

A General Introduction to Integral Theory and Comprehensive Mapmaking

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I don't believe that any human mind is capable of 100 percent error. So instead of asking which approach is right and which is wrong, we assume each approach is true but partial, and then try to figure out how to fit these partial truths together, how to integrate them—not how to pick one and get rid of the others.

-Ken Wilber (from the foreword to The Eye of Spirit)

Introduction

While attempting to keep to the larger vision of integral studies as a whole I shall be proposing a rudimentary outline of an underlying assertion primarily based upon the works of Ken Wilber, Jean Gebser, Don Beck and Christopher Cowan (based on the work of Clare Graves), and Mark B. Woodhouse. Robert Kegan, Howard Gardner, James Mark Baldwin, Susan Cook-Greuter, and Carol Gilligan are influences working in the background.

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind when trying to understand integral studies as a field is that a fundamental, underlying message in Wilber's, Graves', Beck's, Gebser's, and Woodhouse's work is that we are currently in a pivotal transition from one age to another.

The idea, and this is a rather popular idea, is that we are in the throes of a rather deep and penetrating shift in collective consciousness complete with its own once-in-a-lifetime phenomena. In my humble opinion, the works exemplified in this essay are among the most sophisticated, timely, and comprehensive manifestations of this general perception of global transformation.

The main function of this essay is to serve as a preliminary introduction to the new field of integral studies by looking into four particular theorists. Three of these, Wilber, Beck, and Gebser, are highly influential and central to the field. This has much to do with Wilber's highly influential work. Woodhouse, on the other hand, exemplifies an "outsider" perspective yet remains, I believe just as inclusive.

This is an argument for the validity of the integral approach and a call to awareness about the transition that it represents. By proposing a context for the field within the boundaries of the common underlying message of a profound shift in human consciousness, we can come to a greater comprehension of what can be considered to be among the most refined manifestations of human potential to date.

Constructs with greater explanatory power and practical application tend to prevail. (Spiral Dynamics, 29)

In the following pages I have attempted to bring together a few of the more comprehensive maps central to the endeavor of integral theory. There are powerful forces at work in the world that shape and mould our experience as human beings. It has been postulated that ever since humankind started to record this experience there have been attempts at grand, universal visions designed to explain and to help in comprehending and dealing with the mysterious dilemma of existence.

To use Gebser's terminology, we are currently moving through a *mutation* (acausal leap) into the next step in our collective development. Gebser and as we shall see, the other theorists presented here, are not alone in this view. There exist plenty of theorists and outspoken individuals and groups who have proposed very similar if not exact pictures. On that note, it should be kept in mind that the ideas represented here are more than just concepts. They are more like invitations into a flow of awareness just beginning to emerge in the general population.

However, in order to gain a sufficient understanding of the work, it might help to define the term "integral" first. Briefly stated, integral means a bringing together and strategically linking of apparently contradictory or seemingly divergent worldviews, concepts, and practices in the attempt to create a realistic, workable, fluid, and dynamic "meta-vision."¹ This is a "grand unifying theory" as opposed to a "grand unified theory," the latter of which suggests a summation of all knowledge, an absolute, an end, which is absurd and unrealistic.

Based upon this definition, integral studies is exemplary of a new level of development, an *aperspectival*² way of being. It is extremely important to understand that these theorists (with the exception of Woodhouse and to a certain degree, Beck) have attempted to write or propose their vision from a point of view that essentially transcends yet includes the rational mind. That is, the average mode of thinking is in a linear, causal manner where all phenomena have a cause and an effect, a beginning and an end. This mode of thought is what we normally fall back on and cultivate when in the process of reading or writing. For example, the traditional book format is a linear

¹ "I have chosen the word *integral* to represent this overall approach because integral means integrative, inclusive, comprehensive, balanced." (Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit*, xx).

² "The mental-rational consciousness, which operates on the basis of a spatialization of reality, is intrinsically perspectival. It has the ego as the point of origin of its conceptualization of the world. The arational-integral consciousness, however, is ego-free (not merely egoless) and hence also *aperspectival*, that is to say, not transfixed in partial viewpoints." (*Structures of Consciousness*, p. 212)

model with a beginning and an end. The meaning behind the words on each page builds upon each proceeding page until a whole context of understanding is (ideally), created. In Wilber's terms, the book is a holon: wholes, within wholes, within wholes. Each context, or book, is different to some extent in terms of the length, size, form, color, weight, language, style, meaning, etc., yet each book, by the simple fact that it is a book, is to some extent, both a reflection of the dominant mode of thought or way of being of the collective consciousness or an era and the consciousness an individual author. In the era that we are currently moving out of, according to Gebser, the rational mind has been dominant and all-pervasive. In the era that we are currently moving into, *integral/aperspectival* will be the dominant mode.³ It is from this mode of thinking that much of these ideas are founded upon.

The integral vision rides the crest of the leading developments in our postmodern world. Every era has its most sophisticated, highly developed, and ultimately influential expressions. The European Renaissance and the legacy of Ancient Greece are but two examples. However, unlike these, the integral vision is difficult to place within the context of history and time. The reason for this apparent ambiguity is simple. It is merely a matter of perspective. In integral studies there are multiple perspectives. Indeed, every perspective is attempted to be taken into account on some level, as being if anything, a partial truth. This is part of the point.⁴ In other words, one of the main reasons why there is such a thing as Integral Studies, Integral Theory, Integral Psychology, Integral Business, Integral Consciousness Studies, and Integral Art can be understood in terms of multidimensional, multi-level thinking and, furthermore, *being*. As already mentioned, this is what Gebser calls *integral-aperspectival*, what Wilber calls *vision-logic* and what Beck calls *Second-Tier*:

This multidimensional grid—not simply “all-level, all quadrant”—opens the study of human beings in a profound fashion. That, of course, is part of integral studies . . . Thus, modern-day integral studies can do something at which the

³ Integral-aperspectival is similar to Wilber's vision-logic. It is a special way of seeing, a sort of cognition: “As rationality continues its quest for a truly universal or global or planetary outlook, noncoercive in nature, it eventually gives way to a type of cognition I call vision-logic or network-logic. Where rationality gives all possible perspectives, vision-logic adds them up into a totality, which is simply the new and higher interior holon. Aurobindo gave the classic description of vision-logic, which can freely express itself in single ideas, but its most characteristic movement is a mass ideation, a system or totality of truth-seeing at a single view; the relations of idea with ideas, or truth with truth, self-seen in the integral whole.” (*Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 190)

⁴ “(C)lear cut boundaries are rare.” (Woodhouse, *Paradigm Wars*, p. 8) and “There is no single correct interpretation because no holon has only one context. There are as many legitimate meanings as there are legitimate contexts, which does not lead to nihilism but cornucopia.” (Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit*, p. 122)

great traditions failed: trace the spectrum of consciousness not just in its intentional but also in its behavioral, social, and cultural manifestations, thus highlighting the importance of a multidimensional approach for a truly comprehensive overview of human consciousness and behavior.⁵

It can be said that the historical context of the integral vision is cradled within the perennial philosophy in a general sense and the “Great Chain of Being” in a specific sense.⁶ The idea behind the perennial philosophy is that it is as old as recorded history (if not older) and runs through and underneath every great spiritual or religious tradition in the world. It is “perennial” because it seems to be ever-present, that is, undying. It manifests in nearly every culture and in every age. The perennial philosophy is best exemplified by the recognition of the unifying, timeless, spaceless, and formless quality behind, above, within, below, and encompassing all of existence. “In other words, the perennial philosophy is not, at its core, a set of doctrines, beliefs, teaching, or ideas, for all of those are of the world of form, of space and time and ceaseless change, whereas very Truth is radically formless, spaceless, and timeless, encompassing *all* space and time, and thus it could never be enunciated in formal or doctrinal fashion.”⁷

The integral vision, although firmly rooted in the *philosophia perennis*, recognizes that the world’s problems and that the average person’s needs are not answered through the perennial philosophy alone, that is, the perennial philosophy can only speak about one aspect of life. It cannot, for example, give data about population percentages or help us understand certain physical phenomena such as the wave function or magnetic fields. It cannot reveal to us the deep psychological issues predominantly centered on the personal level of the individual. Wilber goes to great lengths in revealing the limitations of the great mystical traditions despite their ability to point the way to transpersonal awareness.⁸

If approached in the manner that will be employed here, it can be seen that existence, and more specifically, human existence, follows a continuum

⁵ *The Eye of Spirit*, pp. 31-32.

⁶ The Great Chain of Being is also called the “Great Nest of Being” and can be understood as the “view that reality is composed of various *levels of existence*—levels of being and knowing—ranging from matter to conception of wholes within wholes within wholes indefinitely, reaching from dirt to Divinity . . . The Great Nest of Being is the backbone of the perennial philosophy, and it would therefore be a crucial ingredient of any truly integral psychology.” (Wilber, *Integral Psychology*, pp. 5-6) It might also be helpful to keep in mind that the perennial philosophy is a reoccurring theme in the field and especially in its predecessor, Transpersonal Psychology.

⁷ *EOS*, p. 53.

⁸ “(T)he great wisdom traditions *even at their best* still neglected several crucial items, items that the early investigators of the spectrum of consciousness could not, or at any rate did not, know.” (*EOS*, p. 30)

of development, a *spiral*, if you will. The notion of the spiral is an elegant model in the context of this comprehension. It can be seen as both linear and as cyclical. Our representative of the spiral model of development in the following pages is Don Beck and Chris Cowan in what they have dubbed *Spiral Dynamics*. By looking into the Spiral Dynamics model we can begin to see just how such seemingly different phenomena such as the perennial wisdom traditions and complex modern issues such as environmental degradation and the global infrastructure relate to each other. We can begin to make important connections between all expressions of human existence. By doing so we are creating a space for the further expansion of consciousness both on the collective level and on the individual level. Spiral Dynamics has much to contribute to integral studies, as we shall see.⁹

Integral studies is highly informed by theories of development: development of individuals, development of cultures, development of nations, ecosystems, biospheres, noospheres, planets, cosmos, and most importantly, consciousness. The desire to create a new model and approach to every field of human inquiry and action imaginable is also pivotal here. It is a reaction, but not reactionary, to the pathologies of modernism and postmodernism. In it's highest ideals it is comprehensive, all-level, atemporal,¹⁰ fluid, open-ended, and constantly shifting to accommodate the seemingly never-ending transcending and including that is at the heart of all development, i.e., this movement is deeply holonic. It makes connections but not at the cost of distinctions. It overlooks nothing while remaining realistic and sensitive to time, place, state, and perspective. It is scientific yet spiritual, rational yet intuitive, critical yet open. In fact, in my opinion, one of the more fascinating aspects of this approach is the discussion of the need for the individual seeking *veritition* in this realm to develop and call upon a "higher" order of thinking (as in Wilber's vision-logic). As already mentioned, Jean Gebser uses the term(s) "integral/aperspectival" to refer to a similar state of high comprehension. Don Beck follows suit when he describes the manifestation of Second Tier thinking starting with the Yellow vMEME and the Turquoise vMEME.¹¹ All of these examples I will cover in more detail later, evaluating and summarizing each individuals' work in the context of the birthing of a new structure of consciousness.

This "higher order" is merely a step in a process that extends much further. For example, Wilber has done much to describe levels of development that range beyond the rational and the vision-logic/centauric

⁹ In fact, Spiral Dynamics (now known as Spiral Dynamics *Integral*) has essentially become a core model of the integral movement.

¹⁰ "The origin and the arational-integral consciousness (which renders the origin transparent to the wakeful consciousness) can be said to be atemporal, or achronic, because they are not defined by experience or conceptualized time, just as they transcend experienced or conceptualized space." (*Structures of Consciousness*, p. 213) In other words, "time transcending."

¹¹ See the description of the Beck's vMEMEs later in the paper.

level. These are the transrational, transmental, and transpersonal realms. In the latter case, transpersonal psychologists are primarily concerned with exploring this fascinating realm. They are interested in supramental phenomena of consciousness heretofore never adequately looked at or revisited from a more verifiable, concrete perspective. Not until the twentieth century has there been such a development or recognition of the need for more verifiably valid data. Indeed, this ability to offer questions of verifiability, injunctions, and paradigms is one of the enduring gifts of both modernism and postmodernism (a topic of great interest to all the theorists discussed here). In this regard Wilber states that:

Since Kant, we have been forced to acknowledge, not that metaphysics is meaningless, but that metaphysics without direct experience is meaningless. And direct transpersonal experience relies on genuine transpersonal practices, paradigms, injunctions, and exemplars, which disclose the domains of post-postconventional experience that alone can ground a verifiable spiritual knowledge, thus fulfilling the Idealist promise precisely by transcending its limited agenda.¹²

Fundamental to the vision is the idea of integrating and balancing not only seemingly disparate worldviews or paradigms, but integrating and balancing seemingly disparate spiritual practices, psychological methodologies, medical practices, scientific methods, political agendas, art, business practices, and other varied injunctions too numerous to mention. No less important is the need to integrate and balance our individual understanding of such things from the different levels and states of our being, to integrate our understanding from the level of whole groups of individuals to whole cultures, and ultimately to the whole planet. Hopefully, as information and experience permits, this integrating will move into the outer as well as the inner reaches of time and space, physical and non-physical, into worlds as yet unseen by humankind. Indeed, nothing shall be overlooked. Not that all shall be neatly compartmentalized, but rather that all shall be taken into account when trying to construct dynamic and comprehensive maps of the Kosmos.¹³

Now, in the process of creating this more complete picture of the manifest and unmanifest realms through the use of hierarchies (holarchies) it

¹² *The Eye of Spirit*, p. 243.

¹³ That's Kosmos with a "K." This term is specific to Wilber and seems to be borrowed directly from Plato. Wilber uses it to denote a more complete version of the universe: "The Kosmos contains the cosmos (or the physiosphere), the bios (or biosphere), nous (the noosphere), and theos (the theosphere or divine domain)—none of them being foundational (even spirit shades into Emptiness)." (*Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 45)

should be kept in mind that there is a sharp distinction between *pathological* hierarchies and *natural* hierarchies:

Each is a whole/part, a holon, existing in a *natural hierarchy*, or an order of increasing wholeness and holism . . . But that which transcends can repress. And thus normal and natural hierarchies can degenerate into pathological hierarchies, into dominator hierarchies. In these cases, an arrogant holon doesn't want to be both a whole and a part; it wants to be a whole, period . . . Power replaces communion; domination replaces communication; oppression replaces reciprocity.¹⁴

It should also be mentioned that, by and large, the ability to construct an integral vision of the world has never, in known history, been attainable to a large percentage of the world population. Never before has information and the complete variety of spiritual practices been as accessible as it is today. That is the upshot of postmodernism and the information age. Multimedia, the internet, books, and the general availability of diverse ways of knowing, whether embraced or not, make it possible to become acquainted with these dynamic systems and to be open to integration and synthesis on a multitude of levels. It is my intention to make all of this more apparent in the following pages. In the first section I will introduce some of the more salient aspects of the four approaches represented here. Ken Wilber with his Integral, AQAL approach, Jean Gebser and his five structures of consciousness, Beck and Cowan with Spiral Dynamics, and Mark B. Woodhouse and his “new paradigms.” In the second section I will briefly cover the theory, practice, and visions for the future of comprehensive mapmaking. I believe that the ideas covered here will increasingly be of more significance and importance as current events continue their onward march.

I. The Theorists

Ken Wilber

In many important ways, Wilber has been the most pivotal writer to popularize the issues presented here. He is credited with synthesizing unrelated and often contradictory disciplines. Whether you agree with every single detail or not there is simply no way to discredit what he has done to introduce the world to the endeavor of comprehensive mapmaking. If one is searching for an ever-increasingly holistic picture of the phenomenon of consciousness in the grand universal context, he is without a doubt, an excellent place to start. The simple fact that he draws from such diverse

¹⁴*EOS*, p. 67.

elements as evolutionary theory, cultural studies, spirituality and systems theory among many other fields, helps to support this statement. All of his books are excellent overviews of what a larger vision of the universe *can* look like. Yet, only a few of these books cover his latest and most refined work.¹⁵ The *Eye of Spirit*, *Integral Psychology*, and *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, seem to exemplify his most refined work.¹⁶ Not only do these texts represent his latest model, they are also mature examples of the latest in what can be rightly called a “world philosophy.”¹⁷

Since the publication of his first book *The Spectrum of Consciousness*¹⁸ he has almost single-handedly revived the popular and professional interest in areas such as Consciousness Studies, Transpersonal Psychology, and Spirituality. According to his publisher, Shambhala Publications, he is the most widely translated living academic writer in the world. No small feat for someone who lives outside of the academic mainstream.

Wilber’s work is directly influenced by Alfred North Whitehead, Emerson, Plotinus, Nagarjuna, and Sri Aurobindo. Not to mention Jurgen Habermas, Hegel, Piaget, James Mark Baldwin, Jean Gebser, Schelling, and several representative figures from the great nondual mystical traditions.¹⁹ Of course, this list is still incomplete, however, it gives a fair idea of where his center of gravity has been.

Wilber’s methodology, to put it simply, is founded upon what he calls “orienting generalizations.” Here the general idea is to arrange as much information as possible from as many fields and traditions as possible and for argument’s sake assume that all the views proposed are true but partial. From here it is then possible to try to devise a system of understanding whereby as many of these truths are intentionally incorporated into this meta-system, this integral understanding:

He is not worried, nor should his reader be, about whether *other* fields would accept the conclusion of any given field; in short, don’t worry, for

¹⁵ Wilber describes his work as having four phases. Phase I is the Romantic Wilber, II is the Aurobindo/Wilber model, phase III is when he began a more fleshed-out account of the contributions of Western culture, and IV is where he combines all these phases and adds a more mature context set firmly within the four quadrants and their historical unfolding. (*The Eye of Spirit*, p. 309) Phase four is what I am referring to in this essay.

¹⁶ I mention only the more technical books he has written. He is also popular for a handful of more reflective and poetic writings.

¹⁷ “Put differently, I sought a world philosophy. I sought an *integral* philosophy, one that would believably weave together the many pluralistic contexts of science, morals, aesthetics, Eastern as well as Western philosophy, and the world’s great wisdom traditions. Not on the level of details—that is finitely impossible; but on the level of orienting generalizations: a way to suggest that the world really is one, undivided, whole, and related to itself in every way: a holistic philosophy for a holistic Kosmos: a world philosophy, an integral philosophy.” (*SES*, xii)

¹⁸ He wrote this at the age of twenty-three after dropping out of graduate school studying for a degree in molecular biology.

¹⁹ Most notably Vedanta, Zen, and Tibetan Buddhism.

example, if empiricist conclusions do not match religious conclusions. Instead, simply assemble all the orienting conclusions as if each field had incredibly important truths to tell us. This is exactly Wilber's first step in his integrative method—a type of phenomenology of all human knowledge conducted at the level of orienting generalizations. In other words, assemble all of the truths that each field believes it has to offer humanity. For the moment, simply assume they are indeed true . . . For the second step in Wilber's method is to take all of the truths or orienting generalizations assembled in the first step and then pose this question: What coherent system would in fact *incorporate the greatest number of these truths?*²⁰

From this point it is possible to “connect-the-dots” and establish meaningful communication between systems that would otherwise seem at odds with each other. To use his language this is called AQAL, short for *all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states* . . .

The next cornerstone backing up his whole theory is what he has termed the “four quadrants.” Here we have an elegant visual representation of the pathologies and the contributions of the premodern, modern, and postmodern worldviews with the added feature of it being a post-postmodern vision itself. In the upper left-hand (UL) quadrant we have the *interior-individual*. This quadrant represents everything that is related to the individual and the interior aspects of the individual. Fields such as psychology, psychiatry, individualized spirituality, mathematics, phenomenology, and anything requiring interpretation on the level of single holons is what we are talking about here. This quadrant also represents the “I” aspect of nature. Next we have the lower left (LL) where everything is still interior except that now we are talking about *collective* interiors. This is the cultural worldspace where interpretation still reigns supreme but only on the level of multiple holons. Here we have shared, cultural values and worldspaces. Pursuits and anything related to community and culture dominate here. This is also known as the “We” aspect. Moving on, we come to the right-hand paths. The right-hand paths are monological, empirical/positivistic, and oriented around material or physical sciences. Here, in the upper-right (UR) is the *individual-exterior*. This represents all of the sciences dedicated to the pursuit of quantifiable, individual holons. Physics, neurobiology, empiricism, behaviorism, etc. are seen here. In the lower-right quadrant (LR) is the *collective-exterior*. Systems theory, Marxism, and sociology are exemplified here and instead of being *it* singular to denote an individual exterior approach, the LR is comprised of *its*, plural. Both right-hand paths are also referred to as the “IT” of nature. Wilber calls the I, the WE, and the IT the “Big Three.”²¹

²⁰ *The Eye of Spirit*, p. xiii.

²¹ “So we have four major perspectives (the inside and the outside of the singular and the plural): I, it, we, its.

The four quadrants can be put in other ways as well. The examples given above show the four quadrants applied to human pursuits and understandings. For now, a more detailed description of this application can be skipped since that would mean more than just an introduction to integral theory. I wish only to cover the basics. Other important concepts of his include the *Pre/Trans fallacy*, a recognition that the difference between prerational and transrational states of awareness are often confused with each other due to the fact that they are, by definition, nonrational.²² Wilber has gone to great lengths to point out how this occurs, who is, in his opinion, committing the fallacy, and how to avoid it.

Perhaps most importantly, his theories are, in all actuality, a call to transformative practice. Repeatedly, he reminds the reader that all true understanding is grounded in such practice and that the intellect alone will not carry one to the higher realizations discussed in his work.

Ken Wilber is by no means the first or the last word on proposals for new ways of comprehending our times. There have been many before him and there will be many after. When it comes to predecessors and an individual who Wilber credits much of his work to, Jean Gebser takes center stage.²³

Jean Gebser: The Aperspectival World

This Swiss cultural philosopher and poet, however seemingly obscure, is certainly one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century. I believe that anyone who has ever read *The Ever-Present Origin*²⁴ would not deny this. What makes his work so impressive is the execution of his proposal and central thesis that humankind undergoes radical shifts or *mutations* in consciousness and that we are currently emerging into what he called the

²² *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, pp. 210-212.

²³ Gebser has been largely unheard of by the mainstream academic community until recently. According to Georg Feuerstein in his introduction and critique of Gebser, *Structures of Consciousness*, the reason for this apparent lack of recognition since his death (despite a fair degree of notoriety during his lifetime, especially after the publication of *The Ever-Present Origin*) is due largely to the prevailing attitudes during and after the war years: “While Europe was still caught in the melancholy mood of the war years, Gebser’s constructive challenge held no fascination. In the frivolous boom years of economic reconstruction after World War II, his work seemed too ‘perennial’ to be attractive to the frenetic, progress-oriented mind. And Gebser steadfastly refused to sensationalize, propagandize, or, as did Sartre, climb on the barricades to get a hearing. In the feverish counter-culture of the 1960s and the 1970s, the sobering demand for personal initiative and integrity implicit in his work could not possibly have had appeal. Now, as we inexorably move toward the close of this millennium, we are once again getting in touch with our disillusionment, jadedness, and “sense of vacancy.” (p. 32, originally taken from the foreword by Gordon Rattray Taylor in *Rethink*, 1949 and 1950)

²⁴ Here I am using the only English translation available thanks to Noel Barstad and Algis Mickunas of Ohio University.

integral/aperspectival consciousness, an idea that remains quite novel for its time and place.

Gebser was born in Posen,²⁵ Prussia (now Poland) on August 20, 1905, an auspicious time indeed:

In the same year, Albert Einstein formulated his special theory of relativity—a theory that, for Gebser, came to epitomize the radical transformation of our Western civilization which it was his life-task to understand, document, and communicate. For Gebser, the Einsteinian innovation in thought was an important manifestation of a new consciousness of time, which he rightly identified as *the* fundamental theme of our epoch.²⁶

Aristocratic by birth, Gebser eventually relocated to Switzerland after spending several years in Germany, Florence, and Spain²⁷ and Paris (where he unhappily lived despite his access to the circle around Paul Eduard, Louis Aragon, Andre Malraux, and Pablo Picasso).²⁸ It was when he made his final move to Switzerland in 1939 that he was to find the intellectual space to finally write his *magnum opus*: *The Ever-Present Origin* (first published in 1953²⁹ despite having been financially poor by this time).

In *The Ever-Present Origin* Gebser outlines five great stages or *structures* of collective human consciousness. Although these structures have been applied to the individual level as well³⁰ Gebser was predominantly only interested in the cultural level of development. In this regard it should also be noted that he was acutely aware of his European background and was, therefore, not ignorant of the fact that his was a uniquely European bias by default.³¹ Thankfully, as his modern-day proponents and popularizers have so assiduously tried to make clear, his ideas are by no means limited to Europe, or more importantly, to the time in which he lived. Though one can definitely see the European in Gebser, he is still considered to be ahead of his time.

Gebser's structures of consciousness include: 1) the archaic; 2) the magical; 3) the mythical; 4) the mental/rational; and 5) the integral/aperspectival (the emergent consciousness).³² The archaic structure

²⁵ Alternately called "Poznan."

²⁶ *Structures of Consciousness*, p. 21

²⁷ Originally motivated by the work of Rainer Maria Rilke, he moved here and worked with Federico Garcia Lorca among other notable Spaniards (*SOC*, p. 25) Gebser was also a member of Carl Jung's institute for a number of years. (*SOC*)

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 26.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 29.

³⁰ Wilber takes this upon himself to do.

³¹ That is, a person is limited by her or his cultural upbringing (it is relative).

³² Wilber's correlative terms are sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete-operational (con-op), formal operational, and vision-logic or the "centauric." (*SES*)

is characterized by a total absence of dimensionality likened to a state of deep, dreamless sleep. The archaic is zero-dimensional, non-perspectival, and lacking any sense of separation from the environment. It is “the source from which all springs, but it is that which springs forth itself. It is the essence which is behind and which underlies consciousness” and “it is just there, and things just happen.”³³ This structure is the most difficult to describe because it is the farthest from what we know and where we are now.

The magical structure of consciousness is characterized by a “one-dimensional, pre-perspectival, point-like existence that occurs in a dream-like state. Unlike the dreamlessness of the previous structure, a recognition is developing in man that he is something different from that around him . . . Feuerstein, one of Gebser’s main biographers, feels that this structure persisted till around 40,000 BC and the advent of the Cro-Magnons.”³⁴ This structure is also referred to as being in attunement with the natural rhythms of the environment and is very alive today in such phenomena as Voodoo and Wicca³⁵ where a magical worldview dominates.

Historically, according to Gebser, the transition from magical to mythical marked the beginning of the two-dimensional, symbolic consciousness. “Language is becoming ever more important”³⁶ as is the ability to interpret life as a series of ever-complexifying myths. It can best be likened to a dream and is alive today through influences such as Joseph Campbell and Robert Bly who have helped us to understand this most crucial element of consciousness.³⁷

By the time we reach the mental structure of consciousness we begin to see a radical shift from two-dimensional (mythical) into three-dimensional space. Historically, in the Western tradition, the example of this was classical Greece. According to this version of history, the early Greeks such as Aristotle, Pythagoras, Plato, and of course, Socrates were among the first to display this structure. As would be guessed, much more is known about this structure than any of the others. It has been the dominant mode since its emergence around 10,000 to 500 BC and has only begun to wane in our era. There have been many stages to this structure but the basic characteristics of being persectivally and analytically oriented have remained consistent. Time, space, and point of view are the hallmarks of this structure. It is also likened to wakefulness (as opposed to the sleep specific magic and mythical structures).³⁸ Finally, we reach the fifth structure of

³³ *The Primordial Leap and the Present: The Ever-Present Origin—An Overview of the Work of Jean Gebser* by Ed Mahood, Jr. (Downloaded from www.gaiamind.org/Gebser)

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ As it is practiced by people where it is considered indigenous, i.e., not necessarily from an revisionist perspective or by someone in a modern country revivifying a certain school such as neo or techno shamanism.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *The Primordial Leap and the Present.*

consciousness, the integral/aperspectival world on which much if not all of Gebser's efforts rest. It is called "integral" because of the unique ability to add up all of the perspectives and transcend the limitations of three-dimensionality. It stresses the importance of the *relations* between the perspectives themselves. As already stated, the aperspectival mind is synonymous with Wilber's *vision-logic* and therefore has the same characteristic of adding up "all the perspectives *tout ensemble*, and therefore *privileges no perspective as final*: it is aperspectival."³⁹ In Gebser's terms this primary characteristic is "transparency" or "diaphaneity" which, along with the term "latency" are among the most important terms he uses.⁴⁰

The integral/aperspectival is marked by being acausal, awaring, arational, aspatial, and atemporal. Terms which imply not a negation but rather a "stepping out of" a dualistic relationship. In other words, aperspectivism is not a contradiction in terms. It is a "perspective" that does *not* seek to come from no perspective. It is, rather, a "perspective" that seeks to, as already stated, favor no one perspective as being dominate over another. It is a fluid understanding of the multiplicity of perspectives available and seeking to honor each of them in the context of the whole. Thus, the aperspectival, by not choosing favorites, seeks to to honor each of them in the context of the every-increasing understanding of the whole. The aperspectival, by doing this, seeks to establish a new holistic and more complete *verstehen*. It necessarily requires a leap into a mode of awareness generally not employed by the world at large. The closest equivalent manifestation (that is only among the very first signs) of this structure *so far* has been the healthier aspects of postmodernism.⁴¹ However, according to Wilber, Feuerstein, Gebser, and Gebser's many proponents, the integral/aperspectival structure has yet to fully develop.

³⁹ *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 193.

⁴⁰ Gebser's terms are coined by him. They are arguably esoteric to the average reader yet to him there simply did not exist the words to adequately describe what he meant. "The former deals with what is concealed; as Gebser describes it, latency is the demonstrable presence of the future. In this manner the seeds of all subsequent phases of evolution are contained in the current one. It is on the basis of this aspect that integration takes place. The second term, transparency, deals with what is revealed. According to Gebser, transparency (diaphaneity) is the form of manifestation (epiphany) of the spiritual. This is perhaps the most important statement he makes. The origin, the source from which all springs, is a spiritual one, and all phases of consciousness evolution are a testimony to the ever less latent and ever more transparent spirituality that is inherent in all that is. Without a recognition of this fundamental and pivotal idea, Gebser cannot be understood and we will not be able to understand ourselves. It is not just an intellectual development that is being described in his theory, rather it is the ever more apparent manifestation of the spiritual that underlies and supports the concept of evolution itself." (*The Primordial Leap and the Present: The Ever-Present Origin—An Overview of the Work of Jean Gebser*)

⁴¹ See Wilber's books, predominantly *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* for an exhaustively detailed discussion on the nature of postmodernism in relation to the emergent consciousness.

To assist in the identification of the themes inherent in the birthing of this new aperspectival world Gebser gave a list of certain key terms crucial to this end:

the whole,
 integrity,
 transparency (diaphaneity),
 the spiritual (the *diaphainon*),
 the supercession of the ego,
 the realization of timelessness,
 the realization of termporicity,
 the realization of the concept of time,
 the realization of time-freedom (the achronon),
 the disruption of the merely systematic,
 the incursion of dynamics,
 the recognition of energy,
 the mastery of movement,
 the fourth dimension,
 the supercession of patriarchy,
 the renunciation of dominance and power,
 the acquisition of intensity,
 clarity (instead of mere wakefulness),
 and the transformation of the creative inceptual basis.⁴²

Such often cryptic terms are only linguistic flags to help recognize this emergent consciousness and should not be taken as absolute signifiers. Gebser, like most pioneers, found the use of language limiting in his attempt to share his crucial insights but nonetheless, used it with skill and creativity.⁴³ As already mentioned, many of his ideas had no active terms for them during his day. As a result, he took the liberty of creating his own. In the context of his overall theory, three terms stand out: *eteology*, *systasis*, and *synairesis*. These are important terms because they adequately describe his “methodology” even if they do not lend themselves well to average usage.

To Gebser, what he was proposing through *The Ever-Present Origin* was not another philosophy but, rather, a new “eteology.” In other words still: “The Greek word *eteos* means ‘true, real’; as an adverb, *eteon* means ‘in accord with truth, truly, really’ and comes from the root *se·es*, meaning ‘to be’.”⁴⁴ The difference comes with the understanding that a philosophy is another three-dimensional, rational system. An eteology, on the other hand:

⁴² *The Ever-Present Origin*, pp. 361-362.

⁴³ The subject of the usefulness or necessity of using esoteric language is beyond the scope of the essay here. It is my belief that Gebser, perhaps could have used more graspable language. Yet, I do also get the impression that this was less important to him as it was to get the meaning just right. In a sense, he wasn’t writing for the public but to deepen and flesh-out his understanding. Of course, keeping firmly in mind the context in which he lived.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 312, n. 4.

(M)ust replace philosophy just as philosophy once replaced myths. In the eteologemes, the eteon or being-in-truth comes to veracity or statement of truth, and the “wares” of guards or guards verity and conveys the “verition” which arises from the a-waring and imparting of truth. Eteology, then, is neither a mere ontology, that is, theory of being, nor is it a theory of existence. The dualistic question of being versus non-being which is commensurate only with the mental structure is superceded by eteology, together with the secularized question as to being, whose content—or more exactly whose vacuity—is nothing more than existence.

Every eteologeme is a “verition,” and as such is valid only when it allows origin to become transparent in the present. To do this it must be formulated in such a way as to be free of ego, and this means not just free of subject but also free of object; only then does it sustain the verity of the whole. This has nothing to do with representation; *only in philosophical thought can the world be represented; for the integral perception of truth, the world is pure statement, and thus “verition.”*⁴⁵

To put it bluntly, Gebser is proposing a whole new way of being and *The Ever-Present Origin* is specifically written from the viewpoint of this “verition.” It would seem that this is part of the reason why his work seems so cryptic and esoteric. In a very real sense, it requires a level of understanding yet to be experienced by the vast majority of people on the planet. From an outsider perspective, this stance would seem to be impractical and even arrogant. Yet, perhaps it is meant to be seen as a necessary variable in an attempt to push the evolutionary impulse that much further. Indeed, what if people like Gebser, by creating a new “space” where such thought-forms didn’t exist before, act as an *attractor* or even create a field that catalyzes or “pulls” the collective consciousness to emerge into that new way of being in the world?

Systasis is “the conjoining or fitting together of parts into integrality.”⁴⁶ It is the actual process of merging partials into a whole.⁴⁷ Synairesis, on the other hand, is “an integral understanding, or perception, of reality.”⁴⁸ Synairesis is the “verition” and systasis is the process. Interestingly enough, Gebser’s intention for using such terms was to transcend the limitations of three-dimensional thought through the use of linguistic signifiers, like a Zen koan. It is a call to freedom from the bondage of time and space. A call to a “liberating understanding of the whole.”⁴⁹ A call to which we are just beginning to heed.

⁴⁵ *The Ever-Present Origin*, p. 309.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁴⁸ *Structures of Consciousness*, pp. 194-195.

⁴⁹ *The Primordial Leap and the Present*.

Clare Graves & Don Beck: The Second Tier: Spiral Dynamics

In the relentless attempt to construct a more efficient, visionary, and complete model of consciousness few such models have had as much practical impact as Spiral Dynamics (SD). In their book by the same name, Don Beck and Christopher Cowan took the psychological principles as outlined and proposed by Clare Graves⁵⁰ and expanded them to include the “fledgling science of memetics”⁵¹ and (more recently) the sophisticated theories of Ken Wilber thus creating Spiral Dynamics *Integral* (SDi)⁵²: “*Spiral Dynamics*, (is) a bio-psycho-social-spiritual conceptual system that describes how and when worldviews emerge, and how they form themselves naturally into spirals of complexity. The Spiral is not a cookie-cutter; it is a process.”⁵³

Thus, Spiral Dynamics has become one of the only sophisticated applications of effective change with a truly integral/holistic approach. Graves’ model, unlike many theoreticians, was specifically designed to be applicable in the real world. This characteristic is what immediately makes Spiral Dynamics unique, especially in the context of integral theory.⁵⁴

Like the other theorists presented here and like all of the great holistic thinkers, Graves was a developmentalist. In his own words:

Briefly, what I am proposing is that the psychology of the mature human being is an unfolding, emergent, oscillating spiraling process marked by progressive subordination of older, lower-order behavior systems to newer, higher-order systems as man’s existential problems change. Each successive stage, wave, or level of existence is a state

⁵⁰ Clare Graves formerly taught psychology at the Union College in Schenectady, New York before his death in 1986.

⁵¹ *The Search for Cohesion in the Age of Fragmentation: From the New World Order to the Next Global Mesh* by Don Beck, Ph.D. Taken from www.integralage.org/docs/DonBeck1. Note: integralage.org does not exist anymore.

⁵² One of the functions of adding Wilber’s model is due to the fact that Spiral Dynamics did not include the “higher” stages or levels of development such as the transpersonal and the transmental: “As is usually the case with Western researchers, he recognized no higher (transpersonal) levels, but the contributions he (Graves) made to the prepersonal and personal realms were profound.” (*Integral Psychology*, p. 40) SDi still lacks a *complete* account of transpersonal states of consciousness though this is being remedied.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “(T)o date, it has been tested in over fifty thousand people from around the world, and there have been no major exceptions found to his scheme . . . Far from being armchair analysts, Beck and Cowan participated in the discussions that led to the end of apartheid in South Africa . . . The principles of Spiral Dynamics have been fruitfully used to reorganize businesses, revitalize townships, overhaul educational systems, and defuse inner-city tensions. Beck and Cowan have had this extraordinary success because, in a world lost in pluralistic relativism, they have brought the clarity—and the reality—of dynamic developmentalism.” (*Integral Psychology*, p. 41)

through which people pass on their way to other states of being. When the human is centralized in one state of existence he or she has a psychology which is particular to that state. His or her feelings, motivations, ethics and values, biochemistry, degree of neurological activation, learning system, belief systems, conception of mental health, ideas as to what mental illness is and how it should be treated, conceptions of and preferences for management, education, and political theory and practice are all appropriate to that state.⁵⁵

The most recent incarnation of Spiral Dynamics has been carried out by Don Beck in collaboration with John Petersen of the Arlington Institute,⁵⁶ Dr. Ichak Adizes, Alan Tonkin, Evan Fowler, and several others who have continued to refine Spiral Dynamics into what it is today—SDi. SDi is the name formally given to the addition of Ken Wilber’s model (4Q/8L)⁵⁷ into the equation: “An aggressive and comprehensive **All Quadrants/All Levels** strategy designed to address the asymmetries and gaps in human development by mobilizing and aligning our resources in a systemic manner so none be left behind.”⁵⁸

Spiral Dynamics is organized around waves of human unfolding called vMEMEs. A vMEME is shorthand for *value meme*. Briefly, a meme has been called a “mind virus” because it behaves like a virus though I find calling it a virus is a bit too value laden.⁵⁹ It is an independent idea, value, set of thoughts, beliefs, etc. that has the tendency to “infect” or be passed like a virus from person to person, group to group, or culture to culture. Memes are also likened to genes yet they are not physical in any way. In fact, strangely enough they would have no existence outside of human minds yet they exhibit properties that seem to be self-creating (autopoiesis) even at the cost of human lives.⁶⁰

A vMEME specifically refers to a type of meme that is at once “a psychological structure, value system, and mode of adaptation, which can

⁵⁵ *Summary Statement: The Emergent, Cyclical, Double-Helix Model of the Adult Human Biopsychosocial Systems*, Clare Graves, Boston, May 20, 1981.

⁵⁶ The Arlington Institute in Arlington, Virginia, is where the Vital Sign’s Monitor is currently being developed: “The intent of the Vital Signs Monitor, displayed within the Institute’s *Fusion Center*, is to track vMEMETIC flows and Stages of Change within the American society . . . The Arlington Institute is currently using national polling firms to detect our “EKG”-like social pulses” (Don Beck, *The Search for Cohesion in the Age of Fragmentation*).

⁵⁷ Four quadrant/eight level. Synonymous with AQAL.

⁵⁸ *The Search for Cohesion in the Age of Fragmentation*.

⁵⁹ The term was first coined by the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins with his publication of *The Selfish Gene* in 1976.

⁶⁰ There are currently several excellent books covering the topic of memes. The ones I have found the most useful are *The Meme Machine* by Susan Blackmore (1999); *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins (1976); *The Evolving Self: A Psychology for the Third Millennium* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi; and *Global Brain: The Evolution of Mass Mind from the Big Bang to the 21st Century* by Howard Bloom (2000).

express itself in numerous different ways, from worldviews to clothing styles to governmental forms.”⁶¹ Spiral Dynamics outlines eight distinct and basic vMEMEs with the potential for more to be added as time and consciousness develop. These levels have been assigned different colors to represent their respective characteristics and to serve as convenient signifiers. Furthermore, they are divided into two “tiers.” Again, I will use Wilber’s summary of the vMEMEs to describe the distinct characteristics of each stage:

First Tier:

1. *Beige: Archaic-Instinctual.* The level of basic survival; food, water, warmth, sex, and safety have priority. Uses habits and instincts just to survive . . . 0.1 percent of the adult population, 0 percent power.
2. *Purple: Magical-Animistic.* Thinking is animistic; magical spirits, good and bad, swarm the earth leaving blessings, curses, and spells that determine events. Forms into *ethnic tribes*. The spirits exist in ancestors and bond the tribe . . . 10 percent of the population, 1 percent of the power.
3. *Red: Power Gods.* First emergence of a distinct self from the tribe; powerful, impulsive, egocentric, heroic . . . The basis of *feudal empires*—power and glory. The world is a jungle full of threats and predators . . . 20 percent of the population, 5 percent of the power.
4. *Blue: Conformist Rule.* Life has meaning, direction, and purpose, with outcomes determined by an all-powerful Other or Order. This righteous Order enforces a code of conduct based on absolutist and unvarying principles of “right” and “wrong” . . . Rigid social hierarchies . . . Law and order; impulsivity controlled through guilt; concrete-literal fundamentalist belief; obedience to the rule of the Order . . . 40 percent of the population, 30 percent of the power.
5. *Orange: Scientific Achievement.* At this wave, the self “escapes” from the “herd mentality” of blue, and seeks truth and meaning in individualistic terms—hypothetico-deductive, experimental, objective, mechanistic, operational—“scientific” in the typical sense. The world is a rational and well-oiled machine with natural laws that can be learned, mastered, and manipulated for one’s own purposes. Highly achievement oriented, especially (in America) toward materialistic gains . . . 30 percent of the population, 50 percent of the power.
6. *Green: The Sensitive Self.*⁶² Communitarian, human bonding, ecological sensitivity, networking. The human spirit must be freed from greed, dogma, and divisiveness; feelings and caring supercede cold rationality; cherishing of the earth, Gaia, life. Against hierarchy; establishes lateral bonding and linking . . . Emphasis on dialogue,

⁶¹ *Integral Psychology*, p. 47.

⁶² The Green meme, both healthy and pathological versions, have been given an exhaustive amount of attention by Wilber. Since much of his work is written for academically minded people, and since most academics express the green meme rather strongly, this makes a great deal of sense.

relationships . . . this worldview is often called *pluralistic relativism* . . .
 . 10 percent of the population, 15 percent of the power.

Second Tier:

7. *Yellow: Integrative.* Life is a kaleidoscope of natural hierarchies [holarchies], systems, and forms. Flexibility, spontaneity, and functionality have the highest priority. Differences and pluralities can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows . . . Knowledge and competency should supersede rank, power, status, or group. The prevailing world order is the result of the existence of different levels of reality (memes) and the inevitable patterns of movement up and down the dynamic spiral. Good governance facilitates the emergence of entities throughout the levels of increasing complexity (nested hierarchy).

8. *Turquoise: Holistic.* Universal holistic system, holons/waves of integrative energies; unites feeling with knowledge [centaur]; multiple levels interwoven into one conscious system. Universal order, but in a living, conscious fashion, not based on external rules (blue) or group bonds (green). A “grand unification” is possible, in theory and in actuality. Sometimes involves the emergence of a new spirituality as a meshwork of all existence. Turquoise thinking uses the entire spiral; sees multiple levels of interaction; detects harmonics, the mystical forces, and the pervasive flow-states that permeate any organization.

Second-tier thinking: 1 percent of the population, 5 percent of the power.⁶³

The difference between the two tiers is crucial. The overriding characteristic of first-tier thinking is the inability to perceive the world from the perspective of the other vMEMEs. First-tier thinking believes its worldview to be “better” than any of the other memes, including second-tier. People in the first tier have a chronic lack of ability to step out their values. It cannot grasp the entire spectrum of interior and cultural development. Second-tier thinking, on the other hand, doesn’t have this problem. Second-tier thinking is characterized by the ability to consider the other vMEMEs in their own right and is not afraid of dynamic hierarchical systems based upon this meta-perspective. It is in the second-tier where all worldviews are beginning to be integrated and balanced into a “higher” way of perceiving.⁶⁴ It is a multileveled, multidimensional, richly holarchical view.⁶⁵ Second-tier thinking is rare. However, according to many, it is emerging on a greater scale now than it ever has especially with many “green memers” moving up the spiral at the same time:

⁶³ Paraphrased from *Integral Psychology*, pp. 48-52.

⁶⁴ “The health of the entire spiral is the prime directive, not preferential treatment for any one level” (Ibid. p. 232, n. 22).

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 52.

With only 1 percent of the population at second-tier thinking (and only 0.1 percent at turquoise), second-tier consciousness is relatively rare because it is now the “leading edge” of collective human evolution. As examples, Beck and Cowan mention items ranging from Teilhard de Chardin’s noosphere⁶⁶ to the growth of transpersonal psychology, with increases in frequency definitely on the way—and even higher memes still in the offing . . .⁶⁷

The vMEMEs can be open, arrested, or closed (OAC status) and understood in the context of *phases*: alpha, beta, gamma, delta, new alpha; *conditions*: potential, solutions, dissonance, insight, barriers, consolidation; *variations*: 7th quantum, 6th UP-Shift, 5th Break-OUT, 4th stretch-UP, 3rd Stretch-DOWN, 2nd Expand-OUT, 1st Fine-TUNE; and what Beck and Cowan call the Universal “P-O-A” (politeness, openness, and autocracy) which is necessary for healthy organizations. All of the states and conditions are explained thoroughly in *Spiral Dynamics* and I only mention them here because I want to show that this model is more than would be assumed by looking at the tiers just described.⁶⁸ When SD (*SDi*) is integrated with other time-tested models such as the Enneagram, for example, what we end up with is a seemingly complicated but more complete and holistic way of understanding in this case, the individual. Wilber in particular is quite good at integrating such models.⁶⁹ Yet, of course, he is not the only one. Some of the figures who have pioneered the creation and refinement of developmental models include the likes of Susan Cook-Greuter, Carol Gilligan, Robert Kegan, Laurence Kohlberg, Jane Loevinger, Jean Piaget, Jenny Wade, Charles Alexander, Howard Gardner, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.⁷⁰

Spiral Dynamics stands as an extremely timely and updated model in the integral vision despite its shortcomings concerning the coverage of transmental and transpersonal states as already mentioned. Interestingly, Beck’s model, like both Wilber’s and Gebser’s models, foresees a great transition on the horizon. Spiral Dynamics’ description of the second-tier and the potential for higher orders of being past the turquoise vMEME infer the ever-refining development of consciousness on this planet.

⁶⁶ The term “noosphere,” or, the world of the mind, has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy but was given new life by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Sir Karl Popper. Teilhard de Chardin understood the noosphere as the third world, the first being the lithosphere (physiosphere), and the second being the biosphere.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 52.

⁶⁸ The prolific use of acronyms displayed here is generally considered to be confusing and unnecessarily complicated which has much to do with why it is rarely mentioned in the Integral literature.

⁶⁹ *Integral Psychology* still remains one of the best places to see this ability in action.

⁷⁰ This is but a small sampling.

Mark B. Woodhouse: Accelerated Interdimensional Integration

*A new worldview is emerging, and many are kneedeep in some very messy transition dynamics.*⁷¹

Woodhouse is the wildcard in this theoretical equation. What I mean is that he is the one theorist presented here who is, to my knowledge, not discussed nor mentioned by Wilber or any of the other integral thinkers. If Woodhouse is acknowledged it is only in passing. Despite his acute, well researched, and generally excellent writing, I feel that the reason for this is because he seriously considers and is willing to discuss such fringe phenomena as UFOs, alien abduction experiences, and channeled information claims without immediately dismissing or marginalizing them. Such willingness, unfortunately, keeps him out-of-the-loop so to speak for without this quality it wouldn't be hard to imagine his work being a bit more popular.⁷² Woodhouse's excellent and fascinating book *Paradigm Wars: Worldviews for a New Age*, is in my estimation, just as holistic and integral of an approach as is the works of Beck, Wilber, and Gebser. Woodhouse represents a kind of litmus test for how far integral studies is willing to go. I include his work here because he, like the above theorists, proposes a major shift in consciousness on the horizon and also because he does so with just as much of a critical eye and a penchant for comprehensive mapmaking despite his relatively unconventional views.

Paradigm Wars is an example of how to critically evaluate trends, influences, fields of study, and paradigms of the modern and the postmodern world without maligning or unnecessarily marginalizing streams of influence considered "unverifiable" by traditional standards. When it comes to the nature and style of Woodhouse's work he has this to say about it:

Paradigm Wars aims, accordingly, for what might be described as the less rigorous end of academic scholarship and the more discerning New Age/New Paradigm readership of popular culture. It can serve both as a textbook for college courses and as companion reading for personal exploration. This middle ground represents a huge market that university presses and trade publishers tend to overlook, because their sights usually are set respectively on the upper end of intellectual respectability and the mid-to-lower end of popular culture.⁷³

⁷¹ *Paradigm Wars*, xiii.

⁷² Relatively speaking, many of the integrally informed are still among the minority and in many ways trying to establish credibility. It stands to reason that the lack of credibility leveled against metaphysics and New Age literature by the mainstream has much to do with this.

⁷³ *Paradigm Wars*, xvi.

He keenly questions the assumptions and the challenges of our times. His core methodology is quite similar to Wilber's in that he seeks to take as broad a sampling as possible and come to some basic, root generalizations in an attempt to bridge gaps and integrate them as much as possible:

In fact, there doesn't have to be an all-purpose definition in the first place. All we need are some overlapping goals at a theoretical level and a sufficient number of *bridge* movements at a social level. The emergence of a new worldview is never a monolithic, prearranged affair in which we all pledge mutual respect and agreement before we jump in, so to speak.⁷⁴

The way in which Woodhouse approaches his subjects is less as someone who is trying to develop a new system or "ism" and more as someone who seeks only to put all the cards on the table so to speak. His is one of less organization and more revelation. Fewer answers and more questions. He certainly has reached conclusions and has made strong proposals, but, in all, his work is more a call to honesty and balance than it is to hard, unmovable injunctions. His discussion of the phenomena of the New Age movement and what he calls the "New Paradigm" and the "Rising Culture," are worth their weight because, unfortunately, few authors have yet to treat this topic with such fairness⁷⁵:

In short, the (popular) New Age is both more restricted than the New Paradigm dialogue in the breadth of its vision and less sophisticated in articulating that vision. But the two are sometimes closely related under the umbrella of a Rising Culture . . . Be aware of the unique demands of shifting contexts. The more one retains general labels, the more likely one is to introduce confusion and controversy from other parts of the cultural map. It's impossible to know whether one is for or against the New Age until one knows what the phrase means.⁷⁶

Other topics explored by Woodhouse include the relation of systems holism with the perennial philosophy, the mainstream establishment and alternative therapies, paranormal phenomena in relation to verifiability, classical physics and the new physics, energy monism, consciousness as the ground of reality, theories of time, traditional educational systems and new forms of education, channeling, and claims concerning extra-terrestrial agendas and origins. In short, he is interested in a fair discussion of fringe topics normally not given much rational consideration by other "holistic" authors.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Paradigm Wars*, p. 53.

⁷⁵ And even fewer have attempted to see it in the context of integral or transpersonal study.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 53.

⁷⁷ Wilber discusses the New Age/New Paradigm but does not distinguish the two as does Woodhouse. Furthermore, like Woodhouse, he criticizes the various New Age movements in

To continue, Woodhouse's conception of holons enveloping holons is nearly identical to both Wilber and Beck's models of development:

Each level in the Great Chain (with the exception of the lowest) contains the level below it and (with the exception of the highest) is contained by the levels(s) above it. More structured than the belief that everything contains everything else, interpretation is asymmetric. Higher contains lower, suffuses and permeates lower, but not the reverse.⁷⁸

The only difference between Woodhouse's model and Wilber's model of holonic enfoldment is that Woodhouse believes there are ultimate ends ("with the exception of the lowest . . . with the exception of the highest"⁷⁹), and Wilber believes such enfoldment runs infinitely into eternity: "And each of the virtual particles in the cloud, of course, also drags along its own virtual cloud, bubbles within bubbles [holons within holons], and so on *ad infinitum* . . ."⁸⁰ This distinction is crucial when discussing epistemologies and underlying assumptions. However, it is a distinction that is not crucial to our discussion here. What is crucial is how Woodhouse's theories and ideas of the coming transformational shift are similar and different to those of Wilber, Gebser, and Beck/Cowan/Graves.

Woodhouse sees that the pace of change in our cultural worldspace is quickening and seems to be shifting in ever more complex and difficult to adjust-to ways:

What *is* happening? There are plenty of sociological explanations. Here are some examples. For one, our values may not be keeping up with the pace of technological change. Then again, cultural relativism is rampant; any behavior is OK, so long as one claims the appropriate legal or moral right. Or it may be observed that the media is simply giving us more information than we can meaningfully assimilate. Then, too, people's very life-styles are being threatened by massive trends seemingly beyond their control. Congress appears unable to come to grips with major issues, especially those relating to the economy. We are being conditioned to blame others when things don't go our way. Living without a sense of rootedness causes deep anxieties, thereby causing us to invent cosmic meaning for our lives even if they have little basis in fact. And it's not surprising that, faced with massive despair and little hope, people turn to drugs . . . However, according to psychological

much the same manner, i.e., as being shallow, incomplete, retro-romantic, and magical narcissistic. However, Wilber goes no further than this and fails to discuss other phenomena such as UFOs and channeling within a more discriminating light in the way, I believe, Woodhouse does. Woodhouse's discussion is a continuation of where Wilber leaves off when it comes to New Age faddism and its related phenomena. Conversely, Wilber would, conceivably, put Woodhouse in the proverbial doghouse with the rest of the retro-romantics and New Age trippers.

⁷⁸ *Paradigm Wars*, p. 238.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, p. 43.

and sociological perspectives, there is nothing metaphysically significant about this time of great change. Nothing is going on behind the scenes, so to speak . . . There is some truth to virtually all of the above explanations. However, the question is whether they go far enough, whether they really get to the heart of the matter. I don't think they do. I believe that something quite metaphysically significant is transpiring behind the scenes. Behind what we can see, I think, are energetic shifts on a global scale that we cannot see. I call this process "accelerated interdimensional integration." This is a speculative concept, but one which provides a needed supplement to the literature of crises and change.⁸¹

Woodhouse goes on to outline certain key features of this accelerated process. These key attributes reflect a proclivity towards an understanding of reality as energy and includes the idea that our dimension is being infused with increasing amounts of higher and faster vibrations of energy thereby pushing old paradigms and pathologies to the surface in an effort to "purge" whilst at the same time making more room for a "fourth-dimensional awareness." Finally, Woodhouse believes that, within the next ten or so years, society will increasingly split into two distinct sides represented by a bell curve. On one side is the rising culture and the other is the dying culture. On this last idea Woodhouse says:

This divergence of rising and decaying cultures is only a transitional picture. After a suitable period of time, the Rising Culture will be represented by a single curve. The shift will be relatively complete. And we shall see things and do things we never thought likely or possible, especially in the areas of health, education, and relationships. Occupying a new perspective within the Great Chain inevitably extends the limits of the possible.⁸²

Woodhouse's ideas are unlike Wilber's, Gebser's and Beck's in that he is less concerned with problem of proof and the rigid academic view it represents.⁸³ Although his conclusions are both highly personalized and, to an extent, highly biased they are also highly objective.⁸⁴ They are based upon careful consideration of the available alternatives and proclivities toward subjective interpretation much in the same way that the other three are. Mark Woodhouse is as guilty as any other writer or theorist in that he cannot escape his subjective truth. However, he, like Wilber, Gebser, and Beck,

⁸¹ *Paradigm Wars*, p. 278-279.

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 281.

⁸³ The literature of "crisis and change" can just as easily refer to the various books about pole shifts, earth changes, 2012, and the photon belt as it can refer to more "respectable" works exemplified by Wilber, Stan Grof, and others.

⁸⁴ At first sight this might seem to be a contradiction in terms yet I maintain that these qualities do co-exist. Some would call this depth.

proposes his ideas with wisdom, intelligence, meticulous research and an inspiring vision of what the future, our future, holds.

II. Integral Studies

On the Nature of Theory and Practice

Theory is often seen dichotomously relative to practice or application. It is not past me to understand the usefulness of this distinction, and if used with mindfulness, makes a great deal of sense. However, I also get the impression that there is a general lack of understanding, especially in pragmatically oriented, “back to basics” circles, about the importance and role of theory.

The pursuit to understand and develop fundamental ideas, concepts, and visions through the use of verbal and written language is something that pervades and underlies our culture in very profound and important ways. The theory that we know as the scientific method is a case in point. Before any applications were made and before it was put into practice, this theory was incubated through years of wonder, thought, careful observation, imagination, and intuition, all being the foundation of action.

Nothing exists in a vacuum, that is, nothing that we do or say happens out of extremely complex and dynamical contexts that exist on multiple levels. The scientific method, although proved to work within our experience of the world, was developed as a result of curiosity about our world and the inherent need to make sense of it all. In Jean Gebser’s terms this development is directly related to the rational structure of consciousness. Nonetheless, another example is the theory of universal human rights, an idea that is younger than most people living today are aware of and an idea that was born out of decades if not centuries of conflict and human suffering. Today, as mostly postmodern Westerners, we are likely to take such things for granted. Thus, through this, we can move into a greater understanding of waves of development heretofore called holarchies.⁸⁵ Woodhouse describes hierarchies in a similar way:

The concept of hierarchical interpenetration is foundational to the emergence of any paradigm that claims adequacy. It represents a key

⁸⁵ “Thus *holarchy*, as I use the term, includes a balance of both *hierarchy* (qualitatively ranked levels) and *heterarchy* (mutually linked dimensions). Theorists who attempt to use only one or the other of those types of relations have consistently failed to explain development at all.” (*Integral Psychology*, p. 32) The terms “holarchy” and “holons” were originally taken from the influential book *The Ghost in the Machine* by Arthur Koestler.

philosophical and experiential insight that, when properly interpreted, resolves a number of long-standing philosophical disputes.

Quite often, I believe, carefully constructed and stable theories are at the heart of nearly every single major course of deliberate action that the modern and postmodern world has seen.⁸⁶ That is not to say that these theories weren't themselves grounded or born out of pure inspiration or transpersonal states of awareness, i.e., born out of non-rational, non-logical means. Many great insights have come from realms beyond what we call the rational or the mental. Indeed, that is at the core of what the term "insight" means.⁸⁷ However, in this world, such inspiration, in its raw form, is simply not enough to change the world in increasingly effective ways (and it is changing the world, hopefully for the better, that we are talking about when we wish to emphasize the importance of applications). In terms of action in the world, just because an individual has a powerfully transpersonal experience of oneness with the cosmos doesn't imply that they will know how to raise a child, balance their checkbook, or carry on a decent conversation.

If we were to observe every act taken that has produced quantifiable results whether it be the construction of modern cities, the development of the internet, or the construction of the light bulb in your lamp we would see behind it a well-fleshed, well-thought, and solid theory. This theory would in turn have been seeded by inspiration.⁸⁸ Sometimes such theory is the result of an individual's efforts and sometimes it is the result of a collective effort (keeping in mind that such boundaries are extremely tenuous).

However, another possible way of looking at the issue is to say that theory *is* a form of action. If looked at this way, we would inevitably by-pass the whole dualism of theory vs. practice and thus move towards a more fluid understanding, a holonic understanding. When I tell someone that I am researching and writing theory they almost automatically think of the seemingly opposite, practice. As I stated before, I agree that this is a useful distinction. However, I do not think that it is a necessary one. In a sense, we are always "doing something" unless we are "doing nothing" in which case has nothing to do with theory or practice in the first place.⁸⁹

If one downplays the importance of theory, then one downplays the whole history of conscious human understanding (at least the history of the modern world). It is a practice that is integral to the ways in which we know our world.⁹⁰ I do not wish to overemphasize its importance because it is only

⁸⁶ If they weren't necessarily premeditated then they most definitely were rationalized and even justified after the fact.

⁸⁷ At this level, such distinctions become blurred to the point where the discussion could easily be propelled into philosophical hermeneutics.

⁸⁸ The nature and origins of inspiration are, of course, arguable.

⁸⁹ Thus, we enter the realm of the semantic paradox.

⁹⁰ "Ours is a complex world. But human knowledge is finite and circumscribed. 'Nature does not come as clean as you can think it,' warned Alfred North Whitehead, and went on to propound an

one fraction of the whole story. Nonetheless, the endeavor of theory as a practice, as a discipline, as a profession, is a fundamental and increasingly sophisticated practice of self-reflection in both the individual and the collective sense.

In the context of integral studies, theory is only one aspect of the whole story. The intellectual capacity is really, in important ways, a means to an end. The whole endeavor must be put into the right context in order to be of any ultimate use to the field. Here is where it is at odds with most other disciplines. Not only does it seek to correct, integrate, and expand upon the existing understanding of our world in an intellectual, vision-logic sense but it also seeks to put the needed emphasis upon *direct revelation* of said truths, especially where it concerns transpersonal and transmental understanding. According to the great wisdom traditions and to transpersonal theory there will always be a limit to how far logic and reason alone will take an individual. Aside from correcting that type of understanding through experiment, data accumulation, and consensual justification, the individual must be willing to take up what Michael Murphy and his colleagues call “integral transformative practice.”⁹¹ Again, Wilber writes:

The fact that the physiological (or “material”) and the cognitive (or “mental”) are two of the most fundamental lines in the human being (“matter” and “consciousness,” Right and Left) means that a truly integral spiritual practice would, at the very least, put an equal emphasis on both body and mind at each and every stage of general evolution, gross bodymind to subtle bodymind to causal bodymind.⁹²

It is this transformative practice that grounds all of the theories and ideas. It not only builds upon the theories but precedes the theories in many ways that cannot be understood intellectually. Theory can point in the right direction and provides a structure by which to guide. Transformative practice such as meditation, yoga, or even entheogens,⁹³ so the idea goes, are the substance of such theories, especially theories such as those presented

extremely clean and elegant cosmology. Since theories, like window panes, are clear only when they are clean, and the world does not come as cleanly as all that, we must know where we perform a clean-up operation. Scientific theories, while simpler than reality, must nevertheless reflect its essential structure.” (Ervin Laszlo in *The Systems View of the World*, p. 9)

⁹¹ Michael Murphy is a pioneer in this area and an individual at the forefront of the Integral/transformative movement. See his book *The Future of the Body* for a more detailed understanding of ITP: “And the overall conclusion of the book is unmistakable: integral practice is now the most viable mode of human transformation.” (*The Eye of Spirit*, p. 234). In terms of an introduction to integral theory Michael Murphy would be immediately included for his ITP alone but since this introduction is but a brief glimpse he has been intentionally left out.

⁹² *The Eye of Spirit*, p. 231.

⁹³ Entheogens are god-manifesting substances. The use of powerful psychoactives in a sacred manner.

here. One begets the other in a cyclical process. There is an inner science and there is an outer science. Ultimately they are one and the same.

The Validity of Integral Knowing and the Problem of Proof

The question of how we can know something and what it is that we can know is fundamental to any valid quest for understanding. Questioning our underlying assumptions is difficult for most people but it is indispensable. That is, if we are to make the fundamental assertion that there is any understanding to be had in the first place.

In *The Eye of Spirit* Wilber discusses this thorny issue in great detail. He helps to reveal in what ways integral studies is similar to and different from other disciplines dedicated to solid injunction and not merely speculation. According to him there are three characteristics that all valid knowledge quests must follow:

1. *Instrumental injunction*. This is generally of the form, “If you want to *know* this, *do* this.”
2. *Intuitive apprehension*. This is an immediate experience of the domain disclosed by the injunction; that is, a direct experience or data-apprehension. (Even if the data is mediated, at the moment of experience it is immediately apprehended). In other words, this is the direct apprehension of the data brought forth by the particular injunction, whether that data be sensory experience, mental experience, or spiritual experience.
3. *Communal confirmation* (or rejection). This is a checking of the results—the data, the evidence—with others who have *adequately completed* the injunctive and apprehensive strands.⁹⁴

Starting from these three premises we can then move into a more accurate way of describing and experiencing things. Wilber again: “Thus, the epistemological claims of integral studies are, like any other valid knowledge claims, thoroughly grounded in experiment, data accumulation, and consensual justification.”⁹⁵

For Woodhouse, all claims are only a matter of degree, there is no way to know a given claim conclusively: “For virtually no claim ever gets conclusively proven. The evidence for our beliefs simply ranges from very strong to very weak.”⁹⁶ Similar to Wilber’s three criteria Woodhouse also has a list of performances to make except that he applies them specifically to claims of the paranormal variety:

⁹⁴ *EOS*, p. 77.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 17.

⁹⁶ *Paradigm Wars*, p. 106.

A recurring, identifiable phenomenon; overall reliability of reports; veridicality of relevant experiences; confirmability; coherence of phenomena within a larger paradigm; inability of competing paradigms to reasonably explain the phenomena; applicability of the explanation to other related phenomena; falsifiability; capacity to generate further test implications; capacity to make a positive difference in promoting shared views and goals.

He goes on to qualify the criteria:

These are the main criteria by which we would attempt to answer the question “What is real?” in normal science and, appropriately modified, the criteria by which we can approach the same question in the parasciences. The difference between how they are used in mainstream science and how they are used in parapsychology, transpersonal psychology, and spiritual practices depends on how narrowly or broadly we interpret experience. I have adopted the broad interpretation to show how the same criteria can be applied across domains.⁹⁷

Integral Studies seeks to apply these premises and types of criteria across all domains and fields.

In Conclusion

The integral vision, in theory, draws upon such a vast ocean of knowledge and experience that any attempt at covering all of its avenues is bound to be, in some area, parsimonious and incomplete. To integrate and organize as much relevant information as possible is a feat that can be nothing more than a perpetual work-in-progress. In reality, all human inquiry and understanding is a work in progress yet much of our history is characterized by definitive proclamations that leave no or little room for improvement. This is the story that underlies the search for a general theory of *everything*, not just the physical world.

Nonetheless, as far as my purposes here are concerned, it is my opinion that *methods* and *applications* based on the visionary theories proposed by the likes of Wilber, Gebser, and Graves/Beck/Cowan have *not* been adequately formed and the ones that have been formed have yet to be sufficiently tested empirically.

Again, where applications have been formed or proposed there is a general lack of refinement that can only come from further research and a greater pooling of individuals and organizations working in this area. The impulse to create comprehensive maps of life, the universe, and everything

⁹⁷ Ibid. pp. 111-112.

from this new way of being in the world is, essentially, what the field is about.

At the time of this writing integral studies is still very much in a gestational phase. Only a relatively small percentage of the world and more specifically the American population is involved in, interested in, or actively living from this type of inquiry and awareness. There simply hasn't been enough time for these ideas to be tested in the culture at large over the periods of time needed for much of the empirical research that would help to solidify the field. Of course, much of the field is based upon empirical research that has been done under different guises such as developmental theory, evolutionary theory, systems theory, complexity science, and transpersonal studies. So, in this sense it could be argued that any new field, at least in the beginning, is a matter of linguistic relativity.

To be clear, I am stating that basic proposals *have* been made into the idea of what, for example, an integral pedagogy would look like. Both Wilber and Beck *have* made a great deal of trailblazing in this regard. However, there has *not* been much widespread action taken to test their methodologies and hypotheses, that is, on a larger scale. The possible exception is the great deal of work that Beck and Cowan have made into applying Spiral Dynamics, to a turbulent South Africa; a test that is well documented in Beck's book *The Crucible*.⁹⁸ They have, in a number of important ways, arduously tried to apply their ideas in the real world.

My point here is that such applicable efforts have not only been widely unknown to most people but have also been carried out in limited or limiting contexts. Of course, in my opinion, this is more a matter of getting enough people to do the basic research required to test the theories. Nonetheless, what research has been done should not be overlooked. Arguably, a good place to see the beginning of this application of theory and the first strong steps toward a greater dissemination is the newly formed Integral Institute⁹⁹, whose founding members include nearly every major professional who has been instrumental with the establishment of the overall integral ambition.

No less important in the context provided here are questions concerning why applications must be developed in the first place, how the pedagogy would be different, and what is the ultimate goal or purpose. This is a question of motive and must be included in the general impulse to create better maps by which to live by. It should go without saying that the answers to these questions, however relative, can either be simple summaries or complex explanations. Hopefully, both approaches can be used without losing sight of the vision, the original creative impulse driving our desire to know.

⁹⁸ John Petersen at the Arlington Institute and a few other organizations are just beginning this daunting task.

⁹⁹ The Integral Institute was founded by Ken Wilber and is based out of Boulder, Colorado.

The four models introduced here and briefly outlined are among the first wave of models based upon this more organized vision. It is certainly a matter of speculation when considering where these models will be in the future since more refined and sophisticated models are still in the making. One thing is certain: the integral vision has not fallen on deaf ears. There are already a growing number of individuals who are working hard to develop and expand the proposals and injunctions given here. With such strong and inspiring minds as the likes of Ken Wilber, Jean Gebser, Don Beck, Mark Woodhouse, and the whole array of individuals and organizations dedicated to this effort, the vision stands as the vanguard of a truly new wave of human evolution.

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