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Science and a Whole Person Psychology: Can Participatory Empiricism Ease the Way Forward?

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Science and a Whole Person Psychology: Can Participatory Empiricism Ease the Way Forward?

Editor's Introduction

Jack Schwarz (e.g., 2000, 2001) was a man with the scientifically demonstrated ability to thrust needles through his flesh and cause the resulting wounds to close and heal in minutes without pain or bleeding (Pelletier & Peper, 1977). This was someone I wanted to meet. When I heard that he was teaching small weekend workshops near his home on the Northern California coast, I saved tips from my work until I had enough money to attend. To my disappointment, Jack Schwarz—then about 70 years of age—no longer performed these remarkable feats of self-healing, but he shared a story that was in some ways more memorable.

Jack had discovered some of his unusual capacities when he was a teenager in his native Holland. He decided to become an entertainer and profit by featuring his gifts in a stage show, so he saved up money earned by delivering milk, rented a large hall in Amsterdam, and advertised that a Dutch boy would lie on a bed of nails. When the big night came, the hall was completely empty except for a couple who had received free tickets in exchange for permission to place his flyer in their shop window. The show was a failure, but Jack went back to his job, saved up his money again, and rented the same venue a second time a few years later. This time he posed as a *fakir* from North Africa (a Muslim dervish or mendicant) and filled the hall to capacity.

On May 10, 1940, while Jack was still a teenager saving up money for his second performance, German tanks rolled into the Netherlands. In occupied

Holland, Jack joined the resistance and helped locate safe houses to shelter Jews. A few months after his successful show, Jack was arrested and sent to a labor camp in Germany. While there, a fellow prisoner contracted typhus. The guards, unwilling to risk contact with the deadly disease, put Jack in a cell with the ill prisoner to serve as his caretaker. Jack realized he had little time to live, as he would almost certainly come down with the disease himself after nursing the dying man. In that moment, he also accepted that his healing capacities were not for his own gain, but a gift to be used in selfless service. He determined to care for his suffering cellmate with wholehearted devotion. The man died, but Jack survived, escaped from the labor camp—and from another German prison after being re-arrested by the Gestapo for espionage. He went on to do decades of research and teaching on human health and healing. He credited this prison experience with changing the central motivation that inspired his life and his actions.

Powerful though it was, Jack's transformative experience would be difficult to fully account for in the language of psychology. Cognitive, behavioral, and neuroscientific work has contributed immensely to psychology, yet often marginalizes aspects of self that are challenging to describe in cognitive terms such as felt sense, intuition, emotional intelligence, inspiration, spirituality, mysticism, vision, creativity, empathy, and presence. Cognitive skills will help with filling out a job application but are less likely to determine what one's lifework will be, what values

they will live by, and whom they will love. Life-defining and life-changing choices are often shaped by much more than rational decision-making, yet rather than examining these wider aspects of experience, scientific psychology has typically given priority to what is easy to measure with current tools.

Transpersonal psychology has a sustained interest in these harder-to-describe elements that seem more central to human life than their role in psychology would suggest. Such capacities are often at the edges of the self of everyday experience, sometimes associated with subtly or profoundly shifted states of consciousness. These also include Jack Schwarz's exceptional capacity to rapidly heal wounds to his body, which accords in some measure with traditional accounts of allegedly miraculous healing. According to documented observation in controlled settings, Jack was able to insert large needles through his bicep without pain, and actively control whether and when the wound bled (Green & Green, 1977; Pelletier & Horrigan, 2002; Pelletier & Peper, 1977). Simultaneous measurement showed that his brain waves switched to alpha when he was controlling pain and bleeding, illustrating the potential for voluntary control of these functions through shift in state of consciousness. He was reportedly able to teach others to successfully accomplish a similar task (Norris, 1989).

Accounts of this type, however carefully documented, deserve to be met with proper skepticism and critical review; given their remarkable potential, they also seem worthy of concerted study. Instead, the response within psychology is more often silence or outright ridicule. Perhaps in reaction to such dismissal, transpersonal circles have often characterized the wider field of psychology as reductionistic, mechanistic, materialistic, and empiricist (e.g., Grof, 1983; Rothberg, 1986; Walsh, 1997; Wilber, 1999). Empirical work itself seems to arouse concern over these potential excesses, which may in part explain why fewer than 100 empirical papers were published in the two longest-running transpersonal journals, combined, during the first four decades of the field (Hartelius, Rothe, & Roy, 2013). As a result, transpersonal psychology has been only marginally effective in advancing its perspectives, constructs, and theories.

With the development of participatory thought over the past two decades (e.g., Ferrer, 2002, 2008, 2011a, 2017), however, there may be potential for wider adoption of empirical methods within transpersonal psychology with less risk of distortion by the shortcomings of empiricist frames. Given that participatory offers not only a philosophy, but a tolerant and inclusive framework within which to hold multiple epistemologies—including those of science—with reduced hierarchy, it may now be possible to approach transpersonal topics from a multi-epistemic stance as has been proposed by some scholars in the field (Ferrer, 2002, 2014; Mack, 1993; Vaughan, in Caplan, Hartelius, & Rardin, 2003).

It is critical to understand that the challenge of implementing competing epistemologies within the scientific discipline of psychology goes well beyond the work of considering various cultural perspectives in social and political contexts. For example, if one were to include intuitive epistemologies along with empiricism (Vaughan, in Caplan, Hartelius, & Rardin, 2003), which interpretive frame takes priority if intuition remains at odds with empirical evidence? If a transpersonal version of empiricism rests on “emotions, creativity, imagination, and intuitions” (Cunningham, 2015, p. 100) as firmly as it does on critical thinking, then how is psychology to exclude imaginative fraud or creative misrepresentations? Proponents of this approach have yet to articulate a way forward with respect to these difficulties.

As part of the discussion it may be helpful to consider positions held by the field's most prominent proponents of participatory thought, Jorge N. Ferrer (e.g., 2002, 2008, 2011a, 2017), and empirical methods, Harris L. Friedman (e.g., 2002, 2013/2015)—positions that are currently in some tension with each other. I have worked closely with both Ferrer and Friedman for many years and have the highest respect for both as excellent but very different scholars. I use participatory thought in my own thinking and writing, and am at the same time a strong proponent of cultivating more empirical research to test and refine the constructs and theories of transpersonal psychology. Indeed, it was a participatory frame that enabled me to

recognize empirical science as simply another situated approach to knowledge—one that is peer to many others, if indispensable within psychology. My intention here is to share with the reader a stance that appears to be compatible with both empiricism and participatory thought—what I have called *participatory empiricism*.

In brief, a participatory stance views scientific empiricism as a useful approximation of reality offered from a particular cultural and philosophical location. While empiricism holds priority within scientific disciplines such as psychology, its priority is situational rather than ontological. Ontologically, empiricism has no priority over, say, Buddhism or perennialism or yoga, but situationally, within a scientific psychology, empiricism is the currency of the context. In a similar way, it would be out of place to use a strictly scientific argument in a debate over a point of Buddhist doctrine among *geshes* in a Buddhist monastery. Buddhism is no more or less true than other traditions, but within Buddhist institutions, Buddhist assumptions hold situational priority. Within psychology, then, science has just as much right to be empiricist as Buddhism has to be Buddhist.

If transpersonal psychology is to incorporate multiple epistemologies, then, it cannot be accomplished by offering these as multiple-choice options so that empirical standards are accepted when their results are pleasing, and rejected in favor of preferred beliefs, intuitions, emotions, imagination, or creativity when empirical results are discomfiting. This latter seems to be the way in which the notions of plural epistemologies and multiple ways of knowing have at times been employed within the transpersonal field: as permissive latitude to indulge in uncritical metaphysical speculation, experientialism, essentialism, or specious reasoning in order to circumvent thorny challenges with comforting solutions (e.g., Blackstone, 2006; Cunningham, 2015; Taylor, 2016, 2017a-c; Wilber, 2006).

What the transpersonal field can do—and this might be instructive for other domains of psychology as well—is implement plural epistemologies as multiple sets of standards against which constructs, theories, and evidence should be simultaneously measured (cf. Hartelius, Thouin-

Savard, & Crouch, 2018). For example, a study may be empirically sound, but may pose its research question in a manner that privileges unconscious assumptions based in a particular culture or state of consciousness (cf. Tart, 1972), or that dismisses entire categories of lived experience (e.g., Tart, 2004). It is reasonable to ask that studies of experiential phenomena be both empirically sound and fully consonant with lived experience, or that studies of Buddhist meditation offer doctrinal perspectives along with psychological interpretations. Agreements between divergent epistemologies may yield particularly rich insights, and differences may lead to useful new research questions.

Another simple strategy is to require that claims based in non-empirical perspectives be clearly situated within their own frames. For example, if a metaphysical perspective is offered, it should be contextualized as such along with the caveat that the view is entirely speculative, and an explanation of what value it might provide—for example, hermeneutical value. Examples are Taylor's (2018) and Barratt's (2019; this issue) papers, where speculative interpretations of subtle somatic experiences are carefully identified as such. Similarly, if a religious perspective is included, it should be unambiguously situated within the context of its own tradition, rather than being put forward as psychological. For example, for the IJTS issue on Integral Yoga Psychology, edited by Debashish Banerji (2018; Vol. 37/1), the editorial staff worked with each submitting author to ensure that the content was offered within a critical frame, with hermeneutical contexts and metaphysical claims identified as such, while also authentically reflecting Aurobindonian thought in a way that remained resonant for members of the Integral Yoga community. This process of discernment and disclosure could go far toward facilitating a critically sound approach to multiple epistemologies within transpersonal psychology.

Before considering how a participatory empiricism might mitigate some of the tension between participatory and empirical perspectives, it may be helpful to review how these two stances fit within the development of the transpersonal field. Four successive orientations have been

identified, and each characterized briefly in terms of its contributions and liabilities.

Four Orientations in Transpersonal Psychology

From its inception, the transpersonal field has been no stranger to the challenge of multiple epistemologies. It has wrestled with the fact that phenomena of human spirituality are situated within scores of different philosophies and metaphysical frames. Its vision of combining the philosophy of the East with the science of the West is complicated by the fact that Eastern wisdom comes in six major schools of Indian religion that encompass three branches of Buddhism—and this reflects just one of several major Eastern traditions. Its efforts to meet this challenge have given rise to four major impulses within the field: *depth psychology*, *perennialism*, *participatory thought*, and *empirical methods*. While the primary focus here will be how participatory thought and empirical methods can be seen as complementary, it is worth reviewing the first two approaches.

The early transpersonal field was situated within a depth psychology framework—so named because it takes into account unconscious aspects of mind (Ellenberger, 1970). Depth psychology explains human spirituality by suggesting that it represents underlying depths within humanity, or within life itself (Washburn, 2003). A depth psychology perspective is reflected in the thought of Stanislav Grof, David Michael Levin, Michael Washburn, and the early Ken Wilber; it can also be applied to approaches based on the work of Eastern scholars such as Sri Aurobindo Ghose, such as Assagioli's (e.g., 1969) psychosynthesis and Banerji's (2018) integral yoga psychology. Despite their value in providing an uplifting explanatory frame, depth approaches describe dynamics thought to be outside of conscious awareness—and so necessarily remain largely speculative and metaphysical. That is, these are comprised primarily of lived experience and culturally situated socially constructed meaning, with few avenues for examination by empirical science.

Midway through the transpersonal field's first decade a second approach was introduced: Wilber's (e.g., 1975) version of perennialist thought, which despite considerable evolution and efforts

to reject the label, remains perennialist in structure (Hartelius, 2017a). If depth psychology sought to understand human resources below the conscious mind, perennialism aspired to unify these depth elements into a grand schema that ascribes these and all the world's spiritual traditions to a singular spiritual source. Perennialist thought takes many forms, but its essence is that spiritual traditions use culturally diverse language and symbols to represent what is essentially the journey to a single spiritual ultimate (Ferrer, 2000, 2002). It suggests that a single truth underlies all traditions and is the goal of all paths. This view was the primary philosophical orientation within the field (Rothberg, 1986) until around 2000. By now numerous serious issues with the viability of various perennialist solutions have been identified, such as the fact that these are essentialist, experientialist, and metaphysical models that offer little more than speculative pattern definition and circular reasoning as their best evidence (see Ferrer, 2002; Ferrer, 2011b; Hartelius, 2017b; Hartelius & Ferrer, 2013). While unsuitable within psychology, these still serve as inspiring spiritual visions for some New-Age oriented communities (Hartelius, 2015, 2017c).

The alternative that has emerged and met with considerable success in transpersonal thought is a participatory philosophy as articulated by Ferrer (e.g., 2001, 2002, 2008, 2011a; 2011b; Ferrer & Sherman, 2008) and others (e.g., Heron, 1992, 2006; Kelly, 2008; Kremer, 2007; Tarnas, 1991). Participatory thought understands the world to be a dynamic and open-ended living system that is continually involved in cocreating itself (Ferrer, 2011a), that mind and nature are necessarily woven of the same fabric (cf. Bateson, 1979), and that therefore consciousness in some form goes all the way down to the basic materials of physicality (Chalmers, 1995; De Quincey, 1994; Heron, 1992).

A particular contribution of participatory thought is its challenge to Cartesian dualism—the notion that the human person is some sort of intellectual spirit of a very different substance than the biological machine it inhabits. Even though Descartes himself likely was not a substance dualist (Strawson, 2006a-b, 2019), early European modernist philosophy adopted this form of dualism and credited Descartes. Separated from the natural world, the

rational mind could supposedly be a neutral agent gathering objective information (cf. Nagel, 1986)—fueling an exuberant, naïve objectivism and the tantalizing Enlightenment prospect of absolutely certain universal knowledge. Yet if consciousness itself is actually part of the world then knowledge is *located in the world*, and universal knowledge is unattainable because the detached neutral observer needed to gain such knowledge is fictional (cf. Haraway, 1988; Nagel, 1986; Rorty, 1979). The locatedness of knowledge makes Cartesian dualism impossible, just as it collapses the divide between spirit and matter, mind and body.

A limitation of participatory thought is that, like Cartesianism, it is situated in what is clearly a Western cultural frame. A participatory stance “invokes mutual respect for the ways in which each individual and each community brings their particular insights and contributions” (Hartelius & Ferrer, 2013), yet this goal is itself a value of the secular humanism that developed from Europe’s Enlightenment—one eschewed by any number of orthodox religious or traditional societies around the world. In addition to this philosophy Ferrer has offered three criteria by which to evaluate spiritual traditions: how well they combat egocentrism, how well they counteract dissociation from the body and other aspects of the whole person, and how effectively they “foster ecological balance, social and economic justice, religious and political freedom, class and gender equality, and other fundamental human rights” (Ferrer, 2011a, p. 7). The very notion of human rights stems also from the Age of Enlightenment, and the various rights enumerated trace much of the history of how that concept has developed in Western society since the 17th century. In addition, Sherman (2008) traced the roots of a participatory perspective to Greek philosophy, and Tarnas (1991) attributed inspiration for its contemporary form to thinkers of the Romantic era. This limitation illustrates participatory thought’s own acknowledged situatedness (Hartelius & Ferrer, 2013), which does not reduce its utility for the study of human spirituality in its diversities.

Shortly after the introduction of participatory thought Friedman formally introduced empirical methods as a transpersonal approach

with his 2002 paper, *Transpersonal Psychology as a Scientific Field*. This paper complements his work and that by Douglas MacDonald and others on describing and developing assessments and constructs relevant to transpersonal psychology (e.g., Friedman & MacDonald, 1997; Gabrhel & Jezek, 2016; MacDonald, 2000, 2009; MacDonald et al., 2015; MacDonald & Friedman, 2002, 2009, 2013; MacDonald, Friedman, & Kuentzel, 1999; MacDonald & Kuentzel, 1999; MacDonald, LeClair, Holland, Alter, & Friedman, 1995; Lopez, Jodhar, & MacDonald, 2017; Mendez & MacDonald, 2012, 2017; St. John & MacDonald, 2007). Friedman’s position is that transpersonal psychology, as a subdiscipline of scientific psychology, should adopt and use empirical scientific methods to study transpersonal topics.

Friedman’s subsequent papers promoting empirical work show recognition of the limitations and disadvantages of these methods alongside his affirmation of their pragmatic value (e.g., Friedman, 2013/2015). He has acknowledged that empirical science is only capable of “modest generalizations” (p. 57), and of describing how things function within a limited context; it is not able to provide universal explanations. A scientific approach is also incapable of studying phenomena that are believed to exist, but that cannot be measured in any way. A scientific psychology could study the impact of *belief in* certain metaphysical or supernatural phenomena, it could study *reports* by individuals who claim to have experienced those phenomena—perhaps in some shifted state of consciousness—but it could not directly study things that do not appear in some way within the natural world. He has also affirmed that science cannot escape empiricism, in the sense that conceptualizing requires a knower and something that is known, perpetuating a subject-object divide.

Ferrer’s participatory thought (e.g., 2002) and Friedman’s empirical approach (e.g., 2013/2015) have both critiqued perennialist approaches and offered alternatives that avoid some of the associated metaphysical pitfalls. Participatory thought and empirical methods are potentially complementary in that each targets a different level in the development of knowledge: participatory is a broad

philosophical frame without a specific method, and empirical methods can be used within various philosophical frames. Despite this, and as noted, some disagreements between the two perspectives have emerged in their early engagement, particularly over the issue of empiricism.

Friedman's Empirical Methods versus Ferrer's Participatory Thought

The first engagement between Friedman and Ferrer came with Friedman's (2013/2015) characterization of participatory thought as promoting "mini-theories that avoid explaining much of anything" (p. 55)—a critique later sharpened into the label, "a theory of nothing" (Friedman, 2018, p. 231). What Friedman has accurately grasped here is that if knowledge is located, then every knower, every point of sentience, holds its own unique context and perspective (cf. Nagel, 1986). While this offers a different starting point for knowledge construction than the imaginary objective self who holds a "view from nowhere" (Nagel, 1986), it is by no means the end of that process. Each participant offers an approximation of shared reality from their own specific location, and together with other knowers and the world itself a shared local reality is co-constructed—one that offers negotiated generalizations. The emphasis on located knowledge is no denial of or limitation on the building of knowledge within shared realities, but a call for greater respect for the differences that individuals and communities bring to such processes. Friedman's (2018) critique appears to serve as a convenient rhetorical device that allowed him to contrast participatory as a "theory of nothing" with perennialism as a "theory of everything" (p. 231) so he could offer his own solution of middle-range theory as the porridge that is just right.

Friedman's (2013/2015) critique appears to be based on concern that Ferrer's approach "explicitly does not seek to generalize results from its data" (p. 57), which is a bit like complaining that a recipe written on paper does not taste good, or that architectural renderings of a Formula One racecar do not move when you push on the drawing of the gas pedal. Whether it is dinner or a fast automobile that is being designed, it is helpful to lay out the conceptual

ground beforehand—in preparation for cooking or starting to assemble a vehicle chassis. Participatory thought aims at careful evaluation of the conceptual ground of transpersonal research *in preparation for* that research, not in lieu of it. Friedman himself has noted that empirical methods cannot yield universal knowledge, a conclusion that requires thinking about how knowledge construction works, apart from the enterprise of actually doing research. His impatience with a thorough articulation of this same type of subject perhaps reflects his passion for getting on with the research itself, but architecture is just as noble a profession as building.

In response to this critique, Ferrer (2014) has offered a detailed analysis of philosophical assumptions in Friedman's work, in the process laying out a thorough and careful articulation of reservations regarding empirical work and science in general that are longstanding within the transpersonal community. By way of example, Ferrer's (2002) earlier critiques of perennialism also included charges that such models failed to fully purge empiricism, leaving behind a residue of subtle Cartesianism (p. 28). Ferrer (2014) has affirmed the value of empirical research, but claimed that following Friedman's proposal to turn the field "into a modern scientific discipline ... effectively binds transpersonal psychology to a naturalistic metaphysical worldview that is hostile to most spiritual knowledge claims" (p. 152). The charge here is that holding the transpersonal field to the standards of empirical science requires subscribing to a reality in which mind and body, spirit and matter, are irrevocably separate—one that has collapsed spirit and consciousness into imaginary figments.

It should be clear that the tension is not between empiricism as a limited Western worldview and participatory thought as a universal philosophy, but between two different branches of Western thought; the selfsame Age of Enlightenment that midwived Friedman's empiricism into the West also birthed the values of rational tolerance espoused by Ferrer. Nor is it a contest between hierarchical and non-hierarchical systems, since the rejection of hierarchies among spiritual traditions creates a different sort of hierarchy by elevating tolerance. The latter is not merely hypothetical, as a student

once shared with me that their traditional religious beliefs had been held up to ridicule by other students after a lecture on participatory thought on grounds that traditional systems were metaphysical and oppressive—so why would anyone remain committed to them? This sort of intolerant behavior is, of course, entirely inimical to the aims of a participatory stance, but it illustrates the point that even participatory thought cannot entirely eliminate hierarchies.

Instead, the differences between Friedman's and Ferrer's positions seem as if they may be at least as much about framing and emphasis as about substance. (I fully expect both scholars to take issue with this framing of their differences as well, as such is the nature of scholarly debate.) The limits on the explanatory powers of empiricism that Friedman (2013/2015) has acknowledged, and his affirmation of its applicability within non-ordinary states of consciousness, seem at least moderately congruent with Ferrer's (2014) view of empirical methods. Consider Ferrer's (2014) example of how transpersonal research might be pursued beyond what he considered the limits of empiricism. He proposed that "a team of researchers focusing their attention on the possible occurrence of external visions" might take "a visionary medicine—such as San Pedro or ayahuasca" (p. 175) and then compare their experiences, leaving open how these might be interpreted within various assumptions about reality. A very similar project might well be pursued under Friedman's (2013/2015) relatively open definition of empiricism:

To be seen as empirical data, all that is required is that information be amenable (or potentially amenable) to the senses, while it needs to be recognized that the senses can operate under many different consciousness states (e.g., under the influence of psychedelic substances; Friedman, 2006). As long as phenomenological data from an alternate state can be accessed with some degree of reliability (again, a prerequisite for being a scientifically valid observation), either by the same researcher across time or by others, it can be studied scientifically. (p. 61)

There seems little cause for disagreement here.

Where some of the confusion arises is an apparent difference in the use of the term, *supernatural*. Friedman's (2013/2015) use of the term implies a wholly speculative construction or interpretation, one that cannot be accessed by means of inner or outer senses under any circumstances. Ferrer's (2014) use of *supernatural*, on the other hand, seems to be more synonymous with what might be termed *supernormal*—that is, experiences that are available to inner or outer senses under exceptional circumstances. As in Ferrer's example cited earlier, certain plant medicines may induce visionary experiences which, though quite outside of ordinary experience, are still within experience. Friedman's version of empiricism embraces study of the *supernormal*, and rejects only the study of the wholly speculative—that which cannot be experienced under any circumstances, or in any state of consciousness. When differences in definition are accounted for, their positions on notions that are wholly speculative, and experiential phenomena accessed under exceptional circumstances, seem congruent.

Another area of difference in language concerns objectivity, which Ferrer (2014) has identified as a liability and Friedman (2013/2015) has named as necessity. On this basis Friedman has characterized Ferrer's work as some version of intersubjective journalism, and Ferrer has in turn implied that Friedman represents a sort of Western scientific colonialism seeking to appropriate spiritual resources from other cultures into its own objectivist knowledge system. It may be, however, that the objectivity decried by Ferrer is not entirely identical with that promoted by Friedman.

For example, if knowing is limited and located so that universal knowledge is not possible, if there is no "view from nowhere" (Nagel, 1986), then truly objective knowledge, wholly unaffected by the subject who knows, is a fictional goal. This does not mean that objectivity is a meaningless concept. Systematic measurements of elevation taken from a thousand different points spread across Japan would provide considerably better information about its geography than a single measurement from some random location. Similarly, a thousand responses to a validated scale on dating satisfaction by residents

of Boston collected on the basis of a statistically valid sampling plan will say more about what it is like to date in that city than tales of romance a friend from Beacon Hill shares over tea or a beer. Careful measurements of a thousand data points—whether geographical or sociological—will provide data that are *more objective* in the sense that they are more likely to reflect the *what it is like* of a larger shared reality than what it is like for some individual or some unique point on a map (cf. Nagel, 1974). Data that are more objective are less idiosyncratic, and more generalizable, but they are no closer to the imaginary idealization of an objectivity that does not exist—one in which an immaterial knower can dispassionately survey all the world without affecting, being affected by, or even being located in that world.

Friedman (2013/2015), in keeping with his work as an empirical researcher, seems to have used the term objectivity in the pragmatic sense of greater generalizability, and in the common sense that research involves an observer and something that is observed. Ferrer's (2014) interest in emancipatory philosophy, on the other hand, appears to have focused his view on the fact that an ideal objectivity does not actually exist, and that the fiction of objectivity has been used to rationalize the discounting of human suffering and human spirituality, along with the exploitation of individuals and communities. Likely, both are true: more data points tend to yield results that are more generalizable, and the myth of an ideal objectivity—which has no particular utility in research—has served to condone dismissals of lived experience as well as personal and social injustices. The differences between Friedman and Ferrer seems to reflect more about how differently their focus rests, even when using the same term, and less about any implications for transpersonal research.

While there are no doubt many points of difference remaining between Ferrer and Friedman, a careful reading of Friedman's (e.g., 2013/2015) affirmation of empiricism and Ferrer's (2014) critique of the same suggests that there may also be more than a few similarities—and that some of the apparent disagreements, if considered carefully, may dwindle into insignificance.

A Way Forward, Perhaps

Scientific empiricism, when considered from a well-tempered perspective that acknowledges its utility while curbing its hubris, may turn out to be reasonably consistent with how a participatory view might hold it—as yet another situated way to approximate shared reality. Holding empiricism as a limited but useful tool—and acknowledging it as the conventional *emic* perspective of the culture of science—does not prohibit the use of plural epistemologies, so that rationality and empirical evidence become a minimum standard of discourse rather than a maximum ideal. Philosophy is always implicit in empirical work, and influential studies often entail a good amount of intuition, imagination, and creativity in their design. In a participatory frame, empirical discourse can include all of these and more—lived experience, hermeneutics, even metaphysical speculation—so long as these are critically situated and not advanced as claims that demand acceptance without support or scrutiny. These do not seem like onerous requirements in a scholarly context.

There will still be some in the transpersonal field who see empirical research as a sort of "gateway drug" likely to lead down some slippery slope to rampant intolerance of the very topics that the field has championed. Yet it may not be the methodology of empirical science as much as its conceit that has at times evoked its rejection in transpersonal circles. To be sure, holistic communities are equally vulnerable to inflation, on occasion appearing to embrace spiritual elitism in response to a dismissive scientific culture. A participatory stance may be of some modest service by offering opportunity to set aside both species of hubris.

Were the culture of empirical science to be more informed by the values of tolerance toward other situated reality frames, tolerance born from a vision of self-evident human rights, then these twin children of the Age of Enlightenment might usher in a science better suited to the study of the whole person amidst the cultural complexities of the 21st century. If careful, rigorous empiricism were accompanied by the cultivation of humility, respect, curiosity, open-mindedness, and active efforts to "try on" other assumptions about reality in an appreciative

spirit, then it might become something akin to a participatory empiricism—a science that might not need to marginalize or reject exceptional human capacities even when these were demonstrated and documented in controlled conditions.

It is possible that such an empirical science might come closer to acceptability by both Friedman and Ferrer—and perhaps to more of the transpersonal field as well. Transpersonal scholars need not wait for the mainstream of psychology to transform in these ways; it is possible for those within the field to embrace and model a version of science that is both epistemologically tolerant and empirically sound. With a little creativity and imagination it may turn out that we are, after all, the ones we have been waiting for.

In This Issue

This issue opens with a new installment to Harry Hunt's series, *Intimations of a Spiritual New Age*, titled, *Martin Heidegger's Phenomenology of Numinous/Being Experience and the "Other Beginning" of a Futural Planetary Spirituality*. This follows Hunt's 2017 paper on universalized Christian mysticism in the life and work of Simone Weil, and his two 2018 papers on Wilhelm Reich's efforts to develop a bio-energetic spiritual psychology. This important series considers several formative figures in the envisioning of a this-worldly mysticism and futural New Age spirituality between the 1930s and 1950s. Hunt considers Heidegger's later work on "the cognitive-noetic meaning of numinous-mystical feeling" (p. 2) as part of his search for Western spiritual renewal and re-sacralization of nature. Hunt faces up squarely to Heidegger's earlier embrace of National Socialism, effectively situating this episode within the trajectory of his intellectual and personal development. The result is a nuanced and insightful treatment of Heidegger's vision that includes his warning—relevant for a transpersonal psychology—against excessive subjectivism, psychic adventuring, and focusing on the exotic and unusual for its own sake.

Following this is a contribution by Jenny Wade on *The Castrated Gods and their Castration Cults: Revenge, Punishment, and Spiritual Supremacy*. In order to understand a myth properly, each theme and image deserves to be situated within

its own historical, cultural, and literary context. Wade's piece acknowledges this, but instead engages in a cross-cultural survey of the types of meaning attached to divine emasculation based on how a variety of myths explicitly describe the narratives of emasculated gods and how castration changed their divine powers. Her treatment is in this way more hermeneutical than historical or literary, as an inquiry into what these mythic themes might convey to a modern reader. She concluded that while "the messages vary, but at their core they are stories of transformation and liberation" (p. 51).

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