

## BOOK REVIEWS

DALE, EDWARD J. (2014). *Completing Piaget's Project: Transpersonal Philosophy and the Future of Psychology*. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House. ix + 378 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55778-910-5. Paperback. \$24.95. Reviewed by Harry T. Hunt.

Ed Dale's *Completing Piaget's Project* is a strikingly original integration of the transpersonal psychology of higher states of consciousness with an expanded neo-Piagetian developmental perspective. Dale convincingly demonstrates the larger transpersonal context of Jean Piaget's (1896-1980) life work, as revealed by both Piaget's hitherto untranslated early (1920's) empirical studies of religious understanding in childhood and in his personal spiritual awakening dramatized in an early (1918) thinly disguised autobiographical novel. Dale compares this late adolescent crisis and its resolution in mystical experience to Grof on "spiritual emergency." He also outlines the young Piaget's ambition for a convergence between modern science and a spirituality based on his own "ecstatic" response to the philosopher Bergson's "identification of God with life itself" (p. 3) and shows how this ambition is still reflected in Piaget's final philosophy of science writings. It is interesting to note Bernard's (2011) recent overview of this same integrative potential in Bergson's vitalist spirituality.

For Dale then, the overall integrative perspective of Piaget's developmental psychology is transpersonal, "Piaget's spirituality can be viewed as the primary motivation behind the psychological studies which revolutionized psychology" (p. 25). Dale suggests that it was the predominantly secular orientation of the academic psychology on which Piaget later had such an impact that left these transpersonal concerns untranslated by Piaget's own choice. Part of the interest of Dale's findings here is their further extension of what we can see as the transpersonal foundations of much early academic psychology – William James obviously, but also including Fechner, Wundt, and the developmentalists James Mark Baldwin and G. Stanley Hall, whose central concern with religious experience we can now see the Piagetian enterprise as seeking to complete.

A second major strand in Dale's analysis comes from adding to Piaget's own anticipations of complexity systems in science his own neo-Piagetian understanding of non-linear open systems, also similar to recent attempts by Combs (2002) and the philosopher Nagel (2012) to establish a direction toward integrative complexity in the living systems of both human consciousness and evolutionary biology. Dale extends this systems analysis into Stephan Jay Gould's "punctuated evolution" account of more qualitative or formal changes in evolution as based on "heterochronous" reorganizations in the temporal sequencing of adult and juvenile characteristics. Dale will apply this same principle to the level of an individual epigenesis of the differential activations of transpersonal capacities possible across life-span development –

ranging from developmental precocities in early childhood to the flowering in old age described by Erik Erikson.

The third major strand in this complex book is Dale's further development of Piaget's own view, still not widely appreciated, of separate lines of development for representational thought, culminating in the abstract or formal operations of mathematics and scientific reasoning, and a distinct line for the "affective schemata," which on Dale's analysis, also citing the similar views of this reviewer on "presentational" intelligence (Hunt, 1995), would culminate in its own formal (and post formal) operations, albeit one more individually variable, in the form of spiritual or transpersonal realization. This model of separate developmental lines, a simpler version of Gardner's (1983) widely influential view of multiple frames of intelligence (including the personal/emotional), would replace the more narrowly conceived single "ladder" models for all intelligence associated with the earlier Wilber (1984) and Alexander (1990). For the latter, formal operations in the representational symbolisms will be followed by the exclusively "post formal" stages of transpersonal realization best reflected in the meditative traditions of the world religions. In addition to avoiding this perhaps arbitrary privileging of one form of intelligence over all others, Dale's extending of Piaget's multiple line approach has the virtue of more parsimoniously accounting for the multiple timings of individual transpersonal development that become a major focus of the book – the late life maturation of Erikson, the mid-life self-actualization of Maslow and Jung, continuous development in spiritual savants (either life-long or beginning in early adulthood), the rare meditational developments in late childhood in traditional monastic cultures, and the spontaneous early childhood precocities of mystical experience that have always proved the most difficult for exclusively "post formal" single ladder models of the transpersonal.

At this point Dale also sees an alternative within this completion of Piaget's original project. On the one hand, there is the above duality of representational and affective lines, with spirituality first appearing as formal operations in the latter, or in its early precocities so like those in music and art, and on the other, there is Dale's own preference for transpersonal development as its own initially independent third line. It is this second view to which he applies the principles of biological "heterochrony" to explain the above variations in its life-span manifestation, and to suggest that its modern "atypicality" reflects an earlier Paleolithic appearance necessary for the group solidarity now secured by more secular forces – leaving its present development as of primarily individual significance.

Here questions might arise over which approach – formal and post formal operations in affect or an entirely separate line – would offer the more parsimonious account, as well as whether an exclusive use of a biological level of analysis might come at the price of ignoring equally persuasive personological and cultural-historical dimensions that would constitute their own emergent realities – outside even this open-systems understanding of evolutionary biology. Thus the "atypicalities" of transpersonal development

can also be considered in terms of the emotional fixations and traumas that have always tended to hold an affective-presentational line to “egocentricity” and/or variously delay its fuller spiritual maturation into mid-life or beyond. Similarly, perhaps, on a sociological level (Weber, Sorokin), there is the historical alternation in all major civilizations between sacred and secular eras – with the latter now more globalized in modernity, along with its fundamentalist and new age counter-reactions.

Be all this as it may, or may not, Dale’s important book is far more diverse in its consideration of these alternative approaches, along with potentials for a future transpersonal philosophy, and the convergences between transpersonal psychology and systems approaches in contemporary science, than can be addressed in this review. Its reach, range, and originality are indeed, impressive. Dale’s neo-Piagetian understanding of spirituality, very much in the tradition of the Bergson who so inspired the young Piaget, warrants the attention of all those concerned with the “living” foundations of transpersonal psychology and their further development.

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