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Transcend and Include

Ken Wilber's Contribution to Transpersonal Psychology

Allan Combs

As is true for many great thinkers, to understand Ken Wilber it is important to appreciate the growth of his ideas over time. Wilber himself helps in this task by dividing the history of his work into five more-or-less discrete phases that he has identified as Wilber-1, Wilber-2, and so on (2006b, June 6). Nevertheless, his own often-quoted mandate, “transcend and include,” describes the overall trajectory of his thought surprisingly well (Wilber, 2000a, p. 9). Within this context he has always been interested in psychological and spiritual development carried upward to transpersonal levels. This theme especially dominated his writings through Wilber-3. Starting with Wilber-4 and continuing through Wilber-5, as well as at the time of this writing, he has concentrated his efforts more toward the formulation of a comprehensive philosophical worldview that extends beyond the scope of this chapter.

For clarity the topics on the following pages are laid out sequentially in terms of Wilber's five phases, always with an eye to the overall progression of his approach to transpersonal psychology.

Wilber-1: The Romantic Period (1975-1979)¹

Major books:

The Spectrum of Consciousness (1977);

No Boundary (1979).

Nowadays it may be difficult to appreciate the force with which *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (Wilber, 1977) and the highly readable *No Boundary* (Wilber, 1979) arrived in the intellectual bazaar of the late 1970s, and in particular the community of psychologists. It was a time of paradigm changes. Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of*

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Scientific Revolutions had been in print since 1962, but was getting more attention than ever. Popular books such as Gary Zukav's (1979) *Dancing Wu Li Masters*, Joseph Chilton Pearce's (1973) *Crack in the Cosmic Egg*, and Fritjof Capra's (1975) *Tao of Physics* took their places on bookstore shelves alongside Wilber's first two books. Excitement was in the air and things were changing. In spite of all this the number of psychologists who knew anything about transpersonal psychology outside of California was still very small. For example, I was living in Missouri in the late 1970s and was the only member of the *Association for Transpersonal Psychology* in the entire state.

In those days psychology was not only figuratively but also literally divided into three major camps. These were the so-called First Force, or behaviorism, dominating the academic world and associated at the time with B. F. Skinner (cf. Hastings, 1999). The Second Force included the psychodynamic psychologies of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Erik Erikson, and others. These tended to exist at independent institutes outside of academia, and in private practice. Many were MDs. The Third Force of humanistic psychology was spearheaded by Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, and a few others. The animosity between these factions was real. The behaviorists were especially discourteous if not downright rude. Maslow was given little respect in his own department at Brandeis University and his students were often the brunt of contempt from other faculty members.

Wilber's first publications in the late 1970s were important because they organized the entire field of psychology into a single theoretical framework or "spectrum." In doing so they transformed transpersonal psychology from its beginnings in humanistic psychology, the West Coast human potentials movement, and explorations of the wisdom of the East, into nothing less than a container large enough to embrace virtually all of psychology's major schools of thought and practice. It is true that most high-brow academics turned their noses up at Wilber, an outsider with no credentials, but he was widely read by an intelligent general public that included many psychologists and academics as well. My own experience at the time, teaching at an undergraduate liberal arts university, was typical. After years of trying to help students make sense out of all the conflicting directions in which psychology was headed, I finally had a map that fanned them all out like cards on the table, creating a spectrum where each type of psychology took its rightful place beside the others.

Since that time it has never been possible to see psychology as quite the fragmented discipline it had previously been. This tendency to conceptualize across broad areas of knowledge has characterized Wilber's work ever since. Starting with Wilber-3, around the mid-1990s (see below), it began to stretch across all realms of human understanding, transitioning Wilber to the category of philosopher.

In the late 1970s, however, the theoretical underpinnings of Wilber's (1977) spectrum theory seemed much less important than the fact that someone was finally making sense out of the many disparate vectors that comprised psychology. As if this were not enough, he was including ideas about altered states of consciousness from Eastern psychologies. This did nothing to endear him to a stodgy academic audience, but along with his informal and lucid writing style his work was immediately recognized by a huge following of people seeking answers to just the kinds of questions he was addressing. The situation has not changed greatly since that time and

Wilber is still more admired by a wide intellectual readership than by the professional academic world. But, as Michael Murphy, co-founder of the Esalen Institute, has often noted, progress is made one funeral at time (personal communication, June 4, 2010), and Wilber's work is now tolerated, if not justly honored, by an increasing academic following.

The Spectrum

The basic idea of the spectrum of consciousness as presented in his first two books was simple enough, although grounded in an essentially Eastern notion of human nature most easily seen in the traditional levels of being, or "sheaths," of Vedanta philosophy (Wilber, 1977, 1979). Wilber did an excellent job of aligning these with Buddhist ideas and notions from Western mysticism as well. The result was a cascade of psychological structures by which the original ground of being, or formless nondual consciousness, is reduced by a series of splits, first into the total organism² against the environment, then the ego against the body, followed by the persona against the shadow. Each step reduces the inner life of the individual another step, and increases its alienation, first from the outer world and then from the shadow aspects of itself. This simple sequence of reductions also marks a series of contractions of a person's identity, ultimately arriving at a cleaving of the inner person into the persona, or conscious personality, and the shadow, Carl Jung's (1939) term for the entire inner menagerie of psychic life evicted from the conscious light of day.

An important aspect of this original spectrum was that it spanned not only a wide variety of psychologies, but also modes of psychological treatment (Wilber, 1977, 1979). Even at the time of the present writing this is an unusual feature of transpersonal theories, and is one reason for the considerable interest that Wilber garnered from the beginning. A close look at Figure 9.1, drawn from *No Boundary* (Wilber, 1979), also discloses examples of types of psychotherapy at each level.

These therapies range from simple counseling to deal with issues of the shadow and persona, to psychoanalysis and other treatments at the level of ego psychology, and on to various forms of existential and humanistic treatment at the organismic (or existential) level.

Wilber's spectrum included a variety of Western esoteric traditions as well as Eastern philosophies that, taken together, construct a series of transpersonal levels leading up to unity consciousness. Placing these on the same general continuum as well-known Western psychologies was a radical move, and one of the most important pieces of Wilber's model. It was a move of considerable importance to the young field of transpersonal psychology because it placed previously exotic ideas about Eastern notions of consciousness, and mystical states in general, into a common framework of discussion with familiar Western models of personality, the mind, and consciousness.

Wilber discussed these ideas at length, and especially in *No Boundary* (1979) considered them in terms of *The Perennial Philosophy*, an ancient idea indicating a basic unity of esoteric philosophies. In 1945, Aldous Huxley had practically reinvented

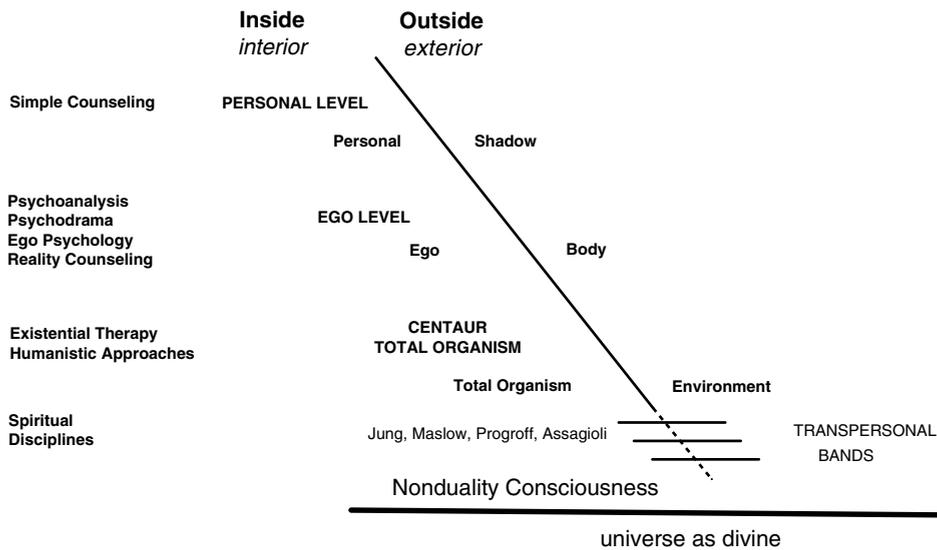


Figure 9.1 Spectrum of consciousness with suggested therapies from *No Boundary* (Wilber, 1979).

the ancient phrase (*philosophia perennis*) to refer to a set of basic themes he had discovered at the root of all religions. Most important among these was the notion of a divine reality as the origin of all being, and the fundamental ground of human consciousness. Giving actual descriptions of the mystical sense of cosmic unity, Wilber (1979) observed:

So widespread is this experience of supreme identity that it has, along with the doctrines that purport to explain it, earned the name “The Perennial Philosophy.” There is much evidence that this type of experience or knowledge is central to every major religion—Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism—so that we can justifiably speak of the “transcendent unity of religions” and the unanimity of primordial truth.” (p. 3)

Here one sees the beginnings of a notion that would expand and grow in sophistication throughout Wilber’s career, namely that the inner truth of human nature has a hierarchical structure. Later he would conceptualize the entire cosmos in this framework, but at this point he was struggling with how to organize the various structures of human experience. In the future he would also refer to this organization as the *Great Chain of Being*, referencing the Christian and more ancient notion of a cosmos vertically organized into a hierarchy of earthly and celestial beings (Lovejoy, 1960), and would draw from Sri Aurobindo’s writings on the hierarchical organization of the inner structures of the human being as well (Aurobindo, 1971; Sobel & Sobel, 1984).

The Loss of Unity

Wilber (1977, 1979) spoke infrequently of evolution in his first two books, but the seeds were already present for later discussions of it as a central aspect of his thinking. The progressive cleaving of an original unified consciousness into smaller and smaller fragments resulting in many kinds of pain and suffering, each calling for its own form of therapy, gives the clear appearance of a kind of evolutionary path leading away from an infantile unity of being. Here there is also a calling to return to the state of that original unity.

Now, every great theory of psychology has a basic notion of motivation. For classical Freudian theory it was the release of libidinal energy, ultimately toward a state of final quiescence in death. For Abraham Maslow it was the urge to move toward a more adequate, fulfilling, and ultimately self-actualizing life. Late in his life, Maslow (1971) also added a calling to transcendence. Wilber (1980a) recognized this urge but reframed it in his book, *The Atman Project*, as a calling to return to one's original unity. He would soon reframe it again into an evolutionary model of growth and transformation.

Wilber-2: Lifespan Evolution, the Pre-Trans Fallacy, and the Historical Evolution of Consciousness (1980-1982)

Major books:

The Atman Project: A Transpersonal View of Human Development (1980a);

Up from Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution (1981).

The term *evolution* does not appear in the original indexes of either of Wilber's first two books, *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (1977) and *No Boundary* (1979). During the Wilber-2 years, however, the idea of evolution became a central concept for Wilber, both as a metaphor for psychological growth and development, and for mapping transformations of consciousness across human history. These ideas would continue as a mainstay in his theoretical program from that time onward.

Exactly what did Wilber mean by *evolution*? He understands traditional science very well, and through his entire corpus he is inclined to take scientific findings and well-established scientific theories at their face value. For example, unlike many "new paradigm writers," with whom he has sometimes been wrongly bundled, he does not make fantastic claims about consciousness and quantum physics, the influence of mind over the material world, and the like. In fact, he has been quite critical of most such claims (e.g., Wilber, 2006a). Nevertheless, in different communities of discourse the term *evolution* has a variety of legitimate meanings. These range from ideas about the transformation of social and personal values over time, to the historical progress of scientific thought, and on to the evolution of biological species, including Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism. It is important to understand that Wilber has not set himself against any of these, although he has argued that certain of them, such as Neo-Darwinism, have been overstretched and do not explain everything they claim to explain (Wilber, 1995).

When he is not referring to established ideas about evolution from traditional disciplines, however, Wilber has his own slant on the concept. In the following passage from the 1996 edition of *The Atman Project* he wrote:

The course of human development—and *evolution at large*—is from subconscious to self-conscious to superconscious; from prepersonal to personal to transpersonal; from undermental to mental to over-mental; from pre-temporal to temporal to trans-temporal, by any other name: eternal. (p. 8)

In the above sense, psychological growth is all about evolution, whether it be about the individual or the history of human culture. Note, however, that this conception of evolution is more of an unfolding, or progressive movement toward fulfillment in unity consciousness, than like standard biological ideas on the topic.

As Wilber would point out many times in his later work, this notion fits hand-in-glove with ideas about spiritual evolution articulated in the writings of the great 20th century Indian yoga-sage Sri Aurobindo (e.g., Wilber, 2006a). It also fits comfortably with the history of human consciousness described by the 20th century German cultural historian Jean Gebser (e.g., 1972, 1949/1986). The latter, as with Sri Aurobindo, will continue from this time on to be among Wilber's most highly regarded influences. Sri Aurobindo's thought is described in greater detail in Chapter 7 of this book, so it will be treated here only in passing. Gebser's thinking, however, is addressed in more detail below.

With the above in mind, one can see that, despite the new emphasis on evolution, Wilber-2 is not dramatically different than Wilber-1; a point Wilber himself has emphasized (Wilber, 1997, see pp. 153-154). It also helps explain why he spoke at length about *involution* in his first two books (Wilber, 1977, 1979), even before he began speaking of *evolution*, and has continued to speak about it ever since.

Involution

Involution, as Wilber has used the term, is an ancient idea that refers to the indwelling or movement of the spirit. It is found, for example, in the works of Sri Aurobindo (e.g., 1990) and described by the Indian philosopher and historian Ananda Coomaraswamy (e.g., 1947), both familiar to Wilber. The idea is that spirit projects or steps itself downward, permeating and finally losing itself in the various levels of being. Then for Wilber (1980a, 1981), as for Sri Aurobindo, evolution is a reversal of this course, one in which spirit progressively manifests and discovers itself again. This is the deep basis of the growth and transformation of consciousness in the individual and in history. In the historical context it is an idea reminiscent of Hegel and the German Romantics. Indeed, speaking of Hegel, Wilber (1981) stated in *Up From Eden* that "his shadow falls on every page" (p. 314). More recently he has said,

The notion of a prior involutionary force does much to help with the otherwise impenetrable puzzles of Darwinian evolution, which has tried, ever-so-unsuccessfully, to explain why dirt would get right up and eventually start writing poetry. (Wilber, 1999, p. 12)

Sri Aurobindo (1980) had proposed similar ideas based on traditional levels of being as found in Hindu thought, especially in Vedanta.

Multiple Levels of Individual Evolution

During this period Wilber (1980a) expanded and articulated his original spectrum into no less than 17 levels (Table 9.1), and in the Appendix to *The Atman Project* compared them, level by level, to a wide variety of contemporary psychologies, as well as concepts from the Kabbalah and Sri Aurobindo's writings, and several traditional Buddhist and Hindu systems of thought. This propensity to take basic ideas and articulate them into multiple categories, then comparing and aligning them with other systems of thought, would become a hallmark of Wilber's work through much of his career.

Not surprisingly, observers wondered how he manages to organize such diverse bodies of information, and how he succeeds in synthesizing them. This is a question that would continue to intrigue his readers, and his critics. The answer would seem to be that he is an amazingly prodigious reader with an equally prodigious memory. Beyond that, he has always had a gift for synthesis. According to his friend Jack Crittenden (2001), his style is to approach any field of knowledge by searching for the most general ideas that will be accepted by virtually all representatives of that field. Crittenden offered the example of religion: What can all religions agree about? That Jesus Christ is the savior of humankind? Certainly not. That God as a divine being is the supreme creator and ruler of the cosmos? Not that either. That there exists some ultimate divine or creative principle? Perhaps this latter one. Wilber then takes

Table 9.1 Levels of Development, from *The Atman Project* (Wilber, 1980a)

Pleromatic
Uroboric
Axial-body
Pranic-body
Image-body
Membership-cognition
Early egoic/personic
Middle egoic/personic
Later egoic/personic
Mature Ego
Biosocial
Centaur
Low subtle
High subtle
Low causal
Hi causal
Ultimate

such overarching ideas as true and seeks even higher principles that will pass muster across a variety of different fields, always in search of general principles that have broad application and wide potential acceptance.

The Pre-Trans Fallacy

The clearest distinction between Wilber-1 and Wilber-2 comes in the form of the pre-trans fallacy (Wilber, 1980b). A simple but powerful idea, it refers to the mistake of conflating infantile or pre-egoic experiences with advanced or trans-egoic ones. Figure 9.2 illustrates this concept.

Here is a lifecycle pattern, drawn from *The Atman Project* (Wilber, 1980a), familiar from Wilber-1, but shown as a circle. Beginning in infancy, at the bottom, life moves upward and outward on the left, transitioning from an infantile state of “blooming buzzing confusion” (James, 1890/1981, p. 462) through childhood and adolescence, and on toward fully adult ego development. If growth continues, the individual moves on around and down to the right through a series of trans-egoic states toward a return to unity with the spirit.

The pre/trans fallacy comes into play when pre-egoic experience or behavior is mistakenly labeled as trans-egoic (Wilber, 1980b). For instance, infancy and childhood experiences have often been romantically taken to be spiritual, when in fact they are simply pre-egoic and pre-personal. In other words having no ego is not equivalent to being trans-egoic. When Wilber first proposed this idea many critics were incensed by his rejection of the authenticity of childhood spirituality. He stuck to his guns

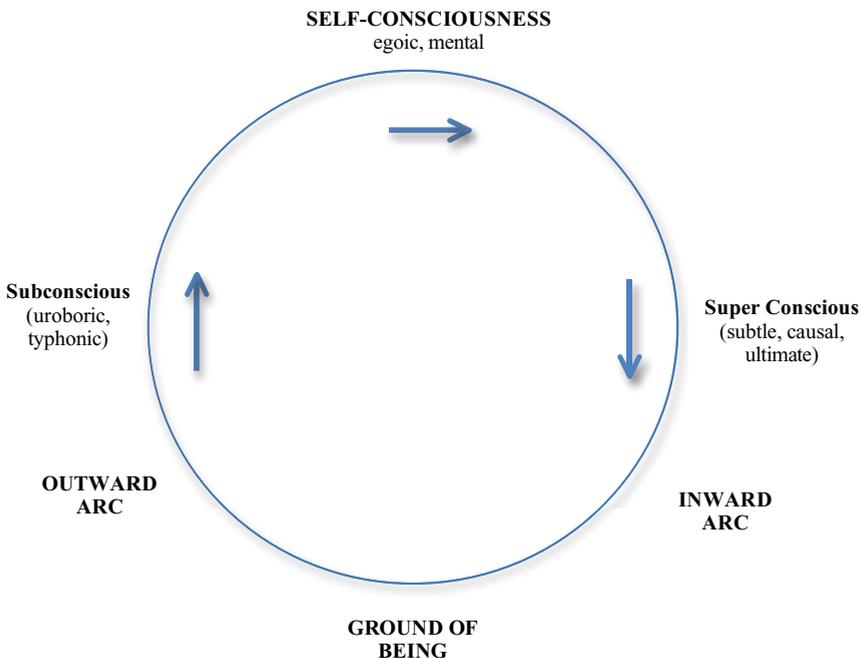


Figure 9.2 General life cycle, suggested from *The Atman Project* (Wilber, 1980a).

however, and did not revisit the issue in detail again until the publication of *Integral Spirituality* in 2006, as will be seen.

Once recognized, many instances of the pre/trans fallacy can be found in the American culture. Wilber (2006a) has been especially critical of the New Age culture that seemed to identify everything from ecstatic dancing, to swimming with dolphins and weekend “shamanism,” as spiritual. In a similar vein Wilber (1983b, 1995) identified certain psychologists as indulging the pre/trans fallacy. These included Carl Jung, for mistaking certain nonrational and undifferentiated states as spiritual or post-egoic experiences, while Freud did the opposite, mistaking genuine mystical experiences as infantile and pre-egoic. Wilber noted that this reductionist attitude toward post-egoic experiences has dominated much of psychology and psychiatry ever since.

Interestingly, although the pre/trans fallacy played a significant role in Wilber’s thinking throughout the Wilber-2 period, the term did not actually occur in either *The Atman Project* (1980a) or *Up From Eden* (1981). It appeared for the first time in print in a *ReVision Journal* article during 1980, simply titled “The Pre/Trans Fallacy” (1980b).

Transformation vs. Translation

In *The Atman Project* (1980a), Wilber first proposed the important distinction between *transformations* and *translations*. On reflection, this is a common sense idea. It simply states that personal transformations shift one “upward” toward growth when the deep or formative structures of consciousness or the self change appropriately; this needs to be distinguished from how one can shift laterally through different forms of expression while staying at the same level. The former indicates structural growth while in the latter the form of expression changes while the structure stays the same. Wilber wrote about these in fairly general terms, but later, in Wilber-3 he would apply the same ideas in terms of specific lines of development.

As an example, consider Lawrence Kohlberg’s (1981) well-known stages of moral development. Suppose that a man whose moral thinking is based on external sources of authority belongs to a church that denounces gay marriage. It is likely that he will adopt this moral view as well. However, if for other reasons he later finds himself to be a member of a church that actually approves of such marriage then his own views are also likely to change. This would not be because he has undergone a fundamental transformation to a higher and more accepting structure of moral thinking, but simply that his source of authority has changed position, producing the translation in his moral reasoning to the approval of such marriages.

Jean Gebser: The History of Consciousness and Culture

With the 1981 publication of *Up from Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution* Wilber entered new territory by fashioning a theory of the history of human consciousness. In doing so he relied heavily on the scholarship of the mid-20th century German cultural historian and poet Jean Gebser (1972, 1949/1986). Gebser was at ease with many languages, was widely read in history, literature, and the arts,

and was a personal acquaintance of many of the great minds of the mid-20th century (Feuerstein, 1987; Thompson, 1998). His most important discovery came when he realized that the turn of the 20th century had brought with it a new form of consciousness surfacing in the arts as well as science, mathematics, jurisprudence, and other fields (Gebser, 1949/1986). The key to this new consciousness was an escape from the rigid boundaries—what he termed “perspectival consciousness” (p. 19)—that had dominated much of human experience since the Renaissance. Put most simply, he found a new fluidity in, for example, the art of Picasso, the poetry of Rilke, the physics of Heisenberg, and so on, all pointing to a new *structure of consciousness* in which time and space, and even the sense of self, had become fluid and holistic. Gebser termed this new form of experience *integral consciousness*.

Having discovered the emergence of this new integral consciousness, Gebser began to consider the long span of human history, and doing so discovered what he believed to be several other structures of consciousness that had dominated different periods, each representing a different way of experiencing and interpreting reality (e.g., Feuerstein, 1987). He proposed five such structures that had unfolded in sequence. These overlapped greatly, but during each period one particular structure rose to dominate much of human experience. Briefly, the five structures are as sketched here.

The archaic structure of consciousness. This is Gebser’s (1949/1986) term for the transitional structure of consciousness that existed before the first fully human experience arose. He claimed quite honestly to know little about it because of the enormous time between then and now, and the absence of detailed artifacts representing that period. But he believed that there must have been a transition time when the first humans began to emerge from their prehuman ancestors.

Interestingly, this period of emergence has been researched intensively since Gebser in the mid-20th century, and even since Wilber wrote *Up from Eden* in 1981, so a much richer story can be told today about archaic consciousness, and indeed scholars are doing exactly that (e.g., Donald, 1991; Mithen, 1996).

The magical structure of consciousness. The magical structure of consciousness interprets the world in terms of magical forces (Gebser, 1949/1986). Georg Feuerstein (1987) characterized its principle features as egolessness, identity with a group or tribe; point-centered perception in which any location can be substituted for any other (as in “sympathetic magic”); space and time are experienced as fluid (telepathy and synchronicity are commonplace); human life is interwoven with the experience of nature; and power is exercised and experienced through magic.

Now, consistent with Wilber’s theme of “transcend and include,” each structure of consciousness remains with humanity even as history moves forward and newer structures come into ascendance. For instance, music and rhythm are intimately associated with the magical structure and even today have the power to arouse people emotionally and to transport them to imaginal landscapes beyond mundane reality. On the pathological side, magical thinking is still a common element in states of grief and anxiety, and on the opposite side sometimes vaunted by New Age writers and filmmakers as the path to love and riches. Interestingly, Anna Freud’s (1936/1987) classic

defense mechanisms rely heavily on magical operations such as repression, projection, reaction formation, and the like.

The mythical structure of consciousness. Structures of consciousness are characterized by the kinds of answers they provide to basic questions such as “What is the purpose of life?” “What happens to us when we die?” and “How was the world created?” (Combs, 2002). Magical cultures even today tell creation stories about tricksters and magic. Mythic stories of creation, however, come from grand narratives of gods and goddesses that, unlike the local spirits of magical cultures, rule over the entire cosmos. The agricultural revolution that took place more or less 12,000 years ago brought with it the first widespread worship of fertility goddesses associated with the night, the moon, and the earth (e.g., Cunliffe, 2011; Thompson, 1981). During early historical times male gods who were associated with the sky and the sun would replace these (e.g., Thompson, 1981). These male gods arose, for example, in the grand mythical pantheons of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and in the Germanic mythologies. Similar systems of mythology were developing in India and China as well (Duiker & Spielvogel, 2010).

The mythic structure of consciousness is associated with narratives and poetry, and along with these a richness of the imagination. Most of the great religions are about such narratives, and afford meaning to those who live according to the aspirations they provide. Even nonreligious persons often have some personal story, or myth, that gives purpose to their lives (Feinstein & Krippner, 1988).

The mental structure of consciousness. Gebser (1949/1986) did not think of these historical structures as sequentially improving, each superior to the one before. Indeed, he felt that the modern mental structure, which dominates the current moment of history, was in some ways the most restrictive one of all. Although mental consciousness began with the Greek and later Roman philosophers, modern mental consciousness, as Gebser saw it, began in the Renaissance when artists, architects, and writers first acquired perspectival consciousness. The latter places the individual viewer at a fixed location in the visual landscape, and solidifies the ego at a fixed subjective position in the head, contrary to mythic consciousness, which seems to have found its center in the heart.

There is no need for a detailed description of the mental structure here because it is today’s dominant mode of understanding reality. It relies on the faculties of reason and logic. Today, for example, one may visit shamans or religious healers, but if a medical condition is sufficiently serious, most people usually end up placing themselves in the hands of scientifically informed physicians. This is an example of how contemporary society places its trust in the mental structure.

Gebser (1949/1986) believed that each structure of consciousness had its own strengths and weaknesses. The scientific and other intellectual achievements of the mental structure are unquestionable, but beginning with the Age of Enlightenment there has been a tendency toward wrangling over details, which Gebser referred to as *ratio*, in part because it represents a division of the whole into smaller and smaller parts that are niggled over in nonproductive nitpicking. Thus, he felt that the mental

structure carries the seeds of its own trivializing. He believed this tendency toward hair-splitting wrangling lies at the root of many of the modern world's problems.

The integral structure of consciousness. The integral structure began to emerge, according to Gebser (1949/1986), around the turn of the 20th century, but may take centuries to become widely dominant. In the meantime he predicted strife on a wide scale, just as is now seen in the early 21st century political arena. As the German philosopher and a leader of the German Green Party, Rudolf Bahro (1994) has pointed out, the major political divisions in the world today run directly along the lines that separate different structures of consciousness.

Gebser first recognized the integral structure of consciousness in the paintings of Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee, where multiple viewpoints appear simultaneously as integral wholes (Feuerstein, 1987); and in the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, where time seems a fluid quality of experience. Full blown integral consciousness experiences the world in a kind of subtle or “diaphanous” light, while at the same time paradoxically it is more real and solid than in previous structures of experience. Although he usually avoided comparisons with Eastern philosophies, Gebser noted a fundamental similarity between integral consciousness and Zen satori.

Gebser and Wilber. We could say much more about Gebser's ideas (e.g., Combs, 2002, 2003, 2009), but the important thing here is to understand his influence on Wilber, first seen in *Up From Eden* (1981), and continuing along with Sri Aurobindo's influence to the present day. Even in the above brief sketch of Gebser's structures of consciousness, it is apparent how easily they align with Wilber's ideas of lifespan evolution. This alignment becomes more apparent in Wilber-3, which moves more explicitly into the language of developmental psychology. In short, Gebser's outline of the history of human consciousness seems nothing less than a mirror of the developmental history of the individual. The single point of disagreement concerns the nature of integral consciousness.

As has been seen, Wilber's (2000a) model of conscious evolution in the individual includes several transpersonal stages beyond the development of an adult ego. Gebser (1949/1986), on the other hand, brings history to a kind of fulfillment and conclusion with the emergence of the integral structure. My own view is that there are two explanations for this disparity, neither of which excludes the other (Combs, 2009). The first is that Gebser was essentially a cultural historian, although psychologically sophisticated, and he was simply reporting what he was seeing. The other is that Wilber was viewing several stages of higher personal development where Gebser was simply seeing a single structure. Gebser (1949/1986), for instance, suggested that certain historical figures such as Meister Eckhart in the 14th century and Nicholas of Cusa in the 15th century had already achieved integral consciousness, but an informal reading of their writings also suggests that they had experiences at very high levels of consciousness. On the other hand it is doubtful that Picasso or Klee, for example, experienced such rarified states of experience, though all are included in Gebser's examples of integral consciousness. Although they experienced integral consciousness in Gebser's sense, they did not, at least on an ongoing basis, experience the higher structures of consciousness that Wilber described.

Before moving on to Wilber-3 let me note that while it is not in the purview of this chapter to review criticisms that have been directed at Wilber's work, his overview of the evolution of consciousness, combined with the notion of the pre-trans fallacy, has easily engendered more *ad hominem* criticism than anything else he has done. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what the problem is here, in part because most of this criticism appears frankly uninformed and vehemently argued by those who have not carefully read his work. It seems, however, there is a popular notion that Wilber has nothing but disdain for primary cultures, and shamans in particular. Because Wilber has shown no interest in primary cultures, except in Paleolithic times, nor in modern shamans, such accusations seem curiously without support. This is a complex issue, however, especially considering that many contemporary tribal peoples as well as modern shamans are not the same at all as our Paleolithic ancestors (Combs & Krippner, 2003). In any case, it is not an issue that Wilber has addressed.

Wilber-3: Lines of Development, the Spectrum of Pathology, and the Beginnings of a New Paradigm (1983-1993)

Major books:

Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm (1983a);

A Sociable God: A Brief Introduction to a Transcendental Sociology (1983b);

Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Great Physicists (Ed., 1984c);

Transformations of Consciousness: Conventional and Contemplative Perspectives on Development (1986; Ed. with J. Engler & D. Brown);

Grace and Grit (1991).

Wilber-3 is often characterized by the introduction of *developmental lines*, first discussed in *A Sociable God* (Wilber, 1983b). This is the concept that individual development proceeds along several different paths at different rates. For example, a person might grow at an average rate in terms of moral development, rapidly in mathematical or musical skills, slowly in artistic judgement, and so on. The result is the everyday fact that different people have different distributions of abilities, or if one prefers, types of intelligence. These lines of development, as well as the overall growth of the personality, are navigated by a core self-system that is the individual's locus of identity and organization.

Now, the concept of lines was already well known in developmental psychology. For example, Piaget (1952; Flavell, 1963) had used the term *décalage* to refer to different rates of growth across diverse areas of intelligence. Nevertheless, for Wilber this represents an important shift because it comes directly from research in developmental and cognitive psychology. Despite the wide range of material in his previous scholarship, he had tended to rely on psychiatric theories such as those of Freud and Jung, as well as neo-analytic ego theory, rather than mainstream developmental research in the field of psychology. Beginning with the introduction of lines of development he began to pay close attention to such developmental research. Along with this came the recognition of other dimensions of individual differences, especially personality

types. Although he did not explore lines or types deeply, he would come to speak of levels, lines, and types as important identifying features for each individual.

Psychopathology and Types of Treatment

This was a highly productive period for Wilber, during which he continued to cultivate his earlier thinking about levels of development and forms of psychopathology. In a two-part journal article published in 1984 (Wilber, 1984a, 1984b), and in the 1986 book, *Transformations of Consciousness* (Wilber, Engler, & Brown, 1986) he presented detailed discussions of this topic, suggesting for each stage of development a major form of pathology as well as a modality of treatment. These can be seen in Table 9.2. This was scholarly work, relying on the literatures of ego development and psychopathology, as well as offering considered reflections on disorders that can occur at the highest levels of development and their treatments.

Each major stage is marked by a “fulcrum,” or milestone in the transformation of consciousness or the self to the next level of growth. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into detail about the individual levels and their transitions, but it is my own view that this work represents Wilber’s finest contribution to transpersonal psychology, and indeed to the field of psychology in general. In it one sees his major developmental stages organized in a systematic fashion, the ways each can miscarry into pathology, and suggested treatment modalities for each. This is not to say that the model is entirely correct, but it does an excellent job of organizing a broad range of psychological phenomena and is rich material for discussion and exploration in greater detail. It is not possible to know the extent to which these ideas have actually influenced the thinking of psychologists since that time, but judging from the author’s personal experience it is safe to say that its effect has not been trivial.

Table 9.2 Levels of Development shown beside Fulcrums with Characteristic Pathologies and Treatment Modalities, suggested from *Transformations of Consciousness* (Wilber et al., 1986)

<i>Fulcrums of self-development</i>	<i>Characteristic psychopathology</i>	<i>Treatment modalities</i>
Ultimate (F-10)		
Causal (F-9)	Causal Pathology	Path of Sages
Subtle (F-8)	Subtle Pathology	Path of Saints
Psychic (F-7)	Psychic Disorders	Path of Yogis
Existential (F-6)	Existential Pathology	Existential Therapy
Formal-Reflexive (F-5)	Identity Neurosis	Introspection
Rule/Role (F-4)	Script Pathology	Script Analysis
Rep-Mind (F-3)	Psychoneurosis	Uncovering Techniques
Phantasmic-Emotional (F-2)	Narcissistic-Borderline	Structure-Building Techniques
Sensory physical		
Undifferentiated Matrix (F-1)	Psychoses	Physiological/Pacification

New Paradigms

During this period from 1983 to 1993 Wilber was beginning to seriously explore diverse epistemologies for understanding and acquire knowledge in general. In *Eye to Eye* (Wilber, 1983a, pp. 2-3), for example, he wrote of Saint Bonaventure's "three eyes of knowing." These are:

- 1 Eye of flesh (monologic/sensibilia/physical senses);
- 2 Eye of mind (dialogic/intelligibilia/rational senses);
- 3 Eye of spirit (translogic/transcendelia/inner senses).

Each represents a different epistemology and a different domain of knowledge acquisition.

At this point one can begin to see that the proper understanding of these three eyes of knowing, including their strengths and weaknesses, foreshadowed Wilber's later ideas about *epistemological pluralism* and *integral methodological pluralism*.

Wilber-4, -5, and Beyond: All Quadrants, All Levels (1995—the present)

Major books:

- Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (1995);
- The Eye of Spirit* (1997);
- The Marriage of Sense and Soul* (1998);
- Integral Psychology* (2000a);
- A Theory of Everything* (2000b);
- Integral Spirituality* (2006a; also Volume 2 of *The Kosmos Trilogy* and *The Many Faces of Terrorism* at various locations on the Worldwide Web).

The 1995 publication of *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (often referred to as SES) marked a major turning point in Wilber's work. Although apparent in his earlier publications, especially *Eye to Eye* (1983a), at this point there was no question that he had become a philosopher. He claims he had actually quit referring to himself as a transpersonal psychologist as far back as the early 1980s (Wilber, 2012), but in SES the thrust of his thinking moved towards the creation of a broad philosophical system.

SES (Wilber, 1995) reconceived the entire cosmos, both in its objective and its subjective dimensions, as *holons*. According to Wilber a holon is a whole process or structure that is part of a larger process or structure, which in turn is part of a still larger one, and so forth, while in the downward direction it is composed of smaller processes or structures made of still smaller ones all the way down. The idea, familiar nowadays in systems science, was suggested in part by Arthur Koestler in *Janus: A Summing Up* (1979), his last complete book. The title refers to the two-faced god, Janus, one face pointing toward larger more inclusive structures and the other toward smaller included ones. Wilber (1983a) had already introduced these ideas in a preliminary

way in *Eye to Eye*. In SES and his following publications he was to raise this concept to an inclusive régime comparable to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’s Monadology (Leibniz, 1714/2012). Indeed, in SES Wilber made numerous references to Leibniz and the nature of his monads.

To explore the system of thought that grew out of the ideas developed in SES (Wilber, 1995) would take our discussion well beyond the limits of this chapter. One important idea, however, was the notion that every holon has four dimensions, or four aspects, often represented by the well-known four quadrant diagram shown in Figure 9.3. That is, each holon has a subjective inner reality, represented by the left two quadrants, and an objective outer reality represented by the right two quadrants. The two upper quadrants represent singular or individual aspects of the holon, and the bottom two represent plural or social aspects. For example, seen as a holon a person has an experiential interior (upper left), while at the same time is part of some larger experiential community or communities (lower left). In similar fashion this person possesses a physical body (upper right) that is part of some community or communities of other bodies (lower right). In terms of fields of inquiry the upper left represents phenomenology and much of psychology, the lower left language and hermeneutics, the upper right behaviorism and objective science, and the lower right systems science. However, these examples only scratch the surface of an enormously complex and comprehensive theoretical framework, one that Wilber (2006) further expanded in *Integral Spirituality* to include interiors and exteriors for each of the four quadrants. For instance, the “interior of the interior” of the upper left quadrant represents “raw” experience. An example is the tangible feel of a toothache or the taste of an orange. At the same time the exterior of the interior of the upper left

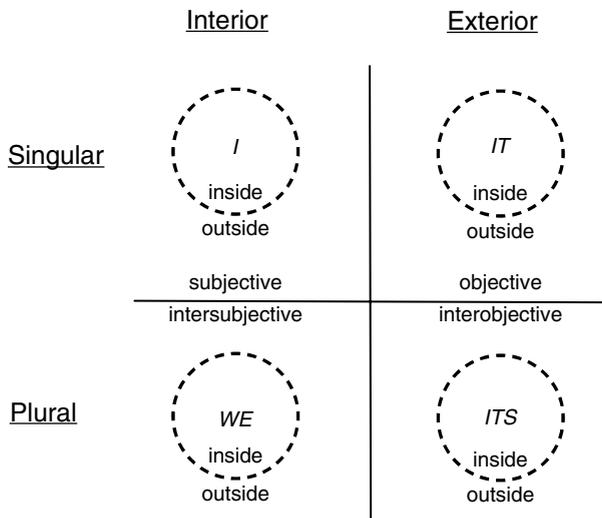


Figure 9.3 The four quadrants shown with interiors and exteriors for each quadrant, suggested from *Integral Spirituality* (Wilber, 2006a).

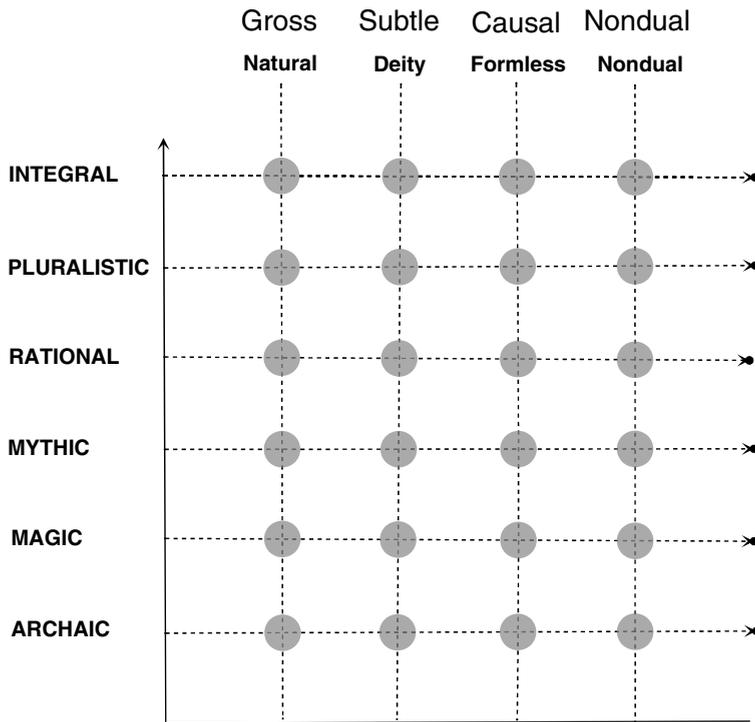


Figure 9.4 A Wilber-Combs lattice, suggested from *Integral Spirituality* (Wilber, 2006a).

quadrant represents the view of an inner observer, or in Wilber’s terms, “the look of the feel.”

This complete system allowed Wilber to place the individual within a rich framework of quadrants as well as levels of development, collectively termed the AQAL or “All-Quadrants All-Levels” model (e.g., Wilber, 2000b). Adding developmental lines and personality types, as well as the fact that a person can be in any of a number of states of consciousness, creates what Wilber informally has called the “kosmic address.”

During this period Wilber also paid considerable attention to methodological issues, leading to a set of considerations referred to together as *Integral Methodological Pluralism* (Wilber, 2006a). Its implications are beyond the scope here, but in essence suggest a comprehensive range of types of inquiry based on the multiple perspectives presented in the AQAL format.

Following his own edict to transcend and include, in *Integral Psychology* Wilber (2000a) continued to examine questions of personal growth and transformation, reframing many of his previous ideas in terms of the newer AQAL model. In *Integral Spirituality* (Wilber, 2006a) he discussed at length the implications of the AQAL model as a set of *perspectives* leading to a complete “post-metaphysical” worldview. The latter is an idea suggested by contemporary European philosophers, especially Jürgen Habermas (e.g., 1985).

In the meantime Wilber continued to improve on earlier ideas about development. In *Integral Spirituality* (Wilber, 2006a) he introduced the Wilber-Combs Lattice, a concept that solved a problem that had troubled many of his readers since Wilber-2 and the pre-trans fallacy. This was the implication that the experience of a child must always be pre-egoic, thus any claims of childhood spirituality had to be considered as instances of the pre-trans fallacy.

The Wilber-Combs Lattice

The issue of childhood spirituality was related to the puzzling fact that many people who have not reached advanced levels of personal development report temporary but powerful experiences of subtle or “higher” states of consciousness, in other words spiritual experiences (see Figure 9.4). But according to Wilber’s earlier models such states of consciousness are identified with advanced developmental levels of the self. In this way of thinking it was not possible for children, or young people in general, retarded people, and so on, to have authentic spiritual experiences. The solution to this enigma occurred to both Wilber and Combs (this author) independently, and is presented in detail by Wilber (2006a) in *Integral Spirituality*, and in my own book, *Consciousness Explained Better* (Combs, 2009). Ideas leading up the Wilber-Combs Lattice had actually been explored in a preliminary way by Wilber in SES (1995), and by this author in *The Radiance of Being* (Combs, 2002).

It now seems an obvious solution, but like so many “obvious” ideas, it was only apparent after the fact. Put simply, people have spontaneous experiences of higher or mystical states of consciousness, *peak experiences* in Maslow’s (1962, 1971) terms, but when they return to everyday consciousness they interpret them to others and themselves through their own structure of development. A child may be deeply moved by such an experience, but will interpret it in the language of a child. Add this to the fact that people at all levels of personal growth occasionally have transient mystical or peak experiences and one has the basis for the wide range of reports given for such experiences.

Summing Up: Wilber’s Legacy to Transpersonal Psychology

One of the most important functions of a good scientific theory is to summarize the important observations of a field of inquiry, while providing a roadmap of the territory—that is, putting some degree of organization onto the collection of disparate facts and observations that constitute that field. Wilber’s early publications, whether correct or incorrect in detail, did this effectively for transpersonal psychology, as well as for the field of psychology in general, and as such made a contribution of significant proportions. Through most of the 1980s Stanislav Grof’s (1975, 1985, 1988) holographic model of the psyche was the only other major transpersonal theory of consciousness, and it did not attempt to detail stages of growth or types of therapy, nor integrate broad fields of knowledge. By the late 1980s Michael Washburn’s (1988) view of how transpersonal experiences arise became another contender, but as with Grof’s holographic model, did not address the wider range of issues that characterized

Wilber's work. Contemporary theorist Jorge Ferrer (e.g., 2002) offers a postmodern view of transpersonal experiences that relies strongly on social and historical context, but again does not address the range of purely psychological issues that Wilber has spoken to in the history of his writings.

Wilber's early publications had created broad interest in the previously almost unheard-of field of transpersonal psychology in large part by placing it in the same theoretical context as traditional psychological theory, while including Eastern ideas as well. In these ways he has provided an important service to the field of psychology.

Notes

1. All such dates are approximate.
2. *Organism* was actually a term used in experimental psychology at the time to refer to an animal that was the subject in an experiment, but it had recently been popularized by the humanistic psychologist, Carl Rogers, to refer to the entire human being, body and mind, conscious and unconscious.

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