



FERRER, JORGE N. *Participation and the Mystery: Transpersonal Essays in Psychology, Education, and Religion*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. 2017. Pp. ix + 376. Hbk. \$95.

The relative lack of interest Jungians have shown for the field of transpersonal psychology warrants attention. Although Jung is considered a founding father of the transpersonal movement (alongside figures like William James, Roberto Assagioli, and Abraham Maslow), the Jungian establishment has all but ignored this movement's existence. As of early 2017, in the 62 year history of the *Journal of Analytical Psychology* there are a total of 25 citations to the combined works of Abraham Maslow (5), Stanislav Grof (6), Charles Tart (7), Ken Wilber (6), Michael Washburn (1), and Richard Tarnas (0). Given the extent to which each of these figures has directly contributed to Jungian interests, this could be considered striking.

Jorge Ferrer's work is concerned with articulating a 'participatory' approach to spirituality. In his first book, Ferrer (2002) mounts a challenging critique towards many of the conventional assumptions of transpersonal theorizing. He conceptualizes these assumptions in terms of the field's sustained reliance on *experientialism*, *empiricism*, and *perennialism*. Each of these lines of criticism can be argued to have direct relevance for Jungians, since to a considerable extent all three tendencies are also evident in the history of analytical psychology. By experientialism, Ferrer refers to the fashion in which transpersonalists have tended to treat spiritual phenomena only as the intrasubjective experience of individuals, a trend which he views as promoting narcissism and obstructing spiritual integration. Ferrer's concern with empiricism, meanwhile, focuses on the inadequacy of attempts to align spiritual inquiry with the scientific method. Partly reflecting an apparent criticism of Jung (whom he cites as having been influential in establishing this tendency), Ferrer's concern with the limits of the scientific method are nevertheless very much in keeping with certain statements of Jung himself. Finally, Ferrer challenges transpersonal psychology's broad reliance on the 'perennial philosophy' – a grand narrative approach to reconciling religious truth claims that Ferrer exposes for its tendency to level distinctions while privileging certain spiritual paths.

Building on the thinking of Richard Tarnas, whose work is centrally informed by Jung, Ferrer seeks to respond to the limits of transpersonal psychology by endorsing an outlook which considers human spirituality to emerge out of a *cocreative* participation with reality. While this approach challenges the Kantian assumptions upon which Jung built much of his work, the outlook offered by Ferrer is very much compatible with Jung's late thinking in terms of synchronicity and the *unus mundus*. Thus,

although ostensibly concerned with developments in transpersonal scholarship, Ferrer's contribution implicitly poses some intriguing questions for Jungian discourse.

Ferrer's participatory 'revisioning' of transpersonal studies, which he expanded upon in a subsequent edited collection of essays (Ferrer & Sherman 2008), has exerted considerable influence. With his most recent book, *Participation and the Mystery: Transpersonal Essays in Psychology, Education, and Religion*, Ferrer offers a series of reflections on the application of a participatory approach to transpersonal psychology, integral education, and religious studies. While this book further develops themes from his earlier work, it also stands on its own as an effective introduction to Ferrer's thinking.

The book's first section is concerned with outlining a participatory outlook and expanding upon its implications for transpersonal psychology. Ferrer surveys the substance of his approach before going on to explore how his thinking has been received. A chapter is devoted to further exploring the relationship between transpersonal scholarship and science. Ferrer clearly articulates the limits of neo-Kantian skepticism before outlining a participatory research paradigm in hopes of fostering a more open form of naturalism. He then turns his attention to the theme of embodiment to explore the ways in which modern psychospiritual practices have tended to focus on the mind and heart while excluding the instincts.

The three chapters constituting the book's second section address the theme of integral education. Reflecting Ferrer's interest in embodiment, these chapters focus particularly on what Ferrer considers to be the sustained 'cognicentrism' of holistic pedagogies. Drawing from his own experiences as an educator, Ferrer attempts to outline a participatory pedagogics of *embodied spiritual inquiry* that seeks to honour the whole person. There are obvious resonances here with Jung's emphasis on typological wholeness, and the questions Ferrer raises seem particularly relevant for clinical training.

In the book's third and final section Ferrer turns his attention to the application of participatory thinking to the broader study of mysticism, religion, and spirituality. An extended reflection on the work of Stanislav Grof in relationship to the question of a priori spiritual insights is likely to be of particular interest for Jungians. This section also includes a discussion of Ferrer's response to the work of Ken Wilber, along with a chapter dedicated to the challenges of religious pluralism.

The range of ideas expressed in this compelling series of papers is extensive. In his seminal *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, Andrew Samuels, drawing from the work of Karl Popper, suggests that in order to understand an unfamiliar field we are well advised to 'go where the disagreements are' (1985, p. 21). With this advice in mind, for Jungians looking to become better acquainted with transpersonal psychology, this book can be considered an excellent starting point.

**References**

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