EDITOR’S NOTE

The articles in this issue have relevance to clinicians, theoreticians/researchers, as well as general readers interested in the meaning of spiritual maturation from a variety of perspectives and the potential role of spiritual experiences in healing psychosis.

Drawing from his decades of work (study, research, professional development, and personal experience) Stuart Sovatsky in our opening article invites the reader into an understanding of the yogic concept of kundalini as a life energy and maturational/developmental force in physio-spiritual maturation. He traces the role kundalini plays from embryonic beginnings and throughout the gestation period until it becomes dormant at the base of the spine but potentially reawakens in adult life, gradually or spontaneously. This process leads to human development from a perspective that Sovatsky terms “maturation of the ensouled body.” While acknowledging the path of the kundalini yogi, the article focuses more directly on kundalini in lifelong enriching marriages. He calls upon clinicians to build models of marriage and family therapy practice that take in account this “deeper” developmental path and recommends further study of kundalini texts and practices as a guide to building more advanced models of human development.

Steve Taylor looks at spiritual maturation as incorporating and integrating the natural spirituality of childhood with positive aspects of ego development such as a self-reflective capacity, impulse control, ability to take perspectives, and others. Accordingly, transpersonal development involves recapturing this natural state of childhood spirituality but at the same time going beyond it. Childhood spirituality, however, is indeed a real and valid phenomenon, he asserts. He questions the validity of the “pre/trans fallacy,” proposing that “pre-egoic” spirituality is as valid as “trans-egoic.” Drawing from research, as well as literary writers and poets, he offers illustrative examples and first person accounts from children.

With Integration as a key developmental theme Joshua Knabb and Robert Welsh resurrect the writings of someone they consider a pioneer in integrative psychology: A. Reza Aresteh. Lamenting that his writings, dating to the 1950s, remain relatively unknown to many, they offer an historical and contextual understanding of the relevance and importance of his work to contemporary times. Aresteh’s Persian background (an early exposure to Sufism, combined with exposure to western developmental models through his graduate study in the United States) led him to develop a model of human development that integrated western perspectives with Eastern religions and philosophies, resulting in the position that in order to fully mature one must rise above one’s culture, a trans-cultural maturation.

Russell Phillips, David Lukoff, and Mary Stone then focus on spiritual experiences in people with psychosis, offering a variety of perspectives and therapeutic approaches, as well as an integrative framework for use by
researchers and clinicians. Based on their literature review, the authors acknowledge concern with their observations that historically when spirituality and psychosis have overlapped the experience was often viewed as pathological, but recognize a contemporary movement, even beyond the transpersonal community, to integrate spiritual issues into treatment, and call for dialogue among researchers as well as clinicians who work with such clients. Of particular concern are psychotic breaks that are spiritual in nature and if “worked through” can be a life-enhancing phase of development. Moreover, some physical and psychological manifestations frequently diagnosed as psychoses often represent openings of potential spiritual growth.

Decades ago Christina and Stan Grof coined the term “spiritual emergency” to refer to such experiences. They offered ten different types of spiritual emergency that Monika Goretzki, Michael Thalbourne, and Lance Storm used as a foundation to construct an instrument to measure the experience of spiritual emergency. Used alongside a scale constructed to measure the experience of psychotic symptoms, they found significant correlations leading them to consider that psychoses and spiritual emergencies may be different aspects of the same thing. They call upon clinicians to probe the content of experiences more deeply and with use of the instrument help ascertain if they conform to one of the patterns descriptive of spiritual emergency differentiated from psychopathology. Further validation studies, however, and future research hypotheses are suggested.

Six book reviews are offered in this issue. The first two books are written by authors who have previously published articles in this journal. Jorge Ferrer, a journal author as well as a member of the Journal’s editorial board, and his co-author, Jacob Sherman, have published The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, mysticism, religious studies, reviewed by Craig Chalquist. The focus of Judith Blackstone’s book The Empathic Ground: Intersubjectivity and nonduality in the psychotherapeutic process, reviewed by Jamal Granick, resonates with her earlier published article in the Journal. Randy Fauver then reviews Lynne McTaggart book on The Intention Experiment: Using your thoughts to change your life and the world, followed by Ryan Rominger’s review of a book by Jennifer Iljis entitled Introduction to Psychology: Inner reality, outer reality in diversity. The final two reviews deal with the perennial philosophy: The underlying religion: An introduction to the perennial philosophy, edited by Martin Lings and the late Clinton Minnaar, was reviewed by Samuel Bendeck and John Holman’s book The Return of the Perennial Philosophy: The supreme vision of Western esotericism, reviewed by Sean M. Saiter. In this issue of the Journal, the book review section also offers a list of recently reprinted or revised books. Finally, our familiar Books Our Editors are Reading section concludes the volume. As always, e-mail addresses are provided to encourage communication with the authors.

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