



**Ken Wilber's AQAL Metatheory: An Overview**

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**Abstract**

This paper surveys the development of Ken Wilber's Integral metatheory to date through five main phases over thirty-five years, twenty-plus books, and numerous articles. Understanding what the major contributions of each phase added to the whole reveals that Wilber's metatheory was firmly grounded by an impulse to integrate scientific, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual ways of being-in-the-world from the very beginning. Therefore, the Integral Spectrum Psychology that permeates Phase-1 through Phase-5 provides a critical foundation from which to apply an "Integrally informed approach" to any field to enhance its methods, validity claims, and practical applications.

## Introduction

*“It is certainly true that I have tried to offer both an integral vision and a critical theory; whether they succeed or not remains to be seen.”<sup>1</sup>*

Kenneth Earl Wilber (b. 1949), the integral philosopher and psychologist, resides in Denver, Colorado. He is a founding principal of the Integral Institute in nearby Boulder. He traces his family lineage back to Meriwether Lewis (of the Lewis and Clark Expedition), was born an “Air Force brat” in Oklahoma City, OK, is around 6’5” tall, tips the scales around 185 pounds, has a penchant for dogs, Red Bull, and chocolate, and considers himself a *pandit*, or scholar/teacher; a concept derived from the Hindu tradition of jnana yoga. During his career as a theorist, his principal focus has been on consciousness evolution, developmental studies, and integral philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

Integral means balanced, inclusive, and comprehensive. When applied to a research methodology it means that one aspires to cover as many perspectives as possible. As such, Wilber’s Integral metatheory is a postmodern attempt to balance all the authentic methods and validity claims in use today to show how each covers a “true but partial” slice of the larger pie of human consciousness. By postmodern, it seeks to include the very best practices and critiques of traditional, modern, and postmodern philosophers, scientists, mystics, and well, everyone with deep insight into the human experience. At its best, Integral metatheory has the potential to show how science, art, spirituality, and everything in-between provide valid insights that, when taken as a whole, provide the most complete view—a *more* true and *less* partial view—of human consciousness currently available.

Wilber is still busy developing his metatheory, and his cogent critics are a key source of constructive and deconstructive feedback that co-creates important refinements. Thus, they form a mostly cooperative, if sometimes raucous, community that is jointly developing the overall theory. Still, many Wilber critics fail to formulate deeply coherent critical responses because

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<sup>1</sup> Wilber, “Introduction to the collected works of Ken Wilber: Volume 7,” 2003g, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Biographical material is from Reynolds (2004, 2006), Visser (2003), Wilber (1997, 2003i), and personal communication with the author.

they are not familiar with the entirety of his work. Since he maps what he calls the Kosmos, after Pythagoras, from “dust to Deity,” his Integral metatheory covers an unprecedented array of ideas, disciplines, and ways of knowing—East and West, North and South, premodern, modern, and postmodern. Still, that does not mean it is complete in any way, or tells us what or how to think. There are plenty of gaps to be filled in and room for further refinements. Thus, the goal of Integral metatheory is help us take an “Integrally informed approach” to our own disciplines to test out the waters directly.

While Wilber used the term “a theory of everything,” he makes no claim to *explain* everything in any final sense. “The theory of everything” is indeed a noble concept, but is also an oxymoron because it can never fully explain the creative novelty or emergence of evolution’s next surprising development. Even though Wilber used that moniker in a popular book (Wilber, 2000a), it appears to be a move calculated to introduce his Integral metatheory into the “flatland” dominated by monological sciences and philosophies, particularly new physics, quantum mechanics, and system theory. The latter fields still maintain a tenacious claim as *sole purveyors* of “the theory of everything.” But they tend to explain only the most basic level, the physical, and thus *least* conscious in evolutionary terms. For instance, biological life forms are more conscious than the lifeless quantum fields of a nebula. Though both contain varying degrees of interiority, a bacterium is *more* conscious than a nebula because it is a more complex and self-replicating lifeform. In turn, a human being, the pinnacle of consciousness evolution on our planet to date, is more complex, self-reflexively aware, and thus *more* conscious than a bacterium. Therefore, for what follows, an “integral theory of consciousness” is a more accurate term than a “theory of everything.”

Wilber’s Integral metatheory is named AQAL (pronounced “ah-qwul”), which stands for all *quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types*.<sup>3</sup> Along with the *self-system* that integrates and navigates them, these six core organizing principles, or orienting generalizations, are analogous to the notes of a musical scale in relation to a symphony. Just as Richard Wagner’s epic Ring Cycle of four operas is in the key of E-flat Major, we can describe Wilber’s Integral metatheory

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<sup>3</sup> See Wilber, *The integral vision: A very short introduction to the revolutionary integral approach to life, god, the universe and everything* (2007) for a thorough, accessible introduction to AQAL metatheory.

as being in the “key of AQAL.” Though Wagner’s Ring Cycle employs many different musical keys, they all ultimately have a fundamental relationship to the main scale tones of E-flat Major. The same is true with AQAL metatheory, even though Wilber’s writings cover a wide range of ideas, fields, and ways of knowing, they *all* fundamentally relate to the six core organizing principles of *quadrants, levels, lines, states, types, and the self-system*. But this metatheory did not develop overnight; it took over three decades to develop through five general phases. Wilber was the first to divide his work into four main phases when he included retrospective commentary and endnotes in *The Eye of Spirit* (1997b). Scholars and critics have subsequently built on that foundation to identify an emerging fifth phase.

In a nutshell, Phase-1 and Phase-2 emphasized the importance of *levels* of human development, and the individual and collective interiors (two of the four *quadrants*). Phase-3 added developmental *lines* (e.g., Gardner’s multiple intelligences) *states* (waking, dreaming, deep sleep, altered, meditative, etc.), and the *self-system* (locus of identification, navigation, and integration). Phase-4 was the first mature formulation of AQAL metatheory, also called the *Integral Operating System* (IOS). AQAL added the four *quadrants* (individual, collective, interior, and exterior perspectives) and *types* (e.g., male/female “voices,” Myers-Briggs, etc.). Phase-5’s main focus thus far is the application of *Integral Post-Metaphysics* (IPM) and *Integral Methodological Pluralism* (IMP) to create an integral scientific method and applications.

Phase-5 is relatively recent, emerging with the new millennium, and in developmental, evolutionary terms Phase-5 “transcends yet includes” all the viable elements in the previous four phases of the theory. Transcend yet include means that there is a developmental direction over time that is irreversible. For example, seedlings grow into saplings and then into trees, but not vice versa. Caterpillars grow into chrysalises and then into butterflies, but not vice versa. So this “but not vice versa” is the crucial metric we use to accurately map any developmental, evolutionary sequence, whether in the formation of galaxies, biospheres, or human populations.

Wilber also owns the rare achievement of having his collected works published while still alive. As such, Phases 1-4 have been more accurately analyzed to date. Wilber provides some insight into the “transcend yet include nature” of his metatheory.

The works of these [four] phases form a fairly coherent whole. It is not so much that one period was rejected and replaced by its successor, but that the works of each period remain, in my opinion, largely valid, and the succeeding works simply add new material, not erase old. Each phase was relatively true but partial, and had much of its partialness corrected by subsequent addition (or so I trust). Even the works of phase-1, if their occasional Romanticisms are removed, contribute useful foundation stones for this particular edifice.<sup>4</sup>

Wilber-5 was outlined in Excerpts A-D, and G (Wilber, 2003a-e) from the second major tome of the Kosmos trilogy tentatively called *Kosmic Karma and Creativity* (unpublished). Brad Reynolds, one of Wilber's senior students, commented on Phase-5:

At best, we have suggested, this may be the first truly integral system in the history of the world that actually includes *all* the possible modes of knowing or methodologies available..., thus generating an *Integral Methodological Pluralism*; at worst, it's one that's close, at least close enough to warrant some serious study and a genuine inspection on the way to reconstructing an even better integral system.<sup>5</sup>

In its simplest expression, AQAL metatheory covers three complementary aspects of human endeavor: 1. ontology (being), 2. epistemology (knowing), and 3. methodology (doing). Together, these provide the philosophical and scientific methodological framework in which Wilber's metatheory unfolded from Phase-1 into Phase-5. If your head is beginning to hurt, don't worry you're in good company! While his metatheory may initially seem to be an insurmountable edifice, this is one of the reasons to explore it bit by bit, beginning with his first book to see what trends have been there from the start and how they naturally developed from the initial "spectrum model" into a full-blown metatheory. In time, the elegant simplicity of the six core notes of the AQAL scale become clearer.

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<sup>4</sup> Wilber, *Eye to eye*, 2001b, p. xiii.

<sup>5</sup> Reynolds, *Where's Wilber At?* 2006, p. 78-79.

Our goal, then, is to briefly trace the five main phases in which AQAL metatheory unfolded to better understand how these six core elements—*quadrants, levels, lines, states, types*, and the *self-system* who integrates them—work together. Further, I hope to show that AQAL metatheory was permeated by scientific, philosophical, psychological, and spiritual impulses *from the beginning* that sought unification within a coherent, holistic, and integral approach that can be applied to any field of human endeavor. As we will see, AQAL is one of the best metatheories currently available, because it successfully synthesized a vast array of true but partial gems from premodern, modern, and postmodern knowledge into a practical system.

**Phase-1 (Spectrum-1): Recaptured Goodness, ca. 1972-1978<sup>6</sup>**

**Major Books<sup>7</sup>:** *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (1977), *No Boundary* (1979).

Phase-1 laid the important foundation for all subsequent work. Beginning with his first book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, Wilber's insatiable drive to post-modernize scientific, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual aspects of human experience played out in a variety of ways. In his early twenties, he dropped out of the pre-med program at Duke University, but earned a graduate degree with honors in biochemistry at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, while engaging rigorous Zen practice with several teachers, and working as a dishwasher. During this period he was also a voracious reader of Eastern and Western developmental psychology and philosophy. So, along with rigorous intellectual analysis, he was *doing* the actual methods used in the East for millennia. In time, his direct experiences, verified by his teachers, validated the existence of a spectrum of human consciousness that included *matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit*.

Thus, his first theoretical work included a major breakthrough that integrated the best available psychotherapeutic maps from Freud (West) and Buddha (East), among others, to model a

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<sup>6</sup> The dates for each phase are triangulated from Reynolds (2004, 2006), Visser (2003), and various Wilber books, essays, and audio interviews. While somewhat arbitrary, I considered time spent in research, writing, and first publication dates of major books to estimate these dates.

<sup>7</sup> For this header, I used the year of first publication to emphasize genealogy. These may differ from other citations in the main body of the paper that refer to subsequent editions.



*spectrum psychology*.<sup>8</sup> Freudian depth psychology emphasized the prepersonal (id) and personal (ego) while Buddhist psychologies emphasized the personal (ego) and transpersonal (spirit). Spectrum-1 synthesized valid elements found in both Western and Eastern maps, and accounted for preconscious, self-conscious, and superconscious aspects of human development. For example, Wilber saw that the Hindu *koshas* or *sheaths* represented different *levels* of the spectrum, and so the *anna-maya-kosha* represented the gross, physical level, the *prana-maya-kosha* represented the subtle, vital level, and the *ananda-maya-kosha* represented the causal, Kosmic unity level. While the Eastern spectrum was more complete, covering gross, subtle, and causal *levels*, all of which had interiors and exteriors, Wilber realized that current Western systems could be situated *within* that larger spectrum, and thus enhance each other. As such, his Spectrum-1 model outlined four main *levels*: Gross Ego, Existential, Transpersonal, and Unity Consciousness.

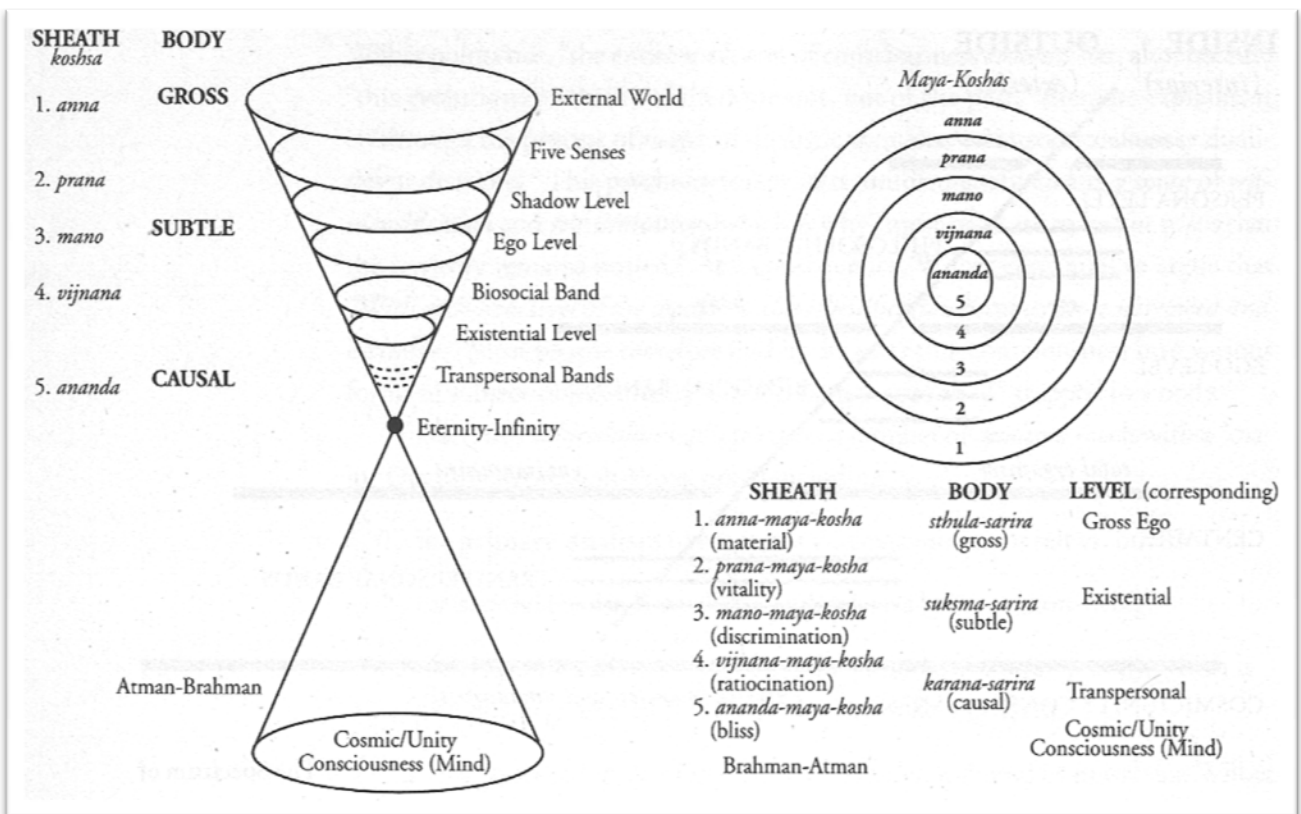


Figure 1. Sheaths, Bodies, and Levels of the Spectrum<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Henceforth, I will often refer to Phase-1 as Spectrum-1.

<sup>9</sup> Image from Reynolds, *Embracing reality*, 2004, p.60.

According to Frank Visser, "... Virtually overnight, Wilber was acknowledged as a leading thinker in the fields of psychology and philosophy, with serious reviews comparing him to Freud, Hegel, and even Plato."<sup>10</sup> Wilber's *spectrum psychology* also contributed greatly to the Fourth Force or transpersonal psychology movement founded by Abraham Maslow, Stanislav Grof, Anthony Sutich, and others in the late 1960s.<sup>11</sup> So he became one of the leading transpersonal theorists in the late 1970s.

Another critical feature of Wilber's early synthesis of East and West to consider is his cosmology of *involution* and *evolution*. The central premise of modern evolutionary theory is that our universe was created by a Big Bang. The early universe consisted of lifeless quantum fields that gradually formed into galaxies, solar systems, and planets (Wilber calls these *physiospheres*). Over billions of years the physiosphere we now know as planet Earth became increasingly complex, diversified, and early cellular life forms emerged to form a *biosphere* (after Suess), which transcended yet included our physiosphere. The third great stage of evolution was the emergence of the *noosphere* (after de Chardin) that transcended yet included both physiosphere and biosphere. As humanity's self-reflexive mode of awareness (e.g., Descartes' "cognito ergo sum") emerged, "evolution was at last becoming conscious of itself."<sup>12</sup>

That's an overview of our modern Western creation story, one deeply embraced by Wilber, but what exactly preceded the Big Bang? On that, modern evolutionary sciences are embarrassingly silent, and most defer to philosophers and theologians because the answers are never to be found in their *empirical methods* based solely on the five senses or *dialogical methods* based solely on reason alone. In other words, *translogical methods* based upon deep intuitive senses are not considered authentic means of disclosing the real and true by modern epistemologies. So it is

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<sup>10</sup> Visser, *Ken Wilber thought as passion*, 2003, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> The First Force included the Behaviorist schools of Watson and Skinner, the Second Force included the Psychoanalytical or Depth schools founded by Freud, Adler, Erikson, Jung, Fromm, etc. and the Third Force included the Humanistic/Existential school founded by Maslow, Rogers, May, Reich, etc. (Cook-Greuter, 20<sup>th</sup> Century background for integral psychology, 2006, pp. 144-184.)

<sup>12</sup> De Chardin, *The phenomenon of man, introduction by Sir Julius Huxley*, 2002, p. 20. Also, recall the "but not vice versa" directionality of evolution. In evolutionary terms, the human noosphere didn't "poof in" and neither did the biosphere. There were long, long stretches of time in which there were nothing but quantum physiospheres (nebulae, stars, planets, moons, asteroids, comets, etc.). Biospheres emerge only when conditions allowed, and only then could a noosphere emerge. By definition, these three main phases are irreversible. Any reverse directionality at this scale is due to catastrophic extinction and regression, in which case the whole process begins yet again.

from the mystical seers of premodern Eastern traditions, particularly the Vedic (Upanishads), that the notion of *involution* was introduced by Wilber to account for what preceded the Big Bang. He admits that this is a *metaphysical assumption*, but an important one that has merit and a long tradition in the East (see Appendix 2).

With *involution* and *evolution* the basic idea is that *Spirit* as Causal Consciousness “steps down” or “throws itself out” into *soul*, then *mind*, then *body*, and finally *matter* causing a Big Bang of primordial *physios*, which contains varying degrees of proto-interiority that sets the stage for matter to begin its journey back to Spirit through the evolutionary process (e.g., physiospheres, then biospheres, then noospheres, then...). Thus, the notion of involutory and evolutionary “currents,” “fields,” or telos helps explain the plausibility that Spirit is hardwired into all physiospheres “before the beginning,” in the beginning (Big Bang), *and* thereafter providing a “push and pull” or innate directionality and intention to the Kosmos. According to Wilber:

Now, of course, you are perfectly free to believe in evolution and reject the notion of involution. I find that an incoherent position; nonetheless, you can still embrace everything... about the evolution of culture and consciousness, and reject or remain agnostic on involution. But the notion of a prior involutory 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.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, in his very first book, Wilber divided the two main sections into Evolution and Involution based on Coomaraswamy to more adequately situate human development and evolution within the paradoxical context of the Spirit *and* form, One *and* many, unmanifest *and* manifest, mind *and* body, and interiors *and* exteriors. Further, he was confounded that these seemingly unbridgeable dualisms were explored by a variety of disparate methodologies in competing schools that more often than not, sought to negate, deny, or marginalize each other. But Wilber honored and included all “true but partial” approaches from the beginning, thus the holistic

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<sup>13</sup> Wilber, “Introduction to the collected works of Ken Wilber: Volume 2,” 2003f.

impulse toward integration was explicit in Spectrum-1, and would be made increasingly so in every subsequent book.

The introductory scope of this paper prohibits going into detail with all of Wilber's major books, but the point is that Wilber was driven *from the very beginning* by an impulse, a deep intuition to provide a more comprehensive view of human development *and* therapy based upon an empiricism whose methods included not only sensorimotor data (five senses), but mental (rational senses), as well as transcendental (inner senses) data into a broader epistemology that would eventually be called Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP) in Phase-5. We can clearly see traces of this in Spectrum-1.

Wilber's next book, *No Boundary*, continued to flesh out the spectrum model, and mapped various psychopathologies and therapies to various stages of development. It remains one of Wilber's most popular books to this day, because it was written for the layperson and clearly spelled out the spectrum model from a transpersonal perspective.<sup>14</sup> Again, we see the influence of Eastern philosophies and methods that helped to clarify why some therapies worked and some did not. Wilber pointed out that various psychological and spiritual schools actually addressed different areas of the spectrum and were thus complementary:

Some of the correspondences are shown in [figure 2 below], where the major schools of 'therapy' are listed beside the level of the spectrum toward which they fundamentally aim. I should mention that because, like any spectrum, these levels shade into one another quite a bit, no absolutely distinct and separate classification of the levels or the therapies addressing those levels is possible. Further, when I 'classify' a therapy on the basis of the level of the spectrum it addresses, that means that deepest level which that therapy recognizes, either explicitly or implicitly. Generally speaking, you will find that a therapy of any given level will recognize and accept the potential existence of all of the levels above its own, but deny the existence of all those beneath it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Visser, *Thought as passion*, 2003, p. 64.

<sup>15</sup> Wilber, *No boundary*, 2001a, pp. 12-13.

*No Boundary* showed how the basic levels of the spectrum have a natural affinity to already existing therapies. Wilber researched and included the great premodern schools of Vedanta, Vajrayana, Mahayana, Zen, Neo-Platonic, Taoism, esoteric Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, and their therapeutic methods in the Transpersonal and Unity Consciousness levels.

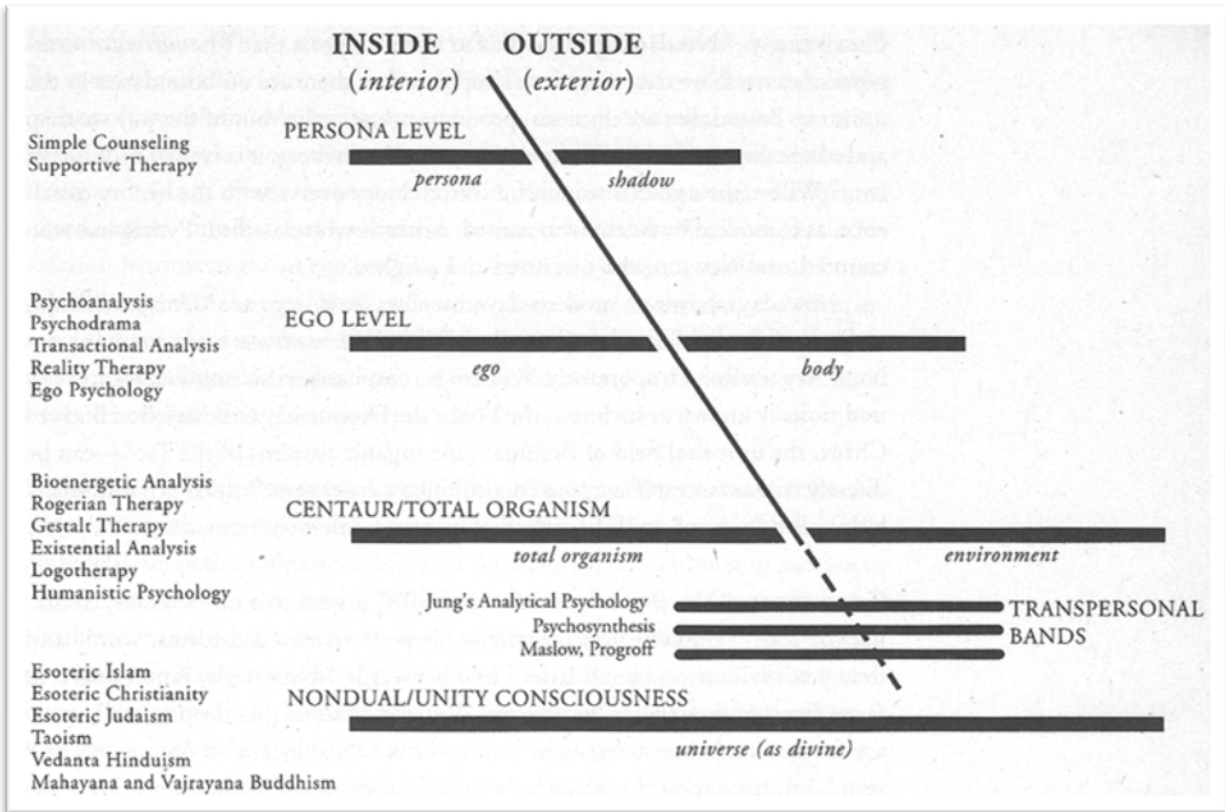


Figure 2. Therapies and Levels of the Spectrum<sup>16</sup>

Overall, Spectrum-1 emphasized the importance of individual interiors, how they developed through a spectrum of consciousness, and how various therapies could be applied problems originating at different *levels* of the spectrum. As such, each had its place in the bigger picture, and what would come to be called the Upper-Left quadrant in Phase-4, the individual interior, *served as the anchor* during this period from which the rest of AQAL metatheory would transcend yet include new additions in successive works.

<sup>16</sup> Image from Reynolds, *Embracing reality*, 2004, p.93.

**Phase-2 (Spectrum-2): Growth to Goodness, ca. 1978-1983**

**Major Books:** *The Atman Project* (1980), *Up from Eden* (1981), *A Sociable God* (1983).

Phase-2 continued to flesh out the spectrum model<sup>17</sup>, but with several important breakthroughs. First, as Wilber learned more about human development and therapy he realized that various researchers had misunderstood the essential paradox of Spirit as “Ground and goal” of the evolutionary process, because they committed what he came to call *pre/trans fallacies*. These confused infantile (prepersonal) *states* and *stages* with mature spiritual (transpersonal) *states* and *stages*. They are easy to confuse because both are *non*-personal and *non*-egoic. For example, Freud mistakenly reduced all transpersonal states into infantile dissociation, a pathological diagnosis that required therapy. On the other hand, the Romantics (e.g., Jung) were fond of elevating infantile dissociative states in adults to deep spiritual realization, when they were in fact misdiagnosing pathology (e.g., borderline dissociation, dissociative personality disorder).

Wilber commented in hindsight:

Now the odd thing about Wilber-I and Wilber-II is that they aren't really all that different. They both move from pre-egoic to egoic to transegoic. They both agree on the great domains of prepersonal to personal to transpersonal.

They both see development ultimately driven by the attempt to regain Spirit. They both see involution and evolution occurring. That is why both Wilber-I and Wilber-II can handle virtually the same type and amount of available clinical and experimental evidence. The big difference—the crucial difference—is that Romantic/Wilber-I *must* see the infantile pre-egoic structure as being, in some sense, a primal Ground, a perfect wholeness, a direct God-union, a complete immersion in Self, a oneness with the whole world. Since the perfection of enlightenment is a *recontacting* of something present in the infantile structure, then that infantile structure must therefore possess that utter Perfection (even if

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<sup>17</sup> Henceforth, I will often refer to Phase-2 as Spectrum-2.

unconscious). Thus, if God is not *fully* present in the infantile structure, the entire scheme collapses.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, to permanently realize the transpersonal Self we do not regress to an infantile state or stage, instead we transcend yet include prepersonal and personal states and stages into a *completely new transpersonal state and stage-structure*. Thus, assuming good health and supportive life conditions, there is an irreversible directionality in which human development unfolds over time. In short, this is the evolutionary impulse or telos in play.

In this way Spectrum-2 continued to focus on ontogeny and expand the individual interior (Upper-Left quadrant). In *The Atman Project* (1980) Wilber included over two dozen tables in which he summarized research from various disciplines and methodologies to refine his spectrum model. According to Wilber, “*The Atman Project* was directly based on the evidence of over sixty researchers from numerous approaches (and hundreds of others in an informal way).”<sup>19</sup>

He refined the “approximate mode of self-sense” into seventeen stages from the previous four stage version of Spectrum-1, and began to compare them to other developmental maps, for example, the work of Aurobindo (cognition), Loevinger (ego levels), Piaget (cognition), Kohlberg (morals), Erikson (psychosocial), Maslow (needs), Vedanta (koshas), Vajrayana (kayas), Kaballah (realms), etc. Using another unique approach, he investigated the *average* level of individual consciousness in relation to the *leading edge* of individual consciousness:

1. Pleromatic
2. Uroboric
3. Axial-Body
4. Pranic-Body
5. Image-Body
6. Membership

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<sup>18</sup> Wilber, *The eye of spirit*, 1997b, pp. 153-154.

<sup>19</sup> Wilber, *The atman project*, 1996a, p. ix.

7. Early egoic/personic
8. Middle egoic/personic
9. Late egoic/personic
10. Mature Ego (current average mode of adult development)
11. Biosocial Bands
12. Centaur/existential (current leading edge of adult development)
13. Low Subtle
14. High Subtle
15. Low Causal
16. High Causal
17. Ultimate (not really a level, but the suchness, Ground, radical emptiness of all levels).

In hindsight, Wilber was beginning to research what he would soon call “developmental lines” in Phase-3, but in Phase-2 he was still assimilating hundreds of different maps, all derived from different schools and methodologies. Still, we can see that four of the six core elements of AQAL metatheory were very much in play: *levels*, *lines*, *states*, and the *self-system*, but again, predominantly within the context of the individual interior (ontogeny in the Upper-Left quadrant).

The next two books, *Up from Eden* (1981), and *A Sociable God* (1983) would branch into the collective interiors of cultural development (phylogeny in the Lower-Left quadrant) as the Spectrum-2 model assimilated anthropology, sociology, and mythology. Thus, the *individual* interior spanning a lifetime (Upper-Left) expanded to include *collective* interiors spanning geological time (Lower-Left) to show the linkage between ontogeny and phylogeny. It was a logical step, then, to take the seventeen stage-structures in *The Atman Project* and begin to trace them collectively in *Up from Eden* through eight cultural stage-structures. He was influenced by the work of Jean Gebser, among others. Similarly, he investigated the *average* level of collective consciousness in relation to the *leading edge* of collective consciousness:

1. Uroboric
2. Typhonic



3. Mythic Membership
4. Mental Egoic (present collective “center of gravity”)
5. Psychic
6. Subtle
7. Causal
8. Ultimate

Collective stages 1-3 are considered *subconscious*, 3-4 *self-conscious* (there's some overlap with 3), and 5-8 *superconscious*. Therefore, we are presently in a high mental-egoic period that began during the Renaissance and Enlightenment ca. 1,500 C.E.

Wilber's startling conclusion was that we were halfway “up from Eden” in our evolutionary journey toward collectively realizing Spirit, something imagined as an infinite mathematical singularity<sup>20</sup> or Omega Point.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, we are not trying to regain Eden; that would be horribly regressive and confuse uroboric, typhonic, or mythic phylogenetic stages with subtle, causal, or ultimate stages (variations of pre/trans fallacies). Instead, we are inexorably evolving toward Spirit and may only be in the midst of our collective adolescence as a species.

Phase-2 moved toward Phase-3 in the early 1980s as Wilber further explored the strengths and weaknesses of the evolutionary model. For example, Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences suggested that overall development does not move through a concrete series of ladder-like stages. Instead, different intelligences or what Wilber came to call *developmental lines* or streams seemed to unfold “in a relatively independent fashion through the basic spectrum of consciousness.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, these *lines* unfold through the same basic *levels* but in an uneven fashion. As such, we all tend to be better at some things than others. For example, Wilber often cites the example of Nazi doctors who had a high cognitive line (Piaget), average interpersonal line (Gardner), and low moral line (Kohlberg, Gilligan). Thus, overall development is a truly uneven, nonlinear affair, and *not* a simple step by step climb up a ladder. According to Wilber:

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<sup>20</sup> Russell, *Waking up in time*, 1998, pp. 9-10

<sup>21</sup> De Chardin, *The phenomenon of man*, 2002, pp. 257-260.

<sup>22</sup> Wilber, *A sociable god*, 2005a, p. 40.

... A massive amount of research continued to demonstrate that the individual developmental lines themselves unfold in a sequential manner—the important truth discovered by developmental studies. But since there are at least a dozen different developmental lines [see Appendix 1], overall growth itself shows no such sequential development, but is instead a radically uneven and individual affair. Moreover, at any given time a particular individual might show much growth in one stream (say, psychological), while showing little or no growth in others (say, spiritual). None of this could be explained by a single-stream evolutionary model, but all of it made perfect sense according to a levels-and-lines model (so-called phase-3).<sup>23</sup>

Spectrum-2 thus culminated the first decade of Wilber's theory of consciousness. It initially emphasized ontology—*individual psychology, philosophy, and spirituality* (Upper-Left quadrant), and then expanded to explore phylogeny—*collective anthropology, sociology, and comparative mythology* (Lower-Left quadrant). The evolutionary “growth to goodness” orientation of Spectrum-2 would permeate *all* of Wilber's subsequent work.

### **Phase-3 (Spectrum-3): Holonic, ca. 1983-1993**

**Major Books:** *Eye to Eye* (1983), *Transformations of Consciousness* (1986), *Grace and Grit* (1991).

Wilber's next book, *Eye to Eye*, was a compilation of various articles that contained many important advances. Its subtitle further revealed the growing scope of Phase-3<sup>24</sup>: “The Quest for the New Paradigm.” Wilber used the term paradigm as Thomas Kuhn originally intended it, as an actual method, practice, or injunction designed to enact, bring forth, and produce experiential data and inductive measurements.<sup>25</sup> He was also seeking a way to better understand the array of methods he encountered in his research that produced seemingly incongruent, even contradictory data. Wilber explored the three eyes of knowing from Christian mysticism to refine his epistemology, since he was already using them:

<sup>23</sup> Wilber, *A sociable god*, 2005a, p. 40.

<sup>24</sup> Henceforth, I will often refer to Phase-3 as Spectrum-3.

<sup>25</sup> Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions*, 1996, p. 10.

- Eye of *flesh* (monologic/sensibilia/physical senses)
- Eye of *mind* (dialogic/intelligibilia/rational senses)
- Eye of *spirit* (translogic/transcendelia/inner senses)

Recall the earlier mention that AQAL metatheory covers three complementary aspects: ontology (being), epistemology (knowing), and methodology (doing). The three eyes of knowing (epistemology), when properly situated across the spectrum of consciousness (ontology), helped to identify more accurate methods for various disciplines (methodology), but when confused caused a variety of problems, for instance, critical category errors. When quantum physicists claim the Schrödinger wave function proves the existence of Spirit, they confuse empirical data acquired through physical senses with transcendental data acquired through the inner senses. That is, they utterly confuse the material level of the spectrum with the psychic, subtle, or causal levels. Proper understanding of the complementary strengths and limits of the three eyes of knowing in Spectrum-3 foreshadowed what would be called *Epistemological Pluralism* in Phase-4, and *Integral Methodological Pluralism* in Phase-5.

Wilber also formulated the three strands of legitimate scientific method, which is empirical and inductive, not rational and deductive to further reduce category errors between the three eyes of knowing. A synthesis of Newton's empiricism, Kuhn's paradigms, and Popper's verification-falsifiability principles<sup>26</sup> outlined an essential methodology to explore the *full* spectrum of consciousness:

1. *Instrumental injunction*: formulate exemplars, paradigms, practices, "if you want to know this, then do this."
2. *Intuited apprehensions*: do the injunctive practice. Account for:
  - Sensory experience, eye of flesh, monologic, sensibilia, empiricism.
  - Mental experience, eye of mind, dialogic, intelligibilia, rationalism.
  - Spiritual experience, eye of spirit, translogic, transcendelia, mysticism.
3. *Communal confirmation or rejection*: by a community adequate to steps one and two.

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<sup>26</sup> Wilber, *Eye to eye*, 2001b, pp. 40-41.

In this way, Wilber was able to flesh out Spectrum-3 further and show how complementary aspects of knowing (the three eyes) meshed with the spectrum of being and outlined a radically new integral methodology that he would refine over the next twenty-five years.

A significant link to Phase-4, the first mature formulation of AQAL metatheory, made a brief appearance in *Eye to Eye*. Wilber used Arthur Koestler's *holon*<sup>27</sup>—a whole/part—to help explain important *hierarchical* and *heterarchical* relationships within his developmental spectrum. As we have seen, hierarchies unfold in irreversible, increasing depths of transcend yet include relationships, for instance, seedlings to saplings to trees. Heterarchies, on the other hand, consist of similar holons with *spans of equivalence*, for example, groups of atoms, amphibians, or primates. The holon would eventually provide the conceptual means to integrate crucial relationships over long stretches of evolutionary time with more localized relationships in a human lifetime. Wilber refined Koestler's concepts of "vertical" transformation and depth within "horizontal" translation and span, two complementary aspects of development and evolution that permeate AQAL metatheory to this day.<sup>28</sup> Taken together, hierarchy (*depths of unequivallence*) and heterarchy (*spans of equivalence*) form what Koestler called a *holarchy*, and we will return to this concept as it plays a central role in Phase-4.

Another important refinement published in *Eye to Eye* was the identification of basic (*levels*) and transitional (*lines*) structures navigated by the self-system. In terms of vertical development, Wilber wrestled with what exactly is included (preserved) and what is transcended (negated) as the self-system's center of gravity spiraled along. First, he refined the seventeen basic levels from Spectrum-2 into a leaner eleven levels that anchor the self-system's vertical development. Each one is transcended yet included:

1. Physical
2. Sensoriperceptual
3. Emotional-sexual

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<sup>27</sup> Koestler, *The ghost in the machine*, 1967, pp. 45-58.

<sup>28</sup> For the rest of the paper, I will leave out the quotation marks when the terms "vertical" and "horizontal" refer to the fundamental axes of holonic development. It is understood that these terms represent the multidimensional nature of these axes, and are not to be construed as simple binary, X-Y coordinates in a two-dimensional flatland.

4. Phantasmic
5. Rep-mind
6. Rule/role mind
7. Formal/reflexive mind
8. Vision-logic
9. Subtle
10. Causal
11. Ultimate

Next, he explored several prominent transitional structures (*lines*) such as Kohlberg's *morals*, Loevinger's *self-sense*, and Maslow's *needs* to suggest that these developed relatively independently of each other, and each could serve as a main thrust of overall development, in essence pulling others along with it, or even leaving them behind. But as that happened, the transitional structures negate each previous stage. Thus, the basic structures endure in terms of collective consciousness evolution because once they emerge they become relatively stable processes or patterns. Transitional structures, on the other hand, are phase specific "self-stages" that get replaced entirely by succeeding phases. For example, Kohlberg's moral stages of preconventional, conventional, and postconventional replace one another completely. They transcend but do *not* include the specifics of earlier phases, since preconventional moral behaviors are egocentric (e.g., "what's in it for me?") and do not consider their effect on others, while conventional moral behaviors are ethnocentric and can walk a mile in another's shoes (e.g., "do unto others as you would have them do unto you"). Interestingly, the cognitive line (e.g., Piaget, Kegan, and Aurobindo) consists of basic structures that have a "necessary but not sufficient" relationship to all the other lines, though there are exceptions (e.g., savants).<sup>29</sup> In other words, by itself, basic cognitive structures like preoperational, conventional operational, formal operational and wider serve to anchor the others (i.e., they are necessary), but are not universally sufficient for all the others to unfold alongside them. As such, this important work on "structure, stage, and self" anchored Spectrum-3 and, as we shall see, was developed further in subsequent works.

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<sup>29</sup> Wilber includes at least thirty potential developmental lines in Phase-4, though some research overlaps. For more information, see Appendix 1.

In *Eye to Eye*, Wilber also defined major characteristics of the self-system to include:

1. Locus of organization (integrator of all *levels* and *lines*)
2. Locus of identification (selective identity based on *levels* and *lines*)
3. Navigator of development (overall self-sense or “center of gravity”)

Moreover, Wilber formally distanced himself from the transpersonal psychology movement around 1983 because he found that their models—laced with pre/trans fallacies, category errors, confusion of basic and transitional structures, the failure to “grok” the essential nondual paradox of Spirit as Ground and goal of evolutionary processes, among others—greatly confused the search for a comprehensive and new paradigm. He also distanced himself from his perennial philosophy affiliation of Spectrum-1 and Spectrum-2 as he came to understand that ever-present nondual Spirit is the *only* perennial aspect of the spectrum, but *everything else evolves*. Wilber also began to conceptualize long term evolutionary processes as “Spirit-in-action” within the many physical forms of the spectrum of consciousness. He wanted to include the many gems of modern and postmodern scholars, and many perennial philosophers tended to reject their growing bodies of evidence. So Spectrum-3 marked a pivotal period of maturation.

In his next important book, *Transformations of Consciousness* (1986), co-authored with Harvard psychologists Jack Engler, and Daniel P. Brown, Wilber further distinguished between basic structures or *levels* of the spectrum and the transitional structures or *lines* that develop relatively independently through them. He used a metaphor of “ladder, climber, and view” to represent the enduring basic structures (ladder), the self-system (climber), and the different lines streaming through the basic structures (view). The result, as we saw, is that overall development is an uneven and nonlinear affair, not a linear, step by step climb up a stage ladder. In spite of the fact that structuralist methods reveal linear stages over time, personal and collective reality creation is an uneven and idiosyncratic process—permutations of various transitional structures spiraling through the basic structures. Wilber would eventually use metaphors like “waves” (basic *levels*), “streams” (transitional *lines*), and “spiraling” to describe how fluid, spontaneous, and creative overall development really is. According to Reynolds, this is the key refinement that defines

Spectrum-3,<sup>30</sup> to which I would add that Koestler's holon and holarchy played a pivotal role in moving Spectrum-3 toward a full-blown metatheory in Phase-4.

Wilber also revised his eleven level conception from *Eye to Eye* into developmental Fulcrums 1-10, and matched types of pathology to each. Fulcrum:

1. Sensorimotor (psychoses, most adult schizophrenia)
2. Phantasmic-emotional (narcissistic-borderline disorders)
3. Representational mind (borderline neuroses, psychoneuroses)
4. Rule/role mind (script pathology and neuroses)
5. Formal-reflexive (identity neuroses)
6. Vision-logic (centauric, existential pathology: depression, inauthenticity, isolation, aborted self-actualization, and anxiety)
7. Psychic (psychic disorders: inflation, dark night of the soul, split life goals, pseudo-duhkha, pranic disorders, yogic illness)
8. Subtle (subtle pathology: integration-identification failure, pseudo-nirvana, pseudo-realization)
9. Causal (causal pathology: failure of complete self-differentiation, failure to fully integrate with physical forms, also known as Arhat's disease)
10. Ultimate (not really a level, but the suchness, Ground, radical emptiness of all levels).<sup>31</sup>

Tragically, Wilber spent the majority of Phase-3 caring for his second wife, Treya Killam Wilber, who was diagnosed with breast cancer shortly after they met in 1983. Ken and Treya's poignant and loving ordeal was chronicled in *Grace and Grit* (1991) after she passed away in 1989. He also contracted an immune system disease called REDD (Rnase-L Enzyme Dysfunction Disease) during this difficult period. Bouts of this chronic fatigue syndrome sapped his physical strength for months at a time. Unfortunately, it is something that still afflicts him to this day. However, possessing an indefatigable will, he returned to research in the early 1990s that culminated in a self-imposed three-year retreat in which he meditated, researched, and lived

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<sup>30</sup> Reynolds, *Embracing reality*, 2004, p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> Wilber, Engler, Brown, *Transformations of consciousness*, 1986, p. 125.

alone. The intense focus of this retreat provided the transition from Spectrum-3 into AQAL-4 metatheory when he solved a central, nagging problem: how to organize all those damned validity claims, methods, and hierarchies that seemed to be all over the place into a coherent whole? What was the core organizing principle? What was the pattern that connected everything? As we will see shortly, he would call it “the four quadrants.”

In summary, Spectrum-3 refined a robust Spectrum Psychology based on over three thousand years of scientific, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual research. This alone was a heroic feat, enough to insure scholars and researchers with years of work to assimilate, critique, and refine. But Wilber was only in his mid-forties, and far from finished. Spectrum-3's foundation was the stepping-stone toward the Integral Psychology that fueled a broader, more Integral AQAL-4 metatheory.

#### **Phase-4 (AQAL-4): Holarchic, ca. 1993-2000**

**Major Books:** *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (1995), *A Brief History of Everything* (1996), *The Eye of Spirit* (1997), *The Marriage of Sense and Soul* (1998), *One Taste* (1999), *The Collected Works of Ken Wilber, Volume 1-4* (1999), *The Collected Works of Ken Wilber, Volume 5-8* (2000), *Integral Psychology* (2000), *A Theory of Everything* (2000).

#### The Quadrants

Wilber published his groundbreaking magnum opus *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* in 1995. It is really two books, the main text, and over two hundred and fifty pages of endnotes that outline Phase-4.<sup>32</sup> Its big breakthrough was the organizing principle of the *quadrants*, the fifth and most encompassing of AQAL's six core principles, because they revealed how everything fit together. The next six books, *Collected Works*, and hundreds of pages of additional material published on his Shambhala website (sidebars and articles) fleshed out what was now a metatheory.

The quadrants represent the innate perspectives found in all individual sentient holons (whole/parts), and extend “all the way up and down,”—from physical (atoms) to biological

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<sup>32</sup> Henceforth, I will often refer to Phase-4 as AQAL-4.



(cells) to psychological (minds) to psychic (souls) to spiritual (causal) holons. As Wilber assimilated the “linguistic turn” of postmodern philosophy, he realized that the quadrants occurred in all modern languages as first- (“I”), second- (“You/We”), and third-person (“It/Its”) perspectives. These horizontal dimensions-perspectives help situate a dizzying array of concepts within what Wilber sometimes simplifies as “the big three.” For example: Max Weber’s three value spheres of art (“I”), morals (“We”), and science (“It”); Plato’s the beautiful (“I”), the good (“We”), and the true (“It”); Karl Popper’s three worlds: subjective (“I”), cultural (“We”), and objective (“It”); Jürgen Habermas’ three validity claims: subjective sincerity (“I”), intersubjective justness (“We”), and objective truth (“It”); Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (“I”/aesthetics), *Critique of Practical Reason* (“We”/morals), and *Critique of Pure Reason* (“It”/objective science), and so on.<sup>33</sup>

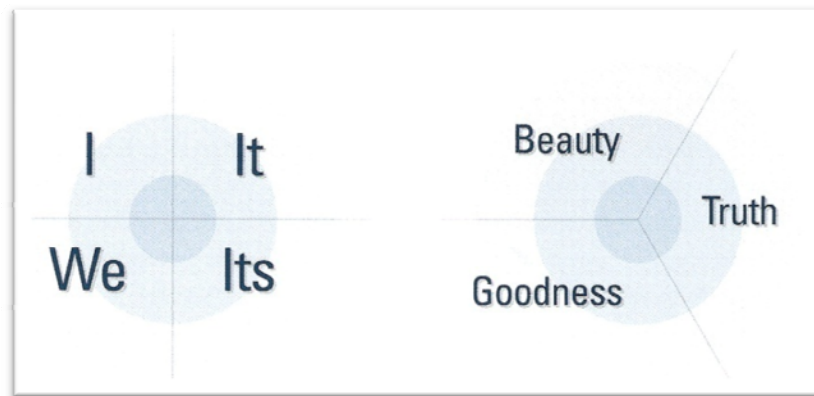


Figure 3. The Four Quadrants and Big Three<sup>34</sup>

According to Wilber:

Thus, an integrally informed path will take all of those dimensions into account, and thus arrive at a more comprehensive and effective approach—in the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ and the ‘it’—or in self and culture and nature.

If you leave out science [Upper- and Lower-Right], or leave out art [Upper-Left], or leave out morals [Lower-Left], something is going to be missing, something will get broken. Self and culture and nature are liberated together or not at all. So

<sup>33</sup> Wilber, *The marriage of sense and soul*, 1998, pp.74-75.

<sup>34</sup> Image from Wilber, *Introducing the AQAL framework*, 2005b, p. 19.

fundamental are these dimensions of 'I,' 'we,' and 'it that we call them the four quadrants, and we make them a foundation of the integral framework.... (We arrive at '4' quadrants by subdividing 'it' into singular 'it' and plural 'its.')<sup>35</sup>

When the big three expand into quadrants, we can further situate four complementary types of developmental, evolutionary *hierarchies* (vertical depth) within nested *heterarchies* (horizontal span). The Big Bang and space-time flow out from the center in increasing vertical depth. Each color band shows horizontal span.

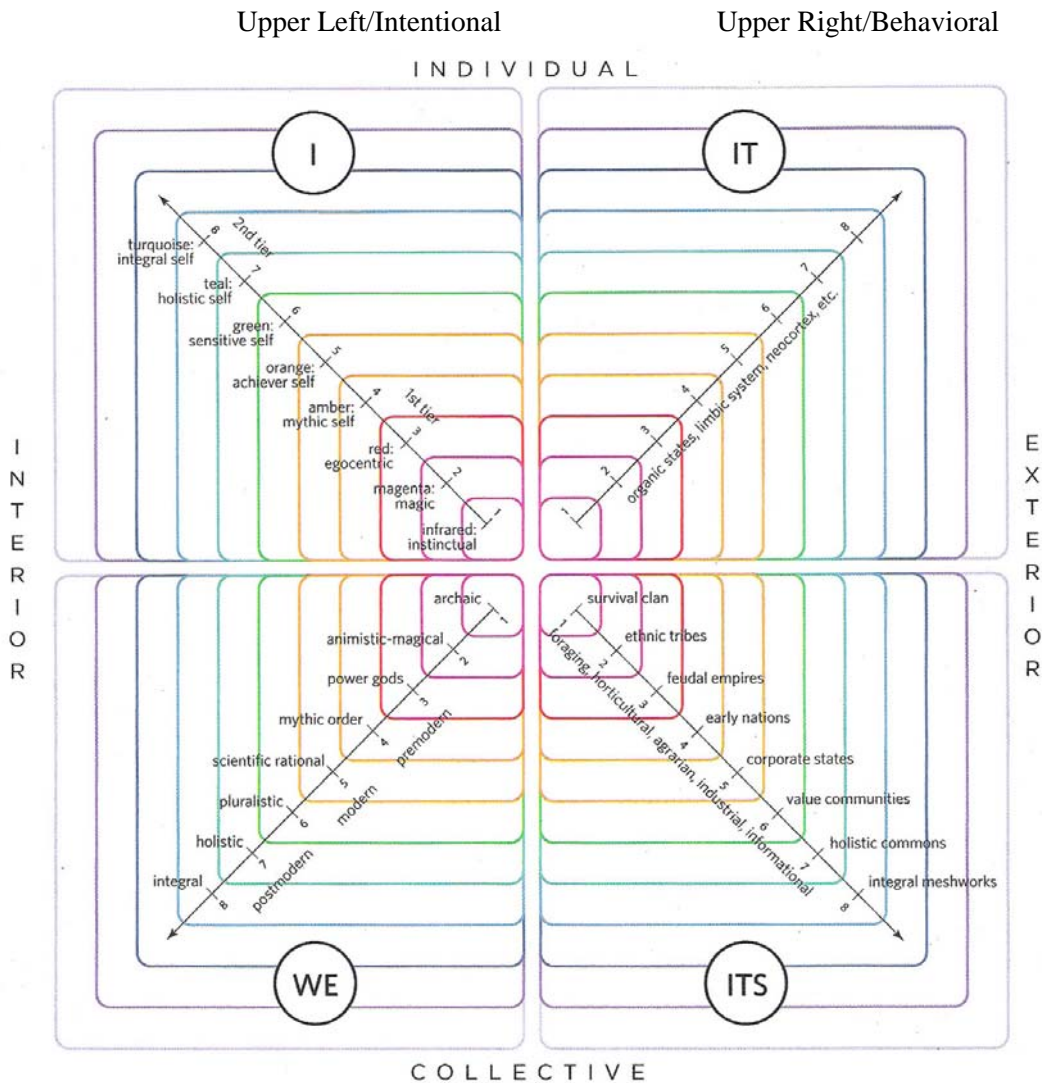


Figure 4. The Four Quadrants (Emphasis on Humans/Noosphere)<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Wilber, *Integral spirituality*, 2006a, p. 30.

<sup>36</sup> Image from Phipps, "A Philosopher of Everything," 2006, p. 60.

Wilber realized that while the Upper-Left quadrant anchors individual interiority (the emphasis of Spectrum-1 through Spectrum-3), consciousness must be more broadly defined as a *tetra-mesh of all four quadrants*. All development and evolution has these four innate perspectives, and therefore we find tetra-development and tetra-evolution within *individual* holons. So the *quadrants* organize the *bare minimum* framework to properly situate the other five core organizing principles that permeate every holon—every whole/part relationship in the manifest world: *levels, lines, states, types, and self-system*. According to Wilber:

The first step toward a genuine theory of consciousness is the realization that consciousness is not located in the organism. Rather, consciousness is a four-quadrant affair, and it exists, if it exists at all, distributed across all four quadrants, anchored equally in each.

... In short, if you take away any of those quadrants—intentional, behavioral, cultural, or social—you will destroy any manifest consciousness. And that means, very simply, that consciousness is located solely in none of those domains. Consciousness is not located merely in the physical brain, nor in the physical organism, nor in the ecological system, nor in the cultural context, nor does it emerge from any of those domains. Rather, it is anchored in, and distributed across, all of those domains with all of the available levels.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, any methodology that claims to legitimately identify consciousness, but investigates only one or two quadrants or several levels within them, remains incomplete and cannot account for premodern, modern, and postmodern insights. Instead, an “all-quadrant, all-level” approach like AQAL represents the most comprehensive theory of consciousness to date.

As we will see in AQAL-5, the quadrants also provide a set of integral scientific methodological checks and balances that let us know when we go too far in relying on any single quadrant or set of quadrants. Wilber calls this *quadrant absolutism* and it is to be avoided (as are level, line, state, or type absolutisms). For instance, premodernity focused too strongly on the Upper-Left

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<sup>37</sup> Wilber, *The eye of spirit*, 1997b, pp. 273-274.

quadrant and over-emphasized individual interiority, religion, and enlightenment as an escape from samsara, the hellish world of suffering. It also had little knowledge of human development and evolution. Modernity focused too strongly on the Right-Hand quadrants and reduced all interiors to exteriors, mere epiphenomena of matter (i.e., side effects of brain chemistry). They threw transpersonal Spirit right out with the premodern bathwater. Postmodernity excelled at showing how both premodern and modern epistemologies (i.e., the *eyes of spirit* and *flesh*) ignored crucial elements in the Lower-Left quadrant, particularly, that all truth claims are interpreted within cultural contexts whose semantics and other cultural values filtered everything (exaggerating the *eye of mind*).

On the other hand, the profound contributions of premodernity include the maps, methods (e.g., yogas) that emphasized the *eye of spirit* to illuminate the interiors in the Upper-Left. Modernity's gifts include the amazing empirical, objective maps and methods (e.g., sciences) that decipher and manipulate the Upper- and Lower-Right exterior world that emphasized the *eye of flesh*. And postmodernity's priceless gem was to point out indispensable cultural, intersubjective maps and methods (e.g., constructivism, contextualism, aperspetivalism) in the cultural Lower-Left that emphasized the *eye of mind*. Thus, an integrally informed methodology aspires to include all four quadrants and their epistemologies.

AQAL-4 also provided a critical theory to ground Wilber's integral scientific methodological approach:<sup>38</sup>

1. Identify *orienting generalizations*—the partial truths in symbolic form called metaphors—in a given field or body of work. For the moment, simply assume they are true.

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<sup>38</sup> Wilber, *The eye of spirit, Foreword by Jack Crittenden*, 1997b, pp. vii-xii.

2. Arrange these metaphoric truths into chains or networks of interlocking conclusions. Pose the following question to all of the orienting generalizations: "What coherent system would in fact *incorporate the greatest number of these truths?*"
3. Once we identify the overall scheme that incorporates the greatest number of orienting generalizations, use that scheme to criticize the partiality of narrower approaches, even though we include the basic truths from those approaches. Criticize not their truths, but their *partial* nature.

As Wilber began to integrate systems, network, ecological, and many other theories into a coherent whole, orienting generalizations allowed him to situate the major fields of knowledge, seek their key similarities and differences, and speak about them holistically. So it is crucial to realize that many of Wilber's conclusions consist of these metaphoric truths and as such, "People shouldn't take [them] too seriously. [They're] just orienting generalizations. It leaves all the details to be filled in any way you like."<sup>39</sup> I cannot stress how important this point is to keep in mind as we explore AQAL-4 metatheory. A common mistake of critics is to take one or more orienting generalizations and assume it is a final, true or false fact, and nothing could be further from Wilber's intent. While the devil is indeed in the working out of details, AQAL-4 metatheory provides an elegant way to integrate the world's knowledge so we can begin to work with it holarchically (i.e., simultaneous tetra-mesh of the *quadrants, levels, lines, states, types, and self-system*).

Seen in this light, we can use the quadrants to better organize *all* fields of human knowledge, and see which quadrant their findings tend to emphasize. For example, physics, chemistry, biology, and cognitive sciences emphasize the Upper-Right, and tend to minimize the interiors of the Upper-Left and the intersubjective aspects of the Lower-Left. While systems, chaos, and network theories tend to emphasize or reduce valid data to the Lower-Right and minimize or omit altogether Left-Hand interiors. Still, they *each*

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<sup>39</sup> Wilber, *The eye of spirit*, 1997b, p. xi.

have something very important to tell us about reality, so an all quadrant approach better identifies their partialness by showing what they omit or reject outright.

Therefore, another chronic issue that dominates current scientific methods is what Wilber calls *Flatland*, when Right-Hand methods are taken to be the only real ones thereby crippling the many contributions of premodern spiritual and postmodern cultural insights.

Within flatland reductionism (in the first sense), there are two degrees: subtle reductionism, which reduces everything to the Lower-Right quadrant (dynamical process systems, chaos and complexity theories, traditional systems theory, social autopoiesis, the Web of Life, etc.), and gross reductionism, which goes even further and reduces those systems to atoms (reduces all phenomena to atomistic units in the Upper Right). Subtle reductionism is also known as exterior holism or flatland holism (in contrast to integral holism, which unites both interior holism and exterior holism). Both gross and subtle reductionism believe the entire world can be accounted for in third-person it-language (i.e., they are both monological, not dialogical or translogical).<sup>40</sup>

In summary, the quadrants are one of the most significant conceptual breakthroughs of the past three thousand years! They provide a means, along with the other core AQAL principles, to connect the dots between seemingly disparate methodologies and incongruous epistemologies to pave the way toward an authentic integral science.

### Types

The sixth and final core principle of AQLA-4 was added in *A Theory of Everything* (2000e). Types are situated on the horizontal axis and thus color all levels as they unfold vertically. Wilber often cites the example of gender to show that we navigate levels and lines in various “voices.” For example, masculine types tend towards an agentic voice that promotes autonomy, and feminine types tend toward a communal voice that nurtures relationships. Myer-Briggs,

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<sup>40</sup> Wilber, “Introduction to the collected works of Ken Wilber: Volume 8,” 2003h, p. 142n.

derived from Carl Jung's work, is another typology of sixteen different *types* used successfully in the workplace to help co-workers understand why they have different work and management styles, as well as in marriage counseling to highlight natural differences between partners. Lastly, the Enneagram, derived from Sufism and the teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff, is another typology based on nine complementary personality profiles.

*Types* flesh out the horizontal axis to help us understand why we may be at similar levels of development and yet seem to come from Venus, Mars, Pluto, and beyond. In other words, *types* provide additional horizontal span to explain the incredible diversity within and between vertical *levels* of development.

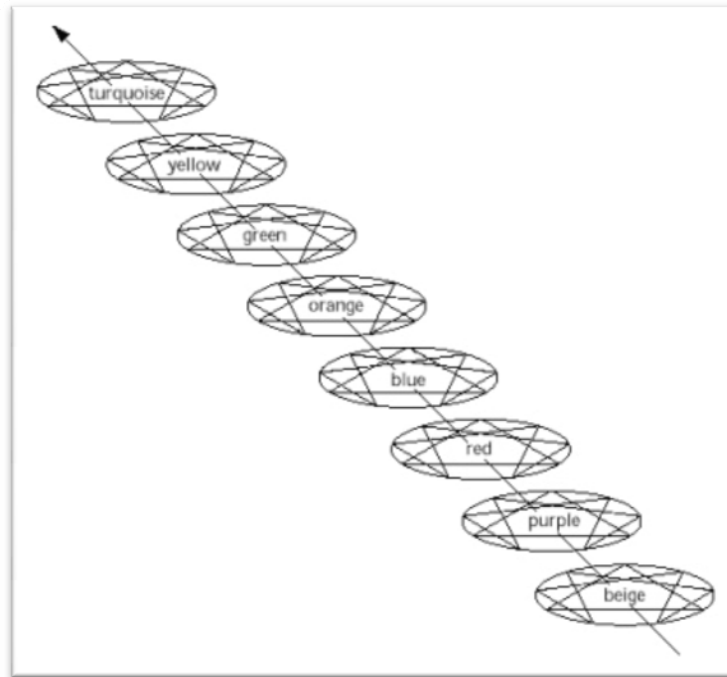


Figure 5. Levels and Types (Wilber, 2000a)<sup>41</sup>

To elaborate, if we apply the Enneagram we find that these nine personality types color the innate intention of all Upper-Left interiors, and provide nine concomitant behaviors in the Upper-Right quadrant. This applies to all *individual* holons. How this scales up to the *social* holons of the Lower-Left collective interiors and Lower-Right institutions is less clear, and I do not want to be as prescriptive here. For instance, there may be institutions that tend to emphasize

<sup>41</sup> Image from Wilber, *A theory of everything*, 2000e, p. 48. This figure uses the color scheme from Don Beck's Spiral Dynamics integral to represent basic levels.

certain group behaviors like sports teams, research labs, medical groups, the military, etc., but there is no research to date cited by Wilber in this area.

### Holons and Holarchy

Earlier we saw that Wilber introduced Koestler's holon in Spectrum-3 to begin to explain vertical and horizontal, and individual and collective relationships. In AQAL-4, he continued to flesh out holarchy (nested hierarchy and heterarchy) and used the holon as the fundamental organizing "unit of consciousness" to further explicate relationships between all *quadrants*, *levels*, *lines*, *states*, *types*, and the *self-system*. Wilber stressed that:

Reality is not composed of things or processes; it is not composed of atoms or quarks; it is not composed of wholes nor does it have any parts. Rather, it is composed of whole/parts, or holons. This is true of atoms, cells, symbols, ideas. They can be understood neither as things nor processes, neither as wholes nor parts, but only as simultaneous whole/parts, so that standard 'atomistic' and 'wholistic' attempts are both off the mark. There is nothing that isn't a holon (upwardly and downwardly forever)."<sup>42</sup>

In *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (2000b) he also outlined the twenty or so tenets of all holons. Though beyond our introductory scope, the tenets outline important forces, tendencies, propensities, and laws of form in the involutory (Agape) and evolutionary (Eros) currents that underlie everything in the Kosmos (see Appendix 2). *Individual* holons (e.g., quantum fields, fish, humans) consist of all four quadrants, while *social* holons (e.g., galaxies, schools of fish, families/nations) consist of *only* the Lower-Left and Lower-Right quadrants, though they are made up of individual holons. Both individual and social holons are *sentient* and contain *interiority* of some kind. Together, holons show hierarchical development in their vertical axes, and heterarchical equivalence in their horizontal axes. Thus, in AQAL-4 the Kosmos is seen as a vast Holarchy of Being consisting of myriad holonic relationships and processes.

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<sup>42</sup> Wilber, *Sex, ecology, spirituality*, 2000b, p. 41.



In retrospect, Koestler's work took over a decade to germinate in Spectrum-3 and flower in AQAL-4. Yet, it is natural to wonder about the validity of limiting all development and evolution to just vertical-depth-hierarchical and horizontal-span-heterarchical axes (i.e., holarchy)? Do they really cover *everything*? After all, this is just a geographic-spatial metaphor, and we have seen that overall human development is nonlinear (*lines*) and a "wildly idiosyncratic affair." Wilber also used the terms *transformation* and *translation*, *authenticity* and *legitimacy*, *depth* and *span*, *vertical* and *horizontal*, and similar dualisms to explain complementary relationships between these holarchic axes of development and evolution. But are there others, or is this the minimum necessary? Is anything missing? If so we need to be sure we include it so that our metrics are as accurate as possible.

To review, the vertical axis is that of *transformation* in hierarchical transcend yet include, "but not vice versa" relationships we measure in terms of increasing *depth*. The horizontal axis is that of *translation* in heterarchical, more egalitarian relationships we measure in terms of increasing *span*. This axis of span forms vast networks of linking relationships that make up the vast majority of our experience. Put another way, growth in terms of vertical transformation is *relatively rare*. For instance, to date we have identified only *three* main vertical evolutionary stages in roughly twelve to fifteen billion years of Kosmic history (i.e., physiosphere, biosphere, and noosphere), and *five* or so main cultural stages of human evolution (e.g., Gebser's archaic, magic, mythic, rational, integral aperspectival) and roughly *six or seven* general stages of individual development in two million years of hominid history.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, growth in terms of horizontal translation *dominates* the vast majority of any meaningful human time scale, roughly a 99:1 ratio according to Wilber.<sup>44</sup> In other words, the vast spans within the horizontal axis far outnumber the relatively small depth of the vertical axis and thus heterarchies far outnumber hierarchies in terms of sheer span.

What is missing, then, and what we also need to consider in our core metrics is that the essential paradox of nondual Spirit as Ground and goal permeates *both* vertical depth-hierarchies and

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<sup>43</sup> Refer to Wilber, *Integral psychology*, 2000d, pp. 197-217.

<sup>44</sup> Wilber, "November Teleconference with Fielding Graduate Students," 2006b. Wilber mentioned that translation occurs 99% of the time, and thus vertical *transformation* is relatively rare in relation to horizontal *translation*.

horizontal span-heterarchies. Wilber came up with a parsimonious way to express this: all holons have *intrinsic*, *extrinsic*, and *ground value*.<sup>45</sup>

- *Ground Value*: All holons are manifestations of Spirit, “radically equal for all holons.”
- *Intrinsic Value*: The value a holon has for *itself* as a whole (agency/depth of whole/parts relations).
- *Extrinsic Value*: The value a holon has for *others* as a part (communion/span of whole/parts relations).

The *higher* the holon's vertical development within the Kosmos (e.g., physiosphere, biosphere, noosphere, etc.) the *more* intrinsic value and depth it has. However, the *lower* the holon's vertical development the *more* extrinsic value and greater span it has. Therefore, humans have more intrinsic value than animals, fish, prokaryotes, rocks, molecules, and quantum fields respectively, and vice versa for extrinsic value. As such, *vast spans of holons with lower depth far outnumber holons of higher depth*. For example, there are only six billion humans in the noosphere, but countless billions more of animals, even more of fish, even more of prokaryotic cells in the biosphere. When we include other planets, then we have even larger numbers of rocks, then molecules, then quantum fields in physiospheres. We see they are by far the most numerous holons, and least conscious in terms of span. And yet, all holons as manifestations of nondual Spirit are have radically equal ground value! Therefore, ground value serves as a kind of wild-card that accounts for anything missing from vertical and horizontal, depth and span, etc. and more importantly, accounts for the essential paradox of nondual Spirit as Ground and goal of the holarchic Kosmos. Together, these three values help to properly situate the ranking values of all holons and holarchy within the Kosmos. However, these values are ultimately a noospheric or human construct, and Wilber is consistent in citing Korzybski's mantra that “the map is not the territory.” So it remains open to continued critique and refinement and should not be taken as an absolute.

### The Self-System

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<sup>45</sup> Wilber, *Sex, ecology, spirituality*, 2000b, pp. 544-545.

Wilber further refined the “overall self” or “self-system” in *The Eye of Spirit* (1997b), *One Taste* (2000c), and *Integral Psychology* (2000d). The self-system now contained three core aspects:

1. Proximate self: “ego development”: the *subject* of awareness (“I”) at any stage.
2. Distal self: the *object* of awareness (“me or mine”) of the previous stage.
3. Intuition of anterior I-I (Atman/Brahman/Spirit).<sup>46</sup>

The self-system provides a “center of gravity” or average mode of individual consciousness at any given time as it navigates its developmental lines. It is responsible for six main functions:

1. *Identification* (locus of self-identity).
2. *Will* (locus of choice within the constraints of present developmental level).
3. *Metabolism* (“digestion” or assimilation of experience).
4. *Navigation* (developmental choices within all levels, lines, and states).
5. *Defenses* (locus of defense mechanisms, phase-specific and phase-appropriate, hierarchically organized).
6. *Integration/organization* (provides cohesiveness to the psyche within all levels, lines, and states).<sup>47</sup>

Again, this core AQAL principle is what actually navigates and integrates all *quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types*, and thus completes explication of the foundational elements of AQAL-4. Looking back, we can see more clearly now that the Spectrum Psychology of Phases 1-3 served as a foundational impetus for Phase-4. As such, AQAL-4 is firmly grounded in an Integral Psychology that emphasized premodern and postmodern advances in Left-Hand interiors, and showed how they complement modern advances in Right-Hand exteriors. Wilber pointed out that:

The Wilber-III aspects in this [Wilber-IV] model are virtually unchanged, but they are set in a context (‘all-quadrant, all-level’) that renders their constitutive

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<sup>46</sup> Wilber, *The eye of spirit*, 1997b, p. 344n.

<sup>47</sup> Wilber, *The eye of spirit*, 1997b, p. 142.

elements more visible. Neither consciousness, personality, individual agency, nor psychopathology can be located simply or solely in the individual organism. The subjective domain is always already embedded in intersubjective, objective and interobjective realities, all of which are partly constitutive of the subjective agency and its pathologies: thus the shift from Wilber-III to Wilber-IV.<sup>48</sup>

### The Integral Psychograph

To finish our survey of AQAL-4, Wilber formulated a tool to map all developmental lines in the Upper-Left. Recall that overall development is a nonlinear and uneven affair. So then, how does vertical transformation in researchers color our work? Wilber calls for simul-tracking as part of any integral scientific methodology. This self-reflexive component has significant implications, potentials, and stumbling blocks. Recall Wilber's not so humorous example of Nazi doctors to drive home the point. Therefore, it is important to consider ways to incorporate our psychographs, not to impugn anyone as being a Nazi doctor, but because they add a layer of interpretation to all data that gets the stamp of authority from all legitimate, institutional research lineages. The idea, then, is to ballpark how our cognition, morals, needs, power drives, interpersonal, affective skills, spiritual concerns, etc. color the motivation and scope of research, or more accurately, how they provide a developmental snapshot to orient our research claims.

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<sup>48</sup> Wilber, *Ibid*, p. 373n.

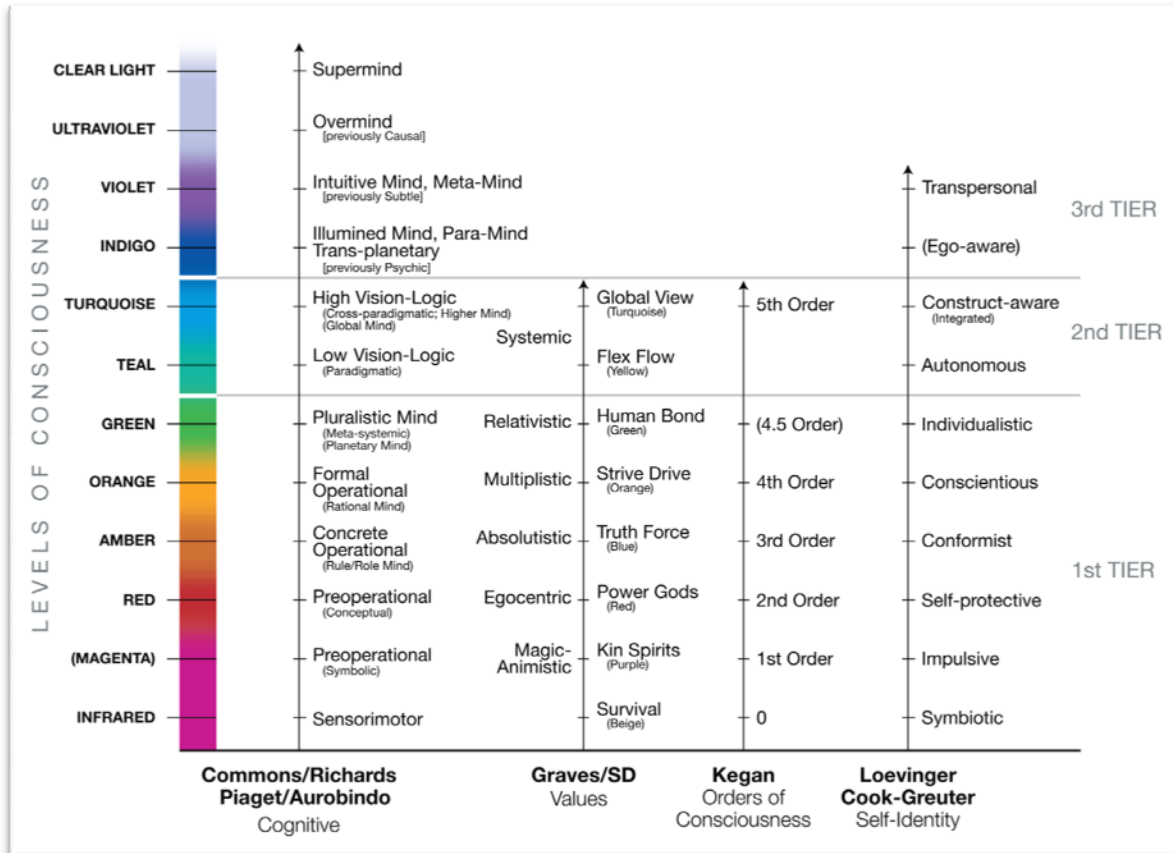


Figure 6. The Integral Psychograph<sup>49</sup>

Wilber pointed out that:

... The Left-Hand paths demand, at some point, transformations of consciousness in the researchers themselves. You can master 100 percent of quantum physics without transforming consciousness, but you cannot in any fashion master Zen without doing so. You do not have to transform to understand Dennett's *Consciousness Explained*; you merely translate. But you must transform to actually understand Plotinus's *Enneads*. ...And that transformation is an absolutely unavoidable part of the paradigm (the injunction) of an integral approach to consciousness.

<sup>49</sup> Image from Wilber, *Integral spirituality*, 2006a, p. 68b. Note that the vertical axis now uses a color scheme to ballpark general AQAL altitudes instead of the earlier five, ten, or seventeen stage conceptions. This AQAL-5 refinement allows us to average and correlate developmental altitudes between various transitional structures (*lines*).

So those two wings—the ‘simultracking’ of all quadrants and the transformation of researchers themselves—are both necessary for an integral approach to consciousness.<sup>50</sup>

But honestly, how many are eager to embrace a methodology that requires us to publish a chart that shows we are pretty amazing in some lines, so-so in some, but not so developed in others? Obviously, there are many issues that need to be addressed and refined with *great concern and care*; we need to develop an accurate instrument, appropriate ethical standards, and safeguards. Like any personal data, it can and will be abused by less ethical people and agendas. Because everyone begins at stage one and develops from there, humanity is guaranteed to produce a consistent supply of people with egocentric motives. Therefore, we also need to address security, privacy, disclosure, and other legal concerns as well.

The good news is that there has been a tremendous amount of theoretical work done already on Integral Psychology as we have seen through AQAL-4 in *Integral Psychology* (2000d). According to Reynolds:

Indeed, in my opinion, there's no one better source than this concise, power-packed volume of around 200 pages in order to get the broadest overview of the AQAL project and its integral psychology.... In addition, the back pages of the book presents numerous ‘correlative charts’ compiled Wilber himself that cross-reference the basic waves of the AQAL matrix as they've been documented by hundreds of researchers, ancient and modern....<sup>51</sup>

Those charts are indeed a treasure trove of Upper-Left quadrant developmental research. They outlined the necessary developmental areas needed to produce a viable psychograph. Wilber concluded that:

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<sup>50</sup> Wilber, *The eye of spirit*, 1997b, p. 376n.

<sup>51</sup> Reynolds, *Where's Wilber at?* 2006, pp. 191-192.

... The Charts...are a startling testimony to the fact that, even if there are millions of details yet to be worked out, the broad contours of the Spectrum of Consciousness have already been significantly outlined. The general similarities in all those Charts are most suggestive, and, from a bird's-eye view, hint that we are at least in the right ballpark.<sup>52</sup>

As such, the psychograph will be produced under the umbrella of an Integral Psychology, an important emerging field in its own right, but with help from Integral Business, Jurisprudence, Education, Politics, and related fields.

#### AQAL-4: The Metatheory

As stated earlier, AQAL-4, taken as a whole, does not attempt to tell us what to think or how everything works in any final way. It simply maps six core organizing principles—*quadrants, levels, lines, states, types, and self-system*—that provide the most comprehensive, balanced, and inclusive set of checks and balances to study any field of human endeavor.

Further, these six core AQAL principles do not produce an arbitrary map of reality to be followed dogmatically, but authenticated and continually refined by our own direct experience within a community of the adequate. As such, we can easily verify them through self-inquiry and research. For instance, do you take first-, second-, and third-person perspectives and use “I,” “We,” “It,” and “Its” references when you speak, write, or read? This reflects the *quadrants* in your use of language. Second, do you recall being an infant, child, adolescent, etc.? This mirrors irreversible, physical and mental *levels* of vertical development. Third, do you do some things better than others? Play the piano, sports, write books, cook, teach, hold relationships, help others, raise a family, etc.? These reflect the different *lines* or intelligences that develop unevenly. Fourth, do you sleep, dream, meditate, peak experience, etc.? These are temporary *states* that you cycle through, some every day. And fifth, do you tend toward a more masculine (analytic, agentic, etc.) or feminine (sensing, communal, etc.) expression? This is one horizontal *typology* that colors your awareness. Together, these are complementary aspects of your

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<sup>52</sup> Reynolds, *Embracing reality*, 2004, p. 388.

awareness right now and in every moment, which is constructed and experienced by the *self-system* who navigates and integrates them all. This is the elegantly simple heart of AQAL-4 metatheory.

Now that we have covered the basics, let us briefly explore what makes AQAL-4 a metatheory. The notion of a comprehensive theory is not new, and dates back thousands of years to the earliest philosophers. However, the modern version that emphasized the Upper-Right quadrant is traceable to Einstein's unification work on the four main physical forces—electromagnetism, gravity, strong and weak nuclear forces—and the notion of a grand unified theory (GUT) from the late 1970s.<sup>53</sup> Twentieth century quantum physicists penetrated so deeply into physical matter, they replaced the preceding atomistic metaphor with an energy field metaphor, one still seen as a universal “building block” of physical matter. They began the search for the core organizing principle that unified these four main fields with the hope it would explain how *everything* works. No need for gods, miracles, involution, or ineffable Spirit, just hard sensorimotor facts.

The main problem with this building block approach, besides being reductionist and ignoring all interiors (Left-Hand quadrants), is that it still only explains how the most basic level of being—physical matter—functions. Modern physicists like Brian Greene have postulated that this unifying principle is an infinitesimal multidimensional string or brane.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, it would take the power of *multiple suns* to verify his calculations, and current methods prevent that. Even when he succeeds, he still will not be able to explain development and evolution, or how stardust found a way to invent artificial hearts, write poetry, or create string theories because it is not part of his theories and methods.

A metatheory, then, is a taxonomy or theory of theories. An Integral metatheory is one that aspires to balance, include, and comprehend all major theories and methods in the quadrants. Wilber's *A Theory of Everything* (2000e) summarized AQAL-4 as a holarchic, developmental, and evolutionary metatheory based upon a critical theory and methodological pluralism that transcends yet *includes* Greene's methods *with other methods already in use* to provide a *more*

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<sup>53</sup> Kaku, *Hyperspace*, 1994, p. 134.

<sup>54</sup> Greene, *The elegant universe*, 1999, pp. 135, 316.



true and *less* partial view of the holonic Kosmos. That is, AQAL-4 properly situates the entire spectrum of consciousness, and no longer limits core organizing principles to *only* the physical level. And yet, this is not to suggest that research to unify four primary physical fields should be abandoned. Hardly, it would be a marvelous discovery that could lead to further advances in the physical sciences that would ripple into biological, psychological sciences, and elsewhere.

In closing, the shift to AQAL-5 remains open to continued developments, as it is still very much in process. So it is difficult to be precise at this point. Also, the sheer breadth of AQAL-4 covers so much ground, from “dust to Divinity,” that many areas remain to be fleshed out. In my view, what scholars are calling AQAL-5 does not exhibit the same radical metamorphosis we saw from Spectrum-1 to Spectrum-2 or from Spectrum-3 to AQAL-4. Rather, AQAL-5 is a continued refinement, unpacking, and extrapolation of the core principles codified through AQAL-4. As such, the jury is still out, and my placement of concepts, times, and books is subject to further understanding.

### **Phase-5 (AQAL-5): Integral Post-Metaphysic, ca. 2000-present**

**Major Books:** *Boomeritis* (2002), *Integral Spirituality* (2006), *The Integral Vision* (2007), *The Many Faces of Terrorism* (expected 2008), *Volume II of the Kosmos Trilogy* (expected 2008).

#### Phase-5: A Summary<sup>55</sup>

There are four main areas that have crystallized within Phase-5 to date:

1. *Integral Operating System* (IOS)
2. *Integral Methodological Pluralism* (IMP)
3. *Integral Post-Metaphysics* (IPM)
4. *Integral Life Practice* (ILP)

*Integral Operating System* (IOS) is the “signaling network” that provides the overall map of all *quadrants, levels, lines, states, types, and self-system*. It is synonymous with AQAL metatheory,

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<sup>55</sup> Henceforth, I will often refer to Phase-5 as AQAL-5.

AQAL Matrix, AQAL-space, Integral theory, Integral approach, Integral map, and Integral model. It took over three decades to formulate.

Wilber also realized that his basic “unit of consciousness”—the holon (a whole/part)—consisted of *always already* perspectives. These indigenous or primordial perspectives get emphasized in AQAL-5. According to Wilber:

If the universe is composed of sentient beings or holons (all the way up, all the way down)—and not merely things nor events nor processes nor systems—then the ‘stuff’ of the universe is perspectives, not mass nor energy nor force nor feelings nor perception nor consciousness (all of which are always already a perspective).<sup>56</sup>

The shift to innate perspectives opened the door to outline the eight zones, the foundation of AQAL-5's integral scientific methodology or *Integral Methodological Pluralism* (IMP). It consists of five key components<sup>57</sup>:

1. Paradigmatic practices based on the heuristic principle of *nonexclusion*—the first step is to include as many relevant methodologies and researchers (perspectives) as appropriate to cover to subject of research.
2. Meta-paradigmatic practices based on the heuristic principles of *enactment* and *enfoldment*—guidelines for the relations or intermesh between all selected methods and researchers to ensure they are properly situated within the AQAL-5 matrix to cover the essential perspectives (quadrants), altitudes (levels/lines), states, types, and self-system.
3. Epistemology—three modes or “eyes” of knowing: *sensorimotor* (physical senses), *reason* (rational senses), *deep intuition* (inner senses). Wilber calls these *sensibilia*, *intelligibilia*, and *transcendelia*.

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<sup>56</sup> Wilber, “Excerpt C: The ways we are in this together,” 2003, p. 31.

<sup>57</sup> Koller, “Architecture of an integral science,” 2006, pp. 250-275.

The three basic modes allow for *at least five different kinds of cognition*, three of which are situated in the mediating eye of reason as it looks “down” to sensorimotor and “up” to deep intuitional knowing. As we have seen, each is valid within its own domain, but when confused results in critical category errors (e.g., when the physical senses are used to describe transpersonal perception, or vice versa). Some egregious examples include “...Scientism [e.g., sensibilia/empirical are the only valid data], religious inquisitions [e.g., transcendelia/deep intuitions are the only valid data], and rational ‘proofs’ of God [e.g., intelligibilia/reason proves the transcendent].”<sup>58</sup>

4. The three strands of scientific method generate valid data:
  - Design an injunction/paradigm.
  - Do the experiment/create data.
  - Interpret/verify-falsify within a community adequate to steps one and two.
  
5. The nonlinear relationship between scientific hypothesis, theory, and law:
  - *Laws* map relationships between phenomena, and map “what is” by emphasizing third-person (it/its) perspectives to create a so-called objective, impartial stance (i.e., knowledge by *description* in Right-Hand quadrants. Validity claims include *propositional truth* and *functional fit*).
  - *Theories* map relationships between phenomena, and map “what should be” by emphasizing first- and second-person perspectives (i.e., knowledge by *acquaintance* in Left-Hand quadrants. Validity claims include *sincerity* and *justness*).
  - *Hypotheses* form a speculative map plus suggested injunctions to test that map. They seek “what is” via experiential, enacted data, find relations between “what is” via laws, and explain “what should be” via theories.

The above have nonlinear relationships in that a hypothesis does not turn into a theory, which ultimately turns into a law. Instead, they form a simultaneous, complementary, and

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<sup>58</sup> Koller, “Architecture of an integral science,” 2006, p. 178.

inclusive set of perspectives that form the “key structural elements of an integral scientific inquiry.”<sup>59</sup>

A sixth IMP component is the eight complementary perspectives or hori-zones (Wilber, 2003b, 2006) whose paradigms (after Kuhn) are used to enact, disclose, and bring forth valid data for any occasion within a community of the adequate. Thus, when we look *inside* (i.e., take a first-person view) and *outside* (i.e., take a third-person view) of the four quadrants, we generate eight complementary zones to “view through.”

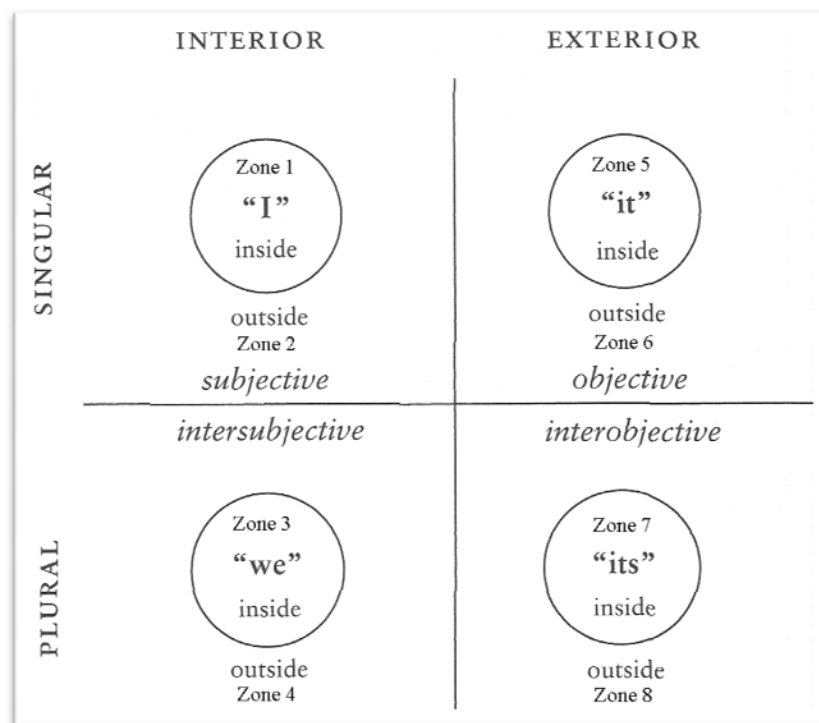


Figure 7. Major Indigenous Perspectives<sup>60</sup>

These views are called a *quadrivium* (*quadrivia* when taken as a whole). Each view, zone, perspective, or quadrivium provides unique, yet complementary methods that disclose important insights on the nature of *all* phenomena in the Kosmos. Taken together, then, we begin to get a more balanced and comprehensive understanding, a truer, and less partial understanding of any

<sup>59</sup> Koller, Ibid, p.172.

<sup>60</sup> Image adapted from Wilber, *Integral spirituality*, 2006a, p. 36.

phenomenon. Thus, the crucial IMP move in AQAL-5 is to take an *inside* first-person and *outside* third-person view of actual occasions in the four quadrants *through* the four quadrants.

Exemplars already in use include:

Upper-Left Quadrant (Subjective Intention)

Zone #1: *Introspection, Phenomenology*

Zone #2: *Structuralism*

Lower-Left Quadrant (Intersubjective Cultural Systems)

Zone #3: *Hermeneutics*

Zone #4: *Cultural Anthropology*

Upper-Right Quadrant (Objective Behavior)

Zone #5: *Autopoiesis*

Zone #6: *Empiricism, Behaviorism*

Lower-Right Quadrant (Interobjective Social Systems)

Zone #7: *Social Autopoiesis*

Zone #8: *Ecological Sciences, Systems Theory, Anthropology*

The eight zones are a little confusing at first. One way to keep this straight is to begin with yourself as a holon with four quadrants/perspectives. For example, from my first-person perspective, I “view from” “I,” “We,” “It,” and “Its” perspectives without even thinking about it, as naturally as taking a breath. However, when I engage IMP to view other holons, I “view through” or *emphasize* my first-person (inside view) and third-person (outside view) perspectives *in relation* to the quadrant perspectives of other holons. In this context, zone #1 is the sole zone to emphasize *only* first-person perspectives and methods (e.g., introspection, meditation). But the other seven IMP zones (#2-8) *always* include combinations of first-, second-, or third-person perspectives and their concomitant methods. Wilber also created an integral calculus of the eight zones that is beyond the scope of this survey, but provides a sophisticated map of how We-

spaces mutually resonate, communicate, and situate meaning with each other.<sup>61</sup> These *always already* perspective relationships form the elegant heart of IMP.

If you feel like you are in a hall of mirrors that is actually a good sign! It is the first step to “groking” the eight zones, and the difference between quadrants, or “view from” and quadrivium or “view through.” Together, they provide the *minimum necessary perspectives* for an integral scientific method. They ballpark key perspectives emphasized in current methods already in the field and laboratory, and thus reinforce how “true but partial” each approach is. However, each method has something very important to add to integral research, and taken together provide a more comprehensive view. There is overlap, of course, so we are not suggesting that every AQAL-5 IMP project require all eight zones to be covered. That is unnecessary in my view, so these eight zones serve, initially, as checks and balances to ensure that we do not reduce all interiors to exteriors (i.e., **ORANGE** flatland emphasis of Right-Hand only) or vice versa (i.e., **AMBER, GREEN** flatland emphasis of Left-Hand only). At a minimum, we need to represent the four quadrants, in my view, so there are many permutations to explore as we go forward with a basic **TEAL** methodology as outlined by Wilber (2003b) and Koller (2006) in the initial rounds of AQAL-5 IMP-based research.

Finally, AQAL-5 IMP clarified four key holonic relationships:

1. *Individual*: sentient, follows the twenty tenets, is driven by a “dominant monad” (self-system possessing *agency*) with the ability to make choices, e.g. atoms, molecules, plants, fish, humans, etc. Individual holons *must* go through mandatory stages of development. They *possess* or “view from” the four quadrants.
2. *Collective/Social*: sentient, follows the twenty tenets, are defined by group affiliation/membership with a dominant mode of communication, exchange, or resonance

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<sup>61</sup> Integral Calculus is based on *three* core perspective relationships based on the quadrants (“view from” “I,” “We,” “It,” “Its”) and quadrivium (“view through” zones 1-8), and is always situated in reference to first-person (“I”) making a claim, assertion, or interpretation: 1. *quadrant perspectives* (researcher’s “I,” “We,” “It,” “Its”) on 2. *quadrivium perspectives* (researcher’s zone #1-8 view) on 3. *domain perspectives* (holon’s quadrant or quadrivium view). For more information, see Wilber, “Excerpt C: The ways we are in this together, Appendix B,” 2003c, and Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 2006a, pp. 40-42.

(*nexus-agency*), e.g., galaxies, planets, crystals, ecosystems, flock of geese, human families, tribes, companies, nations, etc. Social holons can skip around various stages of development because they are dependent upon constituent members' collective center of gravity, which can change significantly depending on overall life conditions. They consist of individual holons and can be "viewed through" the four quadrants or *quadrivium*.

3. *Artifacts*: insentient, do not follow the twenty tenets, have no dominant monad, agency, or perspective, though are created by sentient holons and used in some kind of relational exchange, e.g., food, money, art, products and services, etc. They are made of individual holons such as atoms, molecules, cells, organs.... Artifacts consist of individual holons and can be "viewed through" the four quadrants or *quadrivium*.
4. *Heaps*: insentient, do not follow the twenty tenets, have no dominant monad, agency, or perspective, but are made of individual holons, e.g., rocks, dead plants, junked cars, ruins, etc. are made of atoms, molecules.... Heaps consist of individual holons and can be "viewed through" the four quadrants or *quadrivium*.

Next, *Integral Post-Metaphysics* (IPM) forms the philosophical underpinning of AQAL-5 IMP. It is derived from German philosopher Jürgen Habermas' (1992) post-metaphysical critiques of non-scientific methods. Metaphysics is defined as "a system of thought without experiential proof."<sup>62</sup> The key difference, then, between metaphysics and post-metaphysics is that there are no longer any assumed, pregiven ontological levels of reality. For instance, the premodern Great Chain of Being posited fixed, preexisting levels from matter to body to mind to soul to spirit.

Integral Post-Metaphysics can generate all the essentials of premodern spiritual and metaphysical systems *but without their now discredited ontological baggage*. This, to my mind, is the central contribution of an Integral Post-Metaphysics—it does not itself contain metaphysics, but it can generate metaphysics as one possible AQAL Matrix configuration under the limit conditions of premodern

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<sup>62</sup> Wilber, *The eye of spirit*, 1997b, p. 269.

cultures... but without relying on any pre-given archetypal, or independently existing ontological structure, levels, planes, etc.<sup>63</sup>

An Integral Post-Metaphysical approach also refutes this as “the myth of the given.” Ontology (*being*) is not “out there” in some fixed, objectified manner waiting to be discovered, mapped, and analyzed. This partiality is also found in the modern Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm. Rather, a post-modern, post-metaphysical approach acknowledges that our experience enacts, colors, and co-constructs ontology. Therefore, an Integral Post-Metaphysical approach is based upon the evidence of our senses—our physical, mental, and deep intuitive senses—as they engage various paradigmatic experiments. As seen earlier, *we will always have some metaphysical assumptions*.<sup>64</sup> So we need to articulate them up front, to minimize their impact on overly biasing our research methods and conclusions (see Appendix 2).

Moving on, Wilber and others at Integral Institute, the think-tank he founded in the late 1990s in Boulder, Colorado, also created *Integral Life Practice* (ILP), as a system to develop body, mind, spirit, and shadow within self, culture, and nature. The *ILP Starter Kit 1.0* (Wilber, 2005) provides a sophisticated, comprehensive cross-training approach for personal and professional development. It traces its roots to the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo and Integral Transformative Practice (ITP) pioneered by Michael Murphy and George Leonard. ILP provides a way for researchers to become more aware of their journey toward self-transformation and how that colors their work. Wilber summarized:

However we look at it, it all comes down to a few simple points. In your own growth and development, you have the capacity to take self, culture, and nature to increasingly higher, wider, and deeper modes of being, expanding from an isolated identity of ‘me’ to a fuller identity of ‘us’ to an even deeper identity of ‘all of us’—with all sentient beings everywhere—as your own capacity for Truth and Goodness and Beauty deepens and expands. Ever-greater consciousness with

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<sup>63</sup> Wilber, “Excerpt A: An integral age at the leading edge,” 2003a, pp.2-3.

<sup>64</sup> Wilber, *Ibid*, p. 127n.



an ever-wider embrace, which is realized in self, embodied in nature, and expressed in culture.

Thus, to cultivate body, mind, and spirit in self, culture, and nature. This is the extraordinary aim and goal of the Integral Approach....<sup>65</sup>

ILP thus provides the actual paradigms, injunctions, and yogas to promote researcher transformation, and to allow us to directly test out the AQAL waters within a community of the adequate—a community of scholar-practitioners. ILP is tailored to individual lifestyles and needs, and as such provides a flexible, scalable framework to help us emphasize those areas of our holonic selves that need attention and balancing. ILP also recommends we engage multiple teachers, coaches, etc. to cover various aspects of the AQAL matrix since no single person can provide full coverage. Ultimately, responsibility lies with each individual on how far we take it.

### The Wilber-Combs Lattice

To finish our survey of AQAL-5, we will explore another important refinement in the relationship between *levels* and *states* that Wilber made in *Integral Spirituality* (2006a). Originally he had taken the highest developmental stage before the “transpersonal bands”—the centaur—and simply stacked the four main meditative stages (gross, subtle, causal, nondual) on top, and thus “... you would go from Loevinger’s integrated level (centaur) to psychic level to subtle level to causal level to nondual level. Bam, bam, bam, bam....East and West integrated.”<sup>66</sup> But the question arose, “do you really have to go through all eight or ten vertical stages in order to have an authentic spiritual experience?” The answer was an obvious “No!” Wilber, and independently Alan Combs, realized that they had to stop equating vertical *stage-structures* and horizontal *state-structures*. The solution was that “most meditative *states* are variations on the natural states of gross-waking, subtle-dreaming, and causal-formlessness, then they are present,

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<sup>65</sup> Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 2006a, p. 45.

<sup>66</sup> Wilber, *Ibid*, p. 88.

or can be present, at virtually all *stages* of growth, because even the earliest stages wake, dream, and sleep.”<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, a person at any general *stage* can have a temporary peak or plateau experience of any basic mystical *state*. This helped to explain why some mystics see burning bushes, angels, and demons, and some melt into ecstatic union with The All, because they interpret their experience through the general altitude of whatever *stage* they are at once the *state* fades. Stages, by definition, are permanent acquisitions that reflect the “but not vice versa” direction of vertical growth. States, however, are temporary, and come and go like day and night on the horizontal axis. Thus, if we take a vertical stage conception and map a horizontal set of states, we get a matrix of possible stage-states, and *general zones of interpretation*. This goes a long way to help explain the many different, conflicting, and all too violent definitions of “God’s will” promoted by religious groups that impact current social, political, educational, economic, and military situations across the globe.

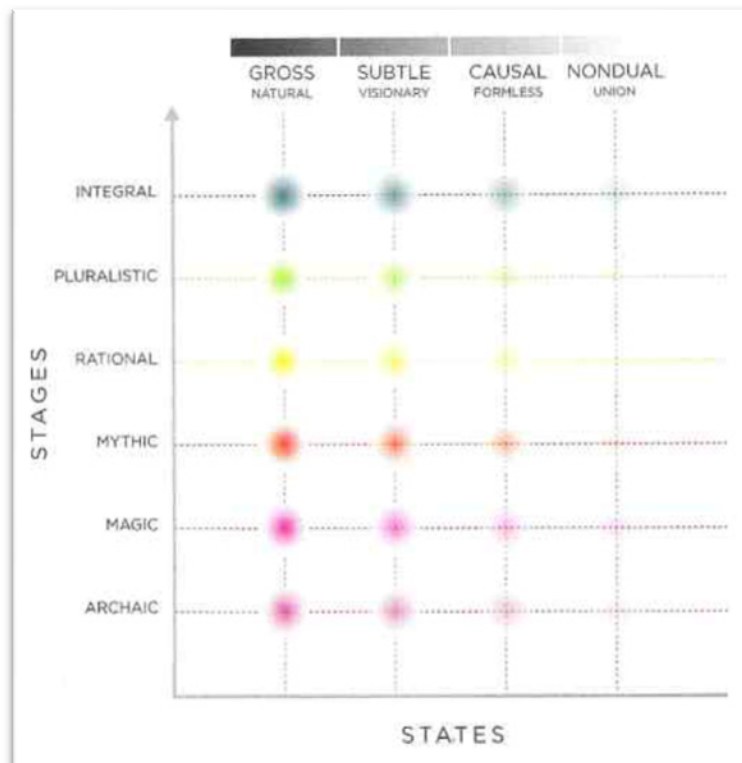


Figure 8. The Wilber-Combs Lattice: Stages and States<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 2006a, p. 89.

<sup>68</sup> Image from Phipps, “A Philosopher of Everything,” 2006, p. 78.

This important breakthrough also allowed Wilber to stop using horizontal state names for the upper reaches of his vertical levels. Thus, with *Integral Spirituality* (2006a) he began to use a color spectrum for the vertical axis of AQAL, another useful refinement that put the emphasis on horizontal *state-stages* that are far more frequent aspects of collective experience. In other words, there are very few individuals who have transformed to the transpersonal *structure-stages*, which again are permanent acquisitions. And there is much less reliable data on what any universal stages above **TURQUOISE** might look like *in any collective sense* at this point. But there is a lot more evidence of what people experience in temporary or altered mystical states. As such, the Wilber-Combs lattice of AQAL-5 is a powerful tool to better understand the general altitude that many religious leaders operate from, and how they interpret their personal experiences with Spirit.

## Epilogue

As I explore AQAL metatheory, I acknowledge with deep appreciation the profoundly important insights of AQAL-5 and the long, hard journey Ken Wilber and those who work closely with him have taken to co-create it. However, I would like to end this paper with three important areas of further consideration, because they are easy to lose track of due to the sheer depth and span of AQAL-5 metatheory. So they are not something that is lacking, Wilber has already addressed these issues, but I point them out to ground those who intend to study further: 1. the vertical/depth and horizontal/span relationships, 2. “stage inflation,” and 3. the altitude scale used by the vertical/depth axis.

First, great theories use Occam's razor to achieve an elegant simplicity, and Wilber has done a heroic job with AQAL-5. As we saw, he uses three values: *intrinsic value* (vertical, depth, agency, wholeness, etc.), *extrinsic value* (horizontal, span, communion, partness, etc.) and *ground value* (nondual Spirit as Ground and goal) to situate the six core organizing principles of AQAL-5 holarchy. Together they elegantly suggest that there is an infinite set of n-dimensional relationships and experiences in potentia within the Kosmos, which are not limited to vertical *levels, lines*, and horizontal *quadrants, states, types*, and the *self-system*. So just a final reminder that holarchy—nested hierarchies and heterarchies, nested holons, nested whole/parts—cannot

be reduced to a simple binary, X-Y axis, which is a reductionist Flatland (**ORANGE**) move to be avoided. Yet, together these values and core principles form a parsimonious foundation for continued refinements.

Also, there really is no “upper” limit in vertical terms of development and evolution. That is, the vertical dimension AQAL-5 now uses the placeholder of CLEAR LIGHT at the top, but *there is no top* since that is really ground value and *present all along*. This is the primordial paradox of Spirit as Ground and goal expressed over and over in Wilber's work.

Second, regarding “stage inflation,” I am concerned that we have lost our sense of geological time when we reduce close to two million years of homo sapiens's emergence with a single stage (INFRARED, beige, sensorimotor, pre-egoic, etc.) but include **GREEN**, which is around 100 years old, **TEAL** and **TURQUOISE** (which are decades old in any meaningful collectively mapped sense). Then we add **INDIGO** and **VIOLET** above them, and we now have *five* stages that are 100 years old at best on top of five stages (INFRARED through **ORANGE**) that cover two million years (possibly more, as anthropological evidence remains sketchy, based on mostly small fossil fragments to date).

So let us be mindful of “stage inflation”—the seeming disparity between two million versus one hundred years expressed in these ten main structure-stages. It is too easy to lose perspective. I sense that **GREEN**, **TEAL**, and **TURQUOISE** may well be a single stage structure in early-middle-late forms as Wilber used to express early, middle, and late vision-logic in AQAL-4. Therefore, we need to better account for the possibility that INFRARED could have included dozens, possibly more, structure-stages as AQAL-5 defines them, likewise with **MAGENTA** through **AMBER**. On the other hand, what appear to be higher stages today may actually compress over centuries and millennia into a single structure-stage, and is likely to have occurred with earlier stages, but again, that is dependent on continued research.

This also leaves *more* room beneath the vertical limit of CLEAR LIGHT for dozens, possibly hundreds more structure-stages to emerge. I believe my comments to be generally consonant with AQAL-5, but it helps to acknowledge that while we may indeed be half-way or more “up

from Eden,” there may be many millions, even billions of years remaining before we ever collectively exhaust the potentials implied in the vertical structure-stage axis.

Third, building off the previous point, I would like to see better graphic representation of the twelve or so billion years of evolution represented in the vertical color scheme. Theorists always wrestle with how granular or simple any scale should be. For example, Wilber has a seventeen stage human model, but he sometimes uses three, five, eight, or ten depending on context.

The eight billion years of physiospheric evolution that *preceded* the formation of the Earth could be better represented in the vertical dimension. We could better account for the period in which the first cellular life forms in our biosphere began, which take us roughly up to two million years ago when hominids *continued* the Kosmic evolutionary journey. This will help diminish the anthropocentric bias in the current color scheme. In other words, we need to better emphasize the fact graphically that our journey “up from Eden” began twelve to fifteen *billion*, not two million years ago.

For example, figure 9 below switches the vertical and horizontal axes only to take advantage of the wider dimension of the paper. If done to scale, then the two million years of hominid history (noosphere) would be found approximately one hundredth of an inch from the right margin. That’s around one tenth the size of a period!

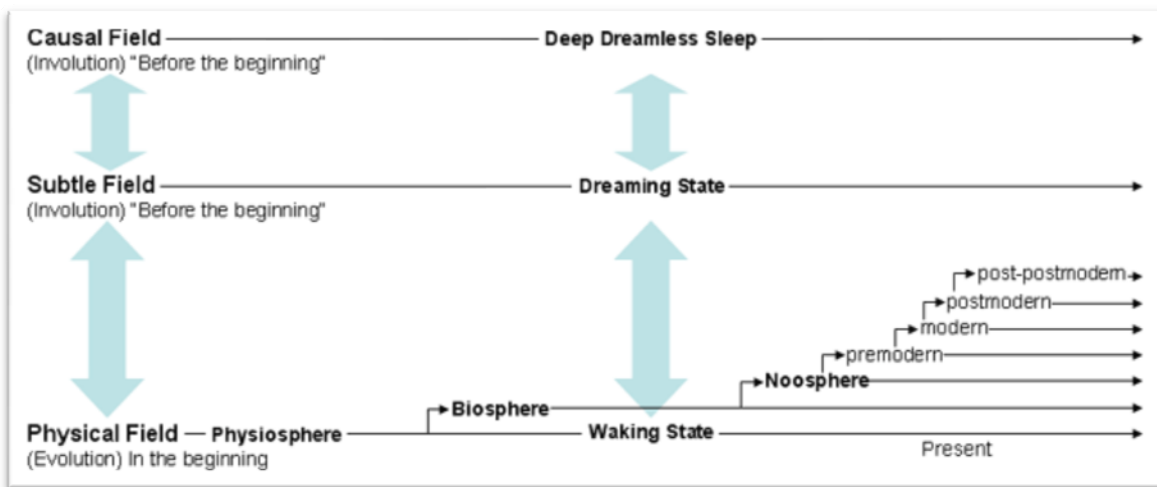


Figure 9. Up From Eden: Physiosphere, Biosphere, Noosphere

Finally, there is a minor performative contradiction throughout *Integral Spirituality* (2006a), which is Wilber's first major AQAL-5 book.<sup>69</sup> He needs to begin to provide his own psychograph to support his validity claims, otherwise critics can make a case that Integral Post-Metaphysics doesn't yet deliver *fully in its own terms*. I am not suggesting he write his next book featuring the AQAL-5 integral calculus seen in the footnotes of the Appendices! However, just make an effort to put that critical tool to good use by personal example when the time is right.

### And It Is All Undone

We have come a long way from Wilber's first book *The Spectrum of Consciousness*. And yet, in retrospect, we can see that the impulse to integrate science, psychology, philosophy, *and* spirituality into a coherent metatheory has driven Wilber's work for well over three decades. Each successive phase has transcended yet included the previous, mirroring the evolutionary impulse along the way. We saw how Spectrum-1 through Spectrum-3 outlined a robust Spectrum Psychology. Another scholar may have eventually solved the same puzzle of the quadrants coming from a different discipline, and yet, it seems more likely to have occurred with someone who was concentrating on the psychological level instead of, say, the physics, chemistry, or biological level, or even the theological or mystical level, because psychology by nature is introspective and employs methods to shed objective light on hidden, subconscious elements of our interiors. It also emphasizes, as we saw, the mediating *eye of mind*, which sees both "down" towards sensorimotor facts, and "up" toward transcendental union.

As suggested in the opening quote, whether AQAL metatheory lives up to its potential remains to be seen. It is still early in the integral game. Hopefully this paper has provided a robust survey of Wilber's work to date, the impulses that fueled it, and a glimpse of the potentials that lie ahead. The idea with AQAL-5 is not that we have to earn a Ph.D. in eight disciplines. That is not practical, nor required. Rather, the idea is to become "integrally informed" and understand our own *self-system*, learn how it relates to the other five main notes of the AQAL scale (IOS), identify our metaphysical assumptions and refute the myth of the given (IPM), and use the eight

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<sup>69</sup> Excerpts A-D, G of the Kosmos trilogy preceded this book by four years, but has yet to be formally published. When published in *Volume Two* of the Kosmos trilogy, they will provide a foundational AQAL-5 model, just as *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* formed the foundation of AQAL-4.

methodological zones (IMP) as checks and balances in our own disciplines to ensure that we are *more* true and *less* partial. Knowledge and wisdom are complementary aspects of Radiant Spirit in the world. Knowledge deals more with facts, and wisdom on learning the skillful means and compassion to apply them in *practical ways* to the many challenges we face in the dizzying pace of twenty-first century life.

In closing, Wilber often ends main sections or books with what has come to be called *poetry*, because it helps to relax the self-contraction and reminds us that we each hold the precious gift of *always already* awareness and are never really that far away from our most intimate Self.

It is, truly, a game; what dream walkers we all are! Nothing ever really happens here, nothing moves in time or space, it is all so painfully obvious that I advert my eyes from the blinding truth. But here we are, You and I, and it is You-and-I that is the form of Spirit in this and all the worlds. For in the entire Kosmos, there is only One Self; in the entire Kosmos, there is only One Spirit—and thus the Self that is reading this page is the exactly the Self that wrote it.

Let us, then, You-and-I, recognize together who and what we are. And I will be with you until the ends of the world, and you will be with me, for there is only One Self, which is the miracle of Spirit. This is why we will be together forever, You-and-I, in the world of the Many-That-Are-One, and why we have never been separated. Just as Consciousness is singular, and the Self is One, and the Self neither comes nor goes, so You-and-I are that Self, forever and forever and endlessly forever.

Thank you deeply for coming on this journey with me, and guiding me at every point, and enlightening me through and through, and forgiving me all along, and being You-and-I.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Wilber, "Introduction to The Collected Works of Ken Wilber: Volume 8," 2003h, pp. 137-138.

## Appendix 1: A Compilation of AQAL-4 Developmental Lines

Learning how these transitional structures interrelate, in terms of low, medium, and high development, is a key to understanding the nuanced manner in which Wilber uses orienting generalizations (i.e., his critical theory) in AQAL-4/5 to describe the vertical axis of transformation. For instance, Wilber often cites Kohlberg's research that found respondents answered questions from roughly 25% in one level, 50% in the next highest, and 25% in the next highest. Therefore, even these transitional structures can be "all over the place" depending on any given set of ethical circumstances. Though there tends to be a solid center of gravity (the 50%), we are still engaging immediately preceding, *and* newly emerging structures *simultaneously within the same line*.

When scaled up and applied to *all* lines, we find *linear* basic and transitional structures ("ladder"), and *nonlinear* streaming ("view") through them by the self-system ("climber"). Thus, when Wilber refers to the vertical altitudes of these lines in individual holons *in toto*, they are not clunk and grind, true or false facts, but orienting generalizations to situate multiple, sometimes contradictory, perspectives within the AQAL Matrix.

Moreover, each of the low, medium, and high vertical altitudes represents "probability waves." In other words, there is a 25%-50%-25% chance where certain interior structures and concomitant exterior behaviors have been found, and are most likely to be found again. Wilber said that:

For AQAL metatheory, a structure is simply a probability wave (in any quadrant). For the paradigm of adequate structuralism, the probability wave refers specifically to the pattern or agency of interior holons—their internality codes or coherence profile (the "wholeness" aspect of the whole/part holon), whether in an "I" or a "we." For AQAL, what all structures have in common is simply the probability of finding a certain behavior in a certain spacetime locale, and thus the safest orienting generalization is



that an “interior structure” is a third-person description of finding a certain first-person reality in particular milieu of the AQAL matrix.<sup>71</sup>

Wilber also organized these lines into three main types:

1. *Cognitive lines* (e.g., Piaget, Kegan, which also overlap with basic structure/levels and provide a “necessary but not sufficient” anchor for most lines)
2. *Self-related lines* (e.g., morals, self-identity, needs, etc.)
3. *Capacities or talent lines* (e.g., musical, linguistic, mathematic, kinesthetic, etc.)<sup>72</sup>

Groundbreaking work by Howard Gardner matched neurological systems or modules in the brain that serve as the physical basis for each line. Though this does not yet apply to every line below, it serves as a solid model to match Upper-Left lines with Upper-Right brain modules to apply to AQAL-5 IMP-based research. While the most comprehensive compilation of lines can be found in the back of *Integral Psychology* (2000d), the list below cites research that Wilber frequently mentions throughout AQAL-4. There is some overlap, and each line represents only one way—a snapshot—to view any subpersonality or subsystem within the self-system:

1. Moral development (e.g., Kohlberg, Gilligan, Armon)
2. Self-identity or proximate-self development (generally called “ego development”) (e.g., Loevinger, Cook-Greuter, Washburn, Wade, Pascual-Leone)
3. Visual-spatial thinking (e.g., Gardner)
4. Logico-mathematical thought (e.g., Gardner)
5. Linguistic-narrative knowledge (e.g., Gardner)
6. Cognitive development (e.g., Piaget, Kegan, Commons & Richards, Aurobindo)
7. Worldviews (e.g., Graves)
8. Interpersonal capacity (e.g., Selman, Perry, Gardner)
9. Psychosexual (e.g., Fortune)
10. Conative and motivational drives

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<sup>71</sup> Wilber, “Excerpt D: The look of a feeling: The importance of post-structuralism,” 2003d, p. 42.

<sup>72</sup> Rentschler, “AQAL Glossary,” 2006, p. 19.

11. Intimacy
12. Self-needs (e.g., Maslow)
13. Altruism
14. Creativity
15. Affective development (e.g., Goleman, Wilber)
16. Level of typical defense mechanisms
17. Mode of spacetime (spatio-temporal architecture)
18. Form of death-seizure
19. Epistemic mode
20. Various specific talents (musical, artistic, bodily-kinesthetic, sports, dance) (e.g., Gardner)
21. Object relations
22. Role-taking
23. Socioemotional capacity
24. Several lines that can be called 'spiritual' (care, openness, ultimate concern, religious faith, meditative stages) (e.g., Fowler, Underhill, Baldwin, Wilber, St. Teresa, Patanjali)
25. Communicative competence (e.g., Habermas)
26. Modes of space and time
27. Mathematical competence (e.g., Gardner)
28. Gender identity (e.g., Wilber)
29. Empathy<sup>73</sup> (e.g., Benack)
30. Aesthetic (e.g., Housen, Baldwin)<sup>74</sup>

Lastly, Wilber further expanded his definition of the overall self-system to include four simultaneously nested *self-system lines* (not to be confused with the three types above) that also “develop relatively independently”:

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<sup>73</sup> Wilber, *The eye of spirit*, 1997b, p. 246, p. 256.

<sup>74</sup> Wilber, *Integral psychology*, 2000d, pp. 197-217.

1. *Frontal* (Ego)
2. *Deep Psychic* (Soul)
3. *Witness* (Self)<sup>75</sup>
4. *Nondual*

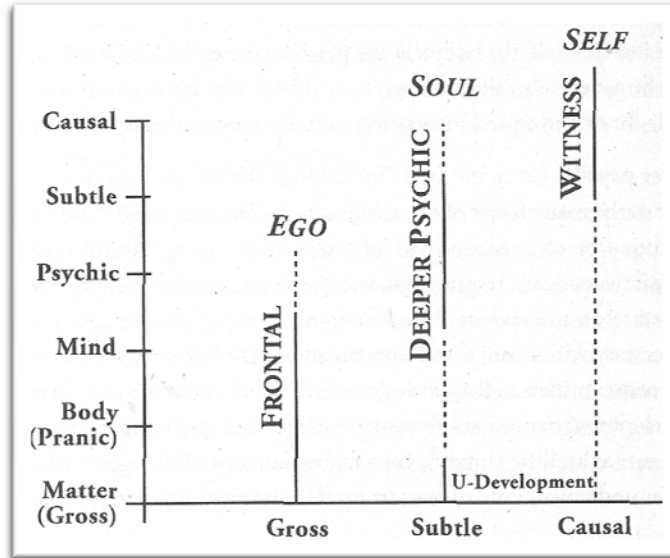


Figure 10. Development of the Three Major Self-System Lines<sup>76</sup>

Paradoxically, the nondual “line” is not really a line (as we saw with the basic structures/levels). It is simultaneously the Ground and goal of all lines. Also, the *frontal*, *deep psychic*, and *witness* lines may show variations of the traits listed in the main list. However, there remains much research to be done to verify just how they develop. Wilber pointed out that:

The self and therefore *all of the self-related lines* can be modeled in this fashion, with gross, subtle, causal, and nondual streams (of morals, perspectives, drives, etc.) developing relatively independently. It must be strongly emphasized, however, that the number of these streams—if any—that actually develop independently can only be determined by careful research guided by models of this type. The lines (cognitive, self-related, etc.) are prevented from total independence by both the self’s overriding drive for integration and the necessities of holarchical development in general. Many of the lines are necessary but not sufficient for others, and all of them are bound to some degree by the self-system.... Although a few of these relationships can be logically deduced, most of them can only be determined by careful research.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Wilber, *One taste*, 2000c, p. 273.

<sup>76</sup> Image from Reynolds, *Embracing reality*, 2004, p. 346.

<sup>77</sup> Wilber, *Integral psychology*, 2000d, p. 258n.

Wilber also pointed out that most developmental research to date measures *only* the frontal (i.e., proximate and distal) selves within the self-system, thus opening the door to explore new relationships between these *self-system lines* through integral research. In this context, then, AQAL-4 provided a robust and nuanced model of “levels, lines, and self” to make better sense of the seemingly disparate research on known *lines*.

## Appendix 2: Metaphysical Assumptions in AQAL-5 Integral Post-Metaphysics

A key function of Integral Post-Metaphysics is to identify a *minimum* set of metaphysical assumptions in relation to the epistemological pluralism used by any integral community of the adequate. Philosophers like Kant and Heidegger have shown convincingly that we can never do away completely with metaphysics; and Wilber's approach honors and includes that. Therefore, he articulated a minimum set of metaphysical assumptions *up front*, rather than have them make stealthy, subconscious appearances as Kant and Heidegger point out.

Wilber (2003a) thus postulated *involutionary givens* that exist "before the beginning" of the Big Bang. They exert an influence on all subsequent development and evolution. The *minimum* requirement to set evolution and space-time rolling are simply *Eros* and *Agape*, two sides of the same "pull." Together, they:

... Constitute little in the way of actual contents or forms or entities or levels, but rather a vast morphogenetic field that exerts a gentle pull (or Agape) toward higher, wider, deeper occasions, a pull that shows up in manifest or actual occasions as the Eros in the agency of all holons. (We can think of this 'pull' as the pull of all things back to Spirit; Whitehead called it 'love' as 'the gentle persuasion of God' toward unity; this love reaching down from the higher to the lower is called Agape, and when reaching up from the lower to the higher is called Eros: two sides of the same pull). This vast morphogenetic pull connects the potentials of the lowest holons (materially asleep) with the potentials of the highest (spiritually awakened).<sup>78</sup>

However, Wilber (2003a) also listed additional involutionary givens that are consonant with various philosophers. In summary:

1. *Eros*
2. *Agape*

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<sup>78</sup> Wilber, "Excerpt A: An integral age at the leading edge," 2003a, pp. 127-128.

3. *A morphogenetic gradient*, a “field of potentials, defined not by their fixed contents and forms but by their relative placement in the sliding field.”<sup>79</sup>
4. *Prototypical forms or patterns*, such as the twenty or so tenets of all holons.<sup>80</sup>

He further distinguished between *evolutionary givens* – Kosmic habits or memory created by the evolutionary process over long stretches of time and cautioned not to confuse them with involutory givens.

Finally, see “Excerpt A: An Integral Age at the Leading Edge, On the Nature of Involuntary Givens” (2003a, endnote 26), for Wilber’s Integral Post-Metaphysical creation mythos that transcends yet includes the Big Bang.

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<sup>79</sup> Wilber, *Ibid*, p. 134.

<sup>80</sup> See Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, 2000b, pp. 40-85 for the Twenty or so Tenets of all holons.

### Appendix 3: My Psychograph and Methods

Given Wilber's call to track horizontal and vertical growth in researchers,<sup>81</sup> I include an outline of my psychograph here. The idea is to situate you, the reader, to what overall altitude or center of gravity I am operating from as I researched this paper. Unfortunately, there is still no standardized psychograph. With this caveat in mind, I will include some information that might eventually make its way into a researcher psychograph.

I am certified at Level-3 in Spiral Dynamics integral (SDi) as transmitted by Dr. Don Beck. SDi is a 4Q/8L model, or four quadrants, eight levels derived from the Gravesian value lines. On a good day I operate around a nodal **YELLOW** altitude, but continue to work on occasional **BLUE**, **ORANGE**, and **GREEN**<sup>82</sup> "antibodies," meaning that these three worldviews still offer me challenges in their healthy forms. Current estimates are that these three worldviews comprise over 95% of the global population.<sup>83</sup> However, I continue to work to better understand healthy and unhealthy versions of all worldviews (vMemes).

Based on what I know about other significant lines, my cognitive line is around postformal (vision-logic) as evidenced by my ability to take multiple perspectives in this paper, design my MIDI music recording studio, earn a Ph.D. in music composition, and successfully run a national testbed like *The Science Learning Network*. My moral line is around postconventional (worldcentric) as evidenced by my work on NewWorldView.com and love of AQAL-5

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<sup>81</sup> Wilber, *An integral theory of consciousness*, 1997a.

<sup>82</sup> Beck's color system used in SDi is different than Wilber's AQAL-5 scheme added in 2006. The main difference is that Beck selected colored based on the feeling tone expressed at each stage, and Wilber used the color spectrum of the Eastern chakra system. However, the general developmental altitudes are equivalent.

#### Spiral Dynamics Integral/Beck

**BEIGE**  
**PURPLE**  
**RED**  
**BLUE**  
**ORANGE**  
**GREEN**  
**YELLOW**  
**TURQUOISE**  
**CORAL**

#### AQAL-5/Wilber

**INFRARED**  
**MAGENTA**  
**RED**  
**AMBER**  
**ORANGE**  
**GREEN**  
**TEAL**  
**TURQUOISE**  
**INDIGO**

<sup>83</sup> Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, 2006a, p. 245.

metatheory. My affective line may be one of my lower lines since I am a male culturally trained to repress and deny feelings (e.g., “real men don’t cry”). So this is an area I continue to work on allowing my feelings to arise and simply be an expression of who I am.

My Myers-Briggs test results were INTJ and ENTJ (introvert/extrovert, intuitive, thinking, and judging) when taken in the mid-1990s. They point to a “free thinker” or “scientist” personality type who is often highly self-motivated and trusts their own vision regardless of nay-sayers. We may be the most independent of all of the sixteen personality types, and quietly enjoy developing our ideas, theories, and principles. As far as the “voice” I use to navigate my lines, I lean toward a masculine expression and favor agentic behavior, rights, and justness. Therefore, I also work on my communal side, care, and responsibility to be more open and nurturing when I engage others.

I have pursued an Integral Life Practice (ILP) for the past four years, and various spiritual practices for over thirty years. My shadow practices include 3-2-1 and NIRAA<sup>84</sup>, body practices include regular exercise (walking) and diet, mental practices include dream journaling, playing the piano, flute, and writing papers that apply AQAL metatheory, and spiritual practices include Tibetan dream and sleep yoga, Vipassana meditation, and Avatar yoga.

As such, I have experienced various profound subtle and causal states—peak and plateau experiences (satoris). They are not yet stable traits overall, but provided enough phenomenological experience to personally verify that the maps presented by Wilber, and many others are authentic, and I am not experiencing pathology or other dysfunction.

Taken together, then, I believe my center of gravity is a nodal **TEAL** when I am well rested and fed. It is amazing how far I can regress when I am tired and hungry! (My wife and I jokingly refer to it as “going **BEIGE**.”) Therefore, I construct my reality from an altitude of probability spaces that are roughly 25% **GREEN**, 50% **TEAL**, and 25% **TURQUOISE**. This intuitively feels in the ballpark.

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<sup>84</sup> NIRAA stands for Noticing, Identifying/Recognizing, Addressing to, and Accepting. It is similar to a Gestalt approach that objectifies shadow elements in third-person artifacts, and gradually transforms them back into first-person terms.



Since the above is a self-report, hopefully your inner skeptic is wondering how the validity claim for the Upper-Left—*truthfulness*—applies to my truth claims? In other words, am I telling you the truth, or am I purposefully or even unconsciously misrepresenting my own interiors for any variety of reasons? If I had a psychograph, then the appropriate truth claim would be *propositional truth*. It would provide a third-person perspective on my interiors, and provide an average snapshot of my vertical and horizontal probability spaces. However, *truthfulness* would still apply to my providing accurate results.

Next, I wanted to include some insights into my motivations to create this paper. Having read Wilber's work for over twelve years, I have accumulated many quotes that helped me better understand Phase-1 through Phase-5. So studying its genealogy has been a natural way for me to assimilate the metatheory. Further, this is one way, not the only, to teach AQAL metatheory at an undergraduate level and higher. By studying its genealogy we are exposed to a broad survey of Wilber's work and cultural milieu, see that it was fueled by scientific, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual impulses to integrate those subjects, and explore how the theory evolved over decades into a full-blown metatheory.

Finally, I wanted to share some insights into the general perspectives used in constructing this paper. I, the researcher holon have taken various first-, second-, and third-person views of the Ken Wilber holon (the mapmaker) as my primary subject over three decades. AQAL metatheory is a Lower-Right artifact (a map of knowing, being, and doing) of the Ken Wilber holon. As such, I used the following zones-perspectives and validity claims in the process:

Zone #1: I took a first-person view of my interior (I/truthfulness).

Zone #2: I took a third-person view of my interior (I/truthfulness).

Zone #2: I took a third-person view of Wilber's interior (I/truthfulness).

Zone #3: I took a first-person view of Wilber's and my interiors through interpreting his writings, audio recordings, and personal conversations (WE/justness).

Zone #4: I took a third-person view of Wilber's and my interiors and cultural milieu (WE/justness).

Zone #6: I took a third-person view of Wilber's and my exterior behaviors (IT/propositional truth).

Zone #8: I took a third-person view of Wilber's and my social systems including the AQAL metatheory, its genealogy, and practical application (ITS/functional fit).

The above is only a prototype to suggest some relevant data to include using Wilber's AQAL-5 IMP and researcher simultracking.

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