

* * * * *

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 Jorge N. Ferrer.*

**Neo-Piagetian Transpersonal Psychology:
Dancing In-Between Pluralism and Perennialism
Essay Review**

Building on a number of prior publications (e.g., Dale, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014a, 2014b), Edward J. Dale (2014c) has written a very significant book that not only settles long-standing transpersonal disputes, but also bridges transpersonal and mainstream psychologies—and originally advances the development of a pluralistic transpersonal philosophy. In a way, Dale's new work contains two related-but-different books. The first part focuses on what I call "the transpersonal Piaget," that is, the largely overlooked spiritual experiences, interests, and motivations in Piaget's life and work. Comprising most of the book, the second part applies insights from neo-Piagetian thinking and modern evolutionary biology to central questions of transpersonal studies, such as the dynamics of spiritual development and the challenges raised by religious pluralism. Since I have no scholarly expertise in (neo-)Piagetian psychology, in this review I summarize the first part before discussing the second part in greater detail. I then identify three possible tensions or ambiguities in the book, which arguably emerge from Dale's commendable attempt to pave a middle path between a naïve universalism and a fragmented pluralism in transpersonal studies. I conclude with a strong endorsement of the book's merits, as well as a recommendation to transpersonal scholars to study it with the care and attention it surely deserves.

NEO-PIAGETIAN TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

This section provides a short overview of Dale's account of Piaget's transpersonal leanings. I also discuss Dale's nonlinear paradigm of spiritual development and his related pluralistic vision of transpersonal philosophy.

The Transpersonal Piaget

Dale begins his book by developing a powerful case for the transpersonal foundations and ultimate goals of Piaget's life work. Through a comprehensive analysis of Piaget's writings, Dale has demonstrated that Piaget underwent

a profound spiritual emergency (S. Grof & C. Grof, 1989) during his adolescence, was interested in the moral dimension of nonordinary states of consciousness, developed an immanentist theory of the divine, understood evolution as a journey toward God-realization, and sought to unify science and religion. Dale has argued that modern psychologists have consistently ignored these spiritual themes in Piaget's life and work, and that the recognition of the "little known spiritual side of Piaget" (p. 27) not only establishes "Piaget [as] a transpersonal thinker ahead of his time" (p. 1), but also can influence "the direction of psychology in the future" (p. 27).

While scholars of Piaget have yet to comment on Dale's exegesis of Piaget's corpus, Dale's alignment of one of the most influential psychologists of all time with transpersonal matters doubtlessly provides an invaluable service to the field of transpersonal psychology.¹ On the one hand, Dale argues that transpersonal psychology has "the potential to complete aspects of [Piaget's] work that he was unable to substantiate during his life" (p. 27). On the other hand, Dale shows that the combination of Piagetian insights with recent developments in both modern biology and transpersonal psychology shapes a *neo-Piagetian* or *genetic transpersonal psychology*. He then characterizes genetic transpersonal psychology as not only intrinsically nonlinear and strongly pluralistic, but also crucial for the future of psychological research in general. As the two main features of Dale's neo-Piagetian psychology are of particular importance to contemporary transpersonal debates, the next two sections address nonlinear transpersonal development and a pluralistic transpersonal philosophy, which are interrelated.

Neo-Piagetian Transpersonal Psychology: Nonlinear Transpersonal Development

Dale has persuasively argued that transpersonal development is *nonlinear* (i.e., atypical and indeterministic) and that eminently linear approaches such as Wilber's (2000, 2006) consequently fail to account for many of the central dynamics of transpersonal development.² Whereas for some individuals transpersonal development begins at a young age and unfolds gradually over a lifetime, for others it begins at a young age but fades after childhood and might re-emerge later in adulthood; for yet others, transpersonal awareness only develops in later life. The application of nonlinear methods emerging from 21st-century mathematics, physics, and systems biology allows Dale to support the existence of multiple—developmental and evolutionary—transpersonal pathways that branch out through "specializing diversification" (p. 219).³ Rather than a single spiritual itinerary, these pathways follow collateral developmental lines.

One important upshot of Dale's nonlinear transpersonal paradigm is that it arguably resolves important disputes in the transpersonal literature, in particular those around the competing developmental models of Washburn (1988, 1990, 1998, 2003) and Wilber (1990, 1995, 1999, 2001).⁴ If transpersonal developmental is both nonlinear and pluralistic, then there is no need to choose between these supposedly conflicting developmental models; instead, both can

be recognized as (at least potentially) equally valid accounts of different individuals' developmental pathways. To illustrate this diversity, Dale described five transpersonal developmental patterns associated with different transpersonal theories—such as Wilber (1996), Assagioli (1988/2007), Hunt (1995), Washburn (1988), and Maslow (1971), among others—as well as various triggers of transpersonal growth such as meditation practices and psychodynamic maturation.

This pluralistic account of transpersonal development is supported by—and actually helps to explain—Thomas, Brewer, Kraus, and Rosen's (1993) important (and unfairly overlooked) empirical findings about the two patterns of transcendence articulated by Washburn (1988, 1990) and Wilber (1990, 1996). After studying the developmental trajectories of English and Indian elders assessed as spiritually mature, Thomas et al. discovered that half of those who had reached transpersonal levels had undergone a regressive transition period (which supported Washburn's model), while the other half did not (which supported Wilber's model). The authors wrote:

In sum, rather than finding a uniform pattern of transition to higher spiritual levels..., what we find is considerable variation in the spiritual paths of our respondents....To suggest that there is one uniform path to spiritual development goes in the face of major spiritual traditions and empirical psychology. (p. 79)

In his discussion, Dale acknowledged that such a pluralistic account of transpersonal development had been proposed by both myself (Ferrer, 2002, 2008) and Rawlinson (1997); see also Schlamm (2001). Dale's application of nonlinear logic, however, brings superior explanatory power and scientific weight to the aforementioned proposals. As Dale explained, classical linear approaches to transpersonal development followed an *anagenetic* view of evolution (i.e., ordering species—or states/stages of consciousness—from lowest to highest in a single line), but modern evolutionary theory follows a *cladogenetic* view in which species (and by extension transpersonal states/stages) branch out via collateral modules or lines toward an ever-greater plurality and diversification.⁵ By bringing this modern evolutionary logic to transpersonal theory, Dale indicated, “many of the positions that are usually considered incompatible or antagonistic can be synthesized into a unified framework, creating a transpersonal psychology based around plurality and complexity rather than universal structuralism” (p. 37).

In addition, Dale advanced an original hypothesis regarding the impact of learning environments on the general validity and reliability of stage models of spiritual development—another highly contested topic in transpersonal scholarship (see, e.g., Ferrer, 2002; Rothberg, 1998, 1999; Wilber, 1999). Specifically, Dale suggested that stage-like patterns more naturally unfold under what he called “*ideal learning conditions*” (p. 182), such as those provided by traditional monastic environments. In “suboptimal” learning conditions (e.g., Western lay settings), however, stages of transpersonal development become less likely or even non-evident. Although I consider this

empirical hypothesis plausible, I wonder whether it could be realistically tested. An assessment would seem to entail decades-long longitudinal studies involving large-scale groups of contemplative practitioners in both monastic (optimal) and lay (suboptimal) environments, as well as the control of a vast number of other variables, such as daily practice time, intensive retreat time, biographical and personality factors, and so forth. Even if these studies were carried out, I strongly suspect—in alignment with Dale’s nonlinear, pluralistic approach—important individual differences would be found not only *between* but also *within* these two groups.

Dale’s nonlinear transpersonal paradigm also has important methodological implications for transpersonal psychology. Since essential aspects of transpersonal experience and development are nonlinear (i.e., indeterministic and thus defying statistical predictability), they cannot be captured by the conventional quantitative methods of mainstream psychology (see also Almendro, 2014; Almendro & Weber, 2012). In other words, because transpersonal trajectories are developmentally atypical, individual case studies are more informative about transpersonal growth than are statistical analyses based on group studies. In the study of transpersonal phenomena, therefore, mainstream (linear) quantitative methods should be supplemented with nonlinear methodologies because “statistical averaging techniques...will not give a true picture of the highly pluralistic landscape of transpersonal development” (p. 191). For this reason, Dale argued, transpersonal studies should privilege nonlinear methodologies over statistical approaches without abandoning the latter: “nonlinear transpersonal theory needs to be able to include the linear averaging approach, much as Einstein’s physics includes Newton’s” (p. 265). Furthermore, for Dale, “a transpersonal theory based around complexity, nonlinearity, and evolutionary developmental biology would expect development to be pluralistic” (p. 121). This consideration introduces the next theme of Dale’s work: pluralistic transpersonal philosophy.

Neo-Piagetian Transpersonal Psychology: Pluralistic Transpersonal Philosophy

In his brief history of transpersonal investigation, Dale situated the “pluralistic-participatory movement” (p. 108) as the prevalent growing force (*agglomeration*, in his terms) in transpersonal scholarship in the 21st century, after Wilber’s hierarchical neo-perennialism and the East–West synthesis of the 1960s and 1970s that spawned the birth of transpersonal psychology. Participatory pluralism is actually Dale’s sixth and most recent agglomeration, with neo-perennialism as the fifth and the transpersonal East–West synthesis as the fourth. He also identified three earlier agglomerations in transpersonal thinking: a premodern mystical world philosophy as the first agglomeration, 19th-century German idealism as the second, and 20th-century early introspectionist/cognitive science as the third. According to Dale, only the pluralistic-participatory movement is aligned with the nonlinear paradigm in contemporary science (i.e., moving beyond mainstream psychology’s linear statistical averaging) that provides the best explanation of transpersonal inquiry and development. Although participatory pluralism “is yet to arrive at its period of greatest influence” (p. 116), Dale stated, “a chronological

ascendancy in period of dominance is also a striking characteristic of the agglomerations identified” (p. 116).

More substantially, Dale further developed the pluralistic-participatory vision of religious diversity that is introduced in my past writings (Ferrer, 2002, 2008, 2010, 2012; see also Ferrer, forthcoming) and had been gradually emerging in the field of religious studies (e.g., Heim, 1995; Irwin, 1996; Kaplan, 2002; Lanzetta, 2007; Sharma, 2005). After considering the possible convergence of religions, Dale presented an alternative view “in which religions achieve shared knowledge of the nature of spiritual reality through the diversification of dogmas, practices, and experiences rather than through their convergence” (p. 258). In this scenario, spiritual convergence will be achieved, not through any kind of perennialist synthesis or underlying spiritual meta-ultimate, but through “the coordination of the knowledge that arises from multiple viewpoints” (p. 262). Paradoxically, spiritual diversification might lead to shared spiritual knowledge because “it is through the coordination of divergent viewpoints that the fullest overall picture of spiritual reality or spiritual realities is possible” (p. 281). I believe that Dale’s *coordination approach* (see below) represents an important contribution to transpersonal studies, participatory theory, interreligious dialogue, and the philosophy of religious pluralism—in articulating a vision that synergically honors both spiritual diversification and communion across differences.

TENSIONS AND QUESTIONS

At this point it is no secret to the reader that I feel very sympathetic to Dale’s project. Nonetheless, I find three tensions (or questions I ponder aloud) in his work regarding the following topics: (a) the stages of contemplative development, (b) the ontological nature of spiritual reality, and (c) neo-Kantian perennialism. Overall, I believe that these tensions emerge from Dale’s admirable struggle to walk the knife-edge in-between universalism and pluralism in his transpersonal vision, as well as perhaps from the ongoing revision of his approach as he completed the book. Although these three tensions are interrelated, for the sake of clarity I discuss each in a separate section.

Are There Universal Stages of Contemplative Development?

While championing a highly pluralistic account of spiritual development, Dale has concurrently proposed three quasi-universal stages of spiritual development, which are based on increasing merger with the object of contemplation and lead to a state “akin to the Eastern notion of meditative samadhi” (p. 177). Dale first stated that these stages “are common but not universal across traditions” (p. 176), but then wrote that they “provide a possible universal aspect of human spirituality” (p. 207). In addition, he added, “The final [contemplative] stage is similar between traditions and delivers many of the same experiential qualities, but does not share complete identity on a neurobiological level” (p. 229). Trying to reconcile these seemingly conflicting views, Dale wrote,

That a single invariant series of stages exists across cultures has been proven to be wrong....But that different lines of spiritual development lead to a summit with at least some shared characteristics is more defensible, and is compatible with traditional perennialism, as well as with Ferrer's participatory approach. (p. 264)

While Dale's stages are shared by contemplative traditions enacting a formless or nondual spiritual ultimate, as well as those aimed at achieving unitive absorption with the object of meditation, in my view they are far from being (even possibly) universal for human spiritual development. Indeed, Dale himself often argued in his book that such development follows a multiplicity of trajectories. I suspect that this issue derives from Dale's arguably limited definition of "contemplative stages [as] stages in the development of unity between subject and object" (p. 177). One counterexample to his definition is found in the Christian mystical tradition (from which the term *contemplatio* was extrapolated to other traditions), where contemplative practice was typically aimed not at a mystical union with the object of contemplation (i.e., God), but at cultivating a "direct presence of God" (McGinn, 1991, p. xvii) that maintained the experiential and ontological gap between subject and object. Even for Pseudo-Dionysius, the soul's participation in divine nature should not be mistaken with monistic nondual claims (McGinn & McGinn, 2003). Other alternatives to unitive contemplative endeavors include the Kabbalistic permutation of the letters and names of God (e.g., Idel, 1987), the shamanic journey to subtle worlds to obtain healing or divinatory information (e.g., Halifax, 1979), and Tibetan tantric practices aimed at visualizing those multidimensional embodiments of feminine wisdom known as *dakinis* (e.g., Simmer-Brown, 2002).

Furthermore, Dale's experiential perennialism regarding the final contemplative stage rather unfortunately supports Smart's (1980) widely discredited view that "phenomenologically, mysticism is everywhere the same" (p. 90). For many decades, modern scholars of mysticism have identified strong phenomenological differences among not only contemplative pathways but also contemplative endpoints (e.g., Fenton, 1995; Hollenback, 1996; Katz, 1978). In addition to privileging nondual, formless, and unitive contemplative paths over dual and visionary ones, Dale's account resuscitates a deceased experiential perennialism that cannot stand the challenges raised by textual and phenomenological evidence.

Although I have argued that a strict adherence to stage models can potentially constrain the organic unfolding of one's unique spiritual trajectory (Ferrer, 2002; see also Heron, 1998), I should clarify that I do not see any major problem with such models in the context of specific traditions that aim at the gradual attainment of a particular spiritual goal.⁶ In these contexts, distinctions between stages of the path can offer valuable signposts for practitioners insofar as they confirm being on the right track, alert the practitioner regarding stage-specific pitfalls, and so forth. Rather, problems emerge when one seeks to make the stages of a particular spiritual tradition (e.g., Advaita Vedanta or Christianity) or spiritual orientation (e.g., theistic, nondual, monist) paradigmatic for all (see Ferrer, 2002). Thus, whereas Dale's proposed stages of contemplative development may indeed

be shared by traditions seeking unitive, nondual states with the object of contemplation, there are many other contemplative endeavors that do not pursue or achieve anything “akin to the Eastern notion of meditative samadhi” (p. 177). Therefore, I recommend that transpersonal scholars carry forward the important task of identifying commonalities among spiritual traditions while simultaneously honoring the important—and at times crucial—differences among them.

What Is the Ontological Nature of Spiritual Reality?

A second tension concerns Dale’s views about the ontological nature of spiritual reality. In explicit alignment with the participatory approach in transpersonal theory, Dale affirmed that “there is no ‘given’ spiritual reality” (p. 261). However, he also stated, “reality is objective, in the style described in the perennialist literature....All subjects [spiritual practitioners] draw towards the same peak, though none ever completely reach it” (pp. 192–193). Citing Huxley (1945) and Schuon (1953), Dale added, “Spiritual traditions converge as detailed in the various forms of the perennial philosophy” (p. 256). These arguably inconsistent statements give with one hand what they take with the other: If spiritual reality is not given, then it cannot be objective in the way perennialist authors conceive it (see Ferrer, 2000, 2002).

In addition, commenting on the unity versus plurality of spiritual ultimates, Dale wrote, “because spiritual reality is just a more accurate perception of physical reality, then there is only one reality, viewed firstly as secular and physical and then as spiritual with greater development” (p. 245). Although this account may be valid for certain worldly spiritualities (e.g., Zen or Taoism) in which enlightenment is said to reveal the deepest, spiritual dimension or transfiguration of the natural world (e.g., see Cook, 1989; Kohn & Miller, 2001), many traditions posit the existence of a multiplicity of subtle worlds whose identity with the physical world (however transfigured this may become after enlightenment) is far from self-evident (see Ferrer, forthcoming).

The plausible existence of a multiverse consisting of an indefinite number of perhaps-interrelated but independent realms or worlds (of which the physical universe is just one among many) also problematizes Dale’s proposal for a “twenty-first century perennial philosophy” (p. 252) based on the future convergence of all sciences and religions. He wrote, “the scientific and the religious, converge on a similar expression of reality because they express *the same* reality in different ways” (p. 251). I suspect that this subtle “objectivist” allegiance to a single spiritual reality (ultimately equivalent to physical reality) lurks behind Dale’s view that many religious truths are merely “subjective.” Concerning particular religious truths not shared by all traditions, he pointed out, “they are still truths, but they are truths of a subjective rather than objective nature, open to individual rather than universal confirmation” (p. 263). As I have argued elsewhere (Ferrer, 2002, forthcoming), a participatory approach overcomes the Cartesian subjective/objective dichotomy through an extended enactive paradigm of cognition that holds spiritual truths to be simultaneously subjective *and* objective, or, in a word, *participatory* (cf. Hartelius & Ferrer, 2013; Heron, 2006; Irwin, 2008; Kripal, 2010).

Significantly, Dale's insistence that his proposed single spiritual reality is not pre-given—but rather co-created in the encounter of individual subjects and object—substantially relaxes this possible, residual objectivism. This subject-object codetermination naturally results in a myriad of spiritual perspectives that, for Dale, will always “remain situated, open to refinement, and ever-incomplete” (p. 261)—a view I find both cogent and consistent with the participatory approach.⁷

This multi-perspectival account of spirituality is related to Dale's criteria for “superior and inferior religions” (p. 261). For Dale, “superior” religions are those capable of not only effecting higher degrees of human growth in all developmental lines, but also embracing the highest number of spiritual viewpoints enacted at any point in history. In his words, “The tradition that succeeds in coordinating the maximum number of perspectives will have the most accurate overall view of the nature and variety of spiritual disclosures at a certain time” (p. 297). Although it is increasingly possible to see signs of Dale's coordination of diverse spiritual truths and practices in the contemporary interreligious dialogue (e.g., Gross & Muck, 2003; Lanzetta, 2007; Sharma, 2005), I wonder whether Dale's cumulative (and, possibly, somewhat quantitative) view of the “highest” spiritual truth may reveal his pledge to both a subtle objectivism and a promissory perennialism.

Do not misunderstand—I deeply value contemporary interreligious exchanges and hybridizations (e.g., doctrinal, practical, visionary; see Arévalo, 2012; Ferrer, 2010), and have previously argued that historical religions have cultivated different human potentials (or developmental lines) and can therefore enrich one another (Ferrer, 2010, 2012). Whereas I feel enthusiastic about the implications of Dale's coordination approach for interreligious relations, I worry that holding the “superior” tradition as the one able to include all others brings back a problematic perennialist inclusivism, in which a single tradition (with its favored spiritual ultimate) claims to encompass all others, but not vice versa (for discussions, see Duckworth, 2014; Ferrer, 2002, 2010; Halbfass, 1991). Perhaps an emerging, plural, global spirituality might be in the future capable of coordinating all spiritual viewpoints without falling into such ideological traps, but I take this ideal to be more regulative than practically reachable.

As he was completing his book, Dale and I had several collegial exchanges about central aspects of his work. Regarding the criteria for qualitative distinctions in spirituality, I have opted to defend that (a) all traditions can become equally holistic and emancipatory *on their own terms*—that is, without the need to include other traditions or account for the existence of all posited subtle worlds (I call this potential the *equiplurality principle*; see Ferrer, 2011a, forthcoming); and (b) the “superior” traditions are those capable of more fully liberating individuals from egotism in integrated ways that are sensitive to the eco-socio-political challenges of modern times (Ferrer, 2002, 2011a, forthcoming). I think Dale would agree with (b) although perhaps not with (a); for example, he may press further than I do regarding the import of some form of overall spiritual ontology in the articulation of these criteria and associated assessments—surely a fertile ground for future dialogue.

Is Neo-Kantian Perennialism Suitable for Transpersonal Philosophy?

A third, related issue is Dale's apparent commitment to neo-Kantian perennialism. In this regard, he wrote, "the structure-of-the-whole [the highest form of organismic and cognitive organization] grows ever-closer to reality, but it can never reach reality as reality is unknowable except through the subject, and the perceptual constructions of the subject are constantly changing" (p. 192). Similarly, he stated, "What reality is, independent of the subject, cannot be known" (p. 193). In addition to imposing a dualistic Western epistemology/ontology upon the world's religions—many of which do claim that reality can be directly known (Ferrer, 2014, forthcoming; King, 1999)—this formulation perpetuates the neo-Kantian alienation from reality that participatory, embodied, and enactive accounts of spiritual cognition arguably overcome (Ferrer, 2014; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Tarnas, 1991; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991).

Building on both the enactive paradigm and its rejection of representational theories of knowledge (Frisina, 2002), I maintain that in the same way a person is her own actions, the mystery is its enactions. Not positing a supra-ultimate spiritual referent beyond its specific enactions has two very important consequences. First, this approach preserves the ontological ultimacy of those enactions (e.g., God, emptiness, Tao, Brahman) in their respective spiritual universes, avoiding the neo-Kantian demotion of those ultimates to penultimate stations (e.g., Nah, 2013). Second, it short-circuits the feasibility of promoting one tradition as objectively superior (i.e., holding the most accurate picture of the mystery), excising ontological competitiveness at its root and settling one of the main challenges of religious pluralism (see Ferrer, 2008, forthcoming).

To summarize this discussion so far, while I believe that Dale's transpersonal psychological paradigm represents a genuine advance in transpersonal thinking, his transpersonal philosophy may not have fully exorcised the modern Cartesian-Kantian spell from which participatory thinking claims to break free (Ferrer, 2002, 2014, forthcoming; Tarnas, 1991).⁸ In my view, a complete transcendence of the Cartesian-Kantian paradigm (see Tarnas, 1991) would make Dale's project more genuinely pluralistic, emancipatory, and, perhaps, even more coherent.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONTINUING CONVERSATION

Despite the potential tensions discussed above, I believe that Dale successfully achieved his main goal of accounting "for a pluralistic transpersonal developmental framework in line with evolutionary developmental biology and neo-Piagetian psychology" (p. 272). The implications of Dale's nonlinear paradigm for transpersonal understanding and research are vast; for example, his work resolves lasting debates on transpersonal development and illuminates recent discussions on the role of quantitative science in transpersonal psychology (e.g., Ferrer, 2014; Friedman, 2002, 2013; MacDonald, 2013).⁹ In addition, Dale's approach to religious pluralism honors both the multiplicity (and increasing diversification) of spiritual truths and realities,

and the possibility of their convergence—not as a result of their synthesis, but of the coordination of multiple spiritual viewpoints. His call to collaboration among religious traditions also deserves to be taken seriously: “Through a cooperative inquiry, spiritual traditions can between them coordinate the fullest possible knowledge of the spiritual universe” (p. 298; see Heron, 1996, 1998). In sum, Dale’s *Completing Piaget’s Project* is a groundbreaking book that deserves to be not only widely read and discussed, but also used as textbook in courses on transpersonal psychology, developmental theories, and the philosophy of religious pluralism. I look forward to learning from Dale’s work as he further develops it in light of the appreciative reception and constructive criticism it is likely to receive from transpersonal scholars—this essay is hopefully just the beginning of the conversation.

NOTES

¹Although I do not think it is an oversight that damages the main theses of the book, Dale could have addressed the well-known cross-cultural criticisms of the universality of Piaget’s developmental model. Whereas Piaget’s (1923/1926, 1926/1960) first three cognitive stages have been documented cross-culturally (even though they often emerge at different rates across cultures; see Dassen, 1994), such is not the case regarding Piaget’s fourth-and-final stage of abstract, hypothetical thought linked to Western scientific reasoning—a skill not valued or pursued by many non-Western cultures (see Matsumoto & Juang, 2008). This important anomaly brings into question Dale’s statement that “Piagetian lines emerge and progress in all global societies” (p. 185)—unless by *global* he meant “modern” and “Western.” See also Flanagan (1991) for a classical critique of Piaget’s stage model of cognitive development.

²Despite Wilber’s (2000) assertion that his approach is nonlinear due to affirming the common asynchrony among developmental lines, Dale argued that Wilber’s (2000, 2006) works are “the epitome of the [linear] statistical averaging approach” (p. 135). Indeed, Wilber’s (2006) defense of an invariant sequence of universal, deep spiritual structures (psychic/subtle/causal/nondual) renders his model fundamentally linear (Ferrer, 2011b, forthcoming). A major problem with Wilber’s (2000, 2006) approach, Dale wrote, is that “whenever attempts are made to fit nonlinear patterns into linear frameworks, the resulting picture becomes overcomplicated and fragmented” (p. 135).

³Dale refers to a wide selection of scholarly references on nonlinear science and methodology, including seminal works such as Prigogine’s (1997) *End of Certainty* (New York, NY: Free Press), Mandelbrot’s (1982) *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* (New York, NY: Freeman), and Kauffman’s (1993) *The Origins of Order* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press).

⁴Other important contributions to this debate include papers by Funk (1994), Grof (1998), and Kelly (1998), as well as books by Nelson (1994) and Wade (1996). Earlier critical discussions of Wilber’s (1996) developmental model appeared in Barnard (1993, 1994).

⁵Dale suggested that the cladogenetic view is consistent with my own (Ferrer, 2011b) use of the image of the rhizome (after Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to convey the dynamics of spiritual evolution. He added, “The transpersonal field...took a cladogenetic approach in Ferrer [2002], even if he did not use a biological framework” (p. 224).

⁶Note that many traditions reject the idea of a gradual approach to liberation—and thus the very existence of stages in the path. For valuable discussions of gradual versus sudden approaches to enlightenment, see Gregory (1987), Rawlinson (1997), and Schlamm (2001).

⁷I am assuming that Dale wrote “ever-incomplete” (p. 261) in the sense that most spiritual perspectives can be complemented and enriched by other spiritual enactions. In the context of the enactions of spiritual ultimates, however, I maintain that they all can be (potentially) equally complete on their own (Ferrer, 2008, 2011a, forthcoming). Furthermore, if Dale’s “ever-incomplete” insinuated Cartesian-Kantian connotations (e.g., as incomplete parts of an existing whole or incomplete phenomenal versions of a noumenal reality), his view would not be consistent with the participatory approach (for further discussion, see *Is Neo-Kantian Perennialism Suitable for Transpersonal Philosophy?*).

⁸Although, in general, Dale may have expressed ideas in Cartesian and Kantian terms, there are some interesting ideas, potentially easy to miss with quick read of the book, that describe an alternative approach. Before submitting this article for printing, I was privileged to have discussions with Dale in which he drew my attention to his account of a “non-Cartesian teleonomy” (pp. 290-293) that provides a mathematical basis for a model of the evolution of religions, which can be either convergent or divergent. The convergent model states that religions need not converge because they draw close to anything pre-given; instead, they converge due to the inherent properties of mathematical systems. Dale stressed that this approach is neither Kantian nor Cartesian, as there is

nothing “out there” that is reflected upon by the individual or shapes her development. He thought that these ideas could be a fruitful area for transpersonal and religious studies scholars to explore and did not want them to be overlooked. Dale also stated that he believes there is value to both Cartesian/Kantian and non-Cartesian/non-Kantian approaches to spirituality, and that he had tried to include ideas that would be useful for both perspectives.

⁹In this regard, Dale distinguished between *empirical-positivist* and *participatory-non-Cartesian* research approaches in transpersonal psychology. According to Dale, empirical positivism derives from analytical philosophy and is linked to the empirical work of Transcendental Meditation (TM) researchers (e.g., Alexander, Heaton, & Chandler, 1994) and Wilber’s (2000, 2006) transpersonal approach, while participatory non-Cartesianism stems from continental philosophy and is associated with the work of Heron (1992, 2006), Tarnas (1991), Ferrer (2002), and Hartelius (Hartelius, 2006; Hartelius & Ferrer, 2013), among others. For a paper elaborating further on this theme, see Cunningham (2015).

REFERENCES

- ALEXANDER, C., HEATON, D., & CHANDLER, H. (1994). Advanced human development in the Vedic psychology of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: Theory and research. In M. Miller & S. Cook-Greuter (Eds.), *Transcendence and mature thought in adulthood* (pp. 39–70). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- ALMENDRO, M. (2014). *Chaos psychology and psychotherapy*. Houston, TX: The Written Spiral.
- ALMENDRO, M., & WEBER, D. (2012). Dissipative processes in psychology: From psyche to totality. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 31(2), 1–22.
- ARÉVALO, S. (2012). Ja no es tracta d’intercanviar pràctiques sinó de cocrear-ne. Entrevista a Jorge N. Ferrer. [The point is no longer to exchange practices, but to cocreate them: An interview with Jorge N. Ferrer]. *Dialogal: Quaderns de l’Associació UNESCO per al Diàleg Interreligiós*, 41(11), 44–45.
- ASSAGIOLI, R. (2007). *Transpersonal development: The dimension beyond psychosynthesis*. Findhorn, Scotland: SmilingWisdom, an imprint of Inner Way Productions. (Original work published 1988)
- BARNARD, W. G. (1993). Perspectives on spiritual development: An assessment of Ken Wilber’s transpersonal psychology. *Paradigms*, 8, 10–20.
- BARNARD, W. G. (1994). Perspectives on spiritual development: A critique of Ken Wilber’s transpersonal psychology. *Paradigms*, 9, 7–17.
- COOK, F. H. (1989). Just this: Buddhist ultimate reality. *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 9, 127–142.
- CUNNINGHAM, P. (2015). Empirical rationalism and transpersonal empiricism: Bridging the two epistemic cultures of transpersonal psychology. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 47(1).
- DALE, E. (2011). Evolutionary developmental biology, the human life course, and transpersonal experience. *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 32, 277–294.
- DALE, E. (2012). The equilibration of the self and the sense of sublation: Spirituality in thought, music, and meditation. *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 33, 219–232.
- DALE, E. (2013). Neo-Piagetian transpersonal psychology: A new perspective. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 45(2), 118–138.
- DALE, E. (2014a). Spiritual consciousness and the age of quantity: The strange case of Jean Piaget’s mysticism. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 21, 97–119.
- DALE, E. (2014b). Variability in the emergence point of spiritual experience in the life cycle. *Anthropology of Consciousness*, 25, 143–164.
- DALE, E. (2014c). *Completing Piaget’s project: Transpersonal philosophy and the future of psychology*. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.
- DASSEN, P. R. (1994). Culture and cognitive development from a Piagetian perspective. In W. J. Lonner & R. Malpass (Eds.), *Psychology and culture* (pp. 145–149). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

- DELEUZE, G., & GUATTARI, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- DUCKWORTH, D. (2014). How nonsectarian is “nonsectarian”? Jorge Ferrer’s religious pluralist alternative to Tibetan Buddhist inclusivism. *Sophia*, 53(3), 339–348.
- FENTON, J. Y. (1995). Mystical experience as a bridge for cross-cultural philosophy of religion: A critique. In T. Dean (Ed.), *Religious pluralism and truth: Essays on cross-cultural philosophy of religion* (pp. 189–204). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- FERRER, J. N. (2000). The perennial philosophy revisited. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 32(1), 7–30.
- FERRER, J. N. (2002). *Revisoning transpersonal theory: A participatory vision of human spirituality*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- FERRER, J. N. (2008). Spiritual knowing as participatory enaction: An answer to the question of religious pluralism. In J. N. Ferrer & J. H. Sherman (Eds.), *The participatory turn: Spirituality, mysticism, religious studies* (pp. 135–169). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- FERRER, J. N. (2010). The plurality of religions and the spirit of pluralism: A participatory vision of the future of religion. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 28(1), 139–151.
- FERRER, J. N. (2011a). Participatory spirituality and transpersonal theory: A 10-year retrospective. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 43(1), 1–34.
- FERRER, J. N. (2011b). Participation, metaphysics, and enlightenment: Reflections on Ken Wilber’s recent work. *Transpersonal Psychology Review*, 14(2), 3–24.
- FERRER, J. N. (2012). The future of world religion: Four scenarios, one dream. *Tikkun: Culture, Spirituality, Politics*, 27(1), 14–16, 63–64.
- FERRER, J. N. (2014). Transpersonal psychology, science, and the supernatural. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 46(2), 152–186.
- FERRER, J. N. (forthcoming). *Participation and spirit: Transpersonal essays in psychology, education, and religion*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- FLANAGAN, O. (1991). *The science of the mind* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- FRIEDMAN, H. L. (2002). Transpersonal psychology as a scientific field. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 21, 175–187.
- FRIEDMAN, H. L. (2013). The role of science in transpersonal psychology: The advantages of middle-range theory. In H. L. Friedman & G. Hartelius (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of transpersonal psychology* (pp. 300–311). Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.
- FRISINA, W. G. (2002). *The unity of knowledge and action: Toward a nonrepresentational theory of knowledge*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- FUNK, J. (1994). Unanimity and disagreement among transpersonal psychologists. In M. E. Miller & S. R. Cook-Greuter (Eds.), *Transcendence and mature thought in adulthood: The further reaches of adult development* (pp. 3–36). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- GREGORY, P. N. (Ed.). (1987). *Sudden and gradual approaches to enlightenment in Chinese thought*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- GROF, S. (1998). Ken Wilber’s spectrum psychology: Observations from clinical consciousness research. In D. Rothberg & S. Kelly (Eds.), *Ken Wilber in dialogue: Conversations with leading transpersonal thinkers* (pp. 85–116). Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House.
- GROF, S., & GROF, C. (Eds.). (1989). *Spiritual emergency: When personal transformation becomes a crisis*. Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher.
- GROSS, R. M., & MUCK, T. C. (Eds.). (2003). *Christians talk about Buddhist meditation, Buddhists talk about Christian prayer*. New York, NY: Continuum.

- HALBFASS, W. (1991). *Tradition and reflection: Explorations in Indian thought*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- HALIFAX, J. (1979). *Shamanic voices: A survey of visionary narratives*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- HARTELIUS, G. (2006). All that glisters is not gold: Heterophenomenology and transpersonal theory. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 13(6), 63–77.
- HARTELIUS, G., & FERRER, J. N. (2013). Transpersonal philosophy: The participatory turn. In H. L. Friedman & G. Hartelius (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of transpersonal psychology* (pp. 187–202). Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.
- HEIM, S. M. (1995). *Salvations: Truth and difference in religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- HERON, J. (1992). *Feeling and personhood: Psychology in another key*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- HERON, J. (1996). *Co-operative inquiry: Research into the human condition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- HERON, J. (1998). *Sacred science: Person-centered inquiry into the spiritual and the subtle*. Ross-on-Wye, United Kingdom: PCCS Books.
- HERON, J. (2006). *Participatory spirituality: A farewell to authoritarian religion*. Morrisville, NC: Lulu.
- HOLLENBACK, J. B. (1996). *Mysticism: Experience, response, and empowerment*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- HUNT, H. (1995). Some developmental issues in transpersonal psychology. *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 16, 115–134.
- IDEL, M. (1987). *The mystical experience in Abraham Abulafia*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- IRWIN, L. (1996). *Visionary worlds: The making and unmaking of reality*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- IRWIN, L. (2008). Esoteric paradigms and participatory spirituality in the teachings of Mikhaël Aïvanhov. In J. N. Ferrer & J. H. Sherman (Eds.), *The participatory turn: Spirituality, mysticism, religious studies* (pp. 197–224). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- KAPLAN, S. (2002). *Different paths, different summits: A model for religious pluralism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- KATZ, S. T. (1978). Language, epistemology, and mysticism. In S. T. Katz (Ed.), *Mysticism and philosophical analysis* (pp. 22–74). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- KELLY, S. M. (1998). Revisioning the mandala of consciousness: A critical appraisal of Wilber's holarchical paradigm. In D. Rothberg & S. M. Kelly (Eds.), *Ken Wilber in dialogue: Conversations with leading transpersonal thinkers* (pp. 117–130). Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House.
- KING, R. (1999). *Orientalism and religion: Postcolonial theory, India, and 'the mystic East.'* New York, NY: Routledge.
- KOHN, L., & MILLER, J. (2001). Ultimate reality: Chinese religion. In R. C. Neville (Ed.), *Ultimate realities: A volume in the Comparative Religious Ideas Project* (pp. 9–35). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- KRIPAL, J. J. (2010). *Authors of the impossible: The paranormal and the sacred*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- LAKOFF, G., & JOHNSON, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought*. New York, NY: Basic.
- LANZETTA, B. (2007). *Emerging heart: Global spirituality and the sacred*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.
- MACDONALD, D. A. (2013). Philosophical underpinnings of transpersonal psychology as a science. In H. L. Friedman & G. Hartelius (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of transpersonal psychology* (pp. 312–329). Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.

- MASLOW, A. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York, NY: Viking.
- MATSUMOTO, D., & JUANG, L. (2008). *Culture and psychology* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- MCGINN, B. (1991). *The foundations of mysticism Vol. I of The presence of God: A history of Western Christian mysticism*. New York, NY: Crossroad.
- MCGINN, B., & MCGINN, P. F. (2003). *Early Christian mystics: The divine vision of the spiritual masters*. New York, NY: Crossroad.
- NAH, D. S. (2013). *Religious pluralism and Christian theology: A critical evaluation of John Hick*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: James Clarke.
- NELSON, J. E. (1994). *Healing the split: Integrating spirit in our understanding of the mentally ill*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- PIAGET, J. (1926). *The language and thought of the child*. London, United Kingdom: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner. (Original work published 1923)
- PIAGET, J. (1960). *The child's conception of the world*. Paterson, NJ: Littlefield Adams. (Original work published 1926)
- RAWLINSON, A. (1997). *The book of enlightened masters: Western teachers in Eastern traditions*. Chicago, IL: Open Court.
- ROTHBERG, D. (1998). How straight is the spiritual path? : Conversations with Buddhist teachers Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, and Michelle McDonald-Smith. In D. Rothberg & S. Kelly (Eds.), *Ken Wilber in dialogue: Conversations with leading transpersonal thinkers* (pp. 133–178). Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House.
- ROTHBERG, D. (1999). Transpersonal issues at the millennium. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 31(1) 41–67.
- SCHLAMM, L. (2001). Ken Wilber's spectrum model: Identifying alternative soteriological perspectives. *Religion*, 31(1), 19–39.
- SHARMA, A. (2005). *Religious studies and comparative methodology: The case for reciprocal illumination*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- SIMMER-BROWN, J. (2002). *Dakini's warm breath: The feminine principle in Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- SMART, N. (1980). Interpretation and mystical experience. In R. Woods (Ed), *Understanding mysticism* (pp. 78–91). Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- TARNAS, R. (1991). *The passion of the Western mind: Understanding the ideas that have shaped our world view*. New York, NY: Ballantine.
- THOMAS, L. E., BREWER, S. J., KRAUS, P. A., & ROSEN, B. L. (1993). Two patterns of transcendence: An empirical examination of Wilber's and Washburn's theories. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 33(3), 66–81.
- VARELA, F. J., THOMPSON, E., & ROSCH, E. (1991). *The embodied mind: Cognitive science and human experience*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- WADE, J. (1996). *Changes of mind: A holonomic theory of the evolution of consciousness*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- WASHBURN, M. (1988). *The ego and the dynamic ground: A transpersonal theory of human development*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- WASHBURN, M. (1990). Two patterns of transcendence. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 30(3), 84–112.
- WASHBURN, M. (1998). The pre/trans fallacy reconsidered. In D. Rothberg & S. Kelly (Eds.), *Ken Wilber in dialogue: Conversations with leading transpersonal thinkers* (pp. 62–87). Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.
- WASHBURN, M. (2003). Transpersonal dialogue: A new direction. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 35(1), 1–20.
- WILBER, K. (1990). Two patterns of transcendence: A reply to Washburn. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 30(3), 113–136.
- WILBER, K. (1995). *Sex, ecology and spirituality: The spirit of evolution*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.

- WILBER, K. (1996). *The Atman project: A transpersonal view of human development* (2nd ed.). Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.
- WILBER, K. (1999). *Spirituality and developmental lines: Are there stages?* The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 31(1), 1–10.
- WILBER, K. (2000). *Integral psychology: Consciousness, spirit, psychology, therapy*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- WILBER, K. (2001). *The eye of spirit: An integral vision for a world gone slightly mad* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- WILBER, K. (2006). *Integral spirituality: A startling new role for religion in the modern and postmodern world*. Boston, MA: Integral Books.

The Author

Edward J. Dale, M.Sc., is an independent scholar, member of the British Psychological Society, and the author of recent papers on Piaget, systems theory, and transpersonal development. He is also translating some of Piaget's early writings into English.

The Reviewer

Jorge N. Ferrer, Ph.D., is core faculty of the department of East-West Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), San Francisco. He is the author of *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002) and *Participation and Spirit: Transpersonal Essays in Psychology, Education, and Religion* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, forthcoming), as well as the coeditor (with Jacob H. Sherman) of *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008). He was born in Barcelona, Spain.

* * * * *