



Embodied Liberation in Participatory Theory and Buddhist Modernism *Vajrayāna*

Sabine Grunwald^{1,2} 

Accepted: 12 January 2021/Published online: 22 February 2021

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG part of Springer Nature 2021

Abstract

This article explores body constructs along the descending, ascending, and extending body-soteriological pathways, as well as it lays the foundation to identify their potential for transbody and transpersonal transformation. Insights are provided on the nexus of pluralistic body constructs using Jorge Ferrer's participatory theory juxtaposed with Buddhist Modernism focused on Vajrayāna Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. An exuberant richness of physical and metaphysical bodies has been recognized in both Vajrayāna Buddhism and participatory theory. In Vajrayāna, the body is central to liberation and viewed as the culmination of immanence, transcendence, and expansion. In participatory theory, the body is viewed as equal to vital, heart, mind, and consciousness as part of an integrated larger whole. Embodiment, disembodiment, and body awareness are critically discussed, and special attention is given to the implications of these two contrasting views and the potential of practices from both approaches to ameliorate disembodiment and foster transbody and transpersonal transformation.

Keywords Participatory theory · Buddhist Modernism · Vajrayāna Buddhism · Body · Embodiment · Liberation

The body has been desacralized and shunned as impure in several major religions (e.g., Coakley 1997; Kripal 2014); ignored, devalued, and objectified in Western philosophy (e.g., Lakoff and Johnson (1999); Shusterman (2008)); and commodified and sexualized in Western culture (e.g., Barratt (2013); Traister (2018)). In various degrees, the rise of individualism, disembodiment, and the relinquishment of a sense of the sacred have contributed to the incipient mind-body divide in Western thought (Klein 2004).

✉ Sabine Grunwald
sgrunwald66@gmail.com; sgrunwald@mymail.ciis.edu; sabgru@ufl.edu

¹ Integral and Transpersonal Psychology, School of Consciousness and Transformation, California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), San Francisco, CA, USA

² UF Mindfulness, University of Florida (UF), 2181 McCarty Hall, PO Box 110290, Gainesville, FL 32611, USA

Building on Tarnas' (1993) analysis, Ferrer (2017) attributed disembodiment, dissociation between mental and somatic worlds, and associated existential alienation in Western culture to a mutually enforced "prison" created by Copernicus's cosmological estrangement of modern consciousness, the Cartesian mind-body doctrine of René Descartes, and Immanuel Kant's epistemic skepticism. Disembodiment, bodylessness, somatophobia, and the oppression of bodily selves have been prevalent in the West (Caldwell 2014), and these narratives of bodies that are dead, numb, unseen, distant, or objects of beauty to be romanticized point to disidentification and fragmentation in which the body is estranged and separated from a larger whole. This marginalization of the body in contemporary Western culture (in which the body is viewed as an object, rather than a subject) stands in contrast to the potential of a lived body, a lived mind, and lived environment (Varela et al. 2016). Feeling the body (body awareness; Prendergast 2015), being within a body (embodiment; Johnson 2018), being in relationship with the body (participation; Stanley 2016), experiencing a larger body (cosmic body; Cardaña and Winkelmann 2011), and being body (nonduality; Blackstone 2008; Ray 2016b) are perspectives that nurture more subjective and intersubjective body constructs. Such positive views of the body have been asserted in the domains of somaesthetics, body consciousness, embodied spirituality, phenomenology, and psychosomatics (Ferrer 2017; Marlock and Weiss 2015; Shusterman 2008). As Shusterman (2008) observed, for example, Michel Foucault touched on the experience of bodily pleasures and proposed the body as a vital site for self-knowledge and transformation, while Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology affirmed the body's intentionality and value of reflective body consciousness. William James' radical empiricism posited that bodily feelings and introspection are crucial in explaining mental life (Goodman 2016; James 2003), while John Dewey vigorously advocated self-conscious somatic reflection (Shusterman 2008). Ferrer (2017) asserted that the body is the uterus for the conception and gestation of genuine spiritual knowledge where creative energy is somatically transformed into feelings, emotions, thoughts, insights, and contemplative revelations.

Body constructs in Buddhism are diverse and contrasting. The human body is viewed as valuable and radiant in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism, while it has been also viewed as impure in the former Theravāda schools (Williams 1997). In early Indian Buddhism, women's bodies were viewed as inferior and an obstacle on the path to liberation connoting misogynist and patriarchal beliefs of the time (Gross 1993). Suh (2017) pointed out that especially women's bodies were associated with foulness as birth givers and were denigrated as sexualized mantraps in early Buddhism. In Tibetan and other Buddhist traditions, the body is recognized as one of the four foundations of mindfulness (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche 2010a). In Zen Buddhism, the body posture in meditation is considered saliently important on the path to liberation (Suzuki 1970), while the body has been deemphasized in cognitive-oriented mindfulness meditation of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition as taught by Mahāsi Sayādaw (Sharf 2015). Klein (2004) emphasized that Western perspectives of Buddhism are etic in nature and have led to misconceptions how Buddhist traditions have rendered the body relative to mind. Klein asserted that in contemporary forms of Buddhism, the focus on the breath, posture, body awareness, the body as one of the foundations of mindfulness, and reimagining of the body as sacred all point to the importance of the incarnate body on the path to liberation.

While the diversity of body practices, perspectives, constructs, theories, and therapies is considerable, the cultural and historic contextualization of the body has been a confounding factor. Coakley (1997) pointed out that there is no agreed upon definition for “body” because of its ubiquitous use across religious domains. The purpose of this paper is to explore body constructs in order to identify its potential for “transbody” and transpersonal transformation. The motivation undergirding this study was to discover similarities and differences in regard to body constructs in Buddhist Modernism rooted in Vajrayāna Indo-Tibetan Buddhist thoughts and Western participatory theory. While transpersonal states of consciousness, such as self-transcendence, have been studied widely, the role of the body and embodiment to facilitate or hamper liberation have been understudied. The self-consciousness experienced as “I” is ordinarily located in the head (Leder 1990) or in the physical body bounded by the skin (Kepner 2015). Both Röhrich (2015) and Weiss (2015) described transbody as states of consciousness beyond the limits of the common physical body identity and the body image as a representational spatial image that people have of themselves.

In particular, this study juxtaposes Ferrer’s participatory spirituality theory (Ferrer 2002, 2017) and Vajrayāna Indo-Tibetan Buddhism (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche 2010a; Geshe Kelsang Gyatso 2016a; Kalu Rinpoche 1995; Ray 2000) from a Buddhist modernist perspective. This approach provides insight into the nexus of pluralistic body constructs within and across traditions and theories, as well as supports a critical discussion of embodiment, disembodiment, and body awareness in modern Western culture.

Embodied Liberation in Participatory Theory and Vajrayana Buddhism

This section situates both Ferrer’s (2002, 2017) participatory theory and Buddhist Modernism focused on the Vajrayāna (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche 2013; Geshe Kelsang Gyatso 2016a, 2016b; Kalu Rinpoche 1995; Ngakpa and Déchen 2003; Ray 2002). Through this juxtaposition, insights into the nature of transbody states and embodied spiritual transformation are drawn that will be comparatively discussed in the conclusion.

Ferrer’s Participatory Theory

Participatory theory of human spirituality emerged in 2002 with Revisioning Transpersonal Theory by Jorge N. Ferrer (2002) as a response to neo-perennialism and perennialism that had dominated the field of transpersonal psychology since its inception. Participatory theory is situated in Western psychology and spirituality and shares some tenets of the dharma teachings. However, some of the ontological assertions of participatory theory are unique to this Western transpersonal view that is aligned with pluralistic and metamodern societal thoughts. According to Ferrer, the participatory vision turns away from intrasubjective inner experiences to participatory events of transpersonal and spiritual phenomena. Ferrer’s theory advocates a pluralistic and participatory vision of human spirituality (Daniels 2005). The participatory approach holds that human spirituality essentially emerges from human cocreative participation in an undetermined mystery

(understood as the generative power of life, the cosmos, or reality) in complex interaction with culture, interrelationships, and possible subtle worlds of energy and consciousness (Ferrer 2002, 2017). Participatory pluralism is nonperennialist as it entails a multiplicity of not only spiritual paths but also spiritual liberations and spiritual ultimates (Ferrer 2011). This metamodern theory integrates insights from premodernity (e.g., ontological value of spiritual referents), modernity (e.g., scientific standards of open inquiry), and postmodernity (e.g., pluralism and rejection of pre-given and absolute truths; for metamodern approaches seeking to mediate aspects of the modern and postmodern ethos, see van den Akker et al. (2017); Freinacht (2017); Turner (2015); Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010). Ferrer (2011, 2017) framed participatory spirituality in terms of three dimensions of spiritual cocreation, which largely correspond to the three pathways of the body-soteriological model: Intrapersonal cocreation consists of the collaborative participation of all human attributes—body, vital energy, heart, mind, and consciousness—in the enactment of spiritual consciousness. This intrapersonal cocreation affirms the embodied, immanent dimension of the mystery, that is, the “spirit within” (descendent path). Transpersonal cocreation refers to dynamic interaction between embodied human beings and the mystery in the enactment of spiritual insights, states, practices, and worlds. It affirms the enactive, inquiry-driven dimension of participatory spirituality as “spirit beyond,” (ascending path). Interpersonal cocreation emerges from cooperative relationships among human beings through peer-to-peer relationships and in communion with “spirit in-between,” including nonhuman intelligences such as subtle entities and natural powers (extending path). The latter dimension touches on interconnected bodies suggesting that bio-physical bodies are in relationship with each other forming a larger social body. The interpersonal cocreation has similarity with the term *interbeing* coined by Thich Nhat Hanh (1987), which expresses the collective aspects and interdependence of all phenomena and beings.

According to Ferrer (2017), the “spirit-beyond” of the most recent version of participatory spirituality is not to be confused with transcendence. The transcendence of the bodily bound ego or the transcendence of the world is based on dualistic notions of ego/no-ego and natural/supernatural world. Transcendence is bound to someone transcending (subject) and something that is transcended (object; Grosso 2015). However, participatory pluralism inherently allows for a multiplicity of enacted spiritual worlds that are not necessarily bound to dualistic notions or specific ontologies, such as panentheistic (i.e., the sacred is in and beyond the world; Komjathy 2015). Ferrer opted to use the term *subtle* instead of *transcendent* to avoid fixation onto any specific pre-given ontologies. Rather, a multiverse of subtle worlds and physical (natural) worlds is assumed that can be enacted in a variety of ways. According to Ferrer, “subtle refers to any possible coexisting or enacted worlds of energy and consciousness, as well as phenomena or entities associated with these worlds the term *immanent* describes spiritual/creative sources located within—or emerging from—physical matter, body, sexuality, life, and nature” (p. 247). Ferrer argued that these notions avoid dualism between the subtle and the immanent. In participatory spirituality, subtle worlds and the world of nature are ultimately united because the subtle states of consciousness and energy and the physical world of matter (e.g., the body) are only expressions of different degrees, frequencies, concentrations, or density states of consciousness and energy.

Embodiment is a crucial element in participatory theory, which denounces many problems inherent in the disembodied spirituality prominently found in Western

culture. However, Ferrer (2006, 2017) also sees world spiritual history to be overburdened by disembodied spirituality, suggesting that the body and vital/primary energies have been ignored or sublimated in religious practice. For example, a celibate monk or ascetic meditator may suppress sexual desires to amplify transpersonal states of consciousness. In disembodied spirituality, the body is viewed as a hindrance to spiritual flourishing, sinful, a defilement, an unreliable source of spiritual insight, illusory, impure, defective, or simply unequal with heart, mind, and consciousness. In contrast, participatory theory embraces embodied spirituality and views all human dimensions, including the body, as equal partners harmonizing self, community, and world with the mystery out of which everything arise (Ferrer 2015). Participatory theory's claim is that, ontologically and epistemologically, this mystery is undetermined and dynamically enacted through engagement of the body (e.g., sensations, movement, sensuality, and sexuality), the heart (e.g., feelings of joy or fear and associated responses/behaviors), and the mind (e.g., cognitive appraisal and contemplation). The body and vital primary energy are viewed as crucial for spiritual transformation and for the exploration of expanded forms of spiritual freedom (Ferrer 2002, 2008), though Ferrer did not explicitly discuss transbody states. Ferrer stressed the importance of the body as spiritual manifestation in itself, because the body (matter) and consciousness come together in sentient beings incarnating embodied love. In alignment with Anderson's (2006) views, Ferrer's participatory model ascribes the human body an intelligence that is accessible through body awareness, is inner directed, and has an energetic dimension.

There is an exuberant diversity of physical and metaphysical bodies recognized in participatory theory. In embodied participatory spirituality, the body can be viewed as subject (living body), as the physical home or locus of spirit manifested in fleshly form, or as a divine revelation that offers spiritual insight and wisdom. The latter account reveals deeper meaning of incarnated life through the physical form of the body (Ferrer 2017). The idea of the body as mirror or reflection of the universe is found in multiple spiritual traditions, among them Taoism, Platonism, Islam, Kabbalah, and Tantra (e.g., Chittick (1994)). The belief of the body as the microcosm of the entire complexity and vastness of the universe implies the notion that the divine physically manifests within the human body. According to this micro-macrocosm notion, the human body serves as a culminating pinnacle of creative spiritual forces (Ferrer 2017).

Ferrer's participatory theory embraces the three vectors of transpersonal development as described by Daniels (2009). These pathways in participatory theory entail the (a) descending soteriological path of immanence through deeper connection to nature, the sacred feminine, the Earth, or the unconscious (e.g., bodyfulness, somatic awakenings, embodied spiritual practices, sexual and sensual spiritual enactments), (b) ascending path toward the transcendence of a narrow, ordinary self bound to the physical body through engagement with subtle worlds, bodies, or fields of consciousness overcoming ordinary human structures (e.g., self-transcendence beyond the physical body in Christianity or Vajrayāna Buddhism), and (c) extending path toward embodiment of cosmic bodies that are expansive beyond the human form (e.g., Gaia consciousness, cosmic bodies in Taoism or Hinduism). Participatory theory's openness to hybridization of bodies as conceptualized and perceived in different religious/spiritual traditions (e.g., Buddhism, Christianity, Shamanism, Judaism, Hinduism) provides a tantalizing richness of possibilities for spiritual embodiment. Multidimensional contemplative integral

practices (e.g., practices that foster the differentiation and integration of masculine and feminine capabilities, strength/gentleness, healing and transformation of wounds and conflicts) were suggested to realize the depth and breadth of embodiment accounting for individual and cultural differences (Ferrer 2017).

Bidwell (2015) described spiritual embodiment as unity-in-diversity of the spiritual self that is a cocreated participatory event, in which the unified-but-distinct spiritual/religious identities (e.g., Buddhist-Christian) are experienced as a whole (i.e., as two natures in one being). Bidwell suggested that from a participatory perspective there are no distinct religious/spiritual identities (e.g., Buddhist, Christian, or other), because one embodies both simultaneously. This simultaneous embodiment is the participatory event. Bidwell provided a phenomenological nature account in Evey Canyon of a participatory event that brought forth an upwelling of gratitude and compassion through nondual knowing while sitting in Buddhist meditation practice and simultaneously knowing through the heart evoked by Christian reflection. The spiritual experience, including the spiritual identity, was enacted through participation with transcendent reality/realities as it manifests in the conditioned world according to Bidwell. This enactment suggests that transcendent body and human body exemplify a unified metaphysical body or a hybridization of bodies. Cocreation means that the participatory event is neither objectively real from an ontological point of view nor simply subjectively constructed, but rather a subjective-objective phenomenon transcending Cartesian dualistic categories (Ferrer 2002). According to Ferrer, the participatory nature of spiritual knowing involves (a) multiple modes of perception (e.g., through the heart, sensing of vital energies, moral insights, and somatic awareness) involved in the process of spiritual knowing, (b) ontologically human beings and spiritual energies participate dynamically in life (without choice), and (c) epistemic knowing through communion and cocreative participation. Participatory theory recognizes the importance of somatic, imaginal, energetic, subtle, and archetypal variables in shaping religious experiences and meanings (Ferrer 2002, 2015). In addition, Ferrer's (2006, 2017) embodied spirituality aligns with Merleau-Ponty's (2012) living body as a source of spiritual insight. Ferrer (2008) advocated the body as subject, as home of the complete human being, and as a microcosm of the universe and the mystery. Ferrer pointed out that in a genuine embodied spiritual practice, it is essential to contact the body, discern its current state and needs, and then create spaces for the body to engender its own practices and capabilities.

Embodied spirituality seeks to cocreate novel spiritual understandings, practices, and expanded states of consciousness departing from the compulsion to recreate traditional transcendent liberations (e.g., replicate the awakening of the Buddha; Ferrer 2017). According to Ferrer (2003, 2011) and Ferrer and Sherman (2008), attention to the body and its vital energies may give greater access to the immanent power of life or the spirit. In this view, the greater the participation of embodied dimensions in religious inquiry, the more creative one's spiritual life may become. This assertion, however, has not been corroborated by empirical evidence and may not even be possible to assess using the scientific method. In any event, participatory cocreation seeks to foster freedom to expand spirituality in the form of novel, bodily immanent enactments of spirituality. An example of these possible innovations is Ferrer's (2017) integral bodhisattva vow, in which "the conscious mind renounces its full liberation until the body, the heart, and the primary world can be free as well from the alienating tendencies that prevent them from sharing in the unfolding life of the mystery here on Earth" (p. 20).

Ferrer (2011, 2017) made an important distinction between the modern hyper-individualistic mental ego and participatory selfhood. The former is often plagued by disembodiment, narcissism, and alienation from self, others, and the world due to its hyper-individualism. In contrast, participatory selfhood embraces an embodied, integrated, connected, open, and permeable identity. Spiritual individuation, thus, is characterized by integration, radical openness, and radical relatedness, through which individuals gradually embody their unique spiritual identity striving for wholeness. Such an embodied spirituality coherently integrates transbody and transpersonal development, ideally bringing forth social, ecological, and political engagement motivated by ethical concern for others, communities, and the world as a whole.

In summary, participatory theory posits that the integration of all human dimensions, among them the body, contributes to a fully embodied spiritual life. It also views the body as a natural doorway to the deepest human energetic potentials operative in the enaction of creative embodied spiritual insights, transformations, and liberations. In doing so, participatory theory recognizes a plurality of possible subtle or metaphysical bodies, which are open, possibly unlimited, and cocreatively unfolding. All three soteriological paths—descending, ascending, and extending paths—are given equal voice in participatory theory through intrapersonal, transpersonal, and interpersonal spiritual cocreations.

Buddhist Modernist Perspective Focused on Vajrayāna Buddhism

Literally translated as “the diamond vehicle,” Vajrayāna Buddhism is a tantric form of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism (Kalu Rinpoche 1995). Tibetan Buddhism formed as a combination of 8th-century Indian Buddhism and Bön, the indigenous-shamanistic religious tradition of Tibet that holds all reality is pervaded by a transcendent principle, called “All Good” (Powers 2007, p. 506). This view of Basic Goodness, that is considered absolute and indestructible, has prevailed in contemporary Vajrayāna Buddhism (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche 2010a). In this paper, Tantra and Vajrayāna are used interchangeably with slightly different flavors in practices, though distinctly different from Hindu Tantra (Geshe Tashi Tsering (Tashi Tsering). 2012). Vajra (Sanskrit) means “indestructible,” “adamantine,” or “inseparable” pointing to the realization of emptiness. Vajrayāna Buddhism has been historically practiced in secrecy and meditation, visualization, and somatic practices have been deeply experiential (Baker 2019; Geshe Tashi Tsering 2012; Ray 2002). Due to its secrecy, Vajrayāna has been somewhat misconceived and understudied. Only recently secret teachings have been made public, in part to more East-West dialogue fostered by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of the Vajrayāna Buddhist Geluk school (The Dalai Lama 1998). There are four major Indo-Tibetan Vajrayāna schools, including the Geluk/Kadam, Nyingma, Kagyü, and Sakya. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939–1987), Tulku in the Kagyü school and also trained in the Nyingma (oldest of the four schools), was instrumental in bringing Vajrayāna Buddhism to the West as founder of Shambhala International (Powers 2007; Ray 2002). Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche’s Vajrayāna teachings have been enculturated in the West, specifically North America, in lineages such as Shambhala (Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche 2013) and Ocean Dharma (Ray 2000). This paper draws predominantly from the Buddhist Modernist perspective enriched by material from the Vajrayāna Kagyü school and other Indo-Tibetan schools of Vajrayāna Buddhism.

The physical body can be found in Vajrayāna as one of the five discrete aggregates (Sanskrit, *skandhas*), which are (a) the physical body or corporeality, (b) feelings, (c) perceptions, (d) habitual mental dispositions that connect karma-producing will to mental action, and (e) consciousness (Esposito et al. 2015). In Vajrayāna, the mind strives toward awakening or *bodhicitta* (awake, Sanskrit *Bodhi*, and mind, Sanskrit *citta*) with *bodhicitta* meaning spirit of awakening (Duckworth 2019). Ultimate *bodhicitta* connects the individual with the fundamental state of existence (Sanskrit, *alaya*), which is believed to be consciousness before it is divided into subject and object (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche 2010b). Relative *bodhicitta* resembles the tender heart, compassion, and viscerally and somatically deep love that is fully embodied in relationships with others, life, and the universe (Ray 2017). Ultimate *bodhicitta* and Buddha nature (Sanskrit, *tathāgatagarbha*) are metaphysical concepts of the experience of the heart of awakened mind. The Vajrayāna view is that Buddha nature is considered unstained, indestructible, primordial (i.e., timeless, nowhere, and everywhere), unconditional, and referred to as the groundless ground (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche 2014).

In Vajrayāna teachings, the human body is considered a microcosm of the macrocosm, which is referred to as ultimate reality, the Totality of all of Being, or groundless ground (Morley 2008; Ray 2016b). The micro-macro cosmic mirror implies that the soma (or body) provides access to Ultimate *Bodhicitta*, and vice versa (Ray 2017). The view is that awareness of the soma in its natural state is open, spacious, and completely limitless. It is believed that the soma just receives and knows what is; therefore, Vajrayāna practitioners equate the direct, unmediated realization of the soma with enlightenment. Conceptualization, rationalization, judgement, and other egoic strategies aimed to seek pleasure, security, comfort, and satiety, while avoiding pain, discomfort, suffering, and threats bring forth disembodiment of awareness that prevent one's liberation. The liberative goal is to contact one's empty body through interoception without conceptual thought (Ray 2018). According to Vajrayāna Buddhism, the unknowable, infinite extent of ultimate reality is embodied and experientially available in human form through interoceptive experience and somatic meditation (Ray 2016b). Relative experience of conditioned reality and phenomena manifest within the field of emptiness (Geshe Tashi Tsering 2012). In Vajrayāna, the ultimate reality arises in the human body as an immediate, spontaneous, nonconceptual apprehension of the whole (Pure Awareness) that is independent and free of one's conscious control (Ray 2018). In other words, emptiness is considered the ground of being. Energetic being arises from this emptiness as the play of energy, and material (physical) being arises from this energy as the play of form (Ngakpa and Déchen 2003). Note that emptiness has distinctly different meanings in prominent Tibetan Buddhist traditions—in the Geluk (emptiness of emptiness), Jonang (self-emptiness and other-emptiness), and Nyingma (Mipham's ultimate emptiness is perceived as a unity of appearance and emptiness as empty appearance). Ray (2016b) stressed that to know the ultimate reality directly can only happen within and through the body, which serves as a gateway of naked and spontaneous experience. Somatic meditation practices (e.g., yin breathing in the lower belly and whole body breathing) allow one to awaken the soma, release trauma, and intimately experience emptiness (Ray 2016a, 2016b, 2017).

In Vajrayāna the transcendence of the ego (self) is associated with emptiness (Sanskrit, *sūnyatā*) of self and phenomena (i.e., material objects, physical body, mental states, and everything knowable; Khensur Rinpoche Jampa Tegchok 2012).

Khensur Rinpoche Jampa Tegchok (2012) asserted that emptiness is expressed through nonattachment to self and phenomena, which are both considered to be concepts without intrinsic essence rather than truths. He stated that attachment solidifies self and that an antidote is to transcend the habitual tendencies of reifying aspects of the ever-changing phenomenal experience.

Paradoxical views are beheld in Vajrayāna. Although transcendence through the personal, interpersonal, and cosmic body toward enlightenment is viewed as one truth, another truth is to realize a fully embodied human life (Ray 2008). Kalu Rinpoche (1995) asserted that Vajrayāna discerns between absolute Buddha nature, which is all-encompassing, unchanging, luminous, and groundless (nonduality), while sentient beings (Buddhas) arise in the world with separate bodies (duality), which endlessly experience sensations, feelings, and perceptions due to the law of dependent origination. These immanent and nonpermanent experiences in sentient beings are emerging from the inner world of the body and the heart (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche 2010a; Ray 2008). The view in this lineage of Vajrayāna is that apparent reality, which is the way things appear to be, is a mental projection onto objects in one's experience, but is not the essence of what things inherently are (the Absolute Truth; Ray 2013).

The feelings of ignorance and desire arise through sensations and perceptions, formed in the human body, and evoke attachment according to the 12 nidānas (wheel of life), which describe the karma of the past, present, and future and associated suffering (Sanskrit, *duḥkha*; Ray 2008). Buddhist traditions, including Vajrayāna, share the intention to end karmic cycles of repeated rebirth (Sanskrit, *saṃsāra*) and suffering (Geshe Kelsang Gyatso 2016b). Specifically, in early Buddhism, the human body was considered to be a source of suffering evoking cravings to annihilate or sublimate the body. Buddhist asceticism strived to sublimate the existence of the human body as a repulsive source of suffering and disembodiment (Collins 1998; Williams 1997). The sublimation of the physical body stands in contrast to the dharmic “four foundations of mindfulness,” one of which is “the mindfulness of body,” emphasizing the importance of the psychosomatic body and sensations in which experiences arise (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche 2010a; Virtbauer 2016).

It is believed in Vajrayāna Buddhism that the Buddha manifests three bodies (Sanskrit, *kāyas*): (a) the dharmakāya or truth body, which is the body of Ultimate reality; (b) the sambhogakāya or complete enjoyment body, which is the energetic body produced from subtle energies; and (c) the nirmanakāya or emanation body, which is a physical manifestation of the Buddha in form of a body of flesh and blood (Powers 2007; Ray 2004). The three *kāyas* are ultimately indivisible, meaning that when one rests all at once in pure Buddha nature, one experiences the emptiness of the dharmakāya, the impermanence of the sambhogakāya, and the body form of the nirmanakāya (Ray 2004). In such states of nonduality there is no distinction between subject and object, between form (body) and formlessness (emptiness; Loy 2015). The assertion is that within this nondual realm of complete openness and naked (nonconceptual) experience there arises a continual stream of spontaneous responses that is inherently and spontaneously responsive as somatically sacred imperatives. This fully awakened state is not empty in the sense of being void or nothing; rather, it is empty of attachment, thought, any conceptualization, empty of essence. From a phenomenological perspective, Nondual Pure Awareness is considered immaculately pure and manifests in form of experience that is illuminated with exuberant joy and a

felt sense of warmth and aliveness in the body. The liberated body, soma, and kāya are equivalents, but distinctly different from the mundane conceptualized, and constructed (nonempty) body, which is called sharira in Sanskrit (Ray 2018). The sharira resembles the third-person, distancing perspective of the body.

In the Vajrayāna, the ascending soteriological path transcends dualistic consciousness realizing the natural nondual state. In Tibetan Buddhism, rig pa (Tibetan) refers to an eternally pure state free from the dualism of subject and object and has been translated into English as “pure awareness” with qualities such as luminosity, effortlessness, presence, original purity, and expanse. Rig pa is regarded as the ground of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, and all objects of knowledge are assumed to arise from rig pa and dissolve into rig pa, which is already self-liberated (Buswell and Lopez 2014). According to Vajrayāna Buddhism, greater immanence also opens the extending path toward an expanding self experienced as completely timeless, open, vast, and spacious with no boundaries. The extending realization of bodylessness gives way to out-of-body experiences that touch on cosmic bodies, such as the dharmakāya and the rainbow body. The view is that the personal body is the Earth, the personal body is the interpersonal body, the personal body is the macrocosmos, the form body is the formless body meaning that all these bodies are indiscernable (Ray 2002, 2008).

Even within Tibetan Buddhist traditions there are notable epistemological differences in regard to the emptiness of body (form) pointing to pluralistic conceptualizations of nondualities. For example, in Mahāyāna Buddhism there are two major schools that assert nonduality: Mādhyamaka (“Middle Way” by Nāgārjuna) and Yogācāra (by Asanga and Vasubandhu). The Mādhyamaka school takes an extreme epistemological stance because it refutes all philosophical positions, including nonduality between body (matter) and mind that is rejected as another illusion. Nāgārjuna neither asserted nor denied the experience of nonduality (Loy 1998). Mādhyamaka posits that the absolute truth is emptiness and even emptiness does not in itself constitute an absolute reality (Lee 2014). In comparison, the Yogācāra school asserts the identity of subject and object. It claims mind-only (Sanskrit, citta-mātra), implying that only mind or consciousness exists. Yogācāra views the apparently objective world not as a projection of ego-consciousness; rather, the delusive bifurcation between subject and object arises within nondual mind (Loy 1998).

In tantric practice, the body is recognized as the gateway to enact rituals and visualizations (Lee 2014). Tantric initiation (Sanskrit, abhisheka) in Vajrayāna involves full-body prostrations considered a gesture of surrender and purification of the body and mind (Ray 2013). Tantric visualizations embody a symbolic reconstruction of one’s self in which one essentially becomes ultimate reality that is embodied in a yidam’s character (Varela and Depraz 2003). A yidam is a male or female Buddha representing enlightened aspects and qualities of deities. The yidam practice aims to help one disidentify from desire, unconditionally accept oneself, and identify with the wisdom mind of the deity for the purpose of transformation. It is believed that the deity is nothing other than one’s own enlightened nature, depicted in apparently external form. The deity is considered a manifestation of all three kāyas of the Buddha. In yidam practice, one realizes the paradox of form (body) that is formlessness (emptiness), and formlessness that is form (nonduality; Ray 2013). Guru yoga is a technique of visualizing and dissolving bodies via the trikāya system. The practitioner visualizes the dissolution of one’s own body into emptiness (dharmakāya as emptiness), meditates to transform light (energy) into the form of a specific tantric deity (sambhogakāya), and then activates the final transformation to the

level of the nirmanakāya where one becomes physically relevant to fulfill the bodhisattva vow of helping other beings (The Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso) 1988). These tantric practices bring forth self-transformation in order to transcend all bodily forms for realizing emptiness (Lee 2014).

The mystical physiology of Vajrayāna describes the human body in terms of subtle energies (or winds) travelling through thousands of channels (Sanskrit, *nadis*) and centers (Sanskrit, *chakras*) within the body (Powers 2007). According to Geshe Tashi Tsering (2012), there are three types of body—coarse body (i.e., the flesh and bone body), subtle body (i.e., the subtle psychic energies and subtle drops), and the very subtle body (i.e., the permanent body that carries the clear light). In Vajrayāna, it is believed that the permanent very subtle body passes from life to life and will remain even after one has attained buddhahood. Tantric sexual practices, the flow of subtle energy (Sanskrit, *prāṇa*), and bodhicitta are interwoven with the subtle body (Morley 2008; Samuel 1989). Esoteric tantric practices simulate the death process, taking the three kāyas as the path, with the purpose of actualizing the state of buddhahood and perceiving the clear light of death as the truth body (dharmakāya; Geshe Kelsang Gyatso 2016a). In Tibetan Buddhism, the bardo, a state between death and rebirth, points to the ephemeral, cyclic nature of life and bodies (impermanence). It is believed that tulku (who are reincarnate custodians of a specific lineage) reincarnate intentionally in human form to transmit the dharma in lineages. Bodhisattvas choose intentional rebirth in saṃsāra to benefit sentient beings, while Buddhas are viewed as perfectly enlightened beings who escape the cycle of rebirth, attaining a formless, permanent, enlightened wisdom state (Karma Lekshe Tsomo 2001). Those who attain awakening are believed to transform themselves into light in the form of the rainbow body, after which their physical form dissolves, leaving nothing behind (Powers 2007). In Tibetan Tantra, the five colored lights of the rainbow body are the essence of earth, water, fire, air, and space (Kalu Rinpoche 1995).

In summary, in Vajrayāna Buddhism, the descending soteriological path involves somatic descent into the physical karmically conditioned body (embodiment) and cultivating subtle and very subtle energies to attain complete openness and spaciousness (Pure Awareness, *rig pa*). The ascending soteriological path is through transcendence of the illusory body-bound ego (self) (nonattachment, emptiness, and nonduality), while the extending soteriological path recognizes interconnectedness of phenomena in the cosmos (karma and dependent origination), realization of indestructible Buddha nature, and the rainbow body. In Vajrayāna Buddhism, mindfulness meditation, deity visualization, and somatic practices form a symbiotic amalgam to foster both transpersonal and transbody development aiming at enlightenment. A key tenet in Vajrayāna is that the microcosm (physical body) mirrors the macrocosm (cosmic body), and thus, the body is viewed as the gateway to liberation. Being body is to realize ultimate reality according to Vajrayāna.

Juxtaposition of Participatory Theory and Vajrayana Buddhism

There is an exuberant richness of bodies recognized in Vajrayāna Buddhism and participatory theory. Both acknowledge embodiment as saliently important to the integration of all human dimensions. Juxtaposing participatory theory and Vajrayāna allows an exploration of potential transbody and transpersonal transformation

pathways. Participatory theory adopts spiritual diversity in terms of a plurality of spiritual paths and a plurality of spiritual ultimate(s) or liberative goals. Liberation and aliveness are realized through spontaneous or intentional participation in an indeterminately mysterious creative power. Therefore, Ferrer (2002, 2017) participatory theory elegantly avoids privileging a specific spirituality or truth claim over another based on ontological grounds (e.g., claiming that the Vajrayāna Buddhist view is better than the Christian theistic view). Both ontological (i.e., doctrinal) criteria for arranging cross-cultural spiritual truths and perennialist (i.e., universalist) truth claims to reality are rejected by participatory theory. Instead, particular spiritualities are assessed based on the desired outcomes in a given context, location, and time. In this account, cross-cultural hierarchies of spiritualities are tied to their transformational potency and emancipatory effects, such as overcoming of egocentricity and dissociation or promoting ecological balance, human rights, and social justice (see Duckworth 2014).

In contrast, Vajrayāna asserts the path toward the pure and immaculate absolute suggesting a univocal liberation and a constructivist relative karmic plane of being in the world. Ferrer's participatory theory heavily draws on Buddhist tenets, such as overcoming egocentrism, the bodhisattva ideal, emptiness (undetermined ultimates), and embodiment. Although this theory arguably offers a contemporary secular global version of Buddhism, it emphasizes participatory emancipatory enactments over a monolithic liberative goal (Duckworth 2014). In contrast, the goal of liberation holds prominence in Vajrayāna Buddhism. According to Ray (2000), in Vajrayāna liberation is considered a liberation for (i.e., to realize fully one's human potential) rather than liberation from suffering, pain, trauma, and life's crisis.

The liberative goals of Vajrayāna Buddhism and participatory theory differ profoundly with the former in adherence to a univocal, superior spiritual goal/ultimate and the latter affirming a multiplicity of spiritual goals, liberations, and ultimates. Although different liberative goals are asserted in different traditions within Vajrayāna Buddhism, such as different kind of emptinesses (Duckworth 2010; Loy 1983), each one of them assumes to assert the ultimate truth. In my view, these contrasting liberative goals are problematic only if spiritual identities are held firmly and without openness, which creates spiritual otherness. Such a reified spiritual identity is similar to any other identity, such as identity-based claims for women's rights, racial, gender, or social identities, that create oppositional identity politics limiting deep and lasting individual and social transformations (Fernandes 2003). A reified Buddhist identity claims a monolithic liberative view, and thus rejects plurality of liberations, while participatory identity rejects absolutes (e.g., the indestructible, primordial groundless ground hold in Vajrayāna) as universal or universally valid. However, participatory theory and Vajrayāna Buddhism share in common similar liberative outcomes: (a) Egocentrism: less egocentricity/no-self and emptiness, (b) embodiment: less dissociation/less disembodiment, and (c) relationality: integral bodhisattva vow/bodhisattva vow. Irrespective of participatory practices or Vajrayāna practices, liberated human beings are more selfless, more compassionate and loving, and more engaged in the social, ecological, and spiritual transformation of the world (Ferrer 2017). As the Buddhist self-identity becomes emptier, less egoic, and more embodied through mindfulness meditation, visualization, and somatic practices, concepts such as spiritual ultimates versus the absolute lose importance because states of being (e.g., being body, nondual consciousness, and subtle states) become more prominent realizing eventually

buddhahood (Ray 2008). Similarly, as novel spiritual understanding emerges through cocreative enactment in an undetermined mystery, it opens more fully the “spirit-beyond” (enlightenment), “spirit within” (enlivenment), and “spirit in-between” (eco-social-political engagement) ultimately leading toward religious hybridization and greater spiritual diversity (Ferrer 2017). Ferrer and Sherman (2008) considered participatory theory not a spiritual tradition, but rather a spiritual sensitivity expressing the acknowledgement and softness toward other religious and spiritual traditions and identities, while conserving grounds for critical discernment (see above). Both participatory and Buddhist practitioners benefit from the inquiry-driven dimensions of one’s own tradition that may gradually increase the hybridization of bodies (Ferrer 2017) and be able to hold the paradox of being both a Buddhist and participatory practitioner, Buddhist-Christian, or fill in any other religious or spiritual tradition (Bidwell 2015). This infinite differentiation-in-communion can express a greater-than-ever spiritual plurality with a deeply felt sense of spiritual unity (Ferrer 2017).

Another distinction between Vajrayāna Buddhism and participatory theory is the position of the physical body relative to everything else. From the perspective of the Vajrayāna, the body is viewed as the gateway to ultimate reality and is given the utmost importance based on the notion that the body is Buddha nature, whereas in participatory theory, the body is viewed as equal to vital, heart, mind, and consciousness as part of an integrated larger whole (Ferrer 2017). On the one side, this equality principle may be interpreted to foster integral development in the sense of a harmonious balance among all human faculties, while on the other side, the body may be considered to include all other human dimensions because they inherently arise within the physical body. In this view, the body has attained bodyfulness, which is not a trait or end-state but rather considered a dynamic cocreated striving toward wholeness. Ferrer (2002) theory is positive in emphasizing creative cocreation of the undetermined mystery, though it gives less voice to negative feelings and perceptions, such as fear of the unknown, while the Vajrayāna connotes negativity by emphasizing suffering and positivity through awakening.

In participatory theory, the integral bodhisattva renounces its own liberation until the body, the heart, and the primary world can be free (Ferrer 2017). The bodhisattva vow is central in both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism with the idealized vision of the bodhisattva. Importantly, the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna view is that full realization of the bodhisattva is attained by wholehearted, embodied, and completely lived intentionality of relieving all suffering of all sentient beings. This ideal is based on Shantideva’s dharma teachings of *The Way of the Bodhisattva* (Sanskrit, *Bodhicharyavatara*) (Pelden 2007; Pema 2018; Tuffley and Śāntideva 2011). The integral bodhisattva vow stresses the integration of all human faculties without subjugating, disembodiment, or detaching from any of them (e.g., dysfunctional sexualities or traumatic-induced tensions in the body). The integral bodhisattva engages creatively immanent and subtle energies in an open and boundless process to explore spiritual worlds, while Buddhist bodhisattvas aim to replicate the awakening of the Buddha along various predetermined stages of liberation (Ferrer 2017).

Historically some of the Vajrayāna traditions have been more individualistic, secretive, and eccentric as exemplified by the siddhas (Sanskrit, realized, embodied beings) who roamed forests and mountains in the past in ancient India and Tibet (Ray 2000). In contemporary Western culture, siddhas resemble “enlightened madmen/madwomen”

roaming the urbanized/digital worlds in a liberated, nondual state of being, nonattachment, and emptiness assumed to enact equanimity and bliss, while being fully embodied helping other people to do the same. In that sense, siddhas have realized the three kāyas through a concerted and disciplined effort focused on liberation as end goal (transbody and transpersonal realization). Although participatory theory stresses three spiritual cocreations—intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal cocreation—these concurrent enacted cocreations endlessly unfold with no defined single liberative ultimate or absolute (Ferrer 2017). Such a lack in unique soteriological goal may evoke existential meaninglessness and anxiety due to absence of an unequivocal direction. For some, the perceived potential subjective relativism associated with such an open-ended participatory path may turn into cynical and nihilistic forms of being due to the lack of a single absolute truth providing ontological certainty. Participatory pluralism implies a multiplicity of participatory beings and bodies in constant enacted cocreation that bear the potential to bring forth transpersonal and transbody states. Cocreated events involve a plurality of interactions of human cognition, bodies, subtle world and entities, culture, and others. Cocreation differs from cultural constructivism because it concurrently involves the possible impact of linguistic, nonlinguistic (e.g., somatic, energetic, archetypal), cultural, and transcultural (e.g., subtle worlds) variables in the shaping of phenomenological experiences. From a participatory perspective, subjective spiritual truth claims rooted in constructivism assert that spiritual realities and bodily realities are social constructions (Katz 1978) and objective spiritual truth claims (e.g., a specific absolute transcendental reality, such as the dharmakāya, Ray 2002) are replaced by a plurality of subjective-objective Truths. This metamodern view of participatory theory does not reject subjective and objective truths, but seeks to liberate the very notion of truth from premodern/modern views contingent on Cartesian dualistic thinking (Ferrer 2017). The body as one of the human dimensions is part of the celebration of this pluralistic liberation.

Vajrayāna has radically indulged the body as sacred and adopted somatic and kāya-visualization practices, while other Buddhist traditions and Western psychotherapies have stressed more cognitive-oriented mindfulness meditation. There is potential to combine cognitive and somatic meditation practices, which may benefit disembodied individuals. The spontaneity of enaction expressed in participatory theory offers potential to soften the rigid postures of meditation practice, bringing more freedom of creative expression and playfulness to the present moment. The time-tested, embodied practices of tantric Vajrayāna lineages offer a nexus of pluralistic body constructs to disembodied cultures, but in a radically naked way, assigning superiority to the form body that is empty of form. Vajrayāna gives prominence to the body, which is viewed as the culmination of immanence, transcendence, and expansion. The transbody-transpersonal pathways in Vajrayāna Buddhism are in a sense linear and hierarchical starting with the cultivation of somatic and meditation practices fostering deep connection to the physical human body and nonattachment of self, other beings, bodies, and all kinds of worldly phenomena. This descending path resembles the immanent way of being in the world in form of a human body. Here the body becomes fully body realizing bodyfulness. Vajrayāna contends that through greater immanence (i.e., embodiment) the ascending path toward liberation of self (i.e., egolessness) and liberation of the body (i.e., nonattachment to karmic bodily conditions, thoughts, experiences, feelings, etc.) is realized. From the Vajrayāna perspective, realization refers to the full integration of human faculties and worldly phenomena through realization of dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya as indivisible one (Powers 2007).

A more balanced integration of the body as an equal partner among other human dimensions forms the impetus for embodiment and bodyfulness in participatory theory. The participatory view does not privilege any of the body-soteriological pathways (i.e., the descending, ascending, and extending paths). The pluralistic lens of participatory theory in regard to body-soteriological pathways allow theoretically an organic unfolding in all three directions of liberation and fulfillment unrestricted by a dogmatic view or specific liberative outcomes. The practical impetus to cocreatively explore the mysterious human existence is driven by primary instinctual processes, secondary processes that are conditioned by past experiences, and tertiary effects that include the free will (intention to act) according to Panksepp (2010). Among Panksepp's empirically informed seven primary-process emotional systems, the seeking/desire and play/social-engagement functions touch on the creative, inner-driven, and open participation in life experiences, while fear/anxiety, lust/sex, care/nurture, grief/separation distress, and rage/anger are tied to specific environmental stimuli. Although the equiprimacy principle of participatory theory states that no human attribute is intrinsically superior or more evolved than any other (Ferrer 2017), Panksepp's research pointed to seeking/desire and play/social-engagement implicated in creativity, novelty, and curiosity. These empirical research findings suggest that seeking/desire and play/social-engagement arising in the human body are poised to cocreate novel spiritualities. Another criterion that assesses intrapersonal spiritual cocreation could involve creative potential, specifically focused on curiosity/seeking, desire, and playfulness. Interestingly, in Buddhism, desires (e.g., bodily, sensual, sexual, imagined, or other desires) have been identified as one of the major defilements underlying attachment and samsāra hindering liberation, while playfulness is restrained in meditation practice (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche 2013). According to Schore (2016) and Schroder (2017), the caveat is that there are two distinct operating attachment systems—the hard-wired biological, maternal regulatory attachment system in the human body (i.e., attachment bonding between mother and child) and the spiritual/Buddhist attachment system (i.e., attachment/nonattachment tied to the emotions desire and ignorance). An impaired maternal attachment system often leads to insecure (anxious and avoidant attachment) in adulthood and impaired intra- and interpersonal relationships (Mikulincer and Shaver 2012; Melen et al. 2016), which may hamper spiritual development and enactment (Zimberoff and Hartman 2002). The body-based maternal bonding attachment system (relational behavior) has been shown to associate with secondary neurological processes in the basal ganglia (Panksepp 2012). This secondary emotional system arises from simple emotional learning based on classical conditioning (Panksepp 2010), which can be re-conditioned with mindfulness meditation and compassion practices (Khoury et al. 2017). These findings underpin that within the human body lies potential to unlock novel spiritualities and impaired attachment systems that limit spiritual participatory enactment. The human body holds the key to heal and liberate the descending, ascending, and extending soteriological paths to attain enlightenment (Vajrayāna Buddhist perspective) or enact a plurality of spiritual participatory events (participatory theory perspective). Future research may focus to investigate the body-soteriological validity and/or effectivity of embodying physical and metaphysical bodies in alignment with the egocentrism/narcissism, dissociation/disembodiment, and eco-socio-political orientations (Ferrer 2017).

Conclusions

A rich plurality of body constructs was found in Vajrayāna Buddhism and participatory theory. The juxtaposition of descending, ascending, and extending body-soteriological pathways allowed to identify potentials and limitations of transbody and transpersonal transformation. In Vajrayāna, the body is viewed as the gateway to liberation, which entails immanent experiences of timelessness, groundlessness, and spaciousness (being body), transcendence of self (nondual states of consciousness), and cosmic expansion. In participatory theory, the body is viewed as equal partner to vital, heart, mind, and consciousness as part of an integrated larger whole. Although the philosophical views between the investigated tradition/theory are contrasting—plurality of spiritual ultimates (participatory theory) and realization of Buddha nature as the ultimate reality (Vajrayāna Buddhism)—many similarities were identified. The similarities include a multiplicity of integral practices and intra- and interpersonal outcomes (e.g., increased embodiment, selflessness, shared humanity, and prosocial outcomes such as compassion). In conclusion, both, Vajrayāna and participatory theory, offer rich spiritual pathways for transbody and transpersonal transformation.

Author Contribution My own work.

Funding Self-funded

Data Availability Literature study.

Code Availability None.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The author declares no competing interests.

References

- Anderson, R. (2006). Body intelligence scale: defining and measuring the intelligence of the body. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 34(4), 357–367.
- Baker, I. A. (2019). *Tibetan yoga: principles and practices*. Rochester: Inner Transformation.
- Barratt, B. B. (2013). *The emergence of somatic psychology and bodymind therapy*. London: Palgrave and Macmillan.
- Bidwell, D. R. (2015). Enacting the spiritual self: Buddhist-Christian identity as participatory action. *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, 15(1), 105–112. <https://doi.org/10.1353/scs.2015.0014>.
- Blackstone, J. (2008). *The enlightenment process: a guide to embodied spiritual awakening*. St Paul: Paragon House.
- Buswell, R. E., & Lopez, D. S. (2014). *The Princeton dictionary of Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Caldwell, C. (2014). Mindfulness and bodyfulness: a new paradigm. *The Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*, 1(1), 69–88.
- Cardena, E., & Winkelman, M. (Eds.). (2011). *Altering consciousness: multidisciplinary perspectives, biological and psychological perspectives* (Vol. 2). Santa Barbara: Praeger.

- Chittick, W. C. (1994). Microcosm, macrocosm, and perfect man. In *Imaginal worlds: Ibn'Arabi and the problem of religious diversity* (pp. 31–38). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. (2010a). *The heart of the Buddha: entering the Tibetan Buddhist path*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. (2010b). *Training the mind and cultivating loving kindness* (Lief, J.L., Ed.). Boston: Shambhala.
- Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. (2013a). *The profound treasury of the ocean of dharma: the tantric path of indestructible wakefulness* (J. L. Lief, Ed.). Boston: Shambhala.
- Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. (2013b). *The profound treasury of the ocean of dharma: the path to individual liberation* (Lief, J.L., Ed.). Boston: Shambhala.
- Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. (2014). *The bodhisattva path of wisdom and compassion: the profound treasury of the Ocean of Dharma* (Lief, J.L., Ed) (2nd ed.). Boston: Shambhala.
- Coakley, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Religion and the body*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Collins, S. (1998). *Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Daniels, M. (2005). *Shadow, self, spirit: essays in transpersonal psychology*. Exeter: Imprint Academic.
- Daniels, M. (2009). Perspectives and vectors in transpersonal development. *Transpersonal Psychology Review*, 13(1), 89–99.
- Duckworth, D. S. (2010). De/limiting emptiness and the boundaries of the ineffable. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 38(1), 97–105. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10781-009-9080-1>.
- Duckworth, D. S. (2014). How nonsectarian is 'nonsectarian'? Jorge Ferrer's pluralist alternative to Tibetan Buddhist inclusivism. *Sophia*, 53(3), 339–348. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-013-0398-5>.
- Duckworth, D. S. (2019). *The profound reality of interdependence: an overview of the wisdom chapter of the way of the bodhisattva*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Esposito, J. L., Fasching, D. J., & Lewis, T. T. (2015). *World religions today* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fernandes, L. (2003). *Transforming feminist practice: non-violence, social justice, and the possibilities of a spiritualized feminism*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Ferrer, J. N. (2002). *Revisioning transpersonal theory: a participatory vision of human spirituality*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Ferrer, J. N. (2003). Integral transformative practice: a participatory perspective. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 35(1), 21–42.
- Ferrer, J. N. (2006). Embodied spirituality, now and then. *Tikkun*, 21(3), 41–64. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08879982-2006-3016>.
- Ferrer, J. N. (2008). What does it mean to live a fully embodied spiritual life? *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 27(1), 1–11.
- Ferrer, J. N. (2011). Participatory spirituality and transpersonal theory: A ten-year retrospective. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 43(1), 1–34.
- Ferrer, J. N. (2015). Participation, metaphysics, and enlightenment: reflections on Ken Wilber's recent work. *Approaching Religion*, 5(2), 42–66.
- Ferrer, J. N. (2017). *Participation and the mystery: transpersonal essays in psychology, education, and religion*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Ferrer, J. N., & Sherman, J. H. (2008). Introduction: The participatory turn in spirituality, mysticism, and religious studies. In J. N. Ferrer & J. H. Sherman (Eds.), *The participatory turn: Spirituality, mysticism, religious studies* (pp. 1–78). State University of New York Press.
- Freinacht, H. (2017). *The listening society: a metamodern guide to politics*. N/A: Metamoderna ApS.
- Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. (2016a). *Essence of Vajrayana: the highest yoga tantra practice of heruka body mandala* (2nd ed.). Glen Spey: Tharpa.
- Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. (2016b). *Tantric grounds and path: how to enter, progress, and complete the Vajrayana path* (2nd ed.). Glen Skey: Tharpa.
- Geshe Tashi Tsering (Tashi Tsering). (2012). *Tantra: the foundation of Buddhist thought*. Boston: Wisdom.
- Goodman, R. (2016). William James. In Zalta, E. N. (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/james/>. Accessed 2 March 2020.
- Gross, R. M. (1993). *Buddhism after patriarchy: a feminist history, analysis, and reconstruction of Buddhism*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Grosso, M. (2015). The “transmission” model of mind and body. In E. F. Kelly, A. Crabtree, & P. Marshall (Eds.), *Beyond physicalism: toward reconciliation of science and spirituality* (pp. 79–114). London: Rowman and Littlefield.
- James, W. (2003). *Essays in radical empiricism (Original work published 1912)*. Mineola: Dover.

- Johnson, D. H. (Ed.). (2018). *Diverse bodies, diverse practices*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
- Kalu Rinpoche. (1995). *Secret Buddhism: Vajrayana practices*. San Francisco: ClearPoint Press.
- Karma Lekshe Tsomo. (2001). Death, identity, and enlightenment in Tibetan culture. *The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 20, 151–173.
- Katz, S. (1978). Language, epistemology, and mysticism. In S. Katz (Ed.), *Mysticism and philosophical analysis* (pp. 22–74). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kepler, J. (2015). Energy and the nervous system in embodied experience. In G. Marlock & H. Weiss (Eds.), *The handbook of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology* (pp. 600–614). Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
- Khensur Rinpoche Jampa Tegchok. (2012). *Insight into emptiness* (Thubten Chodron, Ed.; S. Carlier, Trans.). Somerville: Wisdom.
- Khouri, B., Knäuper, B., Schlosser, M., Carrière, K., & Chiesa, A. (2017). Effectiveness of traditional meditation retreats: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 92(Supplement C), 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychores.2016.11.006>.
- Klein, A. C. (2004). Buddhist understandings of subjectivity. In K. L. Tsomo (Ed.), *Buddhist women and social justice: ideals, challenges, and achievements* (pp. 23–34). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Komjathy, L. (Ed.). (2015). *Contemplative literature: a comparative sourcebook on meditation and contemplative prayer*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Kripal, J. J. (2014). *Comparing religions*. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought*. New York: Basic.
- Leder, D. (1990). *The absent body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lee, R. L. M. (2014). Bodies, religion and relationality: the paradox of the Buddhist trikāya. *Culture and Religion*, 15(4), 436–451. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2014.982669>.
- Loy, D. (1983). How many nondualities are there? *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 11(4), 413–426. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00194265>.
- Loy, D. R. (1998). *Nonduality: a study in comparative philosophy*. Amherst: Humanity Books.
- Loy, D. R. (2015). *A new Buddhist path: enlightenment, evolution and ethics in the modern world*. Boston: Wisdom.
- Marlock, G., & Weiss, H. (Eds.). (2015). *The handbook of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
- Melen, S., Pepping, C. A., & O'Donovan, A. (2016). Social foundations of mindfulness: Priming attachment anxiety reduces emotion regulation and mindful attention. *Mindfulness*, 8(1), 136–143. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-016-0587-8>.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2012). *Phenomenology of perception* (D. A. Landes, Trans.; Original published 1945). New York: Routledge.
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2012). Adult attachment orientations and relationship processes. *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, 4(4), 259–274. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-2589.2012.00142.x>.
- Morley, J. (2008). Embodied consciousness in tantric yoga and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. *Religion and the Arts*, 12(1), 144–163. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156852908X270980>.
- Ngakpa, C., & Déchen, K. (2003). *Spectrum of ecstasy: embracing the five wisdom emotions of Vajrayana Buddhism*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Panksepp, J. (2010). Affective neuroscience of the emotional BrainMind: Evolutionary perspectives and implications for understanding depression. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, 12(4), 533–545.
- Panksepp, J. (2012). *The archaeology of mind: neuroevolutionary origins of human emotions*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Pelden, K. (2007). The nectar of Manjushri's speech: A detailed commentary on Shantideva's way of the bodhisattva (Padmakara Translation Group, Trans.). Shambhala.
- Pema, C. (2018). *Becoming bodhisattvas: a guidebook for compassionate action* (H. Berliner, Ed.). Boulder: Shambhala.
- Powers, J. (2007). *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston: Snow Lion.
- Prendergast, J. J. (2015). *In touch: how to tune in to the inner guidance of your body and trust yourself*. Boulder: Sounds True.
- Ray, R. A. (2000). *Indestructible truth: the living spirituality of Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Ray, R. A. (2002). *Secret of the vajra world: the tantric Buddhism of Tibet*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Ray, R. A. (2004). Three in one: a Buddhist trinity. *Lion's Roar*, 1–8.
- Ray, R. A. (2008). *Touching enlightenment: finding realization in the body*. Boulder: Sounds True.
- Ray, R. A. (Ed.). (2013). *In the presence of masters: wisdom from 30 contemporary Tibetan Buddhist teachers*. Boulder: Shambhala.
- Ray, R. A. (2016a). *Somatic descent: experiencing the ultimate intelligence of the body*. Boulder: Sounds True.

- Ray, R. A. (2016b). *The awakening body: somatic meditation for discovering our deepest life*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Ray, R. A. (2017). *Awakening the heart: a somatic training in bodhicitta* (1 and 2 ed.). Boulder: Sounds True.
- Ray, R. A. (2018). *The practice of pure awareness: somatic meditation for awakening the sacred*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Röhrich, F. (2015). “Body schema,” “body image,” and bodily experience. In G. Marlock & H. Weiss (Eds.), *The handbook of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology* (pp. 237–247). Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
- Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (Osel Rangdrol Mukpo). (2013). *The Shambhala principle—discovering humanity’s hidden treasure*. New York: Harmony Books.
- Samuel, G. (1989). The body in Buddhist and Hindu Tantra: Some notes. *Religion*, 19(3), 197–210. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0048-721X\(89\)90019-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0048-721X(89)90019-5).
- Schore, A. N. (2016). *Affect regulation and the origin of the self: the neurobiology of emotional development*. New York: Routledge.
- Schroder, V. (2017). *Buddha’s mom—the neurobiology of spiritual awakening*. Online: LuLu Press.
- Sharf, R. H. (2015). Is mindfulness Buddhist? (And why it matters). *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 52(4), 470–484. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461514557561>.
- Shusterman, R. (2008). *Body consciousness: a philosophy of mindfulness and somaesthetics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stanley, S. (2016). Relational and body-centered practices for healing trauma: Lifting the burdens of the past. Routledge Publisher: New York, NY.
- Suh, S. A. (2017). Buddhism and gender. In M. Jerryson (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of contemporary Buddhism* (pp. 635–649). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Suzuki, S. (1970). *Zen mind, beginner’s mind: informal talks on Zen meditation and practice*. New York: John Weatherhill.
- The Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso). (1988). *The union of bliss and emptiness*. Ithaca: Snow Lion.
- The Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso). (1998). *The art of happiness*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Thich Nhat Hanh. (1987). *Interbeing*. New York: Parallax Press.
- Traister, R. (2018). *Good and mad: the revolutionary power of women’s anger*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Tuffley, D., and Śāntideva. (2011). *The bodhicaryavatara: a guide to the bodhisattva way of life*. N/A: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Turner, L. (2015). *Metamodernism: a brief introduction*. Berfrois: literature, ideas, tea—Google Search. Retrieved from <https://www.berfrois.com/2015/01/everything-always-wanted-know-metamodernism/>. Accessed 15 Feb 2021
- van den Akker, R., Gibbons, A., & Vermeulen, T. (Eds.). (2017). *Metamodernism: history, affect, and depth after postmodernism*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Varela, F. J., & Depraz, N. (2003). Imagining: embodiment, phenomenology, transformation. In B. A. Wallace (Ed.), *Buddhism and science: breaking new ground* (pp. 195–230). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Varela, F. J., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. (2016). *The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience* (Revised ed.). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Vermeulen, T., & van den Akker, R. (2010). Notes on metamodernism. *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 2(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3402/jac.v2i0.5677>.
- Virtbauer, G. (2016). Presencing process: embodiment and healing in the Buddhist practice of mindfulness of breathing. *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, 19(1), 68–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2015.1115474>.
- Weiss, H. (2015). Consciousness, awareness, mindfulness. In G. Marlock, H. Weiss, C. Young, & M. Soth (Eds.), *The handbook of body psychotherapy and somatic psychology* (pp. 402–410). Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
- Williams, P. (1997). Some Mahāyāna Buddhist perspectives on the body. In S. Coakley (Ed.), *Religion and the body* (pp. 205–231). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zimberoff, D., & Hartman, D. (2002). Attachment, detachment, nonattachment: achieving synthesis. *Journal of Heart-Centered Therapies*, 5(1), 3–94.