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Introduction

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THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TRANSPERSONAL STUDIES

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ENTERING THE LIGHT: VOICES OF RUSSIAN TRANSPERSONALISM

ВЫХОД В СВЕТ: ГОЛОСА РУССКОГО ТРАНСПЕРСОНАЛИЗМА

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Introduction

It is a privilege to bring to light the ideas of our transpersonal colleagues in Russia in this special supplement of the International Journal of Transpersonal Studies entitled Entering the Light: Voices of Russian Transpersonalism. The democratization of Russia and the emergence of free expression there have yielded an unprecedented opportunity for us to learn about transpersonal psychology in Russia, increase Russian-American communication, and promote the exchange of scholars. The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies is in the vanguard of providing a forum for Russian and Eastern European authors through the pages of the Journal, and through a monograph series on transpersonal studies recently inaugurated by Erin M. Neill of Queensland University of Technology--the chief editor of the Journal.

The first contribution to this special supplement, by Denise H. Lajoie, is entitled "The Emergence of Transpersonal Psychology in Russia: An American Perspective." Lajoie is currently on the faculty of the University of Hawai'i - West O'ahu and has published research about the history and development of transpersonal psychology in the United States. After being reunited with members of her family in the Ukraine, she also developed an interest in the emergence of transpersonal psychology in Russia and Eastern Europe. Lajoie presents an overview of the emergence of transpersonal psychology in Russia based upon the literature available in English and upon her visits and contacts in Russia and Eastern Europe. She highlights key contacts and conferences that brought together Americans and Russians with interests in transpersonal studies, and the work of some leading contemporary voices of transpersonal psychology in Russia--two of them contributors to the present supplement. Lajoie concludes that although there is some evidence of the transpersonal perspective emerging, "the transpersonal movement is not a dominant psychological perspective in Russia today and represents only a small (but growing) number of Russian psychologists and scholars." Lajoie is understandably cautious at this point in history about predicting the future development of transpersonal psychology in Russia, and therefore concludes her article with a section entitled "More Questions than Answers."

Following Lajoie's overview, the International Journal of Transpersonal Studies is pleased to present contributions by distinguished contemporary Russian scientists with a longstanding interest in the transpersonal perspective. The first of these Russian contributions is a series of critical reflections in response to Lajoie's essay by V. V. Nalimov and Zhanna Drogalina Nalimov entitled "The Emergence of Transpersonal

Psychology in Russia: A Dialogue." V. V. Nalimov was also kind enough to forward to us for publication an English translation of a forthcoming entry prepared for the Russian Philosophic Dictionary to appear shortly in Moscow. This compilation, which follows the Nalimovs' critical essay, is entitled "Facing the Mystery: A Philosophical Approach," and is a succinct overview of Nalimov's life and work.

The concluding contributions presented in this supplement are the first two installments of an evocative and intoxicating trilogy entitled "Open Mouth, Open Mind: An Impressionistic Attempt at a Transpersonal Autobiography." The author is Tōnu R. Soidla, a molecular geneticist currently working at the Institute of Cytology in St. Petersburg. Soidla's disarmingly candid transpersonal memoir uniquely blends transpersonal soul-searching with theorizing about a molecular model of memory. Speaking now in an Apollonian voice, now in a Dionysian one, now as *The Scientist*, now as *The Magus*, the author sets forth on a seductive literary and scientific romp punctuated with raucous, sensuous, and ethereal glosses and teaching stories. Soidla's torrent of evocative ideas and images may leave the reader breathless--possibly in another state of consciousness. The exuberance of the author's prose bears a remarkable resemblance to the style and perhaps intentions of the ancient Chinese Taoist text, the Chuang-tzu:

Blank, boundless, and without form; transforming, changing, never constant: are we dead? are we alive? do we stand side by side with Heaven and earth? do we move in the company of spiritual brightness? absent-minded, where are we going? forgetful, where are we headed for? The ten thousand things ranged all around us, not one of them is worthy to be singled out as our destination--there were those in ancient times who believed that the "art of the Way" lay in these strange things. Chuang Chou heard of their views and delighted in them. He expounded them in odd and outlandish terms, in brash and bombastic language, in unbound and unbordered phrases, abandoning himself to the times without partisanship, not looking at things from one angle only. He believed that the world was drowned in turbidness and that it was impossible to address it in sober language.¹

Like the Chuang-tzu, perhaps the easiest way to lay hold of Soidla's literary and epistemic onslaught is to relax into it--letting knowledge give way to understanding.

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Supplement Editor

¹Watson, B. (Trans.). (1968). The complete works of Chuang Tzu. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 373.

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