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Editorial

Report From The 2012 Eurotas Conference In Latvia

GIOVANNA CALABRESE, Ph.D.

In September the 14th annual European Transpersonal Association Conference organized by the Latvian Transpersonal Psychology and Psychotherapy Association was held in Jurmala, Latvia.

As stated by the organization, the conference was focused on

“the interaction of creativity and spirituality in the field of psychology and psychotherapy, as well as on the role of these phenomena in the growth, transformation, and healing in the everyday life of an individual and in the development of human society as a whole.”

There was a warm and efficient organization as well as a creative and transpersonal artistic atmosphere throughout the conference. This included an artistic exposition in the main conference hall, a musical “tune-up” at the beginning of each morning session, and numerous cultural events planned for

the evenings. One of the cultural events was an excursion to Pedvale to visit a well-known Latvian sculptor, Ojars Feldbergs, and to see a traditional Fire Ritual. All of these events surely inspired the attendees to share their experiences in the various workshops and lectures.

Presenters came not only from Europe, they also came from the United States, South American countries, Asia, Israel, and South Africa. For four days they discussed the main topics including *Creativity and Spirituality in Everyday Life, Nature – People – Ritual, Synthesis and Integration, and the Role of Transpersonal Psychology in Development of Global Process*. There were also many experiential workshops in the afternoons.

Here I would like to draw attention to the lecture by David Lukoff on “Scientific Research in Transpersonal Psychology” followed by a panel discussion with members from the Eurotas and ATP boards.

David Lukoff showed that the impact of humanistic and transpersonal concepts appears to be increasing within general psychology. I agree with him when he says: “It is our job to reclaim those concepts”. The growing interest of mainstream psychology and psychotherapy for spirituality has to urge us to show to an audience as large as possible what we are doing as transpersonal psychotherapists, counsellors, <and> social workers, researchers and educators in general. We have to communicate the development of transpersonal psychology to agencies and institutions from which health, education, and social services are governed and organized.

David Lukoff referred to the two indexed journals explicitly focusing on transpersonal psychology, the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* and the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, to emphasize the importance of empirical research within transpersonal psychology. He showed

there is a trend toward an increase of empirical research studies published by these two journals, going from almost 5% in the interval 1970-79 to more than 15% in 2000-2009.

However, as Steven Schmitz demonstrated during the transpersonal research panel discussion, to reach a larger audience we must be aware to use the appropriate language, to utilize the research methods designed for transpersonal topics, and to be rigorous when we do research or publish clinical reports. Therefore if we want to convey our vision in other fields we need to speak both in scientific terms and from a transpersonal perspective.

Psychotherapy, in general, has always struggled between science and philosophy, and this is even truer for the discipline of transpersonal psychotherapy. However, we must consider that people making decisions in the field of health care, education and social services rely more on scientific demonstrations than on philosophical argumentation. Referring again to Lukoff's speech we must consider that "it is not unusual for a new discipline to require several decades to find its bearing conceptually before really taking off with an empirical research agenda." It seems to me that now this is even more necessary than ever.

As director of this journal I found David's and Steven's talks very encouraging and supportive, we have to follow the trend of empirical research to support our transpersonal concepts. We have to be aware that there are research tools coming from the qualitative research field that are fitting for transpersonal research and are available to provide such empirical support. It is possible to do research on art-therapy, non-ordinary state of consciousness, and spirituality, just to mention a few areas of interest in the field of transpersonal psychology.

For this reason, without neglecting papers focused on

philosophical discussion, this journal also encourages authors to send papers based on empirical research that describe their approach to and provide evidence of the effectiveness of transpersonal psychotherapy.

Giovanna Calabrese
ITJ Director