

International Journal of Transpersonal Studies

Volume 18 | Issue 1

Article 1

1-1-1999

No Wonder

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Recommended Citation

Gross, P. L. (1999). Gross, P. L. (1999). No wonder. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 18(1), 1–2.. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 18 (1). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies/vol18/iss1/1>



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No Wonder

ONLY A few weeks left before going to press and still no introduction. Browsing through the nearly complete journal issue in front of me, I realize with some pleasure that it is a good example of our editorial vision: a publication with a broad approach to the transpersonal to stimulate, evoke, and delight. But seeing the vision turned into reality leaves me at my desk paralyzed with the imperative of writing a literate introduction commensurate with the contents.

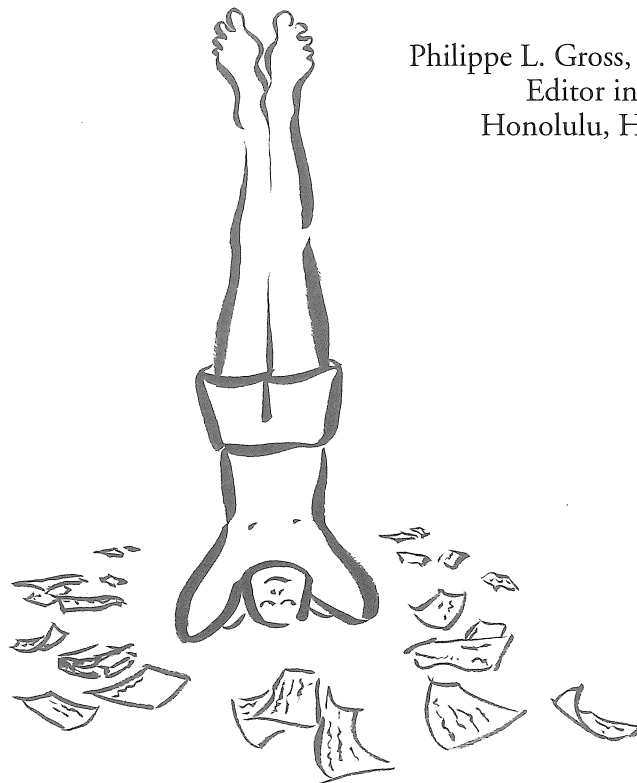
Three weeks later, I was still sculpting and polishing my first sentence—by then radiant but meaningless. Time was running out. An introduction worthy of this issue had to be written—one that would suitably pay homage to our distinguished authors and inspire others to follow. How could I find the right words to express these lofty feelings? My exuberance was drying up; I was drowning in the first of the three *gunas*,¹ *tamas*—heaviness of mind. Maybe the mental blocks were in the body. Maybe yoga could help. I stretched, stood on my head, and explored new breathing techniques. Several blackouts later, my mind was blank. My memory, too. Unable to remember what it was I wanted to say, another week went by.

Back at my desk, the deadline rapidly approaching, I began to write frantically about the history of the transpersonal movement, its lack of a clearcut definition, and the merits of being undefined. Perhaps a field of studies that explores the boundless could never be defined. In line with Gödel's theorem there may be merit in being classless. It was a beautiful, self-serving argument to avoid writing an introduction at all. Clearly, I was experiencing *rajas*, a state of mind described by Patanjali as frenetic but without clarity.

Since the three *gunas* alternate, *sattva*, the state of clarity in Patanjali's system, would most likely be next. But deadlines have no patience, and I know from past experiences that the light is often brightest after the show is over. With an hour left to write that perfect introduction, I decided to move in yet another direction by stealing the story of the "three thieves," from the Vedānta which illustrates the three *gunas*—a story that may shed light on my condition:

Three thieves fell upon a merchant who was on his way home and robbed him. *Tamas* wanted to kill the merchant in order to destroy any trace of the crime. The other two hesitated, and *Rajas* said, "Let's tie him to a tree. Whether or not he is found will depend on his *karma*." They bound him to a tree and hurried away. After a while, *Sattva* returned and cut the ropes. The merchant was overjoyed. "You've saved my life," he said. "Come back to the village with me and I'll reward you." "No, that won't do," replied *Sattva*. "The police know me to be a thief. The only thing I could do was to release you from your bonds."²

Okay, my introduction has not obeyed my intentions, but strangely enough I now feel free from my editorial bonds. Looking back, I was faced with an impossible task... How can one introduce Fadiman's laughable memories, Combs and Krippner's evolutionary grand synthesis, Aitken's sounds of the valley stream, Maikov's thunderous bursts, Claybrook's circles, Marsella's ecology of spirit, Diespecker's flimflam, Volohonsky's drunken poetry, Thorne's balloons, Soidla's birdtalk, and Shapiro's stepping out? No wonder a wandering introduction.



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Notes

¹*Guna* is a Sanskrit word which literally means "fundamental quality." There are three *Gunas*: *tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva*; together, according to the Yoga traditions, they refer to the principal building blocks of Nature. From a psychological perspective, they correspond to three distinct states of mind: heaviness, frenetic activity, and clarity.

²From *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (1989, Shambhala: Boston) under *Guna*.