

One of the developments in transpersonal thought which has been very successful is participatory philosophy. Friedman, Hartelius (2013, p.194) refer to it as “a more effective context for spirituality because it presents a substantive challenge to Cartesian dualism.”

The participatory approach includes all aspects of the self and “presents an enactive understanding of the sacred that conceives spiritual phenomena, experiences, and insights as cocreated events.” (Ferrer 2011, p.2)

We as human beings are an integral aspect of existence and many have purported that we are all co-creators in the universe for which Ferrer’s (2002) participatory spirituality supports. It holds that “human spirituality emerges from our co-creative participation in a dynamic and undetermined mystery or generative power of life, the cosmos, and/or the spirit.” (Ferrer,2011, p2)

Even more specifically the spiritual cocreation feature of the participatory approach to human spirituality has the potential to explain much of what is queried in relation to the Transpersonal and affect real healing in the world.

Ferrer(2011) discusses three dimensions of Spiritual cocreation being the “Intrapersonal” relating to our individual focus of consciousness, the “Interpersonal” relating to our interaction with energies in the external world including other humans, energies and forces in the universe and the “Transpersonal” being that which is beyond both.

Our spiritual development therefore is intrinsically linked to this cocreation which involves an evolution of our own individual consciousness (intrapersonal) by spiritual experiences or phenomena from the “Transpersonal” being reflected in the external phenomenal world (Interpersonal).

The underlying component is the spiritual. The individual aspect of spirit seeking enlightenment (Atman: Spirit within), the universal aspect of spirit (Brahman: Spirit beyond) which is seeking to be brought forth and the spiritual expression of that relationship in the phenomenal world (Maya: Spirit in between). Ferrer 2011. P3

Our Spiritual evolution then is reflected in our individualised consciousness and in the external world as a result of the development and integration with universal consciousness and resulting cocreation in the external phenomenal world.

Daniels (2005, p188) citing Robert Assagioli’s psychosynthesis model claims it “accounts effectively for the vast majority of transpersonal experiences” and has a similar concept. The personal/spiritual psychosynthesis (intrapersonal), interindividual psychosynthesis (interpersonal) and cosmic or supreme psychosynthesis (transpersonal).

The participatory approach then involves the individual, the collective and the universal. By virtue of the interconnectedness of all three within this concept and approach is the potential to not only answer much of the questions about the transpersonal and our conscious evolution but also affect real healing in the world.

The real value of the transpersonal is realised by how the transformation as a result of the experience affects the individual, those around them and in the external world. (Ferrer 2011). This is supported by the participatory approach which sees the individuals’ transformation as well as the transformation in their external environment.

This leads into the concept of the participatory approach to consciousness which provides the framework for us to evolve spiritually individually and collectively.

Can an understanding of the participatory approach can help to provide a deeper understanding of the awakening experience for those especially challenged having such an experience. The respective theories of the US based Spanish Psychologist Jorge Ferrer and British Transpersonal Psychologist Steve Taylor have been chosen as the focus for this exploration.

The catalyst to this topic was Taylors (2017) proclamation that "The fact that enormous collective challenges almost certainly lie ahead for humanity – most of them self-created by the un-awakened, egoic state of consciousness that still has the majority in its grip – should not be interpreted as an indication that a more widespread awakening is not going to occur". (p.xi)

Taylor (2010) defines an awakening experience as "an experience of clarity, revelation and joy in which we become aware of a deeper (or higher) level of reality, perceive a sense of harmony and meaning and transcend our normal sense of separateness from the world".(p.xviii)

How one can realise one has begun to awaken and in the context of the busy-ness of modern life, has been aptly described by Taylor (2017) as "When you realize that the voice inside your head, your incessant compulsive thinking, is not who you are." (p.x)

There are different forms and levels of awakening. It is in cases where the awakening is most challenging that is the context for this exploration. Suffice to say that natural awakening is peaceful. Gradual awakening "provides ample opportunity for people to build a framework to make sense of their experience" (Taylor 2017, p.158) and same combined with spiritual practice can be smooth and gentle. Sudden awakening can also be smooth if supported with a spiritual practice to make sense of it and a supportive environment to allow it to evolve. However, in most cases sudden awakening which Taylor (2017) calls 'Spiritual crisis' is challenging. (Taylor, 2017, p.157).

There are many possible triggers for awakenings. Taylor's (2010) research ranks psychological turmoil highest followed by nature and then meditative practices respectively which concurs with Hardy's (1979) research.

The two main challenges experienced by those going through an awakening experience can be defined as psychospiritual. Psychological turmoil which can be the initial trigger. Further psychological trauma can prevail thereafter as a result of an inability to sustain the awakened experience and a reversion to old past habitual un-awakened thought patterns.

Taylor (2017) refers to both when citing Roberts (1993) describing the wakeful state as "a new dimension of knowing and being that entails a difficult and prolonged readjustment." (p.13).

The 'new dimension of knowing' refers to a deeper understanding of the awakening experience while the 'prolonged readjustment' refers to the ongoing challenge of remaining in that 'readjusted' or 'awakened state'.

Taylor (2017) endorsed the importance of this 'knowing' or intellectual understanding stating the "importance of possessing an intellectual framework to make sense of one's wakefulness. Without this, wakefulness can easily be overridden by confusion and frustration". (p.73). "If awakened individuals don't understand the process they're going through (or have been through) their wakefulness will be overlaid with doubt and they may even try to suppress it." (p.159).

The predominant challenge is in the "conceptual understanding of wakefulness because it is fundamentally an experiential state". (Taylor, 2017, p.158). Thereafter, the challenge then is to remain in this awakened state without reverting back to old habitual patterns, managing the readjustment so that the benefits of the awakening experiences are sustained and integrated.

Much of the obstruction in this case is centred on the persons inability to let go of old habitual patterns of thinking, beliefs and behaviours that effectuate a return to the un-awakened state. "An awakened person may have pre-established behavioural traits that carry over into their new state and may take a long time to fade away (or may never fade away completely). (Taylor, 2017, p.175).

Taylor (2010, p.5) mentioned Kant's (the German philosopher) suggestion that our awareness of reality is filtered through the structures with which we perceive it. Our mind does not just observe reality, it co-creates it which provides an apt lead into Ferrer's participatory approach of spiritual co-creation.

An understanding of Ferrer's (2002, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2017) participatory approach can present a remedy for the two challenges outlined above. This emerges in threefold. Initially, it provides an initial sense of understanding of the experience as a transpersonal participatory event which abates the psychological turmoil. This is then exacerbated by an understanding of the deeper reality of the experience as a spiritual co-creation emerging from an ongoing transpersonal participatory event. Finally, Ferrer's (2011) three dimensions of spiritual co-creation facilitates another level of understanding which facilitates an embodiment of the understanding and deeper spiritual knowing.

The person can then remain in the awakened state, benefitting from its positive effects, allowing for their continued spiritual growth and development while satisfying the innate purpose of participation in the co-creation of a new emerging reality.

The importance of the participatory approach in providing an initial sense of understanding of the awakening experience is crucial. It is especially so in the cases of sudden awakening or spiritual crisis. It helps to make some sense of it for the intellectual aspect of the self and to address the psychological turmoil that often precedes it. The participatory approach then provides for a deeper understanding in the form of a spiritual knowing, which it explains ensues, which itself allows for transformation and participation in what is essentially a

transpersonal participatory event. (Ferrer 2002). The crescendo then materialises in the embodiment of the concerted understanding.

The participatory approach “holds that human spirituality essentially emerges from human co-creative participation in an undetermined mystery or generative power of life, the cosmos or reality”. Ferrer (2017, p10). It includes all aspects of the self and “presents an enactive understanding of the sacred that conceives spiritual phenomena, experiences, and insights as co-created events.” (Ferrer 2011, p.2)

The initial understanding begins with presenting the awakening experience fundamentally as a transpersonal experience. Transpersonal means “beyond the personality”. (Schaub & Schaub, 2015, p,3). By being beyond the individual or personality its very nature then is a connection to something greater than the individual. This dissolution of the sense of separateness that is inherent in the transpersonal awakening experience is supported by the participatory approach.

What is occurring is a spiritual cocreation which is transpersonal and beyond the individual self. An understanding of this connection then beyond the self to something greater is invaluable.

In correlation with Ferrer’s (2002, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2017) participatory approach is Taylor’s (2017) description of the awakening experience as “the expression of something greater than you, of a force that is flowing through you.” (p.40).

The challenges of separation as described by Taylor (2010), “We only experience separation because we’re out of touch with the spiritual essence of our being” (p.31) are eradicated by an understanding of this very co-creation beyond individuality.

In developing a deeper understanding of the awakening experience as a transpersonal experience Ferrer (2002) proposes that “transpersonal phenomena can be more adequately understood as ‘multilocal participatory events’. In other words, I am suggesting that what has been commonly called a transpersonal experience can be better conceived as the emergence of a transpersonal participatory event.” (p.116).

He contends that the transpersonal experience then comes as a result of a preceding transpersonal participatory event. “the emergence of a transpersonal event precipitates in the individual what has been called a transpersonal experience”. (p.116).

This then Ferrer (2008) says, “brings forth the transformation of self and at times of the world” (p.137) through the participatory features of co-creation. The importance of knowing hereto previously presented by Taylor (2017) and Roberts (1993) in the preceding paragraphs is then endorsed further by Ferrer (2008) “a transformation of self is usually necessary to be able to participate in spiritual knowing and this knowing in turn draws forth the self through its transformative process in order to make possible this participation”. (p.137).

The understanding then presented with the participatory approach is that the awakening experience facilitates spiritual development in the person having it, by being initially awakened, then receiving a spiritual knowing, thereby being transformed and from this transformation is then able to partake in the participatory process which is evolving.

If the awakening experience, then is a spiritual co-creation then of further benefit is Ferrer's (2011, 2017) explanation of the three dimensions of Spiritual cocreation, the Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Transpersonal. This provides further understanding while also contributing to the embodiment and consequential sustainability of the awakened state.

The "Intrapersonal" relates to how all aspects of the self are integral to the experience - the "collaborative participation that occurs in all of our human attributes – body, vital, energy, heart, mind and consciousness." (Ferrer, 2017, p.11).

The "Interpersonal" relates to our interrelations with others in the external world including other people and can extend to "non-human intelligences such as subtle entities, natural powers, or archetypal forces that might be embedded in psyche, nature or the cosmos". (Ferrer, 2017, p.13).

The "Transpersonal" then relates to that which is beyond both or the "dynamic interaction between embodied human beings and the mystery in the bringing forth of spiritual insights, practices, states and worlds" (Ferrer, 2017, p.13).

Our spiritual development therefore is intrinsically linked to this cocreation which involves an evolution of our own individual consciousness (Intrapersonal) by spiritual experiences or phenomena from the "Transpersonal" being reflected in the external phenomenal world (Interpersonal).

This understanding of the three dimensions of spiritual co-creation also facilitates in the embodiment of the spiritual knowing and awakening experience and thereafter continued growth and development.

It is an integral element to the transformation of the person having the awakening experience by initially ensuring the psychospiritual transformation is grounded in somatic transfiguration. Thereafter it ensures the state is maintained. "The integrative transformation of the somatic/energetic worlds of a person effectively short-circuits the tendency of past energetic habits to return, thus creating a solid foundation for more thorough and stable spiritual transformation". (Ferrer, 2017, p.81).

Embodied Spirituality "views all human dimensions – body, vital, heart, mind and consciousness – as equal partners in bringing self, community and world into a fuller alignment with the mystery out of which everything arise." (Ferrer, 2017, p.74).

Having a fully embodied spirituality for the person having or having had an awakening experience "emerges from the creative interplay of both consciousness and energy that is transcendent and immanent spiritual sources in complete individuals who embrace the

fullness of human experience while remaining firmly grounded in body and earth. (Ferrer, 2017, p.75).

In summary, the initial intellectual understanding or sense of the experience and spiritual knowing is followed by the realisation of the presence and involvement of the Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Transpersonal dimensions of the spiritual co-creation. In this way the experience is embodied in the individual, their external environment and in the spiritual co-created reality that is emerging from the transpersonal realm.

Of further support in sustaining the awakened state is an acceptance that the awakening experience is part of a continually evolving spiritual cocreation with a myriad of potential realities. This then stunts any reversion back to past habitual patterns of thinking which would have the capacity to revert to the un-awakened state. This acceptance and understanding of the individuals participatory co-creation as a constantly evolving reality ensures the individual remains in the awakened state.

Since “the participatory approach affirms an underlying undetermined mystery or creative spiritual power as the generative source of all spiritual enactments” (Ferrer, 2017, p.17) the individual realising the interconnection to this will find it challenging to revert to their old individual sense of separateness.

Ferrer (2017) explains that “the participatory perspective does not contend that there are two, three or any limited quantity of pre-given spiritual ultimate’s, but rather that the radical openness, interrelatedness, and creativity of the mystery or the cosmos allows for the participatory cocreation of an indefinite number of ultimate self-disclosures of reality”. (p.16).

In the context of a wider collective perspective and collaboration of Taylor’s Awakening experience and Ferrer’s participatory approach a common theme emerges. What presents itself is that the awakening experiences are emanating from a transpersonal participatory event which involves a spiritual co-creation of growth and development in the realms of the individual, external world and transpersonal.

There are clear similarities in what Taylor (2017, p.251) defines as “An evolutionary leap” and describes as “a collective awakening” with what Ferrer (2002, p.vii) defines as a paradigm shift and describes as, “the emergence of a human community formed by spiritually differentiated individuals.” (p.15).

Paradigm shifts have been referred to mostly in the context of evolution. Taylor (2017) presents the case for the emergence of a collective awakening and refers to the inner dimension of evolution defining this as “the increasingly physical complexity is mirrored internally in the expansion of awareness and the intensification of consciousness. In these terms we can see evolution as a process by which living beings become increasingly conscious and aware both of the world and of themselves. “ (p.251).

In a similar context in the theme of evolution Ferrer (2017) contends that the “participatory approach aims at the emergence of a human community formed by spiritually differentiated

individuals.” (p.15). He differentiates between a spiritually differentiated person and the disembodied modern self by describing the former as having an “embodied, integrated, connected and permeable identity whose high degree of differentiation far from being isolating actually allows him or her to enter into a deeply conscious communion with others, nature and the multidimensional cosmos.” (p.15). The latter he describes as “disembodied, plagued by alienation, disassociation, and narcissism.” (p.15).

A unification of both suggests that a paradigm shift in human spirituality is occurring. Initiated by a major shift in intellectual thought which brings about psychological turmoil which then acts as a trigger for an awakening experience. This experience then is presented as a transpersonal participatory event of spiritual cocreation which is procreated by the individual advancing a deeper spiritual knowing which then facilitates the completion of the participatory co-creation. Encompassing the intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal the experience is embodied, and the effects accentuated at the individual, collective and universal levels.

In support of this was Ferrer’s (2002) commentary in reference to a revolution in human thought stating, “a paradigm shift will often be initiated by a distinct, extraordinary break from the past – a kind of declaration of independence – yet this initial breakthrough will retain from the old paradigmatic structure certain essential and usually unexamined assumptions that limit the success of the new vision.” He continues to add that the limiting aspects of the old paradigm which act as a catalyst at the outset to birth the shift then become obstructive to the emergence of the change and that “it may then happen that a second intervention will take place”. (p.vii).

The initial awakening experience is represented by the paradigm shift in thought patterns which can produce psychological turmoil. This paradigm shift in thought then breaks down the traditional modes of understanding allowing for the emergence of a deeper knowing. Thereafter, the second intervention is represented by the emergence of a broader understanding of the experience as an ongoing participatory event of spiritual co-creation. The effects of the paradigm shift continue to evolve in the person through the subsequent embodiment of the experience.

Ferrer (2017) affirmed the importance of embodiment in individuals in the context of spiritual participatory co-creation when referring to the Transpersonal dimension of Spiritual co-creation as “dynamic interaction between embodied human beings and the mystery in the bringing forth of spiritual insights, practices, states and worlds”. (Ferrer, 2017, p13).

This is very much in alignment with Taylor’s (2010) definition of the awakening experience as “an experience of clarity, revelation and joy in which we become aware of a deeper (or higher) level of reality, perceive a sense of harmony and meaning and transcend our normal sense of separateness from the world”. (p.xviii)

As such it provides an understanding of the awakening experience as a transpersonal experience that begins as an initial transpersonal participatory event (which could also be identified as a collective awakening) which then instigates a spiritual knowing which brings

about the transformation in the person in order to accentuate the underlying spiritual co-creative participatory event.

The relevance of the participatory approach is substantiated in the correlation between Taylor's (2010,2017) awakening experience and Ferrer's (2002, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2017) participatory approach as a transpersonal spiritual experience. Taylor (2017, p.157) refers to the awakening experience at its most intense expression as a spiritual crisis. The participatory approach refers to spiritual co-creative participatory event referred to as "a more effective context for spirituality because it presents a substantive challenge to Cartesian dualism." Hartelius (2013, p.194).

An understanding of the participatory approach provides the initial understanding of the awakening experience which dissolves the challenges of personal psychological turmoil by providing an intellectually reasoned understanding of the experience.

Thereafter, the deeper understanding that the awakening experience is actually a spiritual co-creation and emergence of spiritual knowing coming about as a result of an underlying transpersonal participatory event provides greater depth and understanding beyond the personality or individual self.

The penultimate understanding from the three dimensions of spiritual cocreation then ensures the full understanding and knowing is embodied within all aspects of the person to secure the continuity of the awakened state and consequential participatory spiritual co-creation.

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