

Editorial

How Transpersonal Psychology Is Building Walls Instead Of Bridges

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Recently a Special Issue on "Psychotherapy vs. Spirituality" published in March 2017 by the International Journal of Psychotherapy, now available on-line, raised perplexity, if not even scandal among EUROTAS members. In this issue Peter Schulthess raised many critiques to transpersonal psychology. He reported also some guidelines of the EAP (the publisher of IJP) about what can be considered psychotherapy, arguing that transpersonal psychotherapy should not be considered a valid method.

I will not spend many words about Schulthess's arguments. As far as I am concerned the point is not to discuss who is scientific and who is not. Having myself a strong back ground in research in medical science, it is worthless to remind Schulthess that nobody from the scientific arena will really consider psychotherapy as "scientifically based". May be just the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy has some aura of evidence based practice, not for sure psychodynamics, which is quite represented in EAP (maybe for historical reason), or Jungian (read also the replay by David Boadella on the same IJP issue).

In this editorial, however, I would like to admonish EUROTAS members to not take Schulthess's discussion at a personal level. Of course I can understand their resentment, however, my call would be to consider it as a chance to grow, to view these critiques as a stimulus to leave a certain attitude to act as victims (*they are attacking us* as the EUROTAS president, Bernardette Blin, says) and most of all we should not persist on a road that the academic world would never accept (*we are a new science* as Pierluigi Lattuada says in the title of his paper).

Psychology has been in the scientific field for many years. Since the first statement by Watson, "Psychology, as the behaviorist views it, is a purely objective, experimental branch of natural science which needs introspection as little as do the science of chemistry and physics...", mainstream psychologists reached a good position and now they can give rules and define what can be considered psychotherapy and what can not.

I think that we should accept this, and try to understand their world, learn how to use their language so that we could share with them our vision. Instead, I see that transpersonal psychotherapists keep creating new *fancy* terms. I would suggest to learn how to use their instruments to heighten our credibility. Using the tools, both quantitative and qualitative, coming from the academia, we should provide structural and conceptual basis to our practices. Instead transpersonal psychotherapists discuss at philosophical levels their psychotherapeutic models, providing evidences only from their personal clinical experience.

Speaking about research, I see that transpersonal psychotherapists go on to invent all sort of different research methods. Just have a look at the many different ones in Braud&Anderson. Moreover, it seems that each transpersonal psychotherapist is eager to invent his/her own method. However, almost none of the research papers published in a transpersonal journal could provide a good argument worth to be discussed within the academia about states of consciousness or meditation or body-mind integration. I see that researchers both from mainstream psychology and medical science are discussing the effect of meditation and altered

state of consciousness, using their research tools. Why do we have to create new ones? I think this can give the impression that transpersonal psychotherapists simply do not know how to do research.

We should talk about science when we can use objective observation and measurements, instead transpersonals talk about a *new science*.

From my experience I can see that when we use mainstream research tools, in a proper way of course, when we speak the same language of the academia (as shown by the studies on Biotransenergetica already published in the 7th issue of ITJ and in this last issue) we are welcome and listened to.

However, how could we pretend to be taken seriously by mainstream psychologists without respecting their rules or pretending to have our own peculiar rules. Unfortunately it is the mainstream who can decide to let us in the field or leave us out. Of course it is leaving us out, with all the consequences at professional level.

To me it is as if transpersonal psychotherapists are walking on a path parallel to the one the rest of the psychotherapists of different orientation defined. My position is that if we want to wide our area of influence, "to contribute to the transformation of the world" quoting B. Blin, we have to take their path first, then we can open in a new direction. Unfortunately, I see that transpersonal psychotherapists with their attitude are building a wall that is growing higher and higher at a rate that is speeding up.