

EUROPEAN TRANSPERSONAL ASSOCIATION
REFLECTIONS ON THE 2005 CONFERENCE
MOSCOW, RUSSIA

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The meetings of the European Transpersonal Association (EUROTAS) held during 2003 in Sinaia, Romania and 2004 in London, England generated some questions regarding the perspectives of transpersonal psychology in Europe. The incubation period of several years afforded an opportunity to deeply reflect upon the questions, which created a meaningful foundation for discussions at the 2005 Conference held in Moscow.

Some of the questions inquired: What is the nature of transpersonal community? Is it a professional community, where individuals are focused primarily on their jobs and are only slightly curious regarding the attainments in other disciplines which study consciousness? Is it a group of friends? What would be the “right” identity for a transpersonal community in Europe? What is the main goal of a transpersonal conference? Is it to continue reasoning about the transformative potential of non-ordinary states of consciousness? Is it a productive, inspirational exchange of information regarding methods, techniques, principles? Or is it simply a meeting of opened hearts?

What are open hearts doing when they meet one another?—They begin to exchange love, to unite the divided world into one whole. This exchange of glances, smiles, sudden and non-important phrases is equally important and perhaps more meaningful than solely an exchange of information on methods, techniques, and theoretical principles. The state of consciousness “may I give you a hug” is more transforming than any other ordinary and non-ordinary state of consciousness.

A meeting of this kind happened in Moscow. Its participants were enriched in their hearts, filled with love. Was this heart space the main thing that most of participants were looking for? Was this the main inner reason that prompted people from different parts of the Earth to overcome difficulties of long trips and endure the complex environment of Russia?

The overfilled auditoriums for plenary presentations, and the rooms for workshops, gave an answer, and bright, inspired discussions in panels, in the corridors and after conference proceedings, articulate the scenario even more clearly: those different people from various countries were looking for (and successfully gained) some other treasure. This treasure was DISCOVERY.

NOTE: Readers are invited to the EUROTAS website where selected materials regarding the conference will periodically be posted: www.EUROTAS.org

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Discovery in the so called hard sciences, in business or technology, amounts to an algorithm, method, or trick that can be copied and applied. Presentation of this discovery must be in the form of instant information, constituted from formulas and instructions and very well dried from feelings. Some guests of conference proceedings, that were expecting presentations of this kind, actually ran away from the room, where one of the workshops was conducted, with an angry shout “Disgrace, they have lighted candelas!”

While speaking about transpersonal-oriented knowledge, however, it is appropriate to mention Maslow’s opinion expressed in his *Motivation and Personality* that, if science would consist only of regulations and methods, it would never differ from playing chess or dental treatment (From *Motivation and Personality*, translated into Russian and printed in St. Petersburg [“Piter” publishers] in 2003).

Discovery in the transpersonal field is something new (well forgotten?), previously unreflected, hidden, and protected by some invisible door deep inside the discoverer. Techniques, methods, or tricks in this case are the keys unlocking it.

So, the Moscow conference was not only a fair of places in a heart space—but a fair of keys as well! It is impossible to describe all the keys that could be seen in numerous encounters (more than 50 workshops, plenary presentations, and panel discussions). Moreover, it is even more difficult to describe any of them by words, because the essence of every key is beyond the words. Even the words of paper presenters would not be so interesting and effective when separated from the manners of moving and sounds of voices. Nevertheless, an attempt to share impressions on some of the keys will be made.

The start of the Conference was very symbolic: a session on “meditation about interconnectedness” by *Dorothea Galuska*. Dorothea called upon all participants to be citizens of the Earth, to be the Earth itself, to move to its Center, and to go to distant corners of an endless Universe. All those routes and lands were united, and the focus of unification was inside us.

In the first plenary session *Vladimir Maykov*, President of the Russian Association of Transpersonal Psychology and Psychotherapy, and a member of the EUROTAS Board, presented a paper on the transpersonal tradition in Russian culture. The evolution of transpersonal studies and practices in Russia involved five stages. The first stage of this process included the prehistory of the transpersonal project in the Russian culture (from the beginning of Russian statehood until the 1970s). The second stage (1970s–1980s) included the activity of underground groups of enthusiasts, who were reading journals and books on transpersonal psychology which managed to get past the “iron curtain,” and practiced what they learned from these books and journals. The third stage was legalization; the fourth stage—holistic romanticism. The main characteristic of the fifth (modern) stage is professionalism: the core of the transpersonal movement is formed by professionals whose qualifications meet the standard of the Russian and international professional communities. Vladimir had made a remark that during all those periods—and nowadays as well—

Russian culture is transpersonal; so, speaking about transpersonal projects in the culture, we must mean Russian culture as it is.

In Russian (maybe in other languages or cultures too), *transpersonal* sometimes is associated with *trance*. So, *Barbara Schasseur's* workshop "Trances and their Impact on the Therapy" was quite suitable for a transpersonal conference held in Russia, and delighted Russian guests. Barbara, Clinical Psychologist D.E.S.S. University Paris, encountered trance very early in her personal therapeutic process. It has been the real initiation of her life, a constant source of research and discovery, completely changing and re-dimensioning her concept of healing. Furthermore her work with chronically addictive patients challenged her to look for alternative methods to using medicinal drugs and develop a theory and philosophy setting aside readjustment as the only criterion for health. Body work was the first step to a different kind of healing; trance states was the second. Following this path Barbara studied with different shamanic and religious traditions using trance states in their rituals. Each experience widened her vision concerning healing states and brought new questions, making her realize the necessity to integrate spiritual concepts and development in the therapeutic process. In the workshop Barbara demonstrated how trance can be a pathway to experiencing the soul and inner self generated healing.

Stuart Sovatsky (BA, Religion Princeton; PhD, Psychology, CIIS), Co-President of the USA based Association for Transpersonal Psychology (ATP), in his workshop "Saving Marriages With Spiritual Sentiments," based upon 30 years of experience, with experiential exercises and potential live demonstration, proved that no matter how severe the marital conflict or how advanced toward separation or divorce, the deft use of admiration, apology, and forgiveness can revive love and creativity and renew marriages.

Another Co-President of the ATP, *David Lukoff*, Ph.D., a licensed clinical psychologist in California and Professor of Psychology at Saybrook Graduate School in San Francisco, in his presentation "The Journey to Spirituality in Mental Health" quoted Joseph Campbell's observation that most people prefer to listen to a lecture on God, than meet God. This has been true in the mental health disciplines as well – he noticed. Yet there is evidence that including a spiritual perspective in diagnosis and treatment can increase the effectiveness with clients. In his talk he traced the history of the increasing openness to spirituality in the mental health profession and discussed possible ways to work spiritual issues and intervention. Many people who have mental disorders have genuine religious experiences during episodes that provide a source of strength and community. The recovery movement led by former patients has highlighted the importance of spirituality in recovery. Unfortunately mental health systems and professionals are not always adequately prepared to recognize the symptoms or to support. To redress the lack of sensitivity to religious and spiritual problems, Lukoff and colleagues successfully proposed a DSM-IV diagnostic category, Religious or Spiritual Problems, which has its roots in the transpersonal movement's attention to spiritual emergencies.

Joachim and Dorothea Galuska (Clinical psychologists, Germany), *Hans Peter Weidinger* (M.D, Integrative gestalt therapist, Austria) and *Anna Maurer*

(Psychotherapist, Austria), *Ingo B. Jahrsetz* (Ph.D., Holotropic Breathwork practitioner, Honorary Chairman of Spiritual Emergency Network, Germany) dedicated their plenary presentations to similar items, as discussed below.

In their paper “The Awakening Soul as the Heart of Transpersonal Psychology” *Joachim* and *Dorothea* noted that the transpersonal orientation develops a new soul understanding: the soul can be experienced and at the same time is a structure which follows the ego-identity within the process of consciousness development. When it is awakening, the soul can be experienced as the place of internal vividness, freedom, capacity of suffering, healing power, and intuition. It has a personal and a super-personal side and can be understood as the individual way of the manifestation of the absolute. A soulful life reconciles with its own soul, a godlike soulful life is filled of divinity and absolute.

Hans Peter Weidinger and *Anna Maurer*, who have been working for many years as transpersonal psychotherapists integrating transpersonal concepts into their daily psychotherapeutic practice, raised the question as to whether it is possible that a transpersonal method alone can lead to liberation and self-realization. When a person can have spiritual experiences in a holotropic breathwork session and when spiritual awakening can take place, do we have to follow a traditional spiritual path with all the cultural impacts?—They are often asked this question. Why does somebody need a spiritual teacher when there is a transpersonal psychotherapist? When they see that a client or a participant of their seminars goes deeper into a spiritual process, they recommend to him or her to look for a spiritual tradition or a spiritual teacher. It does not mean that they send him or her away. The client can continue doing holotropic breathwork anyway. But Hans Peter and Anna know the limits of the methods they use and also know that they are not spiritual teachers.

In “Where does Transpersonal Psychology lead to?” *Ingo Jahrsetz* quoted Wilber who has said: “My work is to integrate Freud and Buddha.” Ingo has been leading training experiences in transpersonal psychology for three years—and can confirm how difficult in terms of group-dynamics it can be if the psyche starts to open up to the spiritual truth. To overcome the narcissistic character of the >I< means to pass an extremely frightening doorway. For transpersonal psychology this is a question of having enough potent teachers to lead people through this doorway. Ingo completed his paper with the hypothesis that transpersonal psychology may lead to unconditional love, overcoming narcissism of Ego, anxiety, and hate.

The appointment of spiritual practices in modern psychotechnologies was the core theme of symposia and panel discussions on “Religions and Spirituality,” “Oriental paradigms in Western Psychology & Psychotherapy,” and others. So, many conference events were related to spirituality in life and practice. But, speaking about spirituality, we noticed with regret that this coin has two sides. In this connection two presentations were of especial interest: A workshop entitled “The Psychic Defense” by the president of EUROTAS and ALUBRAT (Brazilian-Portuguese Transpersonal Association), *Vitor Rodrigues*, Ph.D. (*Portugal*), and a paper “The Shadow Side of Spiritual Organization” by psychologist and

UKCP (United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy) psychotherapist *Rupert Tower (UK)*.

This paper by *Rupert Tower* had four aims: first, to introduce the theme of the Shadow and Power with a Russian fairytale, “The Black Magician Czar”; second, to discuss briefly Rupert’s understanding of Jung’s ideas about the personal and archetypal Shadow; third, to explore the tensions that manifest in psychotherapy training organizations between holding a Vision and organizational practice, with particular reference to the relationship between founders and later generations. In his paper Rupert addressed the issue of finding frameworks that can welcome Shadow dynamics and more creatively manage the tensions and engage with them; that can allow for difference, resolve long-standing conflicts, and contain such naturally occurring splits as will inevitably emerge, without being torn apart by them. Rupert assessed ways and processes of surviving, confronting, naming, and owning the Shadow within organizational life, and suggested some innovative forms of holding authority and leadership for the 21st century.

Vitor Rodrigues has been dealing clinically both with non-psychotic, well adapted people that described experiences of encountering with energies or “entities” from “other dimensions of being” and also with disturbed people for whom contact with other realms of life does seem to play a role in suffering and behavioral problems. In some cases, directly addressing issues of psychic defense against “entities” or “invading energies” produces dramatic clinical improvement where psychiatric medication or “normal” psychotherapies were not doing the job. Vitor’s workshop dealt with both parapsychological evidence relevant to discussing issues of psychic attack and Wisdom Traditions that explicitly mention the phenomenon of psychic attack, “demons,” “lost souls,” Attendees of the workshop discussed “inner demons,” projection mechanisms (and their connection to possible “outer demons”), symptoms of possible attacks, self-protection procedures both naïve or elaborated and their relevance, and other issues like personal power, grounding, centeredness and subtle structures of human beings.

In the final lines of this overview it is—on one hand—paradoxical, but on another—quite reasonable – to introduce the event that could be considered an epigraph for the conference itself, and the title of which could be an epigraph for narration about it. This event was a workshop entitled “Living with an Open Heart” by the leader of French Transpersonal Association and Institute of Research and Studies in Transpersonal Therapies, *Bernadette Blin (France)*. Her experiential workshop was about one’s capacity to open the heart to unconditional love, which is unconditional welcoming. Those who participated met themselves as unique beings in their humanity and fraternity (or brotherhood), undressing judgments and conditionings to open themselves to vulnerability. Participants of the workshop explored relationships to the others with their body, breathing, voice—and this experience brought them not only to the treasure of love inside, outside, elsewhere, everywhere—but also to the conclusion, that can be the conclusion of this report.

Only living with the open heart—indivisible from the whole part of the heart space – is it possible to be **transpersonal** in fact. Only living with the open heart is it

possible to create, propose, and pass the keys unlocking invisible doors deep inside; namely, the doors to the space **of**—and **for** hearts, united and filled with love.

The Author

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