

Beyond Postmodern Spirituality

Ken Wilber and the Integral approach

Introduction

We might say that we moved from living in a cosmos to being included in a universe (Charles Taylor 2007: 59).

In his latest book, the British philosopher Charles Taylor asks ‘why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy but even inescapable?’ (Taylor 2007: 25). What are the contours of the modern world in which we live? Why the change from believing in God as a default to not-believing as the new mode for our being-in-the-world?

The American philosopher Ken Wilber has taken on a sizeable challenge by trying to unsnarl the modern world-knot and its secular worldview. In the course of his almost forty years of predominantly solitary study (he has worked outside academia for the best part of his career) and writing, Wilber has produced a body of work that spans from consciousness studies to sociology and anthropology, to mysticism and to different fields of philosophy, psychology and comparative religion (Visser 2003: 1–15). The main theme running through his writings is the concept of *Kosmos*, the universe of matter, life, mind and spirit, that he seeks to restore and bring back both to our vocabulary and to our everyday experience of reality (Wilber 1996: 16).

The spectrum of consciousness

A recurring theme in Wilber’s oeuvre is the idea of a spectrum of consciousness. Since the writing of his first book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness* at the ripe age of 23, Wilber has maintained that the human psyche has a natural capability to span a huge spectrum of available stages of consciousness (Wilber 1993: 3–6). Starting out as an attempt to bridge the gap between

Western psychological therapeutic modes and Eastern contemplative practices, Wilber found that consciousness indeed forms a spectrum from the earliest prerational stages of a newborn infant to the highly developed mature stages of a well-functioning adult human being and beyond. Different modalities of treatment and therapy place themselves along this spectrum according to their appropriate and respective stage (Wilber 1993: 7–10).

A few words of explanation regarding the ‘beyond’ might be in place. According to Wilber, the spectrum of consciousness spans the entire psyche of a human being. This psyche has three basic stages: prerational, rational and transrational (Wilber 2001a: 180). Prerational stages are the ones that correspond roughly with the Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget’s first two stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor and preoperational (Slater & Muir 1999: 36–40).

In the prerational stages a human individual lacks the capacity to take another person’s perspective. Humans at these early stages are very much egocentric and lack authentic, natural, developmentally acquired compassion that follows from the cognitive skill of taking another person’s viewpoint and operating from that point of reference. However, in the concrete operational stage the child starts to disengage from his or her egoism and starts to feel a need to belong to a separate group larger than him/herself. It is this intrinsic need to extend beyond the confines of one’s isolated ego that forms the basis of the next big stage, conventional or rational, or formal operational in Piaget’s terms (Slater & Muir 1999: 41–2).

The studies of moral development by Lawrence Kohlberg and later, Carol Gilligan, are a good context in light of which to see the three broad stages of Wilber’s idea of the spectrum of consciousness. Lawrence Kohlberg, an American psychologist who studied with Piaget, theorized that the moral reasoning underlying ethical behaviour is constructed in six stages that can be grouped together at three levels. These three levels are called pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional (Kohlberg 1984: 172). Very similar to Piaget’s findings, these three levels represent the capacity to hold more complex systems of thinking and feeling in mind, and the capacity to base one’s judgment on an ever-expanding circle of care, compassion and justice. The further one is in one’s moral development, the more thought-out and principled one’s moral reasoning is (Kohlberg 1984: 216).

Psychologist Carol Gilligan did additional work on Kohlberg’s stage conception, trying to balance out its criticized androcentrism. In Gilligan’s model the basic stages are the same, but the emphasis is on care and compassion rather than rights and justice. As the title of her book puts it, men and women

develop in a different voice through the same developmental stages (Gilligan 1993: 1–7, 16–23, 69–70).

Kohlberg postulated also a seventh stage which is a ‘response to ethical and religious problems . . . based on constructing a sense of identity or unity with being, with life, or with God’ (Kohlberg 1984: 249). It is the stage that functions as a bridge connecting the orthodox stages predominantly studied by Western psychology with transrational or contemplative stages, both of which together form the spectrum of consciousness crucial to Ken Wilber’s Integral Model. It is to these stages beyond the post-conventional development that we shall now turn.

Pre/trans-fallacy

In his earliest works Wilber postulated human development as going from the oneness of a newborn child to the existential angst of a mature adult, and again back to the source of which we had an unconscious taste in our earliest years or, better, months (Visser 2003: 71–3). However, revising his theory after his first books were published, Wilber came to the conclusion that there is a difference in the spectrum between prerational and transrational consciousness. The early stages appeared at first glance to be in union with the universe; more likely, they are not yet separated from it. There is a big difference between being one with something, which is a transrational experience, and being embedded in something, which is the case of a child and her mother before the separation phase begins (Visser 2003: 73–7).

The crux of the pre/trans-fallacy is as follows. The rational stage and its corresponding cognitive functions see everything non-rational to be either pre- or trans-rational (Wilber 2001a: 184). Wilber often uses the case of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung as an illustrative example. Freud tended to reduce everything non-rational into infantile oceanic feeling, thus committing what Wilber calls a reductionistic version of the fallacy. Everything non-rational was pre-rational nonsense, said Freud. Jung for his part tended to elevate everything non-rational into spiritual visions of a reality that is somehow more real, committing an elevationist version of the pre/trans-fallacy. Everything non-rational was trans-rational glory, expounded Jung (Wilber 2001a: 184, 226).

With this new addition to his work, Wilber went from what he himself calls the Wilber-1 stage of his work to the Wilber-2 stage. This new stage began with the books *The Atman Project: A Transpersonal View of Human Development*

(1980) and *Up from Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution* (1981), respectively concerning the psychological and anthropological development of the species *Homo Sapiens* (Visser 2003: 28).

Stages and states of development

Wilber has done revisions to his theoretical model five times (Visser 2003: xiv, 6). Somewhere between Wilber-4 and Wilber-5 his concept of stages and states of development changed. The core issue behind the change is the following. While trying to tie the psychological stages discovered by Western psychology and Eastern (and also Western, with its variety of mystical traditions ranging from the Rhineland mystics to northern shamans and the desert fathers of Christianity) contemplative practices, Wilber and many of the scholars he drew his vast range of influences from failed to differentiate between stages of development and states of consciousness (Wilber 2006: 88–93).

Basically what Wilber and the other transpersonalists (although Wilber is not strictly speaking a transpersonalist but an integralist; he separated from the transpersonal movement in 1982 criticizing its overemphasis of altered states of consciousness (Wilber 2000c)) did was take the Western psychological stages of development and tried to stack the stages of development discovered by the contemplative traditions on top of these. Thus they came up with a model that represented the spectrum of consciousness in a somewhat simplistic, linear fashion. Not that there is anything wrong with simplicity, but in this case the tower of consciousness turned out to be teetering on the brink of collapse due to its somewhat hollow theoretical groundwork.

Wilber and consciousness researcher Allan Combs discovered, unbeknownst to each other, the relation between states and stages (Wilber 2006: 89). Stages are like the ones researched by Piaget, Kohlberg *et al*: fairly permanent developmental acquisitions that function as centres of the total individual. The stages are earned, in a way, as the human being experiences challenges that foster growth towards more complex levels of cognition. Of course development is not a given, since both regression and developmental arrest can occur, too (Wilber 2000a: 35, 92–3). Wilber sometimes calls these stages structures or structure-stages, underlining their more permanent nature, somewhat like that of levels in a building (Wilber 2006: 72).

States, on the other hand, are fleeting experiences, states of mind that come and go. Unlike stages, states of consciousness do not follow a stage-

like progression. Stages of consciousness cannot be skipped (Wilber 2006: 10–11). Level 1 is followed by level 2; level 3 can never occur without the individual first having experienced level 2. An analogy can be drawn between psychological development and syntactical progression: you have to have letters before words; words before sentences; and so on. States of consciousness, however, do not appear to follow the same kind of rigid hierarchy. One can dive into the deep end of human experience—or, as a mystic might say, the Endless End—at practically every stage. The experience of vast emptiness, of standing outside oneself looking at one’s habitual persona going about, the experience of freedom and/or fullness; in a word experiences usually deemed spiritual or mystical, or, in somewhat dated lingo, religious, can happen at every structure-stage of human psychological being-in-the-world (Wilber 2006: 76).

Now this is very important for a lot of reasons. It liberates us from the simplistic attempts to unite Eastern and Western knowledge. Those theories were and are often not unlike the teetering tower of consciousness postulated above, trying to stack phenomena upon phenomena until observations from real life come and poke holes in its sides in a deadly fashion. It was exactly this that awoke Wilber (and Combs) from his slumber. The result came to be called the Wilber–Combs lattice.

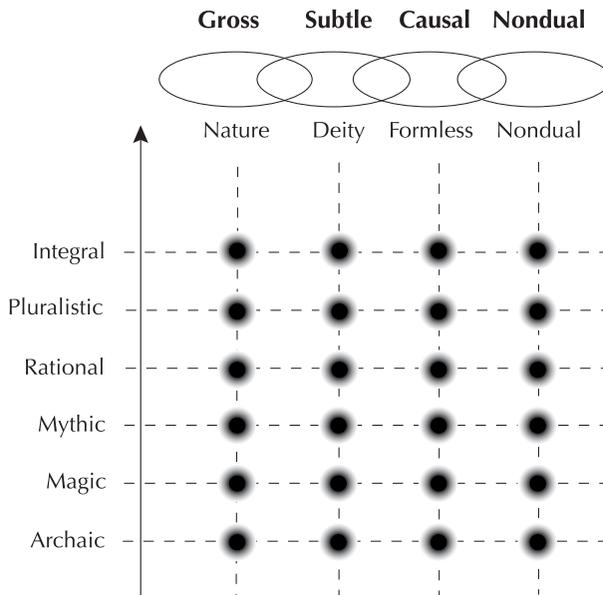


Figure 1. Wilber–Combs lattice. © Ken Wilber 2006.

The problem before the discovery of the W–C lattice was this. If Western stages of development were to be united with Eastern stages of contemplation, they would form a continuum or a spectrum, on the first stages of which we would find Piaget’s sensorimotor and preoperational stages and on the final stages something like *nirvana* or *nirvikalpa samadhi* or *unio mystica*. The problem then becomes, how can someone who has no access to, say, a postformal operational consciousness have a blissful union with the divine? How can a Tibetan monk meditating in a cave experience a sudden luminosity, merging with the light that is supposed to appear, according to the theory, only after three or four or five stages of psychological development? How can a child or someone living in challenging conditions that block the emergence of more complex cognitive capacities ever experience the alleged Divine, the True Reality? Is there a totalitarian hierarchy of realization that omits the unfortunate?

Apparently, no. There is, according to the W–C lattice and the theory that supports it, indeed a hierarchy of realization, but it is not totalitarian. In fact, it seems to be, unlike the stages of development, open to all. States appear to be free, as it were, but stages are earned. And this leads to some very interesting conclusions.

Anybody can experience any state at every stage. I do not have to be developed to formal operational cognition or moral stage six in order to have an altered state experience. But, after coming back from the experience I will interpret the experience according to the stage I am at. A brief look at the lattice will give us 24 possibilities of experiencing and interpreting a mystical or a spiritual experience. We can have a spiritual experience and interpret it in a number of ways according to our developmental frames of reference (Wilber 2006: 84–93). Someone at a conformist stage might give their religious experiences a much more fundamental, one-right-way interpretation than someone in a rational stage. While they both might have the same profound experience of uniting with nature or seeing a figure of light, the former could interpret it as a hierophany or a manifestation of their (or their people’s) personal saviour and bringer of salvation (Wilber 2006: 92–3), while the interpretation of the latter might produce something akin to nature mysticism, the kind that one could nowadays see for example in complexity theorist Stuart Kauffman’s book *Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason and Religion* (2008). The important thing to keep in mind is that there is a variety of religious experience and a variety of interpretations. Both most likely go far beyond those dreamt of in our philosophies.

Return to Kosmos

After having briefly touched on some of the basics of Ken Wilber's thinking—namely, stages of development as the spectrum of consciousness, and their relation to states of consciousness and the pre/trans-fallacy—we can start to draft the outline of an Integral theory.

The word integral is not coined by Ken Wilber. There have been pioneers of the integral movement: people such as G. W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Schelling, Sri Aurobindo, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo Ghose are some of the names that are dropped when discussing the birth of integral thinking (Cohen 2007: 100). Its roots lie deeper, though. If, in the words of another pioneer, philosopher A. N. Whitehead, all of western philosophy is just footnotes to Plato, then we must trace the beginnings back to the ancient thinkers. From Plato Wilber takes the concept of The Big Three: the Good, the True and the Beautiful, which form one of the cornerstones of his own philosophical model. But this is getting ahead of the story.

According to Paul Heelas, an increasing number of scholars are attempting to unite the valuable lessons of postmodern thought with the valuable lessons of the Enlightenment thought. Heelas calls this integrative approach The Middle Way (Heelas 2007: 270–1). It is not essentially an either/or-question between Enlightenment and postmodernity, but rather, says Heelas: '[H]aving emerged from two (main) sources, it now operates with its own dynamics... A zone of inquiry has developed,' explains Heelas, 'between the "wilder" shores of Enlightenment and postmodern thought—although ultimately informed by both—in which these modes of thought have come into creative and constitutive interplay' (Heelas 2007: 271). One of the people employing these dynamics and trying to work with their creative interplay is Ken Wilber.

Wilber's work is marked from the very beginning by a maxim: 'Everybody is right' (Wilber 2000b). Trying to figure out how every view can be right is a daunting task. It is a task that can only be achieved by not taking an extremist position but rather a middle way approach. That is something that Wilber has consistently tried to do.

The outline of an Integral theory, approach, or model is formed by (1) agreeing with everybody on their terms, and (2) creating a framework deep and wide enough to fit every perspective (Wilber 2001b: 1–32). Wilber sometimes says that when some particular scientist, be it a representative of a 'narrow science' like physics or a 'broad science' like hermeneutics, says something of their own field of research, we should pay close attention. When

they say something outside of their own fields of study, we should be wary. The simple guideline, then, becomes: beware of reductionism of any sort. One can find cases of reductionism not just in natural sciences but also, and to a large extent too, in cultural sciences, as was the case with extreme postmodernist approaches. Trying to reduce everything to the boundless cultural and societal contexts, denying all universal truths, they committed what Wilber calls a performative contradiction: there are no universal truths except the declaration just made (Wilber 1996: 25). A universal truth of no universal truths is reductionistic in its essence. This is just one of the examples that the Integral approach tries to balance out.

As is the case with postmodernism and every other field of study, there are many valuable and lasting truths in their findings. The central mission, so to say, of the integral theory is to find out what is true in each field and then unite them into a unified whole, a Kosmos instead of a universe. Wilber emphasises the word Kosmos, wishing to return it to our common usage. It was allegedly first used by Pythagorean philosophers, for whom it referred to the unified order of the totality of existence, with hierarchical levels of being (Wilber 1996: 16–17; Taylor 2007: 60). In this Kosmos, humans existed only in relation to the whole. This whole had a *telos*, to use the Aristotelian term, and the telos pointed to God (Taylor 2007: 60).

Charles Taylor describes this worldview in his book *A Secular Age* (2007: 60): ‘This kind of cosmos is a hierarchy; it has higher and lower levels of being. And it reaches its apex in eternity; it is indeed, held together by what exists on the level of eternity; the Ideas, or God, or both together – Ideas as the thought of the creator.’ This idea of a multilayered Kosmos with its levels of existence—the Great Chain of Being—was, as Arthur Lovejoy puts it, ‘the dominant official philosophy of the larger part of civilized humankind throughout most of its history’ (Lovejoy 1936: 26 in Walsh & Vaughan 1994). Only in recent centuries has it changed (Wilber 1995: 16), and according to Taylor, ‘[p]artly as a result of the scientific revolution, the cosmos idea faded, and we find ourselves in a universe’ (Taylor 2007: 60). This universe is what Wilber calls—after Edwin Abbott’s novel—Flatland, where ‘in order to be valid knowledge must be based on the reality perceived by the senses’ (Visser 2003: 195).

Basically Wilber’s Integral approach can be seen as a type of return to Kosmos. Away from mere Flatland, back to the many-hued and multidimensional universe that includes levels of being and the Big Three of Plato’s the True, the Good and the Beautiful. And now, after laying the foundations of the Integral model, we can start to look more closely into its main components.

The four quadrants

Ken Wilber's integral map is also known as the AQAL model. It is shorthand for all levels, all quadrants, all lines, all states and all types. It is essentially a value-free and empty framework that tries to create the deepest and widest space possible for accounting for the Kosmos (Wilber 2006: 30–2).

All quadrants represent the interior and the exterior of both individual and collective realities. The four quadrants are four different perspectives of any given moment, phenomena and thing. They are in a sense the four sides of everything we face. And they can, in their simplest form, be reduced to the aforementioned Big Three of Plato: 'the Good, the True and the Beautiful', or 'Morals, Science and Art', or 'Culture, Nature and Self', or 'We, It and I' (Wilber 2006: 18–23). But for now, let us deal with the quadrants as they appear in Figure 2.

In the subjective or upper left quadrant (UL) is the world of our individual, interior experiences: our thoughts, emotions, and memories, states of mind, perceptions, and immediate sensations. It is our 'I' space, accessible by asking: 'How do I feel or what do I think right now?'

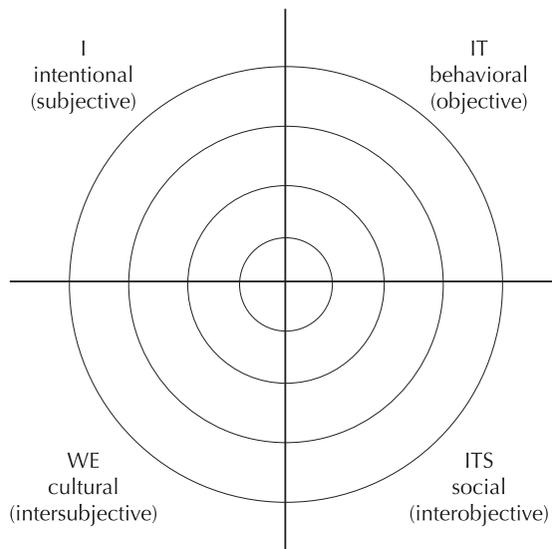


Figure 2. The four quadrants. © Ken Wilber 1995.

In the intersubjective or lower left (LL) quadrant is the world of our collective, interior experiences: our shared values, meanings, language, relationships, and cultural background. It is our 'we' space, accessible by asking: 'How do we feel / What do we think right now?'

In the objective or upper right quadrant (UR) is the world of individual, exterior things: our material body, including the brain and anything that we can see or touch or observe scientifically in time and space. It is, in other words, our 'it' space, accessible by asking: 'What is surrounding me as an individual?'

In the interobjective or lower right quadrant (LR) is the world of collective, exterior things: systems, networks, technology, government, and the natural environment, in other words, our 'its' space, accessible by asking: 'What is surrounding us as a collective?' (Wilber 2006: 20-3).

We usually stay in our quadrant-comfort zone, reducing one way or the other all phenomena into either interior(s) of the individual or the collective (psyche, spirit or culture), or alternatively into exterior(s) (biology, neurology, physics, social structures, etc.). Combinations are also possible, even strange ones. A self-professed 'anti-guru' U. G. Krishnamurti claimed that his enlightenment experience, which he himself called 'calamity', was in essence purely physical and biological (Krishnamurti 2007). Integral theory, however, holds that all four quadrants are equally valid. Every dimension or perspective is irreducible from one another, they correlate with one another, they cause and are caused by one another. With the four quadrants we are dealing with the tetra-emergence of Kosmos in all of its dimensions (Wilber 2006: 19-20).

Four different types of truth

The four quadrants are four fundamental perspectives that give us four different ways of knowing (Wilber 1995: 127-47). They orient us in acquiring knowledge with four different validity claims, all of which, according to the Integral view, are equally valid and equally true. It is not a case of value relativism, but rather a case of four-folded reality, of which there must be at least four different types of truth claims. Let us look at the ways of knowing in each quadrant.

When we are studying interior individual experiences, we use the art and science of interpretation, i.e. hermeneutics. It reveals subjective realities, for the validity of which we need to be able to trust the mapmaker. It is not about having a trustworthy map of empirical reality; it is about the truthfulness of

the mapmaker. So the validity claim in the upper left quadrant is truthfulness: are you sure you are giving a good interpretation of your own, internal, subjective world (Wilber 1996: 98–102)?

When we study behaviour, or the exteriors of an individual, we use observation as a method. We try to reveal objective reality, the empirical world. The validity claim here is propositional truth. For that we need to have as good a map as possible, a map that represents or reflects nature, the exterior world as accurately as possible. We do not engage in a dialogue but in a monologue. We look, observe, measure instead of asking and interpreting (Wilber 1996: 97–8).

In studying cultures, or the lower left quadrant, we engage in some form of cultural understanding. We try to reveal something of the interior of a collective, their intersubjective reality. Here the validity claim is justness or cultural fit. We ask what is good or what is right. How do the interiors of a collective mesh together? What are some of the shared assumptions about reality? What is considered valuable? Here we enter the arena of hermeneutics or interpretation again, but this time concerning groups of people or cultures (Wilber 1996: 102–4).

When we engage in the study of the lower right, or the exteriors of a collective, we study systems or groupings from the outside. We study their functionality, trying to reveal the interobjective reality behind the appearance. The validity claim here is functional fit. How do these systems mesh? What functions or parts do they play in this whole? Systems theory is an application of the lower right quadrant (Wilber 1996: 104–8).

Wilber calls the interior methodologies Left-Hand Paths and the exterior methodologies Right-Hand Paths (Wilber 1996: 79). He gives other examples of the validity claims for both paths. In the upper left we have sincerity, integrity and trustworthiness, all crucial parts in accessing our interior depth. In the lower left there are claims like mutual understanding and rightness, in the upper right concepts such as correspondence (like the correspondence theory of truth) or representation, and in the lower right we have systems theory webs, structural-functionalism and social systems mesh. As for scholars in each quadrant, Wilber names people like Freud, Jung, Piaget, Plotinus and Aurobindo (UL); Kuhn, Dilthey, Gadamer and Weber (LL); Skinner, Watson and Locke (UR); Parsons, Comte, Marx and Lenski (LR) (Wilber 1996: 77–97).

According to Integral theory, for a balanced and comprehensive view, the reality and the corresponding truth claim of each quadrant must be taken into account in their own terms, and at the same time be seen as one unified whole

(Wilber 1996: 108). The totality of existence demands that each quadrant be given a voice. The harmony Wilber is seeking with his everybody-is-right philosophy comes from balancing the voices so that quadrant absolutism (as he calls any sort of reductionism) is actively monitored and balanced by a more comprehensive view of and a corresponding methodology for a multi-dimensional reality, a tetra-emergent Kosmos, a four-cornered universe.

Holons and holarchies

Wilber recalls how he came up with the concept of the four quadrants in his book *A Brief History of Everything*:

[A]t one point I simply started making lists of all these holarchical maps – conventional and new age, Eastern and Western, premodern and modern and postmodern – everything from systems theory to the Great Chain of Being, from the Buddhist vijñanas to Piaget, Marx, Kohlberg, the Vedantic koshas, Loewinger, Maslow, Lenski, Kabbalah, and so on. . . the more I looked at these various holarchies, the more it dawned on me that there were actually *four very different types* of holarchies, four very different types of holistic sequences. . . once I put all of these holarchies into these four groups. . . it was very obvious that each holarchy in each group was indeed dealing with the same territory, but overall we had four different territories, so to speak. (Wilber 1996: 66–7.)

Wilber uses the term ‘holarchy’ when referring to hierarchies composed of holons. Holon is a term coined by Arthur Koestler. It means a whole that is a part of another whole; for example an atom is a whole that is a part of a molecule, which is a whole that is a part of a cell, and so on (Koestler 1980: 447; Wilber 1996: 17–19). Wilber’s ontology is based on these holarchies composed of holons. There is another rule, or a tenet of which Wilber gives around twenty, seemingly law-like in the evolution of the Kosmos, that govern these holarchies, namely ‘more depth, less span’ (Wilber 1995: 64–8). It means that the more holons there are at a given level (the span of the holons), the less there is depth at that level. An example is stage six, universal ethical principles-orientation of Kohlberg’s moral development. There are not many individuals at that stage (not much span), but it has huge depth regarding the care and concern for other beings’ welfare. A reverse example is the case of rocks and apes: there are most definitely more rocks than apes in the known

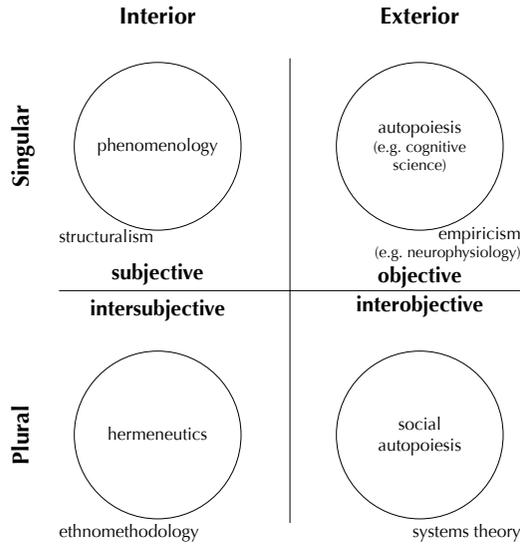


Figure 3. Integral methodological pluralism.@ Ken Wilber 2006.

universe; rocks have more span but less depth than apes. This leads Wilber into formulating the ethical aspect of his system, Basic Moral Intuition (BMI). Its basic premise is to promote and preserve the greatest depth for the biggest span. To oversimplify, it is better to kick rocks than to kick apes, and better to eat carrots than to eat cows (Wilber 1996: 300–7).

So there are holarchies composed of holons going from big span with small depth to less span, more depth. This sequence happens everywhere in the ‘four dimensions of the Kosmos’. The four quadrants represent a blueprint of these evolving holarchies. The interior and exterior of the individual and the collective: mind, nature, culture and societies with their respective whole-spectrum evolution from the Big Bang to Integral (or Super-integral) Consciousness (Wilber 1995: 127; Wilber 2006: 89–91).

Integral methodological pluralism

The four quadrants form, then, the blueprint of the AQAL model. But if the model is to become truly alive and usable it must have a methodology. As everyone knows, the word ‘method’ becomes from the Greek root words

meta and *hodos*, meaning a following after (White & Schwoch 2006: 54), following a way or a path. So we have to have paths that our quest for knowledge follows, trails of truth with distinct truth claims that allow us to enter into their worlds and bring forth data from them. Those worlds, as outlined in the previous chapter, have not one but two paths which we can take.

In each quadrant there is both an inside view and an outside view (Wilber 2006: 35–6). One can find parallels between this and Kenneth Pike's emic and etic distinction and perhaps also with Kim Knott's inside/outside thematic (Knott 2007: 243–58). These views, two in each quadrant, correspond to what Wilber calls the eight primordial perspectives. These perspectives employ eight different methodologies. This approach, which can be seen as one application of the AQAL model, is called Integral Methodological Pluralism (Wilber 2006: 33–8).

So there is an inside and an outside view of the interior of an individual (UL), giving us phenomenology and structuralism, respectively, as methodologies. The same goes for every quadrant: cultural hermeneutics and ethnomethodology (LL), cognitive science and neurophysiology (UR) and social autopoiesis and systems theory (LR).

All lines, all states, all types

Above, we already covered some aspects of the second part of the AQAL map. All levels refer to the levels of development studied in western psychology and in the contemplative traditions around the world. There are pre-egoic or prerational levels or stages of development, egoic or rational levels of development and post-egoic or transrational levels of development. These levels are like basic structures that evolve over time. Some, like psychologist Clare W. Graves, say they evolve as hierarchically more complex answers to existential problems in the interaction between biology, psychology and societal conditions (Beck & Cowan 1996: 15–33). Urie Bronfenbrenner has a somewhat similar perspective with his Ecological Systems Theory approach to human development (Bronfenbrenner 1979: 16–42). The basic point is that human beings evolve, or have a possibility of evolving, through several stages in the complex ecological system (Bronfenbrenner), the emergent cyclical levels of existence (Graves) or in the four quadrants (Wilber). In any case, levels of development extending from prerational, rational and transrational are a crucial part of the Integral map (Wilber 2007: 30–7, 112–24).

Development is always the development of something. Recent studies on intelligence show that cognitive capacities are but one form of development. Howard Gardner, for example in his studies with multiple intelligences, has shown how many different facets there are to human capabilities. Gardner proposed several different lines of intelligence, such as cognitive, emotional, musical, kinesthetic, and so on (Wilber 2007: 38).

There are also lines of development in needs (Maslow), self-identity (Loevinger), faith or spirituality (Fowler) and values (Graves) (Wilber 2007: 76–7). Lines appear in every quadrant, but Wilber's work has mainly focused on those appearing in the Upper Left quadrant, the individual consciousness.

All states refer to the states of consciousness, as distinguished from the stages or structures of consciousness. When they differ from our everyday, waking-state experience, they are sometimes called peak experiences, altered states, religious experiences or meditative states (Wilber 2007: 139). These states can, according to Wilber, be grouped into four broad categories: gross, subtle, causal/formless and nondual, or following the great wisdom traditions, into waking, dreaming and deep sleep (Wilber 2007: 28, 139). These states can be accessed suddenly but often they appear after some form of contemplative practice. In the words of Zen master Richard Baker Roshi: 'Enlightenment is an accident. Meditation makes you accident prone.'

Wilber has a taxonomy for these states that correlates each altered state with a type of mysticism. It follows the logic of their progression from the gross to the nondual. When a person has an altered state experience in the gross waking state, it produces what Wilber calls nature mysticism. When altered states happen in the subtle dreaming state, it produces forms of deity mysticism. Altered states in the causal deep sleep or formless state produce formless mysticism. Also there are states of flow, of being one with everything that arises in each state (gross, subtle and formless). Wilber calls this nondual mysticism, also known as *turiya* in Hindu philosophy (Wilber 2007: 141). And, as we remember, these states are interpreted according to the developmental stage one is at.

Types refer to the 'items that can be present at virtually any stage or state' (Wilber 2007: 45). These items are ones grouped by different typological systems such as Myers–Briggs Type Indicator assessment, the enneagram of personality or the Big Five personality traits. The common point here is that the viewpoint from any given stage, state, quadrant or line differs according to type. It is important not to erase our self from the equation. The mapmaker or the interpreter is a central part of our being-in-the-world. The types in the AQAL model represent just that part, and its many facets. Wilber does

not suggest any one typological system *per se*, but uses examples like Carol Gilligan and her studies on the 'different voice' of men and women in moral development as a representative of different types that seem to appear in people (Wilber 2007: 45-51).

Postmodern spirituality and the Integral vision

We have outlined the basics of an AQAL map or an Integral theory as proposed by the American philosopher Ken Wilber. The theory is composed of five key elements: quadrants, levels, lines, states and types. Some key terms in understanding the model, or cartographic symbols that help us approach the map and the post-metaphysical ontological territory (Wilber 2006: 42) it represents, are the pre/trans-fallacy, the relationship between states and stages and the ontological concepts of holarchy and holons. Epistemologically the map leads us from the four validity claims through the eight primordial perspectives to Integral Methodological Pluralism.

The Integral vision is wide indeed. Its wider implications for different fields of study began in 2006 with the publication of *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* and has continued in 2008 with the launch of the Integral Research Center and in 2009 with being the operating system with which State of the World Forum will launch its ten year plan to address climate change. But what does the Integral approach offer to the study of postmodern religion? What could some of its contributions be to orthodox academia?

Taking all four quadrants into account gives a wide view of the phenomenon of postmodern spirituality. It is not a case of any single quadrant, level, line, state or type producing or operating with these currents. Rather, it is an all-quadrant, all-level unfolding with many lines, states and types that form and affect and shape the manifestations of postmodern spirituality. By giving each perspective a space to exist in, it makes as much truth and knowledge available as possible. It tries to steer us clear of quadrant absolutism, the reduction of Kosmos to any one of its corners or holarchical levels, by not favouring any one approach but by letting each pursue its own truth without colonizing others (Wilber 2006: 49, 224). Postmodern spirituality can thus be approached from multiple levels and multiple perspectives. Explanation and understanding; neurobiology and hermeneutics; cognitive science and phenomenology; the Left-Hand and the Right-Hand paths, then, are not mutually exclusive but mutually supportive paths of knowledge.

References

Literature

Beck, Don Edward & Christopher C. Cowan

1996 *Spiral Dynamics. Mastering Values, Leadership, and Change*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie

1979 *The Ecology of Human Development. Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Cohen, Andrew (ed.)

2007 The REAL Evolution Debate. *What is Enlightenment?* 35: 86–100.

Gilligan, Carol

1993 *In a Different Voice. Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Heelas, Paul

2007 Postmodernism. In: John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*; pp. 259–74. London: Routledge.

Kauffmann, Stuart

2008 *Reinventing the Sacred: A New View of Science, Reason, and Religion*. New York: Basic Books.

Knott, Kim

2007 Insider/Outsider Perspectives. In: John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*; pp. 243–58. London: Routledge.

Koestler, Arthur

1980 *Bricks to Babel. Selected Writings with Comments by the Author*. London: Hutchinson & Co.

Kohlberg, Lawrence

1984 *Essays on Moral Development. Volume II: The Psychology of Moral Development. The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages*. New York: Harper & Row.

Slater, Alan & Darwin Muir (eds)

1999 *The Blackwell Reader in Developmental Psychology*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Taylor, Charles

2007 *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Visser, Frank

2003 *Ken Wilber. Thought as Passion*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

White, Mimi & James Schwoch (eds)

2006 *Questions of Method in Cultural Studies*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Wilber, Ken

1993 *Spectrum of Consciousness*. Wheaton: Quest Books.

1995 *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality. The Spirit of Evolution*. Boston: Shambhala.

1996 *A Brief History of Everything*. Boston: Shambhala.

- 2000a *Integral Psychology. Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy*. Boston: Shambhala.
- 2001a *Eye to Eye. The Quest for the New Paradigm*. Boston: Shambhala.
- 2001b *The Eye of Spirit. An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad*. Boston: Shambhala.
- 2006 *Integral Spirituality. A Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Postmodern World*. Boston: Shambhala.
- 2007 *The Integral Vision. A Very Short Introduction to the Revolutionary Integral Approach to Life, God, the Universe, and Everything*. Boston: Shambhala.

Internet sources

Krishnamurti, U. G.

- 2007 My Swan Song. http://www.well.com/user/jct/SWAN_SONG.htm (accessed on 31 October 2008).

Walsh, Roger & Frances Vaughan

- 1994 The Worldview of Ken Wilber. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 34 (6). <http://jhp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/34/2/6> (accessed on 7 October 2008).

Wilber, Ken

- 2000b Introduction to Volume II of the Kosmos Trilogy. http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/books/cowokev8_intro.cfm/ (accessed on 31 October 2008).
- 2000c On Critics, Integral Institute, My Recent Writing, and Other Matters of Little Consequence: A Shambhala Interview with Ken Wilber. Part I. The Demise of Transpersonal Psychology. <http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/interviews/interview1220.cfm/> (accessed on 31 October 2008).

Websites

- Integral Research Center. <http://www.integralresearchcenter.org>.
- Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*. <http://aqaljournal.integralinstitute.org/Public/Default.aspx>.
- State of the World Forum. <http://www.worldforum.org>.