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Approaches to Transpersonal Psychotherapy: Introduction to Special Topic Section

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Approaches to Transpersonal Psychotherapy: Introduction to Special Topic Section

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Transpersonal psychotherapy, as the practical application of transpersonal psychology, has arguably received less attention in transpersonal literature than the broad conceptual frameworks of the discipline. Yet it is the clinical embodiments of transpersonal principles that have the potential to bring transformative energies into the practice of psychology. As a small contribution toward this enterprise, this issue's special topic section presents five very diverse papers focused on transpersonal psychotherapy.

Liora Birnbaum, Aiton Birnbaum, and Ofra Mayseless explicate a way to understand various levels of bringing spirituality into psychotherapy in their paper, "The Role of Spirituality in Mental Health Interventions: A Developmental Perspective." This clearly-presented stage model can serve as a useful guide for experienced transpersonal psychotherapists who seek to better conceptualize their own way of introducing transpersonal content into therapeutic arenas. It may also provide encouragement to psychotherapists who have been thus far hesitant to introduce a transpersonal approach into their work to sense a way to both begin working in this mode, as well as offering insight into how deeper engagement of this sort might be accomplished.

José M. Tirado, in his paper titled, "The Buddhist Notion of Emptiness and its Potential Contribution to Psychology and Psychotherapy," contrasts Western and Eastern views of the individual, focusing on how overly-narrow and reified Western views of the self as an isolated monad may lead to psychological difficulties which, in turn, might be remedied by Eastern views and their related practices, particularly as derived from the rich insights stemming from the Buddhist tradition.

Specifically, this could lead to the recognition of a differently conceived and constructed sense of self as part of healing in psychotherapy.

In contrast to how transpersonal studies so often turn to the rich insights within Eastern cultures while ignoring the equally rich and often forgotten Western spiritual traditions, Dennis Patrick Slattery explores the applicability of a classic poem in his paper, "Dante's Terza Rima in *The Divine Comedy*: The Road of Therapy." The map provided in this poem, which is much more than a mere cognitive map but, rather, a coherent literary device to alter consciousness, operates through a constantly oscillating rhythm uniting past, present, and future in a tapestry of history, memory, mimesis, and myth. Together, these can serve as a transpersonal guide to the journey clients take in psychotherapy, as they learn to relate their personal narratives of past, present, and possible future selves to the heartbeat of their more mundane lives and their higher spirituality.

In the "Integral Approach to Mental Suffering," Laura Boggio Gilot proposes a model of psychological suffering that unites scientific psychology and meditative wisdom. Through comparing these disparate traditions, she expands both developmental and psychotherapeutic theory, providing many insights applicable to the practice of psychotherapy.

Last, Andrée Salom, in "The Therapeutic Potentials of a Museum Visit," outlines the transformational potential of museums. As the repository of archetypal objects, museums can elicit transpersonal experiences and can be used as part of psychotherapy to promote expanded awareness and transpersonal growth.

Together, these five papers share a common theme, namely that the range of possibilities for developing and refining transpersonal approaches to psychotherapy are only in the beginning stage of being explored. It is our hope that this special topic section will stimulate such exploration and encourage psychotherapists to creatively reach out with avowedly transpersonal approaches in their work.

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