

(This discussion is in relation to "[Bald Ambition, Chap. 1: Holarchy - the 20 tenets](#)" by Jeff Meyerhoff on Integral World).

Katthe Wolf: Sept 14, 2014

I see 12 Tenets Wilber's book SES & in your article. Where are the other 8?????

Bill Kaye: Mar 28, 2016

First, I am not a Wilber fan boy. But what is your point? To improve Wilber's model? Wilber's quadrant model is open for improvement. A model which is all inclusive is difficult to dismantle.

The details can be tweaked. This is what you appear to be attempting.

Peter Collins: Nov 24, 2020

Hello Jeff,

This is an excellent contribution.

Through a careful reading of Wilber, together with the pertinent observations of other able critics such as Andy Smith and Mark Edwards, combined with your own thoughtful reflections, you expose many glaring contradictions and further questions arising from the 20 tenets.

However there is a deeper issue here, which I have raised on many occasions in varied ways on Integral World (though not yet provoking the attention I believe it urgently requires). And this relates as to whether Ken Wilber's work, superb as it undoubtedly is in so many ways, can be said to constitute a proper integral theory.

My own position is this. Ken Wilber certainly provides a comprehensive multi-differentiated interpretation of development that is unparalleled with respect to its scope, intelligence and insight.

He also provides, often in a beautiful poetic manner, wonderful descriptions of the ultimate nondual nature of reality.

However he never properly reconciles his intellectual treatment of development – which relies heavily on repeatedly emphasised dualistic distinctions – with the ultimate nondual spiritual nature of reality (which he would rightly maintain as primary).

By skilfully using the same linear asymmetric approach that Wilber employs, you have been successfully able to show many of the contradictory conclusions that inevitably follow from the attempt to provide unambiguous principles of development (such as Wilber's 20 tenets).

And the same fate will inevitably follow anyone who attempts to approach development in the same manner starting with arbitrary – and ultimately untenable – dualistic premises.

So for example Wilber begins by defining a holon as a whole that is part of another whole.

However right away, with this premise, he comes down in favour of just one side of a polarity, in giving primacy to the whole aspect of a holon, as if somehow a holon can be given a pre-defined starting identity as a whole (rather than a part).

Thus a critical imbalance in the manner he defines the holon is evident from the very start (with the whole aspect being identified with the individual holon). Then by attempting to follow the logical consequences inherent in this starting premise, he is later led to make the somewhat ridiculous distinction as between sentient and non-sentient holons (which he inelegantly refers to as heaps).

I have made this point repeatedly that one cannot base a coherent integral theory (in intellectual terms) on an approach that is so much based, as it is in Wilber's case, on linear asymmetric analysis.

Rather what is required for a true integral understanding is a dynamic appreciation in all developmental contexts of the complementarity of polar opposites. So every dualistic distinction, by definition, entails an unbalanced emphasis on just one side of a polarity (where the other side has an unrecognised equal validity).

In this context, I would see three polarities as being of fundamental importance i.e. internal/external, whole/part and form/emptiness. And it has long been my contention that the dynamics between these poles, which operate in a unique manner in each case, can be scientifically understood in a fully coherent holistic mathematical manner.

Though from one perspective, Ken Wilber is indeed aware of these complementary distinctions, to a remarkable extent, he quickly forgets their crucial relevance, reaching many conclusions based on asymmetrical analysis that are simply untenable from an overall integral perspective.

The simplest of these complementary polarities relates to that between internal (as subject) and external (as object).

Though it is customary in discussions, as for example on Integral World to look at scientific data as if it existed independent of the observer, this is clearly not valid from an integral perspective, where understanding strictly represents an (internal) mental interpretation of (external) objective reality.

However this seems to be quickly forgotten, not alone by Ken Wilber but also the majority of critics on this forum.

For example Tenet 9 states “destroy any type of holon and you will destroy all the holons above it but none of the holons below it”.

Therefore according to this logic, if we were to destroy all the molecules in the world, all of the atoms would still remain.

Now this might appear valid if we could treat the objective world as independent of the interpreting mind.

However from an integral perspective, it makes no sense whatsoever. For, if we destroy all the molecules, this necessarily would entail human life (that is composed of molecules).

Therefore it clearly can have no experiential meaning as humans could not meaningfully interpret such an event. So this tenet based on the gross fallacy of “the myth of the given”, in fact flies in the face of all Wilber’s more recent work on perspectives, which remind us that 3rd person events necessarily have 1st person interpretations.

So there is this continual inconsistency in Wilber’s writing, where though often appearing integral as when he states that all quadrants and all perspectives, unfold simultaneously, quickly contradicts this through his actual analysis of development, which in many respects supports conclusions that are remarkably reduced in nature.

And frankly I am amazed that others do not properly see the root of this fundamental problem, i.e. one cannot build a coherent integral theory on asymmetrical type analysis as this inevitably requires the making of arbitrary distinctions that are thereby inconsistent from an overall integral perspective.

Asymmetric analysis (in which Wilber excels) is suited for the differentiated treatment of development in all possible contexts.

However for true integral synthesis of reality we require an inherently dynamic approach that is based on the paradoxical (circular) principle of the complementarity of opposites.

For all Wilber’s merits – which are many – he offers a sophisticated mechanical model of development that is greatly lacking in true dynamic appreciation.

Jung in psychology (who Wilber often criticises unfairly) Hegel in philosophy and Underhill in mysticism, just to mention three influential writers, though much more inexact in expression, do offer a dynamic account of development more properly suited as an integral approach.

In fact the true purpose of an integral approach should be to consistently show how all the carefully made dualistic distinctions at an asymmetric level are rendered paradoxical in terms of a coherent integral synthesis based on distinctive circular logical understanding.

In fact such understanding in its most refined manner properly unfolds at the more advanced spiritual contemplative levels of understanding.

This understanding entails a pure intuitive understanding that in intellectual terms is

associated with new dynamic bi-directional forms of understanding.
So the integral appreciation of development is fully consistent with a movement to ineffable nondual awareness, free of phenomenal rigidity.

Then with due methods of interpretation of the distinctive nature of differentiated and integral aspects respectively the final comprehensive period of development, which I refer to as radial, can then take place.

So rather than the intellectual confusion of differentiation with integration, we really should have three distinct approaches to development i.e. multi-differential, integral and radial. From this perspective therefore Ken Wilber provides a superb comprehensive multi-differentiated approach (that however significantly confuses, in intellectual terms, integration with differentiation)

Because Wilber misleadingly persists with the misleading belief that intellectual understanding culminates with the vision-logic of the centaur, he has so far completely failed to properly recognise the cognitive structures of the more advanced levels.

And once again an integral theory that is worthy of the name will need to employ these new dynamic structures.