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Poročilo iz 16. mednarodnega EUROTAS kongresa z naslovom *Metamorfoza: razkrajanje, integriranje, zavestno življenje*

Report from the XVI. EUROTAS Conference entitled Metamorphosis: Disintegration, Integration, Conscious living

Letošnji EUROTAS kongres je potekal od 1. do 5. oktobra 2014 na Kreti v hotelskem kompleksu Pilot Beach Resort blizu manjše ribiške vasice Georgioupolis. Organizirala ga je Grška zveza za transpersonalno psihologijo in raziskovanje SYNTHESIS, v sodelovanju z Mednarodno transpersonalno zvezo (ITP) in Zvezo za raziskovanje transpersonalnega področja (ATP). S svojim bogatim programom in izbiro več dnevniških pred- in po-kongresnih delavnic je privabil okrog 220 udeležencev iz 25 različnih držav, tudi Slovenije.

Glavno temo in naslov kongresa *Metamorfoza: razkrajanje, integriranje in zavestno življenje* so osvetlili naslednji plenarni govorniki:

David Lukoff – Spiritual emergencies and spiritual practices.

Bernadette Blin – Do we need crisis to evolve? From victimhood to discipleship.

Stanley Krippner – Spiritually transformative experiences.

Anne Baring – The great challenge of our time: Awakening to the feminine.

Rosemary Anderson – Research in a sacred world.

Harald Walach – Towards a viable theory of consciousness.

Les Lancaster – A compromise too far: Mindfulness and the challenge of the sacred.

Marcie Boucouvalas – Reflection on the past, learning for the future.

Poleg plenarnih predavanj so imeli udeleženci možnost sodelovati v številnih 2-urnih delavnicah (okoli 60), ki so vsaka na svoj način odražale naslovno temo o preobrazbi in spreminjanju na različnih nivojih: terapija s pripovedovanjem zgodb, plesna terapija, kabalistična psihologija, prebujanje kundalini energije, prakticiranje šamanizma, alkimija, holotropno dihanje, teorije zavesti, meditacije, hevristična metoda v raziskovanju, idr.

Zadnji dan kongresa pa smo bili povabljeni na celodnevni izlet na Phaistos, zibelko grške civilizacije, ki je zadnjih 100 let prostor zelo zanimivih arheoloških odkritij. Odkritje temeljev Minoanske palače in mesta okrog nje nam nudi vpogled v življenje 3500 let stare kulture – načrt mesta, ogromne vaze za shranjevanje žita in olja, vodnjaki, figure za obredne namene, relief in pisava na darovalnih mizah, idr. Nakazuje tudi bogato duhovno življenje, ki nam je znano predvsem skozi komparativne študije svetovnih religij.

Celotno dogajanje na kongresu je potrjevalo, da sta bila glavna tema in naslov *Metamorfoza: razkrajanje, integriranje in zavestno življenje* izbrana kot zelo primerna tema za današnji čas in kot ponovno opozorilo, da smo v intenzivnem procesu globalnega spreminjanja, ki je nujno, če

hočemo kot rasa preživeti. Metamorfoza se dogaja nenehno na različnih ravneh in v vseh živih bitjih. Pogosto nismo pozorni nanjo ker je tako zelo sestavni del življenja. Pozorni postanemo šele, ko se pojavi bolečina – lahko na telesni, psihični ali duhovni ravni – ki nas opozarja, da smo izgubili stik z namenom svojega življenja in smo ven iz ravnovesja.

Iz perspektive transpersonalne psihologije in psihoterapije je v tistem trenutku zelo pomembno, da se zavemo, da imamo izbiro. Izberemo lahko vlogo Žrtve in se počutimo žrtev okoliščin ter na aktiven ali pasiven način naložimo svoja pričakovanja o rešitvi na druge ljudi – rešili nas naj bi težke situacije in bolečine. Lahko pa izberemo držo Bojevnika in smo v metamorfozi aktivno udeleženi. To pomeni, da se zavedamo, da je spreminjanje proces, ki je nujen za nadaljevanje življenja in da imamo na vsakem koraku izbiro.

Bernadette Blin, sedanja predsednica EUROTASA, je v svojem plenarnem predavanju poudarila, da človek instinktivno teži k redu in ravnovesju, in se izogiba razkrajanju in posledičnemu kaosu. In čeravno je to sestavni del človeškega življenja, je izogibanje smiselno le do tolikšne mere do katere ohranjamo kreativne in konstruktivne načine. Ko pa ostaneta samo še odpor in bolečina, je bolj smiselno da z upiranjem prenehamo, vzamemo bolečino v svoje srce in smo sočutni do sebe. To je zavestno dejanje sprejemanja situacije, kakršna pač je in to je naša izbira. Tudi kadar racionalno ne vemo, kaj se dogaja z nami in okrog nas, se lahko zavedamo, da smo v procesu spreminjanja, v katerem mora staro umreti, da se lahko porodi novo. Metamorfoza gosence v metulj je poznan simbol tega procesa, zato: »Ne uničujte gosenc, če želite imeti metulje v svojem življenju.« (E. Sahtouris).

Posebej pa bi želela izpostaviti plenarno predavanje in dvodnevno delavnico Rosemary Anderson, profesorice in raziskovalke transpersonalne psihologije ter članice jedrnega tima na Sofia University od leta 1992. Je avtorica mnogih člankov in knjig, med drugim tudi (s pokojnim kolegom W. Braud) *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (1998). Njena dela so še posebej pomembna, ker sta transpersonalna psihologija and psihoterapija najpogosteje izpostavljeni kritiki, da so njuni temelji ne-znanstveni – pri čemer je znanost definirana kot kvantitativna znanost, ki meri, šteje in distribuira. To seveda drži, zato smo lahko toliko bolj hvaležni za razvoj kvalitativnih znanstvenih metod, ki raziskovalcem omogočijo poglobljeno psihološko izkušnjo ter njeno sistematično opisovanje v 1. osebi ednine.

Dr. Andersonova, ki je na začetku svoje raziskovalne poti uporabljala kvantitativne metode in pozneje tudi kvalitativne in mešane metode, je tekom svojega profesionalnega življenja razvila transpersonalno raziskovalno metodo, ki jo je poimenovala intuitivno poizvedovanje [intuitive inquiry]. To je posebna metoda pridobivanja podatkov za raziskavo, ki temelji na utelešenem načinu pisanja [embodied writing]. Hkrati je Dr. Andersonova razvila lestvico za merjenje intuitivnega zavedanja notranjih in zunanjih telesnih zaznav, ki močno vplivajo na človekovo zdravje in počutje. Znana je pod imenom Body Insight Scale. Lestvica meri intuitivno védenje oz. zaznavanje na različnih ravneh percepcije: na kinestetični in na visceralni ravni, na ravni vseh pet čutil ter na mentalni ravni razumevanja budističnega koncepta praznine.

Pomembni datumi EUROTASovih dogodkov v prihodnje:

8. – 10. maj 2015: Transpersonal Research Colloquium. Monte Carmel Retreat Centre, blizu Milana, Italija.

18. – 20. junij 2015: TP Festival Feeding the Soul, Milan, Italija.

4. – 7. september 2015: 17. EUROTAS kongres, San Paulo, Brazilija.

21. – 25. september 2016: 18. EUROTAS kongres, Konstanca, Romunija.

Bernadette Blin

Do We Need Crisis to Evolve? From Victimhood to Discipleship

Abstract: As individuals, we all experience crisis in our lives. This can be the opportunity for a personal journey from being a victim to becoming a disciple. Our society is also facing deep crisis. Is humanity going to die or be reborn? What is the evolutionary process made possible through crisis? The caterpillar becomes a butterfly through the collapse of the old structure and the emergence of a new one. This metamorphosis is possible due to the awakening of imaginal cells held dormant within the caterpillar. Is humanity also entering a process of collective transformation to initiate a new world based on transpersonal values and vision?

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Last year I was informed that I would be giving a lecture at this conference about Metamorphosis, Disintegration, Integration and Conscious Living. I thought a lot about this theme over the last year. I had some ideas, did some research, but it was quite impossible for me to write anything well structured about this theme. It was always there in my head, but I was stuck in my mind.

But the very interesting thing is to take a look at what was going on in my life during this past year (or actually, during these 2 past years). While I was trying to “think” about disintegration, my life was going through a real phase of disintegration and destruction. I was experiencing a terrible situation in which my entire professional life (accomplishments, values and investments) was attacked and challenged. The French authorities (through several administrations, the police and judicial system) tried to stop my work, my institute, and my transpersonal practice, and they have accused me of various reprehensible activities, etc. I was suspected to be a dangerous sect, to use practices that harm people, especially through Holotropic Breathwork and sweat-lodges, that are considered as mental manipulation, this sort of accusations. They wanted and still want to take me to court for these reasons. They have also tried to ruin my reputation and the reputation of my institute with so much efficiency that I’ll have to close this school. This situation was and is like a tsunami in my life.

My engagement in the transpersonal movement is so crucial and central for me that these attacks have touched the most sensitive part of my life.

It took me quite a lot of time to realize that the reason I could not prepare this talk at the thinking level was because I was personally involved in the topic of this conference. It’s not an easy thing when you’re in the middle of a storm to grasp and understand its teachings and messages. At first I didn’t want to share this experience publicly but if I want to be honest with you, I cannot speak theoretically about disintegration disconnected from my own experience that was

and still is so present.

There are two levels I would like to consider from this story, which is mine of course, but not only mine, because it reveals important parameters of the collective evolution of our society and our world. I'll come back to this second point later.

On the Personal Level

I was put in a state of total loss, chaos, uncertainty, and fragility. I could not grasp anything to find a basis for a feeling of safety. This was a very difficult and painful time. Some days, I felt so miserable, so lost and overwhelmed, especially when I discovered new negative information or a new attacks or accusations. But this is where psychological and spiritual works have been so helpful. I very quickly realized that even if the circumstances were unfair and based on false information, I would not stay in the state of victim, which was the worst place to be, a place where I was losing my inner power and responsibility.

When we experience such destructive multiple attacks, there is a strong tendency to ask "why?" Why me? What did I do wrong to experience such a disaster? I quickly decided that "why" was not the right question; it was a waste of time because the answers depend on the level you look at. And with our minds, we can create so many stories to explain what is happening and why it is happening. Starting from my childhood, my past-lives, my genealogy, etc. All the answers I considered could have been true but the question remained: "does it help me to ask why?"

I decided to focus more on "what for". Not in the sense of finding a good reason or explanation that would have transformed the incessant aggressions into a kind of epic that I had to go through as the "hero" has to do in his journey. No, it was much more simple and humble. What I often said was "I don't understand why I'm there, why I have to experience this, but why not? And what can I learn during the process itself, day after day, sometimes, minute after minute?" It reminds me of what we often say when we accompany and teach people in Holotropic and Transpersonal Breathwork: "trust the process and even if you don't understand what's happening, trust this inner intelligence inside of you that knows better than your mind". When we're challenged in our life, maybe there is an intelligent process that's unfolding to offer us circumstances that may lead us to a new stage of evolution.

About disintegration

What part of us is facing disintegration? I was very aware that it was my ego, my sense of who I am, my identity that was threatened and humiliated but also my social life, what I had built, my home that I could lose, my professional accomplishments that were dissolving, the institute I created close to disappearing ... I had to face the risk of a big loss, the destruction of everything that mattered in my professional commitments in service to the transpersonal domain. I was attacked because of my choices in the transpersonal field, my transpersonal practice as psychotherapist and my attempts to establish a transpersonal curriculum in psychotherapy.

Meditation was one of my principal tools, my practice to come back to myself and to the present moment. I also needed a body practice to keep contact with my living body and feel my vitality and my breath moving through it. For me, this practice is Tai Chi.

And day after day, I tried to stay connected with all my feelings, reactions and emotions. Some days, anxiety and despair were my companions but most of the time, when I was there, I could come back to my center, to my axis and just breathe, letting go of all images and stories my mind was creating about the situation and events that occurred. But this was and this is a process and a practice, which requires commitment, discipline and faith. This is not magic.

I have also extensively used the practice taught by Richard Moss, the Mandala of Being. It's a way of watching every emotion and thought and questioning them to realize they are just a creation of the mind and not the real truth of who we are. Even if we feel desperate and lost, we have the choice of staying a victim of the circumstances and a victim of our thoughts about these circumstances (which is often worst) or to leave this survival structure and breathe in this space which is the center of the Mandala that Richard calls the NOW or the beginning of ourselves and stay there with no hope, no comment, just connected to the sensations of our body which is always in the present moment. Our body doesn't lie. It is always here and now and it's a sort of starting point of our reality at each moment.

About resistances

Disintegration is fascinating because there is huge power of imagination in it. The first reaction of the ego is to say "no", to escape and the practice is to learn to say "yes" and let go of fear, resentment, anger, to open our heart to life and to love. And when the difficult feelings are still there and don't want to let go, then the practice is to hold them in our heart as if we were holding a wounded child, the wounded child that we are in those moments of powerlessness. The instinctual reaction is to resist against disintegration. And this is exactly what I did. It took me a while to really accept to let go of any hope and to stay open to a new step in my life.

In our daily life, we often meet circumstances that create reactions inside of us. We like, we don't like, we're angry, we're frustrated, we feel hurt, we're upset and we refuse what life is presenting to us, especially in relationship with others. And all these reactions support our egoic structure, our survival personality. They are linked to our defense mechanisms, which merely define our character.

But when we are facing terrible life-accidents, we may touch suffering at a different level, we may experience places in us that threaten our ego, threaten our life and put us in a state of total annihilation. This is generally connected with what we call archaic states, states where the sense of me is not well established, when we don't have a clear separate identity. Richard Moss names them "untamed emotions" or "untamed feelings". This is where we have to face emotional forces that seem bigger than our possibility of dealing with them.

Can we experience metamorphosis without going through this stage of disintegration, annihilation? I don't think so. In the hero's journey, these untamed feelings are like the monsters we have to face in order to accomplish our destiny. All our life can be seen like a death and rebirth process. In order to grow, we need to let go and let the past identities die, for the infant to become a baby, for the baby to become a child, and so on until our last breathe when we enter this new state of consciousness we call death. Every 7 years, most of the cells of our body are renewed, which means that somehow, we are not the one we were 7 years before. The physical transformation is obvious for any human being. But what about the evolution of our consciousness?

I'm sure that for most of us, we could agree that the main challenges we experienced during our lifetime were the times of greatest changes. If you are psychotherapist, you know that most of the time, people come to your office because their suffering is unbearable and they need to understand, to make sense and to get rid of it. And this will happen through a process which could be called "facing the shadow", not understanding the shadow, but meeting it, embracing it, creating a mature relationship with it. The shadow is a place we don't want to stay, we don't want to recognize, but it is also a huge reservoir of vital energy that is stuck because we're afraid to release the monsters and to be annihilated by them. Shadow and disintegration are connected to fear and even to terror. And what do we do when we are full of fear? We run away or try to and elaborate strategies to hide or ignore the fear of annihilation. But what will happen if we stay there? Like in the hero's journey, what will happen if we stay present, if we stay still and quiet in front of it? Not moving but opening our heart to it?

In concrete daily life, sometimes we have to fight. I personally have to fight against the administration, against the unfair decisions they put on me, but I try to be very attentive not to fight "against" but rather to fight "for". "Fighting against" means reinforcing the power of the other, making them enemies; this is useless and ineffective. "Fighting for" supports our energy, connects us to our values and choices, and enhances our ability to be a conscious human being. "Following a path that has a heart", said Don Juan to Castaneda. The warrior needs to manifest his strength and power and, at the same time, to recognize his vulnerability, his fear. It's all about relationship and how to stay present with whatever we feel and whatever happens. And also accepting to fail sometimes and to start again even when we think we are crushed. In challenging times, we may have to start again to climb the mountain from the very beginning because we may fall down at every step. This is about faith, trust and letting go and this is an ongoing process.

This is what I call "becoming a disciple"

In this type of process, I think we do not "integrate". The integration comes by itself if we travel consciously through our thoughts, emotions reactions... One day, we feel the resistance has gone and we feel free of the fear or the attachments, even if we cannot explain how it happened.

What is conscious living?

To me, it's not a result: it is the process that can describe how to go through disintegration without going insane or falling into some form of permanent regression. Whatever the circumstances are, we always have a choice, the choice to create our relationship with any event at any moment. Are we going to stay a victim, or are we going to choose to become a disciple and learn from the circumstances and the events in our lives? Conscious living means staying present, witnessing all our internal reactions and acting as much as possible from the center of the mandala, our Essence, our deep connection with the Source. It also means not blaming others but taking our own responsibility for our life and what is happening. Living consciously with an open heart is what could be the essence of a transpersonal way of life. And above all, there is our connection with the mystery. Living consciously doesn't mean we understand the sense of what happens to us. We are invited to surrender to the ineffable mystery of life.

Metamorphosis of the caterpillar into a butterfly

We all know the metaphor of the metamorphosis of the caterpillar and the butterfly. We can

look at it at the level of personal transformation, which is what we all easily understand: The death and rebirth process. The caterpillar has to die to become this beautiful butterfly but if we consider the process from a human point of view, when the caterpillar in us is dying, it has no idea what will be the result except its experience of disappearing. This is where we can experience fear or faith or fear and faith. This is where I am, trying to hold these two feelings like the 2 sides of a scale and stay in the middle in order to cultivate my faith and recognize my fear when it emerges.

On the Collective Level

I would like to open the second part of my talk and leave the personal aspect to address the level of the collective. It is really interesting to look at this metaphor from the point of view of collective transformation.

Let's tell the story of this caterpillar. We all know the result, however it is not the result I would like to look at today, but the process itself of how the caterpillar becomes a butterfly. Inside the caterpillar, there is what biologists call imaginal cells. These cells are sleeping and inactive as long as the caterpillar is alive. At a certain stage, the caterpillar becomes voracious and starts to eat everything it can find. It eats a hundred times its weight. This is how sometimes you find a bush with no leaves because just one caterpillar has eaten all of them. Then it will find the right place to stay and begin to create a cocoon until it is totally contained within it. Once the cocoon is solidified, an incredible process will begin. The imaginal cells wake up and migrate to gather and form the imaginal discs, which will design the future structure of the butterfly. But then, something remarkable appears. Although this is the normal biological evolution for a caterpillar, these discs will be considered as foreign bodies by the immune system of the caterpillar, which will try to eliminate them. As long as these cells were alone and sleeping they were not detected but when they become active and gather together, they are detected as a threat!

But it is too late because the imaginal discs multiply and begin to weld together. The immune system has to capitulate and all the other cells become a sort of nutritional mash for the imaginal cells that will then create this miracle we know as the butterfly. The collapse of the caterpillar structure is essential for the arrival of the butterfly.

It is interesting to make a parallel between this transformational process and what is happening in our society.

To come back to the situation in my country, it is obvious that the attacks against me are not directed only at me personally, but at me as a representative of new ideas, new systems, new models in psychology, in spiritual development, in way of considering the healing process and so on. Transpersonal ideas and visions interest and convince more and more people today. That's why the general public is attracted by what we offer and what we present, but at least in my country, the mainstream and the authorities are afraid and try to reject us, our practices and do their best to eradicate people like me, and maybe like you.

At the beginning of this transformational process, there are large numbers of individual imaginal cells, but as they gather, they start to exchange to create a common future. The old structure refuses this kind of change, which threatens its way of running the world. So, its leaders will do their best to fight against the change and try to destroy the imaginal cells initiating the process.

This has happened in societies many times throughout history. When a system is predominant, it wants to keep the power. But progressively, people will create something new, share their new ideas and start to create small changes in their communities or fields. When the head of the system realizes its world is questioned and threatened, the political leaders and their administrations can become aggressive and violent to stop this process. They can win battles. But if the number of imaginal cells trying to cooperate is sufficient, then the metamorphosis will happen sooner or later.

The good news is that the process is irreversible. We – the transpersonal community - are creating the imaginal discs for giving birth to a future and a new structure in our society. We don't have to fight, we don't have to reject the "old paradigm", we just have to stay connected to the other cells, the other groups. Even if we have differences in our visions, the transformation will happen anyway. Elisabeth Sahtouris, who is an evolutionary biologist, expresses it like this: "If you want a butterfly-world, don't crush the caterpillar, but join other imaginal cells to build together a better world for all of us."

The interesting point also is that the transformation from the caterpillar to the butterfly is not a progressive process, it's really the death of the caterpillar and the birth of an entirely new different being, with new possibilities, like the possibility of flying, for instance.

Are we facing the death of the old materialistic paradigm, which is condemned and the re-birth of a new humanity with spiritual connections between human beings, and between human beings and nature?

Rudolph Bahro, a German philosopher and a political figure in his country said "When an old culture is dying, that's those who are not afraid of insecurity who will create the new culture". We need to work together and collaborate to give birth to this new world and avoid the destruction of our species and maybe of our planet. I think that, as Transpersonal associations, this is the message we have to address to the world.

And remember, we just need a sufficient number, a critical mass to make the difference...
