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A Daniel Come To Judgement?[1]

Dennett and the Revisioning of Transpersonal Theory

Abstract: *Transpersonal psychology first emerged as an academic discipline in the 1960s and has subsequently broadened into a range of transpersonal studies. Jorge Ferrer (2002) has called for a 'revisioning' of transpersonal theory, dethroning inner experience from its dominant role in defining and validating spiritual reality. In the current paradigm he detects a lingering Cartesianism, which subtly entrenches the very subject–object divide that transpersonalists seek to overcome. This paper outlines the development and current shape of the transpersonal movement, compares Ferrer's epistemology with the heterophenomenology of Daniel Dennett, and speculates on the integration of the latter into transpersonal theory.*

Keywords: Dennett; Ferrer; inner experience; heterophenomenology; revisioning; transpersonal.

I: The Transpersonal Movement

Transpersonal theorists are concerned with aspects of human psychology that go beyond the individual, using such terms as self, soul and spirit, to speak of realities that transcend ordinary human sensing and thinking, but which can nonetheless be experienced in the right conditions. As a scholarly discipline, transpersonal psychology grew from a heady mix of Western psychology, Eastern contemplative traditions, and the psychedelic counter-culture of the 1960s. It concerns aspects

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[1] 'A Daniel come to judgment! yea, a Daniel! O wise young judge, how I do honour thee!' — *Merchant of Venice*, Act 4, Scene 1.

of human experience that go beyond the individual's normal waking conscious state, focusing on 'altered states of consciousness', such as those associated with dreaming, meditation, or the taking of psychoactive drugs. Abraham Maslow, Stan Grof, and Robert Assagioli are key names in its early development, along with Charles Tart; from the late1970s its most prolific writer has been Ken Wilber.

Defining the transpersonal

The term 'trans-personal' was first introduced to the English language in 1905, on the syllabus of one of William James' Harvard courses. It then had a rather different meaning from its current one, being used to describe an object simultaneously seen by two people. The context was James' radical empiricism, according to which there is an intimate relation between a perceiving subject and perceived object, and all objects are dependent on being perceived by someone (Taylor, 1996, p. 26).

A better guide to the meaning of transpersonal for today's theorists, and others who associate themselves with the contemporary transpersonal movement, is an influential set of definitions proposed by Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughan:

> *Transpersonal experiences* may be defined as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (*trans*) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, *psyche*, and cosmos. …
>
> *Transpersonal psychology* is the psychological study of transpersonal experiences and their correlates. These correlates include the nature, variety, causes, and effects of transpersonal experiences and development, as well as the psychologies, philosophies, disciplines, arts, cultures, lifestyles, reactions, and religions that are inspired by them or that seek to induce, express, apply, or understand them. …
>
> The *transpersonal movement* is the interdisciplinary movement that includes and integrates individual transpersonal disciplines [including psychiatry, anthropology, sociology, and ecology, in addition to psychology] (Walsh and Vaughan, 1993, pp. 3–4; original italics).

Charles Tart and Michael Daniels prefer descriptions that make explicit the spiritual or religious dimension found in much (though not all) transpersonal writing:

> Transpersonal psychology is a fundamental area of research, scholarship and application based on people's experiences of temporarily transcending our usual identification with our limited biological, historical, cultural and personal self and, at the deepest and most profound levels of experience possible, recognizing/being 'something' of vast

> intelligence and compassion that encompasses/is the entire universe (Tart, 1997).
>
> 'Transpersonal Psychology' is a branch of psychology that is concerned with the study of those states and processes in which people experience a deeper or wider sense of who they are, or a greater sense of connectedness with others, nature, or the 'spiritual' dimension (Daniels, 1996/2003).

Pioneers of transpersonal psychology

How were the pioneers in this field to tackle such topics effectively and systematically in a mid-twentieth-century world in the grip of behaviourism? This was just at the moment when introspection was abandoned and science remained only respectable arena of study, religion having been banished to the privacy of one's inner world — 'what the individual does with his own solitariness', as Whitehead (1996) put it. So the early transpersonalists were faced by the daunting challenge of restoring spiritual knowledge to the public domain of objective truth.

Their plan was to develop a 'science of human experience', which would redeem inner experience in the eyes of science by presenting replicable and verifiable data. The pioneers' confidence that this was possible lay in their belief that all transpersonal experience accesses a single underlying spiritual reality. Described in the 'perennial philosophy' of Aldous Huxley (1945), its most notable feature was a hierarchy of all reality, stretching from matter at the bottom all the way up to pure spirit, known as the Great Chain of Being. It followed that if all knowledge gained by inner experience in altered states of consciousness reflected the same reality, then all subjects would report similar findings, and their agreement would confirm their accuracy. Thus the sceptics would be confounded on their own empirical ground.

Despite such long-term confidence, the immediate fear of being rejected by the scientific community as a religious fifth column was evident, for example, in Anthony Sutich's editorial statement in the first issue of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (launched in 1969 as part of the drive towards the discipline's academic respectability). Having listed a large number of topics that fell in the journal's scope — including such things as 'mystical experience … ultimate meaning … transcendental phenomena' — he added this:

> As a statement of purpose, this formulation is to be understood as subject to *optional* [Sutich's emphasis] individual or group interpretations, either wholly or in part, with regard to the acceptance of its content as

> essentially naturalistic, theistic, supernaturalistic, or any other designated classification (Quoted in Scotton *et al.*, 1996, p. 10).

It was certainly true that no single paradigm or metaphysical theory was espoused by the whole movement, as a brief review of the leading figures makes clear.

- *Carl Gustav Jung* (1875–1961) is too significant a figure in psychology and twentieth-century thought generally to be pigeon-holed as a transpersonalist, but his theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious has left its mark on all discussions of transpersonal psychology, even where his use of these terms provoked criticism (as in the cases of Assagioli and Wilber, see Daniels, 2002).
- *Roberto Assagioli* (1888–1974) produced a very complex scheme to explain personal development, with a higher, middle and lower unconscious (in addition to the external collective unconscious) and a Transpersonal or Higher Self of which the Conscious Self 'is merely the reflection or projection' (Daniels, 2002, p. 8). He coined the term psychosynthesis (in contrast to psychoanalysis) to describe the individual's path to Self-realization, and he understood this has having two distinct stages (see Battista, 1996). First comes personal psychosynthesis, a preparatory phase to develop a *conscious centre* for the personality (at this stage called the 'I') into which the subpersonalities of the psyche are integrated. This is followed by spiritual psychosynthesis, in which the 'I' accesses the creative and transforming spiritual energies of what Assagioli called the superconscious, to produce a *spiritual centre* for the personality (now become the 'Self'). Contact between the conscious centre and the superconscious is achieved through techniques such as meditation, and results in the sense of connection to all humanity and all nature, a phenomenon for which Maslow more prosaically proposed a biological basis.
- *Abraham Maslow* (1908–1970) is, after Jung, probably the best-known of this group outside transpersonal circles. His trade-mark 'hierarchy of needs' triangle has been taken up as a popular development tool and applied variously by self-help manuals, management consultants, and assorted others. He was unusual among psychologists in studying high achievers (self-actualized persons, in his terminology) rather than those with deficits or illness. And he was unusual among transpersonalists in looking to our common biology, rather than to some higher spirit or consciousness, to account for the universal (culture independent) values associated with what he termed the

'peak experiences' of self-actualized individuals. He took the view that spirituality has a naturalistic meaning that does not necessarily make any religious or metaphysical assumptions, and he claimed that all moments of deep bliss (peak experiences) could be equated with 'core religious experience' — even if their context was not religious (Battista, 1996, p. 53). By contrast with the complex schemes of some of his colleagues, in Maslow's essentially simple model it was exactly the same person who was motivated to develop from the most basic physiological needs through the hierarchy to the highest 'need' of self-actualization.

- *Stanislav Grof* (b. 1931) carries to its extreme the idea of an external origin for consciousness, to be thought of 'as something that exists outside and independent of us … infinite, rather than finite, stretching *beyond the limits* of time and space' (Grof, 1993, p. 83, quoted in Daniels 2002; my emphasis). He also has the most detailed and comprehensive psychic scheme we have so far considered, which derives from his experimental work with altered states induced either by psychedelics or his trademark Holotropic Breathwork™, developed when legal restrictions curtailed his drug-based research. Grof suggests three domains of the psyche to which we have access: the biographical unconscious, the perinatal (unique to Grof and central to his therapeutic model), and the transpersonal. The transpersonal domain is itself divided into three main categories of experience: within 'consensus reality', beyond 'consensus reality', and psychoid experiences on the physical/mental boundary (Daniels, 2002).
- *Charles Tart* (b. 1937) treats consciousness as a complex system of components that function together. They can be structured in different ways, each creating a different 'discrete state of consciousness (d-SoC)' (see Tart, 1993, for this and what follows). He does not build a large speculative scheme, but tries to analyse each d-SoC so as to bring some order to the 'highly fragmented and chaotic' data that constitute our current knowledge of human consciousness. Examples of d-SoCs in his scheme are ordinary waking, dreaming sleep, alcohol intoxication and meditative states. A discrete *altered* state of consciousness (d-ASC) is a d-SoC that is different from some baseline state, and has been induced by applying first a disruptive force, to destabilize the existing structuring, and secondly a patterning force to stabilize a new structure. Tart is more concerned to produce a reliable experimental tool than a grandiose theory.

Wilber: an attempt at integration

Ken Wilber (b. 1950) has no degree in psychology and has never held a university post, yet by sheer weight of published output and an ability to inspire great loyalty (and equal hostility) he had, by the age of 50, made himself the undisputed doyen of transpersonal theorists.[2] Discontented with the fragmentary state of the discipline, he aims at nothing short of 'a truly integral psychology, [which] would involve the very best of premodernity, modernity, and postmodernity' (Wilber, 2000a, p. 87). The distance between him and other transpersonal psychologists may be judged by comparing the quotation from Anthony Sutich in the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (see above) with this quotation from Fritjof Schuon with which Wilber opened his first book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (1977): 'There is no science of the soul without a metaphysical basis to it' (quoted in Visser, 2003, p. 275).

By Wilber's own reckoning his theorizing has gone through at least four distinct stages, and critics are routinely told that he has moved on from or modified any particular weakness they might highlight in his schema. Nonetheless his 'all quadrants, all levels' (AQAL) model may fairly be taken to represent the heart of his enterprise (see, e.g., Wilber, 2000b).

By levels (or waves as he now calls them, in response to criticisms of over-rigidity) Wilber refers to 'the view that reality is composed of various levels of existence — levels of being and knowing — ranging from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit' (Wilber, 2000a, p. 5). This doctrine, already referred to above as the Great Chain of Being, but called by Wilber the Great Nest of Being, derives from the Vedantan tradition but is alleged by Wilber (following in the footsteps of Aldous Huxley, 1945; Huston Smith, 1976) to belong to a culture-independent 'perennial philosophy' traceable across 3000 years of mystical and esoteric writings. His theory seeks to cover the journey of the self through this whole range, on to which may be mapped the more modest developmental schemes of Maslow, Piaget, and other developmental psychologists.

The four quadrants are Wilber's own idea and consist of a grid demonstrating that all data can be put into one of four categories: individual/interior, individual/exterior, collective/interior, and collective/exterior. Any attempt to account for human development that ignores any one of these quadrants is, he says, partial and

[2] Although since the mid-1990s he has disavowed the label 'transpersonal' in favour of 'integral' to describe his approach.

incomplete. The full expansion of AQAL is 'all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, all types'. Lines (now called streams to fit the wave metaphor) refer to the self's different lines of development (intellectual, emotional, moral, etc.) which can mature at different rates in different quadrants, and whose being out of step needs to be allowed for. States means different states of consciousness — waking, sleeping, etc. — all of which must be accounted for in a fully integral psychology, and the inclusion of types is an acknowledgment of different psychological personalities, all of which must be catered for.

Wilber's all-encompassing scheme relies crucially on two further concepts. First there is the *self* (or self-system), which is to be thought of as 'the centre of gravity of the various levels, lines and states, all orbiting around the integrating tendency of the self-system' (Wilber, 2000b, p. 161). The other is the *holon*, by which each entity at one level (say a living cell) is understood to be composed of lesser entities (molecules, atoms) and to be part of larger ones (an organ, a body). This is where the idea of the great Nest comes from, because moving from level to level, the upper levels incorporate rather than destroy or abandon the lower ones. Integration is the name of the game.

A wolf in the sheepfold

Since the early 1970s, transpersonalists such as Charles Tart and like-minded colleagues have been arguing that knowledge gained in altered states of consciousness can be tested and verified by trained researchers in just the same way as knowledge gained in the science laboratory (e.g. Tart, 1971; 1983). They have grown used to being sniped at by sceptical outsiders who mock this goal of an inner empiricism, based on disciplined introspection. But recently they have come under attack from an insider, a young professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies called Jorge Ferrer.

He first fired a ranging shot, aimed specifically at Ken Wilber, in the form of an article titled 'Speak now or forever hold your peace: A review essay of Ken Wilber's *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*' (1998). That was perhaps not surprising. Many people regard the open season on Wilber as lasting twelve months of the year. But in 2002 Ferrer celebrated the new millennium by opening up an entire broadside against the whole transpersonalist project as it had been conducted for a generation.

II: Ferrer's Proposals

Central to his book *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory* (2002) is Ferrer's claim that treating transpersonal phenomena as individual inner experiences, and making them the objects of interior empirical observation, is a mistake, and betrays a covert reliance on Cartesian categories.

Ferrer is not without sympathy for the pioneers of transpersonal psychology, and he accepts that the road they took was, at the time, probably inevitable. We have seen that with the breakdown of the unified medieval world-view, and the consequent backlash against religious dogma, empirical science had taken over the public domain of objective truth while religion became a private matter of inner experience. So the best — indeed the only — way to emancipate spiritual knowledge back into the public domain of objective truth had been the one they took, attempting to develop a 'science of human experience' or an 'inner empiricism', to use Ferrer's preferred term. So he acknowledges that, in the prevailing circumstances, the '[redemption] of spiritual knowledge' had to be achieved by 'the exaltation of the epistemic value of individual inner experience' (Ferrer, 2002, p. 23). But accepting its inevitability should not, he says, blind us to its consequences, namely, an in-built contradiction that must eventually prove fatal to the whole enterprise.

'Since its very beginnings,' he says, 'transpersonal theory has been explicitly anti- or post-Cartesian' (p. 29). But in spite of this, the 'inner empiricism' advocated by Tart and his colleagues retains a 'subtle Cartesianism', a 'self-betrayal' that will ultimately prove self-defeating (p. 33). Indeed, inner empiricism gives us the worst of two worlds.

On the one hand, the focus on what is *inner* 'perpetuates the modern marginalization of spirituality to the realm of the private and subjective' (p. 23), where science will continue to ignore it. On the other, embracing *empiricism* — together with the scientific standards it symbolizes — 'distorts the nature of spiritual inquiry' (p. 3) because it enshrines the very division between subject and object that post-Cartesians deny. The only way Ferrer sees to emancipate spiritual knowledge is to change course completely: 'I propose a translation of the entire transpersonal project,' he writes, '… into a participatory framework that is free from rusty Cartesian moorings' (p. 131).

Essentialism, contextualism, and the participatory vision

To appreciate the subtlety of Ferrer's revolution we need to consider a little more of the background to the study of transpersonal

phenomena. While it is important to avoid simply equating 'transpersonal' with 'spiritual' or 'religious', there is undoubtedly much experiential overlap between all three.[3] Consequently, there spill over into the broader transpersonal area some fiercely contested issues relating to the interpretation of overtly religious reports. As William James discussed a century ago, there is a wide variety of religious and mystical experiences (James, 1902), and the fact itself is uncontroversial. It is how to account for this variety that raises major disagreements between scholars, with psychologists of religion falling into two broad schools of thought.

In one group are *essentialists*, among them advocates of the perennial philosophy, claiming that in mystical states a single underlying reality is experienced in all cases, and then differently interpreted according to the particular religious and cultural and linguistic tradition to which the individual belongs.[4] On the other side are *constructivists* (or contextualists, to use their own preferred designation),[5] who deny any such universal commonality and insist that each experience is genuinely different 'all the way down' (see, e.g., Katz, 1978). They argue, as Daniels puts it, 'that the experiences themselves (rather than simply their post-hoc interpretations) are profoundly and irrevocably determined by predisposing personal, social, and cultural factors, including religious doctrines and particular forms of spiritual practice' (Daniels, 2005, p. 238). If the contextualists are right, then there are no pure or unmediated experiences, in which case there can be no experiential or cognitive access to the fundamental mystical reality alleged by the essentialists. Such a reality might indeed exist, but equally it might not (Ferrer, 2002, p. 141), and since we have no possibility of contact with it or knowledge of it, it might just as well not exist.

Somebody simply wanting to attack perennialism within the transpersonal movement could take up constructivist weapons, but this is not an option for Ferrer. To his mind, both these approaches 'are burdened by a host of Cartesian-Kantian prejudices' (Ferrer, 2002, p. 156). Neither can break free from an erroneous dualism, in which human knowledge and a supposedly uninterpreted reality are

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[3] See Daniels (2005), chapter 11, for a fuller discussion of the issues touched on here.

[4] See Forman (1994) for an essentialist account of the role of language in relation to mystical experience.

[5] Ferrer quotes Katz, writing in 1992, thus: 'I have been, of late, referred to as a "constructivist," but given the meaning attached to this designation by my critics, I reject this term, preferring to describe my approach as "contextualist"' (Ferrer, 2002, p. 210).

simultaneously linked and held apart by conceptual frameworks which allow only partial communication. In his own words:

> This basic dualism naturally engenders two interdependent epistemological myths: The Myth of the Given (there is a single pre-given reality out there independent of any cognitive activity), and the Myth of the Framework (we are epistemic prisoners trapped in our conceptual frameworks). Although representatives of these approaches tend to subscribe to both myths to some degree, perennialists seem particularly bewitched by the Myth of the Given, while contextualists tend to be especially constrained by the Myth of the Framework. These epistemological myths … not only create all sorts of pseudo-problems about the nature of spiritual knowing, but also contribute in fundamental ways to human alienation by severing our direct connection with the source of our being (Ferrer, 2002, p. 156).

Ferrer's solution is to transcend this Cartesian dualism by invoking the 'participatory epistemology' of Richard Tarnas (1991), 'in which human beings are regarded as an essential vehicle for the creative self-unfolding of reality' (Ferrer, 2002, p. 155). On this approach,

> spiritual paths can no longer be seen either as purely human constructions … or as concurrently aimed at a single, predetermined ultimate reality … Once we *fully* exorcise the Cartesian-Kantian spell in spiritual studies and give up our dependence on essentialist metaphysics, in contrast, the various spiritual traditions can be better seen as vehicles for the participatory enaction of different spiritual ultimates (Ferrer, 2002, p. 157; original emphasis).

When I first read Ferrer's book, two words kept running through my head: Daniel Dennett. Wasn't the author's insistence on the need to rid ourselves of covert Cartesianism very reminiscent of Dennett's famous assault on the 'Cartesian Theater' in the brain, contained in his best-selling book *Consciousness Explained* (Dennett, 1991)?

Dennett's popular image is of an archetypal reductionist, prominent member of CSICOP (the highly sceptical Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), and card-carrying atheist. At first glance, it is hard to imagine his having anything in common with a leading transpersonal theorist. As for casting him in the role of the saviour of integral studies, it sounds absurd. However, popular perceptions are sometimes misleading, and I believe the serious application of Dennett's heterophenomenological method to the questions that Ferrer is investigating could prove fruitful.

III: Dennett's Heterophenomenology

Ferrer thinks that scientists will never take subjective reports seriously, but Dennett claims to have a scientific methodology that takes 'the *first* person point of view as seriously as it can be taken' (Dennett, 2003, p. 19; original emphasis). He calls it *hetero*-phenomenology, because it is a third-person investigation of *someone else's* first-person phenomenology.[6] He sets out four possible levels of data relating to conscious experience, and asks which constitutes the 'primary data' for the third-person investigator:

(a) 'conscious experiences themselves'

(b) beliefs about those experiences

(c) 'verbal utterances' expressing those beliefs

(d) utterances of one sort or another (Dennett, 2003, p. 21).

For Dennett, there are for the third-person investigator two kinds of primary data: primary *raw* data, to be found at level (d), and primary *interpreted* data, to be found at level (b). It is these level-(b) data that he regards as the primary data that a science of consciousness needs a theory to explain.

Critics such as Joseph Levine (1994) demand that a satisfactory theory must go right back to level (a), in order to give an account of the conscious experiences themselves. But Dennett insists 'this is not a good idea' (Dennett, 2003, p. 21). His reasons are simple and to my mind convincing:

If (a) and (b) are identical — i.e., if your beliefs about your experiences are true — then to deal with (b) is the same as to deal with (a) and Levine's wish is granted using Dennett's method. Nothing is gained by insisting on going back to level (a).

But what if (a) and (b) are not identical? That can only happen if *either* you have consciousness experiences you don't believe you have, *or else* you believe you have conscious experiences you in fact don't have. In the first case neither the first-person subject nor the third-person observer has any access to the additional data in (a) that

[6] This is different from traditional introspection, as developed by Wundt and Titchener (Boring, 1929/1950), which could be described as the attempted third-person study of *one's own* first-person phenomenology. It is also different from the neurophenomenology of Francisco Varela, in which two sets of data — disciplined first-person accounts of experience obtained by Husserlian phenomenology or Buddhist meditation, and the third-person accounts of their correlates described by cognitive science — are set alongside each other, acting as 'reciprocal constraints' (Varela, 1996, p. 343; see further Lutz & Thompson, 2003).

are not also in (b), so the usable (i.e. accessible) data available to Levine and Dennett would end up the same. In the second case, there are less data in (a) than in (b), but again there is no way for either the first-person subject or the third-person observer to detect which of the data in (b) are missing from (a). In any case, as Dennett points out, 'it is your beliefs we need to explain, not the non-existent experiences!' (Dennett, 2003, p. 21).

IV: Heterophenomenology and Transpersonal Phenomena

To see how this helps Ferrer, we need to look a bit more closely at the transpersonal model, which adds another level of data below Dennett's level (a), to yield:

(α) spiritual realities themselves

(a) conscious experiences of spiritual realities

(b) beliefs about those experiences

The relation between these three levels is a matter for debate. The transpersonalist establishment would say the primary raw data for transpersonal science are to be found at level (α), which is faithfully transmitted at levels (a) and (b), and provides spiritual knowledge that finds expression in the perennial philosophy. To the extent that there are differences of detail between the various mystical traditions — Buddhism, Vedanta, Western esotericism, etc. — these are to be explained by a degree of interpretation intruding at level (b). But this does not, on the official view, invalidate the truth claims of the perennial philosophy.

The alternative to this perennialist view, as put forward by contextualists, such as Steven Katz in his book *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (1978), sees things differently. On this account, as we have shown, spiritual experiences themselves — level (a) — are already inescapably shaped by the concepts the mystic brings to them. Consequently, it is impossible to gain any direct knowledge of spiritual realities — level (α) — from which it follows that they might not even exist (see above, p. 103).

We now know that Ferrer is opposed to both perennialism and contextualism and seeks instead 'a vision of spirituality free from Cartesian-Kantian dualism and myths' (Ferrer, 2002, p. 144). This means abandoning both the Myth of the Given, i.e. the perennialist idea that there is an objective observer-independent spiritual reality at what we are now calling level (α), and also the contextualist's Myth of

the Framework, i.e. the idea that all experience at level (a) is predetermined by the conceptual scheme we bring to it. But what of his favoured third option, which he calls, following Richard Tarnas, the participatory vision, and which is neither subjective nor objective but intersubjective? Tarnas explained it like this: 'Nature's reality is not merely phenomenal, nor is it independent and objective; rather it is something that comes into being through the very act of human cognition' (Tarnas, 1991, p. 434). But how does this idea relate to the quest for data at our levels (α) and (a)? The answer is that it doesn't, and this is where Dennett comes in.

According to Ferrer, perennialists and contextualists are squabbling about spiritual data at levels (α) and (a), while in fact — if he and Tarnas are right — no usable data will be found at either of these levels. He regards the transpersonal community as trapped in a leaky boat, seduced by the experiential vision and wedded to inner empiricism, and he wants them to abandon it. In his view, any attempt to patch up this unseaworthy craft will be wasted effort, and ought not to be encouraged. What it needs is a courageous and insightful figure, like the prophets of old, who will tell it as it is without fear or favour, and sink the leaky bucket once and for all. Never mind if this prophet does not endorse Ferrer's alternative vision. What is needed tactically at this moment is someone — anyone — who can see clearly the shortcomings of the current paradigm and get everyone to give it up. And who is more prophet-like — certainly in words but even in looks and in name — than our Daniel?[7]

If Dennett's heterophenomenology — focusing on levels (b) and (d) for primary data (interpreted and raw respectively) — is the way to shift the attention of transpersonalist studies away from fruitless wrangling over levels (α) and (a), then Ferrer should not be too proud to accept him as a temporary ally. Transpersonalists are not normally supposed to have dealings with reductive materialists, but if Ferrer is right about the urgent need for change, then the alliance is a price worth paying to reach that first goal of escaping the experientialist vision. Once this has been achieved, he can perhaps draw on more congenial support to persuade his colleagues to adopt his participatory vision.

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[7] The original prophet Daniel, eponymous hero of the Biblical book, became an icon of the wise and just judge, which is why Shakespeare's character Shylock hailed Portia as 'a Daniel come to judgement' in the scene from which the title of this paper is taken.

V: Integrating Dennett Into Transpersonal Theory?

But does the alliance have to be temporary? You might think this speculation is quite outlandish enough already, and even a touch cynical, but at the risk of trying your patience even further, I wish to express one more thought. Doing so may make my proposal seem even more outlandish, but I hope it will remove any suggestion of cynicism. I invite you to put aside the idea of a mere tactical use of heterophenomenology by Ferrer, and instead contemplate the integration of Dennett's method into a fully revisioned transpersonal theory.

If Ferrer and Tarnas are right, and reality is 'something that comes into being through the very act of human cognition', then a viable transpersonal theory will have to look to the cognitive level for a description and explanation. That means looking to what Dennett calls level (b), the level of beliefs, and that is precisely the level at which heterophenomenology operates. Despite the obvious differences in their starting points, if Dennett's heterophenomenology and a revisioned transpersonal theory can agree at least on an appropriate level of inquiry and theorizing, then the possibility of further convergence cannot be entirely ruled out.[8]

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[8] A shorter version of this paper was delivered at the conference Toward a Science of Consciousness, Tucson AZ, April 7–11, 2004. I am grateful to Les Lancaster and Jorge Ferrer for comments, and to Joseph Goguen for encouraging me to develop the oral presentation for publication.

While this paper was in press I received a pre-publication copy of Dennett's book *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (2006). In advance publicity the book has been applauded by atheists and condemned by Christian reviewers, but if the ideas put forward in this paper bear scrutiny, they could lead to a more constructive dialogue between the book's author and some at least of those who practise a religion.

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