Tart: I learned some meditation from a man named Shinzen Young.

Dr. Dave: Oh, OK.

Tart: He's a Westerner actually, but "Shinzen" is the name he took when he became a monk in Japan years ago. And he's experimented a lot with adapting traditional Eastern meditation stuff to fit better in with Westerners, and I think he's made a lot of progress there.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmm. And so is that the basis of your book on meditation, then? You've written a book – I think the title is *Practical Meditation*, isn't it?

Tart: Oh yeah, *Mind Science: Meditation for Practical People*. That's one of the basis. Also, teachings from Sogyal Rinpoche, a Tibetan lama I've studied with a lot, and mixed in with stuff from the Gurdjieff tradition. I'm a synthesizer there; I'm not a pure channel for any particular tradition, but I figure stuff that worked for me, who is probably not naturally suited for it, must work for some other people. And I've experimented with teaching workshops to scientists and intellectuals and scholars, and they've gotten something out of it, so I figure I'm doing something right.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, terrific. Terrific. That's kind of how I am too, and you know, kind of pick and choose what works for me. And I'm always really interested in the practical side of psychology, and you know, if it doesn't work for us psychologists, then who are we to recommend it. So, I'm wondering, has there ever been a time of crisis or transition in your life where your knowledge of esoteric psychology or traditional psychology, or the spiritual traditions you've studied has kind of pulled you through?

Tart: Well I suppose so, but I don't normally think in that style. You know, we have a bias in trying to understand spiritual traditions, or anything else in life actually, where the spectacular gets our attention. But I think a lot of personal and spiritual growth is a much slower kind of thing where the bad side of things just sort of gradually slides away without there being any particular crisis. So for me, when I look back on my own growth it's been more that sort of gradual evolution. It's not that I have some big dramatic experience and use that spiritual technique, it's more that I will suddenly notice, "Oh, that bad habit of mine that I've been doing for the past 25-years, I haven't done it in several years. Gosh! That's nice. That sure takes a load off."

Dr. Dave: (Laughs) Right.

Tart: But it makes a lousy story, doesn't it?

Dr. Dave: (Laughs) I believe one of your current projects is called TASTE. I think that's an acronym. Maybe you tell us what that's all about.

Tart: Right. It's an acronym for The Archives of Scientists' Transcendent Experiences. You know, because I'm known for my unusual interests, then when I give talks somewhere or write books and the like, a lot of people contact me about unusual experiences they've had. And that includes a lot of scientists, where typically they'll say I'm the first person they've ever mentioned this unusual experience to because they know they'd get in trouble with their colleagues if they dared to talk about it at home.

Dr. Dave: Right.

Tart: Now you know that doesn't just apply to scientists; it applies to people in all sorts of professions, but scientists are the ones I work with. So sometimes just by being able to tell it to me it's been sort of therapeutic for them; they've got it off their chest, right? Here's somebody who'll listen and won't look at them like they're crazy. So this website I've started, The Archives of Scientists' Transcendent Experiences, TASTE, has been a place where scientists can anonymously, if they feel at all threatened, describe the transcendent spiritual and parapsychological kinds of experiences they've had, and not only get it off their chest but have a chance to help other scientists realize, oh! this sort of thing happens. Now, another reason I've chosen scientists is I'm using social prejudices. I mean, don't you think that if a physicist talks to God it's more profound than if a plumber talks to God? That's silly!

Dr. Dave: I think, yeah, we have a kind of – actually I was going to ask you if this wasn't some sort of argument ad hominem in a kind of positive way.

Tart: No, no, I'm just riding on the coattails of social prejudices where we think physicist are inherently more profound people than plumbers are.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, yeah.

Tart: I'm sure there's a lot more plumbers that are much more profound than a lot of physicists! I'll use the social prejudice. So anybody can read this, OK, and most of the visitors to the site are just people from all walks of life who share that prejudice that – “Gosh, this is a research chemist who talked to an angel – that's so important.”

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Tart: But I only post experiences from people who are conventionally recognized as scientists. That also just simply keeps the load down so I don't get overloaded with a zillion things to work with.

Dr. Dave: OK, so if people are interested in that they'll be able to find that from that same website that I've mentioned before, that I will post. So, we're kind of at –

Tart: Actually, you're going to post two website links. One is to my personal website that's got a lot of my articles and books and stuff there, and the other, the TASTE site, is specifically the transcendent experiences of scientists.

Dr. Dave: OK, I'll make sure that I've got both of those.

Tart: Right. That latter one particularly I'm trying to undermine the social stereotype that really smart people don't have any thing to do with the spiritual. It's not true at all.

Dr. Dave: Um-hmm, good. Well we're kind of at the end here. I wonder if there's anything that I haven't asked you about that I should have, or that you'd want people to know.

Tart: (Laughs) Probably!

Dr. Dave: (Laughs) Anything that comes to mind?

Tart: I'll let you be inspired to figure out what that is. There's so many things I have fun talking about that I leave it up to you.

Dr. Dave: OK, well I really want to thank you for taking the time to give me this interview.

Tart: Oh it's been a pleasure, David.

Dr. Dave: OK.

Tart: And I hope the information that we've talked about is useful to people.

Dr. Dave: I'm sure it will be. So thanks so much.

Tart: OK. Take care then.

Dr. Dave: Bye-bye.