EDITOR’S NOTE: SPECIAL ISSUE ON
TRANSPERSONAL MEDIA

From the initial launching of the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology during 1969 it was apparent that beyond a focus on the individual, agents of change in society-at-large would be important critical catalysts in bringing to fruition the image of humankind and worldview supported, sought, studied, and actualized by transpersonal psychology. An array of disciplines and fields concerned with society and culture rallied toward that end, but more far-reaching now is an emerging movement that is silently and subtly bringing transpersonal elements and awareness into the lives of the mass populace. That pervasive agent is the mass media.

A year or two ago we started noticing the arrival in the JTP office of a few manuscripts relevant to this theme, and simultaneously discovered that Dan Gaylinn, Executive Director of ATP (Association for Transpersonal Psychology), had special interest and expertise in the connection between the mass media (particularly film) and transpersonal theory and practice. He agreed to work with us in bringing together this special issue of the Journal, and we are most grateful for his involvement as Guest Associate Editor. This volume is offered in recognition of the role that the media are contributing, and have the potential to contribute, in effecting a transpersonal vision in society-at-large.

The meaning of media is wide in scope, as discussed by Gaylinn in our opening article, which provides an introductory overview to this special topic. He recognizes the potential of media’s many manifestations, and draws the reader into thinking broadly and deeply about the mass media as a powerful force in bringing transpersonal consciousness to many in a shared manner. Further focusing on cinema, as do most of the articles, he generates a typology to think about the ways in which a film can be transpersonal, namely: in content, form, or purpose. He speaks as well to the artists who create and communicate through such media.

Such a design element is further honed by Dana Klisanin as a final piece in this issue. She offers an in-depth process for crafting media designed in both content and contextual aspects to catalyze and guide society and the human species toward planetary consciousness. She names the concept and approach Evolutionary Guidance Media (EGM), and is currently applying the EGM framework to the development of a film, entitled Project Milky Way.

Mark Kaplan invites the reader into an intense exploration of the transpersonal dimensions of cinema. Replete with examples from an array of films, he demonstrates: transpersonal elements inherent in the nature of the medium of cinema itself; incorporation of transpersonal influences by way of content, structure, or style (and the particularly transformative character when all three facets synchronize), and offers a classification scheme of transpersonal effects of cinematic experiences on the viewer and the greater culture on personal, interpersonal, and collective levels. He calls for and suggests additional theoretical analysis and further research on the topic.
Debbie Charles issues a wide-ranging appeal for attention to the development of transpersonal film theory. In discussing the psychological impact of film, she observes that psychoanalytic film theories and theorists (and more recently Jungian) figure prominently, but that less has been offered from a transpersonal perspective. While films have the potential to influence the transpersonal development of the viewer, they can also serve a function in further exploring transpersonal theories. Likewise, transpersonal literature and theories can be applied in better understanding films.

Two articles, which revolve around an analysis of a specific film, lead us in that direction: Francis Lu’s article targets the film *Ikiru* subsequent to its 50th anniversary; Hayal Kackar and Thomas Roberts focus on *Fight Club*.

Building upon his previous articles on *Ikiru* published in *JTP*, 19(2), 1987, but providing a deeper and more detailed analysis, Francis Lu illuminates the transpersonal nature and meaning of the film. His analysis reveals both the outward and inward arcs of the main character’s transformative journey. Outwardly, the film portrays what is known in the literary world (and further adapted by Joseph Campbell) as the Hero’s Journey; inwardly the journey entails a healing spiritual path from personal to transpersonal consciousness. Throughout, as Lu illustrates, a complementary blending of Eastern and Western aesthetic themes becomes apparent.

Hayal Kackar and Tom Roberts analyze the film *Fight Club* by selecting to focus on the plot-line, actions, and events—recognizing, however, that much awaits further analysis. The authors apply Grof’s theory of the human unconscious to an understanding of the film, concentrating on the perinatal level in their analysis. Employing the framework provided by the Basic Perinatal Matrices, themes inherent in Grof’s theory vividly illustrate the plot-line, actions, and events in the film. Parallels between the theory and the film serve to deepen one’s understanding of both.

This Special Issue of the Journal offers but a small aperture into the meaning of transpersonal media, an inquiry which we hope our readers will continue. Accordingly, and in lieu of our regular *JTP* features of *Books Our Editors are Reading* and *Book Reviews*, Mark Kaplan offers a Resource Directory of books, periodicals, websites, archives, and other material for our continuing inquiry.

While this issue was in process I discovered that *Venture Inward*, the official periodical of ARE (the Association for Research and Enlightenment) was publishing an issue that spotlighted an interview with Steve Simon entitled “A voice for films with a soul.” ‘Now that is resonance,’ I thought, and perhaps more “evidence” that something recognizable by other groups as well is percolating in society-at-large (Simon’s work is discussed in Gaylinn’s article). We are pleased to present to you this incipient effort to capture the developing nature of this movement and invite you, our readers, to join us in celebrating, augmenting, and critiquing this initial attempt to bring focus to the nexus between the mass media and the transpersonal terrain.