

## Chapter 1. **Integral Methodological Pluralism**

We start with the simple observation that the “metaphysics” of the spiritual traditions have been thoroughly critiqued—“trashed” is probably the better word—by both modernist and postmodernist epistemologies, and there has as yet arisen nothing compelling to take their place. So this chapter begins with an overview of the methodologies available that can be used to reconstruct the spiritual systems of the great wisdom traditions but with none of their metaphysical baggage.

**Integral Methodological Pluralism** (IMP) involves, among other things, at least 8 fundamental and apparently irreducible methodologies, injunctions, or paradigms for gaining reproducible knowledge (or verifiably repeatable experiences). The fundamental claim of AQAL Integral Theory is that any approach that leaves out any of these 8 paradigms is a less-than-adequate approach according to available and reliable human knowledge at this time.

The easiest way to understand IMP is to start with what are known as the **quadrants**, which suggest that any occasion possesses an inside and an outside, as well as an individual and a collective, dimension. Taken together, this gives us the inside and the outside of the individual and the collective. These are often represented as I, you/we, it, and its (a variation on 1<sup>st</sup>-, 2<sup>nd</sup>-, and 3<sup>rd</sup>-person pronouns; another variation is the Good, the True, and the Beautiful; or art, morals, and science, and so on—namely, the objective truth of exterior science, or it/its; the subjective truth of aesthetics, or I; and the collective truth of ethics, or thou/we).

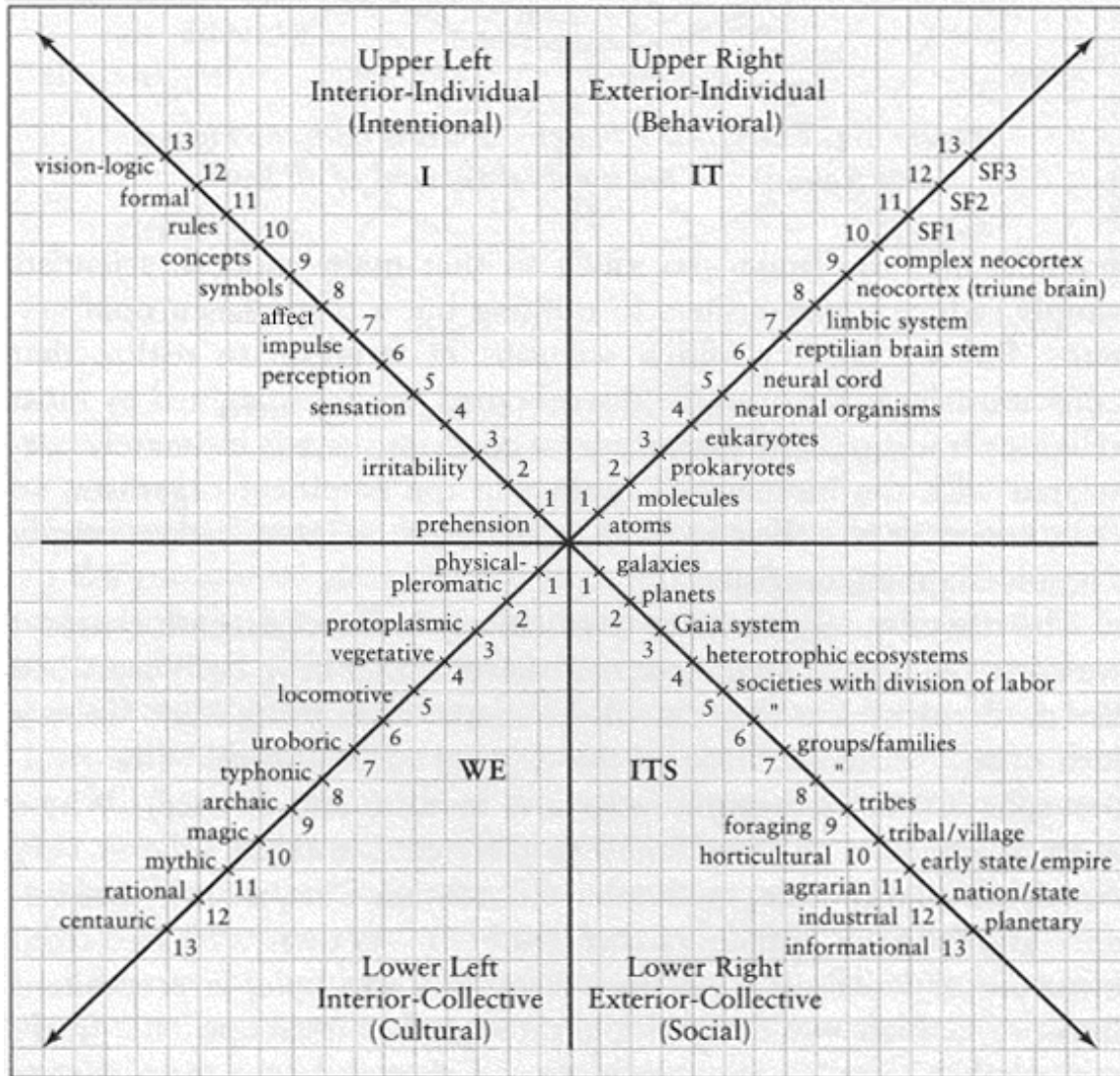


Figure 1.1. *Some Details of the Quadrants*

Figure 1.1 is a schematic of some of the phenomena found in the quadrants according to reliable knowledge communities working with them. (Don't worry if some of the terms are unfamiliar; we will cover the important ones later.)\*

\* As introductory statements we say things like, "The quadrants are the inside and the outside view (or perspective) of the individual and the collective." More technically, with reference to these perspectives, we differentiate between the "view through" and the "view from." All individual (or sentient) holons HAVE or POSSESS 4 perspectives through which or with which they view or touch the world, and those are the quadrants (the view through). But anything can be *looked at* FROM those 4 perspectives—or there is a view of anything from those perspectives—and that is technically called a *quadrivium*. For example, a

We often refer to any event as a **holon**—a “whole/part,” or a whole that is a part of other wholes—and thus each of the items labeled in the various quadrants can also be referred to as a holon (e.g., in the UR quadrant, a molecule is a holon that contains whole atoms and is contained by whole cells; in the UL, a concept is a holon that contains whole symbols and is contained by whole rules, and so on).

Now here, as they say, is where it gets interesting. If you imagine any of the phenomena (or holons) in the various quadrants, you can look at them from their own inside or outside. This gives you **8 primordial perspectives**—the inside and the outside view of a holon in any of the 4 quadrants.

---

chair, as an artifact, does not possess 4 quadrants, but it can be looked at from those 4 quadrants or perspectives, which is then a quadrivium of views of or about the chair. An individual holon (like you or me) *has* an I, we, it, and its dimension-perspective (and hence a view through); an artifact does not, but I can look at the artifact from each of those perspectives or each quadrivium. Likewise, the 8 zones are “8 quadrants,” and the 8 methodologies are “8 quadrivia.” See appendix II.

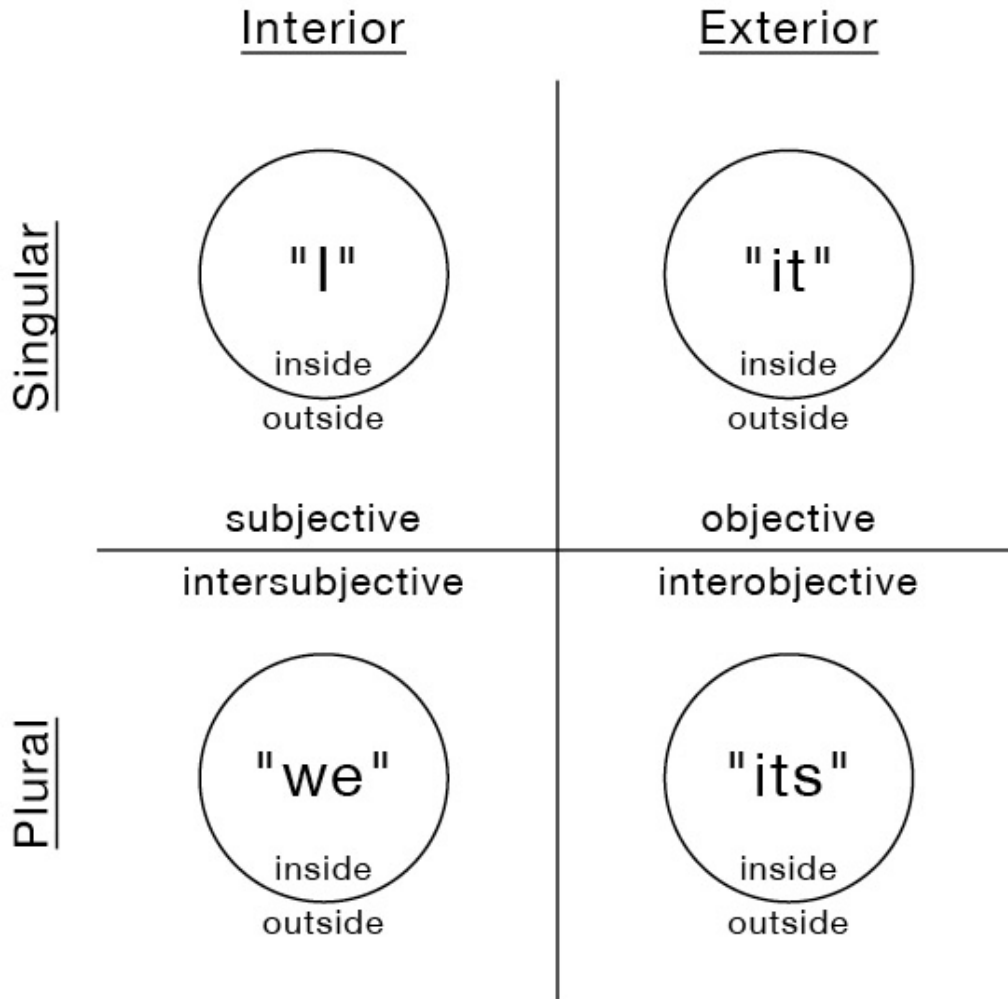


Figure 1.2. 8 Primordial Perspectives

These 8 primordial perspectives of any occasion are summarized in figure 1.2. The sum total of these 8 views we call **Integral Perspectivism**.

We inhabit these 8 spaces, these zones, these lifeworlds, as practical realities. Each of these zones is not just a perspective, but an action, an injunction, a concrete set of actions in a real world zone. Each injunction *brings forth* or discloses the phenomena that are apprehended through the various perspectives. It is not that perspectives come first and actions or injunctions come later; they simultaneously co-arise (actually, tetra-arise). "Perspectives" simply locate the perceiving holon in AQAL space. To take such-and-such a perspective is to be arising in this

particular area of the AQAL matrix. (In fact, we will soon give the “address” of a holon in the AQAL matrix as: **address = altitude + perspective**, where *altitude* means degree of development and *perspective* means the perspective or quadrant it is in.)

We will come back to all that. The basic point is simply that these 8 fundamental perspectives also involve 8 fundamental methodologies. You not only can take a view, you can act from it. Some of the more well known of these methodologies are summarized in figure 1.3. These methodologies taken together are referred to as **Integral Methodological Pluralism**.

The idea is simple enough. Start with any phenomenon (or holon) in any of the quadrants—for example, the experience of an “I” in the UL quadrant. That “I” can be looked at from the inside or the outside. I can experience my own “I” *from the inside*, in this moment, as the felt experience of being a subject of my present experience, a 1<sup>st</sup> person having a 1<sup>st</sup>-person experience. If I do so, the results include such things as introspection, meditation, phenomenology, contemplation, and so on (all simply summarized as **phenomenology** in fig. 1.3).

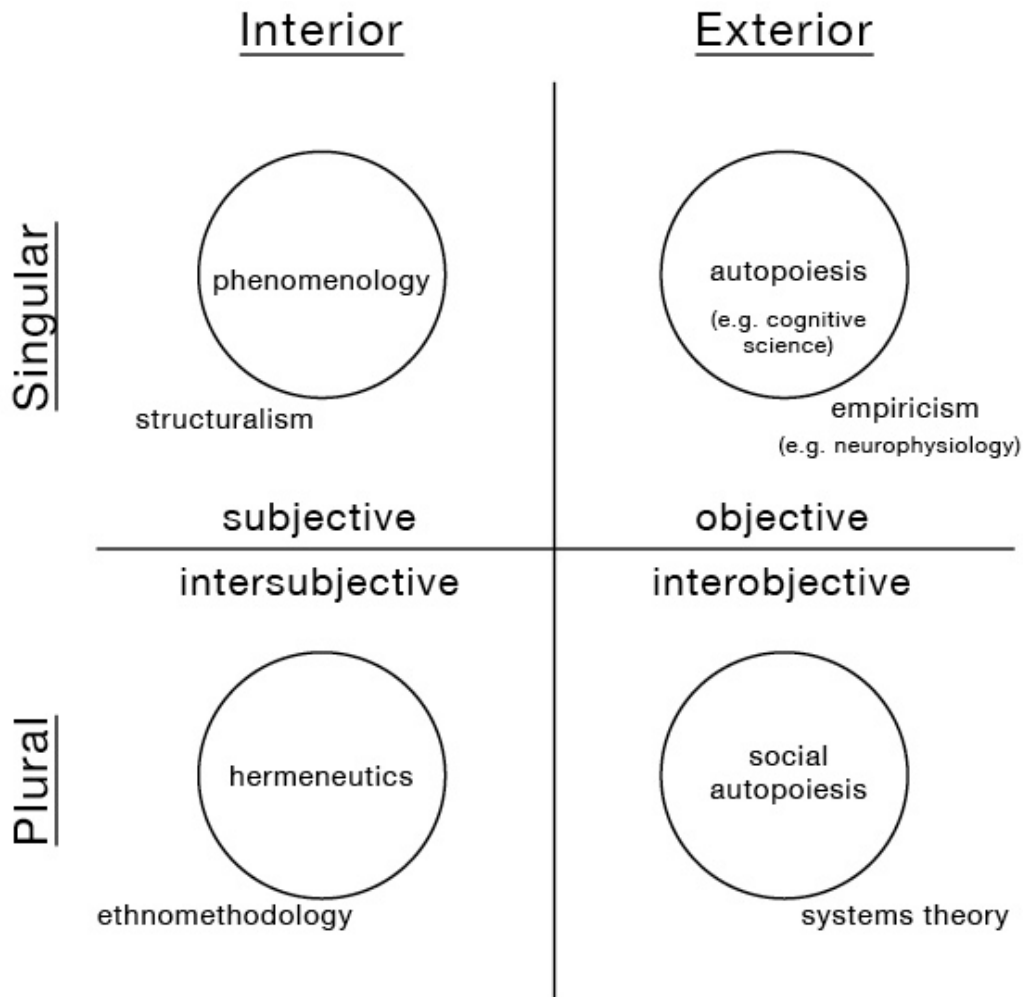


Figure 1.3. 8 Major Methodologies

But I can also approach this “I” *from the outside*, in a stance of an objective or “scientific” observer. I can do so in my own awareness (when I try to be “objective” about myself, or try to “see myself as others see me”), and I can also attempt to do this with other “I’s” as well, attempting to be scientific in my study of how people experience their “I.” The most famous of these scientific approaches to I-consciousness have included systems theory and **structuralism**.

Likewise, I can approach the study of a “we” from its inside or its outside. *From the inside*, this includes the attempts that you and I make to understand each other right now. How is

it that you and I can reach *mutual understanding* about anything, including when we simply talk to each other? How do your “I” and my “I” come together in something you and I both call “we” (as in, “Do you and I—do we—understand each other?”). The art and science of we-interpretation is typically called **hermeneutics**.

But I can also attempt to study this “we” *from the outside*, perhaps as a cultural anthropologist, or an ethnomethodologist, or a Foucauldian archaeologist, and so on (all of which are summarized in fig. 1.3 as **ethnomethodology**).

And so on around the quadrants. Thus, 8 basic *perspectives* and 8 basic *methodologies*.

Let me give a very quick indication of why this becomes crucially important for today’s spirituality. Many of you are familiar with Spiral Dynamics, a system of psychosocial development based upon Clare Graves’s pioneering research on stages of value systems (if you’re not familiar with SD, don’t worry, we will summarize it later, at which point what I am about to say will make sense). SD is representative of the type of research that has been so valuable in understanding people’s worldviews, values, and the stages of meaning-making that human beings go through.

And many of you are aware of the profound meditative states of awareness referred to generally as *unio mystica*, *sahaj*, or *satori* (or illumination and awakening). These are states that are said by the great traditions to give knowledge or awareness of an ultimate reality. (Don’t worry if you’re not familiar with those terms either, we’ll come back to them.)

Here’s the point: you can sit on your meditation mat for decades, and you will NEVER see anything resembling the stages of Spiral Dynamics. And you can study Spiral Dynamics till the cows come home, and you will NEVER have a satori. And the integral point is, if you don’t include both, you will likely never understand human beings or their relation to Reality, divine or otherwise.

Meditative understanding involves preeminently a methodology of looking at the “I” from the inside (using phenomenology); Spiral Dynamics involves studying it from the outside (using structuralism). Both of them are studying a person’s consciousness, but they see very different things because they are inhabiting a different stance or perspective, using different methodologies. Further, a person could be quite advanced in one, and not in the other, or vice versa, and there is no way to tell using either of their yardsticks; they can’t even see each other!

## HORI-ZONES OF ARISING

Each view or perspective, with its actions and injunctions, brings forth a world of phenomena; a worldspace that (tetra-)arises as a result; a worldspace with a horizon. The sum total of all of that we simply call a **hori-zone**, or **zone** for short. A zone is a view with its actions, its injunctions, its lifeworld, and the whole shebang called forth at that address. You can think of it as a life-zone, or zone of awareness, or a living space—any number of terms will do.

But it is a definite location in the AQAL matrix: this actual holon living at this address, with these actions, bringing forth these phenomena. But all in very concrete terms. A zone is . . . actually going shopping. And everything you might see and feel and do in the space that you inhabit doing so.

(We earlier briefly mentioned that a holon’s address = its altitude + perspective. We will indeed come back to this in the next chapter and see how that relates to a zone. As we will discover, all of this is important because it relates to being able to “prove” the existence of anything, whether a rock, a proposition, or God. . . .)

Perspectives and methodologies are just subsets of hori-zones—they are some of the things that can happen in a zone of arising. This, too, will become clearer as we proceed. For now, simply think of a zone as everything that CAN arise in any of those 8 areas on figures 1.2 and 1.3. For convenience, we will label all of them (see fig. 1.4).

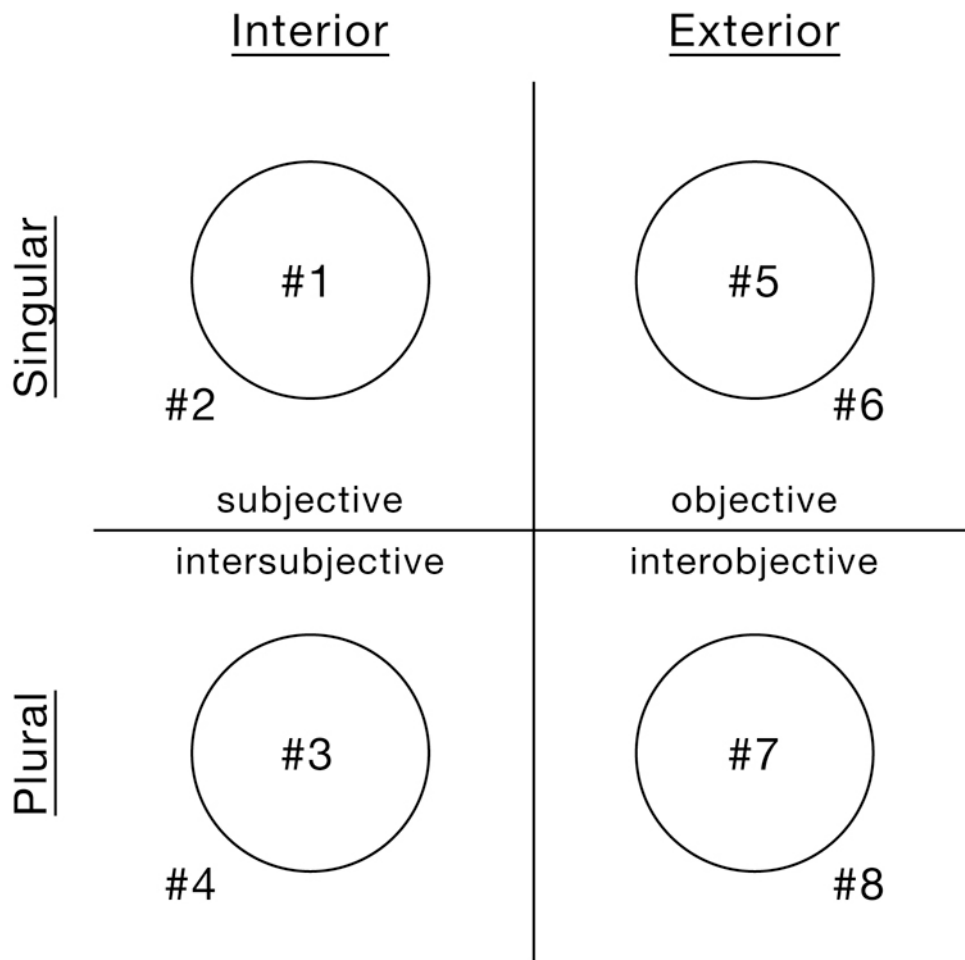


Figure 1.4. 8 Zones

To return to Spiral Dynamics and meditation: when it comes to interior consciousness (the Upper-Left quadrant) both zone-#1 and zone-#2 methodologies are crucially important types of knowledge, and both complement each other wonderfully. (In case you're unfamiliar with them, we will give extensive examples of both in the next chapter.) Taking both into account is absolutely essential for making any sort of progress in understanding the role of religion and spirituality in the modern and postmodern world.

Once we acknowledge the research and importance of both, the trick is to then understand how they are related. How are zones #1 and #2 related—indeed, how are all 8 zones related?

This is a primary topic of this book. And, beyond that, what does all this have to do with religion in the modern and postmodern world?

## AN INTEGRAL MATHEMATICS OF PRIMORDIAL PERSPECTIVES

For you advanced students out there, notice that the 8 methodologies are really giving us perspectives on perspectives on perspectives. For example, meditation involves the inside view of an interior view of an individual view. Francisco Varela's approach to biological phenomenology is the outside view of the inside view of the exterior view. Hermeneutics is the inside view of the interior view of the collective view. And so on. Each **zone** actually involves at least **3 major perspectives** to locate it! (Don't worry, it's much simpler than it sounds!)

This leads to a new type of mathematical notation that we sometimes call **integral math**, which replaces traditional variables with perspectives. (For you not-so-advanced students, don't worry about this section; we'll pick up the fun again with the heading "Integral Post-Metaphysics," and you don't need to even read this section if it seems unusually stupid to you.)

Using the shorthand of 1<sup>st</sup> person (for *the inside in general*) and 3<sup>rd</sup> person (for *the outside in general*), then **introspection**, let's say, which is a type of phenomenology (or zone-#1 activity), is when "I look into my mind"—or I have a 1<sup>st</sup>-person experience of my 1<sup>st</sup>-person awareness, which we would write as **1-p × 1p**.

But I can also try to see myself "objectively," like others see me. So that would be a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person view of my own introspection, so let's write that as **3-p × 1-p × 1p**. Contrasted to that, pure meditation or introspection would be **1-p × 1-p × 1p**, which means a 1<sup>st</sup>-person view (**1-p**) of my 1<sup>st</sup>-person awareness (**1-p**) of me, or my 1<sup>st</sup> person (**1p**).

We will come back to Varela's view later, but for those of you following it now, Varela started with the objective organism in the Upper Right (or a 3<sup>rd</sup> person, **3p**). He then attempted to "see the world through the frog's eyes," or take a 1<sup>st</sup>-person view within that objective organism (**1-p** × **3p**). And he then put that in scientific terms (**3-p**), so he had a **3-p** × **1-p** × **3p** (a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person conceptualization of a 1<sup>st</sup>-person view from within the 3<sup>rd</sup> person or "objective" organism).

That's a simple version of doing "integral math," which really means, *inhabiting as many perspectives of other sentient beings as you possibly can*. Get out of yourself and take the role of others, and take the roles of others yet again. . . . That's why the full name is an **integral mathematics of primordial perspectives**. Doing this type of integral math is actually what one person called **psychoactive**, because it's not really abstract math, but an actual putting yourself in somebody else's shoes, which forces your awareness to grow. (We will come back to that.)

Integral math can become enormously rich and complicated, with many more roles and terms and perspectives, but those are some examples for a start. (You can actually go on to build a type of real mathematics here, with the equal sign representing "mutual understanding or resonance." As far as we know, this is a radical new type of mathematics that replaces variables with perspectives and objects with sentient beings.)

But here's the main point we are following. Meditation, as we saw, is **1-p** × **1-p** × **1p** (or the inside view of the interior awareness of my 1<sup>st</sup> person). Spiral Dynamics, as it relates to an individual, is **3-p** × **1-p** × **1p**. It's a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person conceptual map of the interior awareness of a person.

With reference to Spiral Dynamics and meditation, you can see right in those equations that the first term in each phrase is different—very different—in Spiral Dynamics (**3-p** × 1-p × 1p) and in meditation (**1-p** × 1-p × 1p). As the underlined terms show, Zen and SD share two of the variables, but not the first: SD is a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person map of an interior territory, and Zen a 1<sup>st</sup>-person experience of an interior territory. There are some other important differences that we will get to

in a minute, but you can start to see the useful distinctions that come from an Integral Methodological Pluralism and an integral mathematics of primordial perspectives.\*

We will explore those differences in detail in a later chapter. And you *don't* have to know the math.

## INTEGRAL POST-METAPHYSICS

The Integral view leads to an entirely new approach to metaphysics that is actually **post-metaphysics**, in that it requires none of the traditional baggage of metaphysics (such as postulating the existence of pre-existing ontological structures of a Platonic, archetypal, Patanjali, or YogacharaBuddhist variety), and yet it can generate those structures if needed (as I will try to demonstrate later).

This **Integral Post-Metaphysics** replaces *perceptions* with *perspectives*, and thus re-defines the manifest realm as the realm of perspectives, not things nor events nor structures nor processes nor systems nor vasanas nor archetypes nor dharmas, because all of those are perspectives before they are anything else, and cannot be adopted or even stated without first assuming a perspective.

---

\*In integral math, when we use 3 terms, such as **1p × 1-p × 3p**, those terms are usually: quadrant × quadrivium × domain (and “domain” can be a quadrant or a quadrivium). Of course, it can get much more complicated very quickly, but much of integral math is simply reiterations of those fundamental possibilities. As integral math gets more complex, we use 4 and 5 terms, not just 3 (e.g., **1p × 3-p × 1-p × 3p**). If we only use 3 of those terms, as I usually do in this book, then the definitions can look different from those given in the Excerpts, but they really aren't. For example, Varela's view using 4 terms is **3p × 1-p × 3-p × 3p**, and if you shorten that to 3 terms, it will look different depending on which 3 you choose. In the text, I am using the first 3 of those 4 terms (**3-p × 1-p × 3p**), but you could use the last 3 (**1-p × 3-p × 3p**).

Also, “the inside and outside of the singular and collective” technically are not the same as 1<sup>st</sup>-, 2<sup>nd</sup>-, and 3<sup>rd</sup>-person approaches or combinations thereof, and some severe theoretical problems result if this equation is made. We sometimes use 1-p and 3-p to represent inside and outsides views, but this is a concession to popular understanding and not the actual definitions. The quadrants (inside/outside × singular/plural) are much more fundamental and prior differentiations in Kosmogogenesis than are 123p (and, in fact, generate them). Ditto for judgments such as aesthetic, moral, scientific.

Thus, for example, the Whiteheadian and Buddhist notion of each moment being a momentary, discrete, fleeting subject that apprehends dharmas or momentary occasions, is itself a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person generalization of 1<sup>st</sup>-person view of the reality in a 1<sup>st</sup> person (3-p × 1-p × 1p). Each moment is *not* a subject prehending an object; it is a perspective prehending a perspective—with Whitehead’s version being a truncated version of that multifaceted occasion, a version that actually has a hidden monological metaphysics. Integral Post-Metaphysics can thus generate the essentials of Whitehead’s view but without assuming Whitehead’s hidden metaphysics.

The same turns out to be true for the central assertions of the great wisdom traditions: an Integral Post-Metaphysics can generate their essential contours *without* assuming their extensive metaphysics. (If those examples are a bit too abstract, we will return to this topic shortly with some simpler ones.)

The problem with the Great Wisdom Traditions is that, heavy with metaphysics, their incredibly important truths could not easily withstand the critiques of either modernity or postmodernity. Modernist epistemologies subjected them to the demand for evidence, and because the premodern traditions were ill-prepared for this onslaught, they did not meet this challenge with a direct elucidation of the one area of their teachings that could have met the challenge: *the phenomenological core* of their contemplative traditions, which offered all the verifiable evidence one could want within a remarkably modern paradigm (contemplation was always a modern epistemology ahead of its time in a premodern world). Although both modernist contemplation and modernity itself were monological, they could provide legitimate proof *within their own exemplars*, which was a start.\* But the Great Traditions failed to call on this one strong suit, and failing that, the premodern spiritual traditions, more or less in their entirety, were savaged and rejected by modernist epistemologies: modernity rejected premodernity altogether.

---

\*See Excerpt B from vol. 2, [Wilber.Shambhala.com](http://Wilber.Shambhala.com), for a full treatment of that issue.

Not that it mattered much, because postmodernity rejected both. The important truth advanced by the postmodernist epistemologies is that all perceptions are actually perspectives, and *all perspectives are embedded in bodies and in cultures*, and not just in economic and social systems (which modernist epistemologies from Marx to systems theory had already spotted). Modernity flinched and then recoiled in the face of these postmodernist critiques. If modern epistemologies had a hard time handling these postmodern critiques, you can imagine how the premodern traditions fared.

Integral Methodological Pluralism highlights an array of fundamental perspectives, some of which the postmodernist epistemologies would particularly come to emphasize (others they remained ignorant of, even while implicitly using them). In particular, AQAL insists that every occasion has 4 quadrants, including a Lower-Left quadrant (intersubjective, cultural, contextual), and the quadrants “go all the way down.” In simpler terms, according to AQAL, all knowledge is embedded in cultural or intersubjective dimensions. Even transcendental knowledge is a 4-quadrant affair: the quadrants don’t just go all the way down, they go all the way up as well. It’s turtles all the way down, and it’s turtles all the way up, too.

As we will see throughout this book, modernity tended to focus, not just on a particular level of development, but on the Right-Hand quadrants of objective exterior evidence; while postmodernity focused, not just on a particular level of development, but on the Lower-Left quadrant of intersubjective truth and the social construction of reality. The premodern wisdom traditions, which generally were not even explicitly aware of those 3 quadrants (they were not differentiated until modernity), were simply no match for the productions of modernity (e.g., modern science) and postmodernity (e.g., multiculturalism) in those domains. But there was one area that the Great Traditions still specialized in, an area forgotten, ignored, or sometimes even suppressed by modernity and postmodernity, and that was **the interior of the individual**—the Upper-Left quadrant with all its **states** and **stages** of consciousness, realization, and spiritual

experiences. But by situating the great wisdom traditions in an integral framework—which accepts the enduring truths of premodern, modern, and postmodern realizations—their enduring insights can be salvaged to an remarkable degree.

For example, *virtually the entire Great Chain fits into the Upper-Left quadrant* (see appendix A, “From the Great Chain to Postmodernity in 3 Easy Steps”). The Great Chain, which, as Lovejoy pointed out, has been embraced by the vast majority of the greatest speculative and contemplative minds East and West for almost 2000 years, and which represents the essence of those premodern traditions, is actually dealing with realities and phenomena that are almost *entirely* in the Upper-Left quadrant. This is not a negative put-down, but a positive address: these folks were consummate phenomenologists who would explore and master some of those realms with a genius and intensity often yet to be matched. But the Great Traditions did not—and could not at that time—really know about the contours of these other quadrants (e.g., serotonin, dopamine, neurosynapses, DNA, neocortex, triune brain, etc., in the UR; systems and complexity theories in the LR; multicultural hermeneutics in the LL, etc.). And thus they were bound to come under the harshest scrutiny because they claimed to have all-encompassing knowledge, or at least claimed to be complete paths, and yet discoveries in the other quadrants would decisively undercut that claim (but NOT undercut their claims in the UL, where they specialized—and that’s the point: they have incredibly important if partial truths that need to be integrated in the larger picture).

Modernity, on the other hand, brought a breathtaking understanding to the Right-Hand quadrants, an understanding that, in that regard, blew the old Traditions out of the water. Under this modern onslaught, so badly did the Traditions fare, they all but retired from the scene of serious intelligentsia anywhere in the modern West (including theory and research). Modernity’s triumphal march was deftly captured by Kant: “Modernity means that if one of your friends comes in and finds you praying, you would be embarrassed.”

Indeed.

On the other hand, Postmodernity (these are just quick sketches; we will return to details later) focused on the other blind spot of the traditions—a blind spot shared by modernity—and that was the so-called *monological* nature of their knowledge (which means many things, but you can think of it as *not* being dialogical or not being intersubjective, or not realizing how culture molds individual perceptions of phenomena and dharmas, and then—having made that fundamental mistake—ascribing truth to what are, in part, merely cultural tastes).

Habermas calls monological knowledge by various names, particularly “the philosophy of the subject” and the “philosophy of consciousness”—both of which he and every postmodern theorist worth their salt completely savaged. The “philosophy of the subject” simply takes it that an individual subject is aware of phenomena, whereas that subject is actually set in cultural contexts of which the subject is totally unaware. For example, a Tibetan meditator in the 14<sup>th</sup> century would sit in his cave, meditating on an object of awareness—perhaps from the Zabmo Yangtig—and think he was dealing with given realities, whereas every single thing he is aware of is actually culturally molded to a significant (not total) degree. He thinks he is contemplating timeless truths, truths that hold for everybody, whereas a good number of them are Tibetan fashions.

“The philosophy of consciousness” is the similar assumption, namely, that there is consciousness and that phenomena present themselves to consciousness, either individual or a collective or store-house consciousness (e.g., *alaya-vijnana*). Every meditative and contemplative tradition makes this assumption. And it is simply wrong. It is profoundly mistaken and hence caught in what is often called *false consciousness* in several ways. The easiest way for now to state this unanimously agreed-upon postmodern criticism of the philosophy of consciousness is to simply say that the philosophy of consciousness is unaware of how the other 3 quadrants profoundly impact and mold consciousness in ways that are completely invisible to consciousness

itself. (Again, the Great Hierarchy of the wisdom traditions is almost entirely an Upper-Left quadrant affair.)

Therefore, introspection, meditation, and contemplation (and all of the exclusively zone-#1 methodologies) are caught in various types of illusion and ignorance that their own methodologies cannot get them out of. Postmodernity spotted this immediately (although it threw out the baby with the bathwater, as we will see), and proceeded to devastate the monological knowledge of both modernity and premodernity. Between the critiques of modernity and postmodernity, what was left of the Great Traditions could be put in a teaspoon.

The claim of Integral Post-Metaphysics is that the invaluable and profound truths of the premodern traditions can be salvaged by realizing that what they are saying and showing applies basically to the Upper-Left quadrant, so they needn't be held responsible for not knowing about the other 3 quadrants, and thus their own truths can be honored and included in the integral banquet. Likewise, Modernity was dealing largely with the Right-Hand quadrants, and Postmodernity with the Lower Left, all of which can be enthusiastically embraced.

Thus, shorn of their metaphysical baggage, the premodern wisdom traditions fit into an integral framework that allows modern and postmodern truths as well. This inclusive intent is genuine with AQAL, and the details of how to accomplish this integral embrace are spelled out in ways that are serious enough to merit further, sustained discussion and research. Failing to do so simply increases the alienation of the traditions from the modern and postmodern world.

#### THE GREAT TRADITIONS FLOUNDERED ON THE TABOO OF (INTER)SUBJECTIVITY

Here's an example of why taking these concerns into account is important for the contemplative traditions. Alan Wallace has written a wonderful book, *The Taboo of Subjectivity*,

about the eventual domination of Western scientific materialism over interior introspection, resulting in a modern worldview hostile to contemplative and meditative traditions, East or West.

This is certainly true. Modernist epistemologies were generally defined by their empirical nature. But notice that empiricism—which means “experientialism” or “experience-based”—was *originally* big enough for interior experience, or introspection (UL phenomenology), as well as the more familiar exterior experience, or behaviorism (UR positivism). In fact, William James’s *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, eulogized by Wallace, is a *quintessential modernist epistemology* (it replaces metaphysical postulates with experiential evidence, and it judges truth by its results, not its supposed ontological referents). In other words, it is a pure phenomenology, or as James preferred to call it, a “radical empiricism.” But due to various currents, many skillfully elucidated in *The Taboo of Subjectivity*, interior empiricism was rejected in favor of exterior empiricism, and the contemplative traditions went down with that ship, at least in the eyes of late modernity.

But again, when it came to the fate of meditation and introspection in the West, having Modernity kill Premodernity was not the only problem, or even the major problem, which was that Postmodernity killed both. In fact, what the postmodernists attacked most vitriolically (and successfully) was the modernist phenomenology exemplified by a Husserl or a William James—or a Dogen or an Eckhart or a St. Teresa. Those were the objects of the postmodernist onslaught, and it was postmodernism that won the day in the Western humanities.

What all of these contemplative Traditions had in common is that they were, and still are, monological—they all subscribe to the philosophy of consciousness. The entire Buddhist psychology and great metaphysical systems of Theravada and Yogachara are build on monological consciousness, individual or collective, as are the great Neoplatonic systems in the West, including the contemplative traditions. In fact, all of the types of knowledge offered by both Premodernity (and Modernity) were *unaware of the constitutive nature of the Lower-Left quadrant*, and that is where Postmodernity leveled devastating (and accurate) critiques of both.

Again, lots of babies were being thrown out with the bathwater, but by the same token, spiritual seekers were meditating on lots of bathwater and calling it dharma or gospel.

Thus, it wasn't just, or even especially, modern scientific materialism that killed meditative introspection and phenomenology, not in the humanities, anyway. It was the extensive and savage *postmodern attacks on phenomenology* (and all similar methodologies). Most postmodernists didn't even bother with science, they went straight after phenomenology. Foucault ignores the physical sciences and attacks Husserl. And the reason was as indicated: phenomenology failed to take into account the cultural embeddedness and the intersubjectivity of all awareness. The philosophy of the subject and subjectivity needs to be supplemented (not replaced) with the philosophy of intersubjectivity. The Upper Left needs its Lower Left (not to mention its UR and LR).

Postmodernity spotted this with a vengeance. Technically, the postmodernist critique of meditation would be: Meditative awareness is the quintessential type of monological awareness, which is not itself conducted in dialogue but in interior monologue of pure "presence" and "bare attention." But far from liberating somebody, that mode of awareness *merely cements their ignorance of their cultural embeddedness*, their intersubjectivity, and it is *that ignorance that allows social and cultural interests—patriarchal, sexist, ethnocentric, androcentric—to ride undetected into the awareness of a meditator even during satori*. Satori is therefore just a big cement job on intersubjective ignorance, allowing oppression and marginalization of dialogical realities: so much for the paths of liberation in the eyes of postmodernity.

Thus, it wasn't just the taboo of subjectivity that killed the contemplative traditions, it was the taboo of intersubjectivity *that the traditions themselves inherently contained and mindlessly continued to display*. Even if you remove the taboo of subjectivity, the traditions have not addressed the deepest of the postmodern critiques. And in that regard, offering more introspection and bare attention and vipassana and consciousness is NOT what the philosophy of

consciousness needs—that is exactly more of the disease, not the cure. And while contemplative prayer or vipassana might free you from your ego, it will not free you from your culture, whose prejudices remain in the hidden intersubjective background never brought to consciousness and thus never transcended—a source of collective ignorance, false consciousness, and bondage in an island of egoic release.

In short, the double death suffered by the contemplative traditions in the last few centuries involved *the taboo (or ignorance) of subjectivity* or interiority that was **displayed by late modernity**, and *the taboo (or ignorance) of intersubjectivity* **displayed by the traditions themselves**. Thus the contemplative traditions were slammed by both Modernity and Postmodernity, and little survived that double onslaught, at least in the eyes of serious scholars and researchers. Modern science rejected the very real phenomena disclosed by contemplation, and so did the postmodern humanities. (If you would like to see a further discussion of this topic, please see appendix II. For a critique of two dozen of today’s spiritual writers who have still not come to terms with the postmodern revolution, please see appendix III.)

## GENERAL OUTLINES OF INTEGRAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Integral Methodological Pluralism is one way of handling those difficult issues. It explicitly finds room for premodern truths, modern truths, and postmodern truths, all in an integral framework not of conclusions, but of perspectives and methodologies. Moreover, it doesn’t “cheat” by watering down the various truths in such a horrid way that they are hardly recognizable. *It takes all of those truths more or less as it finds them*. The only thing it alters is their claim to absoluteness, and any scaffolding (and metaphysics) meant to justify that unjustifiable claim.

Moreover, in ways we will return to later (when this will make more sense to an introductory reader), Integral Methodological Pluralism can *reconstruct* the important truths of

the contemplative traditions but *without the metaphysical systems* that would not survive modernist and postmodernist critiques, elements it turns out they don't really need, anyway.

I am not saying that AQAL (or IMP) is the only solution to these problems, simply that AQAL has explicitly taken all of these problems into serious account, and thus it is one way to proceed to integrate the best elements of premodern, modern, and postmodern currents of humanity's and spirit's self-understanding. **An integral approach thus protects each of those currents from attacks by the other two.**

Let's see an example of that by focusing on interior realities, including meditative and contemplative realities, and exploring some of the major approaches to those interior occasions.