



Meta-Genius: A Celebration of Ken's Writings (Part 1)
Reflections on His Work through Its Many Positive Critical Reviews

Many individuals are familiar with Ken Wilber's work since the publication of [Sex, Ecology, Spirituality](#), which Dr. Larry Dossey called "one of the most significant books ever published." Fewer people are familiar with his pre-SES books. These pre-SES are usually divided into three phases (wilber-1, wilber-2, and wilber-3), with SES marking the beginning of wilber-4, which lasted until the "volume 2" excerpts, as well as [Integral Spirituality](#), whose Appendix II is a preview of what some critics are calling his newest phase, wilber-5.

When we were cleaning house in preparation for the move from the old loft to the new loft, we found numerous reviews of his first three major books (*Spectrum*, *Atman*, and *Eden*), along with a raft of positive critical quotes about them. We thought they were a hoot, so we thought we'd share them.

The two central books of wilber-1 are [The Spectrum of Consciousness](#) (1977; his first book, written when he was 23 years old); and a popularization of it, [No Boundary](#) (1979; his second book, and still one of his biggest sellers). His next two books were central to wilber-2: [The Atman Project](#) (1980; his third book, which marked the shift to the wilber-2 phase); and [Up from Eden](#) (1981; his third book and the other major book of wilber-2).

The following quotes and two review articles refer to those three major books (*Spectrum*, *Atman*, and *Eden*), and the extraordinary impact this very young theorist had on entire fields of endeavor (esp. humanistic psychology, transpersonal psychology, religion, and psychotherapy-before he branched out into almost two dozen other fields, summing in [Integral University](#) and their 19 Centers of Discourse--not to mention his 25 books that are their main supports).

We decided to post these critical quotes just because they're fun to read, and they might remind you of the fact that when Ken started writing (around 1970), there were hardly any Zen centers, TM centers, or even college courses on these kinds of things (meaning meditation, transpersonal anything, transcendence, integral studies, consciousness studies, transformative practice, [integral life practice](#), etc.). It was literally a wasteland, and Ken, along with a handful of intrepid pioneers, had to carve a space in the Kosmos for any of these kinds of things to manifest. So we're also positive these numerous

positive reviews as a way to say thanks to Ken--and to all of those extraordinary pioneers--for all the work they did, all the carpet burn they suffered, and all the many opportunities and possibilities that all of us now enjoy in these areas because of them.

What follows, then, is a raft of positive reviews from experts in the various fields that Ken has touched. If these kinds of incredibly positive things (you're going to hear the word 'genius' run into the ground by these reviewers) upset you or make it seem like this site is being way too braggadocio, then please, just stop reading now and go do something else. This is intentionally a celebration of Ken's work, and the incredibly luminous, liberating, transformative, and emancipatory impact it has had on hundreds of thousands of readers around the world. If you have any sort of gratitude for his work, these positive criticisms will have the same impact on you it did on us: reading one after another after another is a kind of festival, a commemoration, where each new quote is met with a "Yes!" and "That's exactly right!" It's a way to share in all the thanks that so many have had for a 23-year-old kid who has spent at least 6 hours every day of his entire life creating frameworks that help other people make sense of the world.

Ken achieved almost overnight success with his first book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (with critical reviews like, "In one stroke, Wilber has established himself as the foremost scholar on psychology and consciousness studies"--Dr. Kenneth Ring, and "Wilber will likely do for consciousness what Freud did for psychology"--Jean Houston), a book he wrote when he was 23 but which wasn't published till he was 28 or so ("It took me three months to write and nine months to type")--not to mention that it was rejected by over 35 publishers (and yet is still in print today--along with *all* of his other books, which have been translated in up to 30 foreign languages!--making Ken the most widely translated academic author in America). Ken washed dishes for most of that decade (literally), and kept writing books. The accolades continued to flood in; he wrote 6 more books until SES:

[*The Holographic Paradigm* \(1982\)](#)

[*Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm* \(1983\)](#)

[*A Sociable God: An Integral Approach to Sociology* \(1983\)](#)

[*Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Great Physicists* \(1984\)](#)

[*Spiritual Choices \(with Dick Anthony and Bruce Ecker\): The Problems of Recognizing Authentic Paths to Inner Transformation* \(1985\)](#)

[*Transformations of Consciousness: Conventional and Contemplative Approaches to Development \(with Jack Engler, Daniel P. Brown, Mark Epstein, and John Chirban\)* \(1985\)](#)

--with *A Sociable God* and *Transformations* marking the shift to wilber-3. It was in 1984 that Ken met Treya--and ten days after they were married, she was diagnosed with breast

cancer; they spent their five-year marriage fighting her cancer; she died in 1989. Ken wrote or published virtually nothing during that decade, focusing entirely on helping Treya. A year after her death, he published the extraordinarily moving [*Grace and Grit*](#), and then, the next year, SES.

The first part of what follows is actually a list of critical quotes assembled by Treya at the publisher's request. These are followed by two short reviews of Ken's work up to that period (around 1980, when Ken was 31 or so). Part 2, which we will soon post, picks up the story after that, with the extraordinary impact SES had, then with the books after SES, and then the recent writings (wilber-5), which incredibly seem to be going beyond even SES.

We're sometimes asked why study something like Ken's work, which can be fairly formidable, especially if you're on something like a spiritual or meditative path, which transcends all concepts and all forms anyway? The short answer is, even if you transcend the manifest world, nonetheless, if you realize that Emptiness and Form are not-two or nondual, then meditation will indeed show you the Emptiness or Clear Light Void, but it won't give you a Framework with which to understand and make sense of the manifest world of Form that is one with Emptiness. The vow of the bodhisattva is to master both Emptiness and Form, and Ken's AQAL Framework is the only Form that we know of that is genuinely inclusive, comprehensive, and integral. Even Dzogchen, the purest of the contemplative paths, insists on including both Emptiness and View--and the Integral or AQAL View is by far the best we have found. If you leave out View, your Enlightenment is incomplete. This is why Lex Hixon, perhaps the greatest of the cross-cultural spiritual masters of his generation, said this of Ken's first book, upon its 20-year commemorative edition: "For twenty years, Ken Wilber's writings have been awakening the Western culture from the dogmatic slumber of reductive thinking. We must understand every step of his journey, for it is our own collective journey. Wilber's works constitute an articulated path into the open space of primordial awareness, the only basis for a compassionate global civilization." And even *Yoga Journal* concluded that, "As a model of philosophical [inclusiveness], Wilber's act of reconciliation among facets of the 'perennial psychology' is even more salutary today, in this world of intensely polarized belief systems and claimed perceptions, than it was in 1973."

These quotes, then, are a tribute not just for Ken, as we said, but for all the pioneers who helped make this clearing in which we can all now thrive. We're standing on the shoulders of giants who were, and are, divinity made flesh and spirit made real-which means, awakened to the fact that we all are. This is our inheritance; and, Dear Lord, please don't let us fuck it up....

-The Editors of KenWilber.com

[The Spectrum of Consciousness \(1977\)](#)

"Quite simply, this is the most important book written on consciousness in modern times. For Wilber has succeeded in unifying virtually every school of Western psychology and the various schools of the East. Make no mistake; Wilber has succeeded in this feat..."

Dr. Thomas Bearden

"Wilber has written the most sensible, comprehensive book about consciousness since William James."

Dr. James Fadiman, past president, Association for Transpersonal Psychology

"A feat of intellectual synthesis that may be the birth of a special science paradigm."

Dr. Thomas Roberts, Illinois St. Univ.

"The timely issues, the relevant sources, the revolutionary method, the all-inclusive theory of consciousness: Ken Wilber blends them dynamically in **The Spectrum of Consciousness**. Indeed, both 'spectrum psychology' and 'Ken Wilber' are likely to become household phrases."

Dr. Chris Largent, Director, The Delaware Institute

"In one stroke, Wilber has established himself as the foremost scholar on psychology and consciousness studies. A masterful synthesis of a great many spiritual traditions and Western therapies. Brilliant."

Dr. Kenneth Ring, Psychology Dept., Univ. of Conn., author *Life at Death*

"In the course of this presentation, Wilber offers a dazzling exhibition of scholarship. There are quotes drawn from physics, metaphysics, theology, philosophy, psychology, sacred scriptures and other fields of human knowledge. Extraordinarily clear, a work of the most substantial sort--a book that will endure as a classic. Such remarks are not offered gratuitously. This reviewer would like to add his own note to the chorus of praise which this book fully deserves. And when you begin to hear people speaking of 'spectrum [integral] psychology,' you'll know where it comes from."

Spiritual Frontiers, Winter 1977

"**The Spectrum of Consciousness** is a major conceptual breakthrough. It is the brilliant work of a theoretician who, I predict, will emerge as the founder of a major school of psychology--a school that will affect our academic, medical, and

social institutions as did behaviorism and psychoanalysis."
East-West Journal, Feb. 1978

"It is incredible that one man's head could contain so much knowledge and understanding of Eastern religions as is revealed in **The Spectrum of Consciousness**. But the same brain reveals equal erudition concerning Western psychology--and then integrates them both! One is amazed at such prodigious feats. It is literally more exciting than any book since Plato's *Dialogues*. What a magnificent synthesis of religion, philosophy, physics, and psychology. How can one mind know so much? All one can answer is: Ken Wilber must be a genius."
Claire Myers Owens, psychologist, author of *Awakening to the Good*, etc.

"An important and seminal work, a remarkable piece of synthesis and revisioning. There is every chance that Wilber will do for consciousness what Freud did for psychology."
Dr. Jean Houston, past president of Association for Humanistic Psychology,
author *The Possible Human, Search for the Beloved*

"He's a good boy."
Mrs. Lucy Wilber, mother

The Atman Project (1980)

"Several years ago when Ken Wilber introduced himself to psychological circles by a series of articles and his pioneering book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, he received an almost instant recognition from his colleagues. This unusual achievement that has very few precedents was based on a rare combination of abilities and talents. His encyclopedic knowledge of Western psychological systems of thought and of the major spiritual traditions of the world in itself is quite remarkable. However, he also has a unique gift of incisive analysis, unusual clarity of thinking, mature and articulate style, and capacity to synthesize creatively and imaginatively vast amounts of seemingly disparate data. Now, shortly after **Spectrum** comes another major contribution to the fields of psychology, psychiatry, philosophy, and theology.

"In my opinion, **The Atman Project** is an extraordinary work of historical relevance. Ken Wilber succeeds in accomplishing a brilliant synthesis of most of the major schools of Western psychology and many aspects of the great religious traditions; he outlines a comprehensive and coherent vision of the development of human consciousness in a cosmic context. At the same time, this new model integrates ontology and cosmology into one organic whole.

"**The Atman Project** is thus an important landmark in the history of psychology. It will undoubtedly become a classic, whose significance will continue to grow in the decades to come."

Dr. Stan Grof, Maryland Psychiatric Inst., author *Spiritual Emergency, The Holotropic Mind*, etc.

"A breathtakingly original achievement...scholarly without being trivial, metaphysical without being obscure."

Dr. Stanley Krippner, Program Director, Saybrook Inst., author *Healing States*

"A brilliant integration of the psychologies of East and West such as no one else has even attempted. Insights so profound yet so lucid, they indicate a mind of genius--nothing less."

Claire Myers Owens, author *Awakening to the Good*

"Ken Wilber is remarkable. He has no formal training in these fields, and is still in his youth, yet he has become a most important voice in psychology, philosophy, and religion. *In fact, for the way it brings Asian and Western psychology together--clearly, systematically, comprehensively, and with sound judgment--I know of no book that equals **The Atman Project**.*"

Huston Smith, Thomas J. Watson Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Syracuse University, author *The World's Religions*

"With **The Atman Project**, Wilber has become the long-sought Einstein of consciousness research."

John White, (past) Director of Education, Inst. of Noetic Sciences (IONS); author *What is Enlightenment?*

"A novel, fundamental, and brilliant reformation of human development."

Dr. James Fadiman, past president Assoc. for Transpersonal Psychology, author basic textbook, *Personality and Personal Growth*

"Few people have Ken Wilber's broad grasp and deep understanding of the many facets of Western psychology. I regard Wilber as the foremost writer on consciousness and psychology in the world today."

Dr. Roger Walsh, Dept. of Psychiatry, Univ. of California Medical School, Irvine, author *Staying Alive, Essential Spirituality*, etc.

"For those interested in the integration of Western psychological theories and

therapies with Eastern schools, the recent work of Ken Wilber has become indispensable reading and worthy of concentrated study. Without question, Wilber has contributed nothing less than a comprehensive synthesis and brilliant analysis which has penetrated beyond previous work in this area.

"At the young age of 33, Wilber has made his presence felt throughout the psychological world in no uncertain terms. It would not be an overstatement to call him a 'genius,' a term I have never been willing to ascribe to someone my own age, and certainly did not believe I would be willing to commit myself in writing regarding anyone, no matter what age. But in Ken Wilber we have a theoretical genius at work. Even if one is not terribly interested in psychology or consciousness research, **The Atman Project** is must reading for those desiring an example of what theoretical brilliance and creativity are all about."
Dr. Steven Hendlin, in *Pilgrimage--Journal of Existential Psychology*

[Up from Eden](#) (1981)

"This is an enormous, a ground-breaking, an enthralling book."
John Rowan, Association for Humanistic Psychology, England

"**Up from Eden** is a colossal achievement. Sweeping and profound, it will rank in the annals of intellectual history with **The Origin of Species** and **The Interpretation of Dreams**."
John White, author *What Is Enlightenment?; Kundalini, Evolution, and Enlightenment*

"Ken Wilber is undoubtedly one of the most important of contemporary writers. He is a true philosopher-mystic, and should be read by everyone interested in the role which inner development can play in the modern world."
Peter Russell, Oxford Univ., author *The Global Brain Awakens, Waking Up in Time*, etc.

"Ken Wilber draws on evidence breathtaking in its sweep to outline a view of the trajectory of human evolution. In so doing, he joins the ranks of the grand theorists of human consciousness like Ernst Cassirer, Mircea Eliade, and Gregory Bateson."
Dr. Daniel Goleman, Senior Editor, *Psychology Today*, Psychology Editor, *New York Times*, author *Emotional Intelligence*

"Wilber has written a book that in concept, range of scholarship, and sheer compellingness ranks with Teilhard de Chardin's classic work **The Phenomenon**

of Man."

Prof. Kenneth Ring, author *Life at Death*

"Wilber is truly a genius of our time, weaving together insights from many different disciplines to give us a coherent view of evolution. **Up from Eden** is a masterpiece that has already been compared to the work of Darwin and Teilhard de Chardin.

"The scope of the book is stunning. Wilber has traced the evolution of human consciousness, identity, culture, and religion from their first appearance (hundreds of thousands of years ago) up to the present time. Different states of consciousness have predominated in different stages of human evolution, and have been reflected in both culture and religion.

"**Up from Eden** is a work of genius. It weaves together insights from many disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, anthropology, religion, sociology, and mythology. It is profoundly wise and instructive, as well as being fascinating reading. History, as the unfolding of human consciousness, is seen to be going somewhere--not toward a final judgment, but toward ultimate wholeness."

Dr. Frances Vaughan, past president Association for Transpersonal Psychology, author *The Inward Arc* and *Shadows of the Sacred*

"I consider **Up from Eden** the single greatest work on psychology ever written--including Freud, Jung, et al."

Dr. Silas Wesley, past professor Clinical Psychology, Yale Univ., and Director Psychology Clinic, USC

"Wilber dialogues throughout with theorists such as Freud, Marx, and Hegel. By placing them in a larger evolutionary context--and showing their application in and restriction to particular levels of development--he is able to complete and fulfill their work. *A tour de force....*"

Brain/Mind Bulletin

"**Up from Eden** is a truly original, even a revolutionary book in the true and best sense of the term. Long and complicated it may be, but it is very readable nonetheless, for Wilber writes with the crackling energy of a man who has the authentic creative fire burning in him. As his canvas is so vast, one might expect his verve to falter on occasion, for there to be awkward patches when his arguments grow a little thin and uncertain. But not so. He moves confidently and unwaveringly on, casting a new and thoroughly illuminating light into every area which he enters.

"Furthermore, when it comes to religious ideas, one might expect one so young to be retailing other people's ideas on trust, but again this is not the case: Wilber handles these ideas with deep understanding. Certainly, what he has to say about

the higher stages of consciousness tallies with the best of what one has read and heard from other authorities. Ken Wilber belongs to a new generation--a breadth of learning that is stunning, the 'well-rounded' man of the Renaissance."

John Snelling, Editor-in-Chief, *The Middle Way*, London

Here are the two short review articles. Remember, theoretically, these are referring to mostly wilber-2 models, so don't quote them....

Unified Consciousness--Ken Wilber's work reviewed by John White, 1983

The question is: What can be said about the nature of consciousness? In recent years there has been a veritable flood of writings on the subject, but most of it deals with the froth rather than the depths. Among the serious and pioneering investigators into the nature of human consciousness, one name has become preeminent: Ken Wilber.

A young theoretical psychologist, Wilber is editor-in-chief of ReVISION Journal and a practitioner of Zen meditation. After earning his bachelor's degree in biology and his master's degree in biochemistry, he went on for a PhD in biochemistry. When he was just shy of receiving his doctorate he took a voluntary sabbatical from his studies. The purpose of the sabbatical was to write a book. He was then only 23 years old.

That book, **The Spectrum of Consciousness**, appeared in 1977. It quickly established itself in psychological, academic, and intellectual circles as extraordinary. Dr. James Fadiman, then president of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology, called it "the most sensible, comprehensive book on consciousness since William James," and Dr. Jean Houston, president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, stated flat out that "there is every chance that Wilber will do for consciousness what Freud did for psychology."

The Spectrum of Consciousness presents a major conceptual breakthrough in psychology and consciousness research. It integrates the entire range of Eastern and Western psychologies and psychotherapies. Not only are they fitted together, like the colors in a rainbow or the bands of an electromagnetic spectrum (the image from which Wilber drew his title), but also each is assessed critically, its strengths and limitations shown with clarity and penetration.

Wilber's second book, **No Boundary**, appeared two years later. It is the best place for the reader unfamiliar with Wilber's works to begin. A popularized version of the more scholarly **Spectrum**, **No Boundary's** articulate simplicity does for this generation what Alan Watts' writings did for an earlier one. It brings

the most difficult subject of all--the nature of consciousness--into an easily grasped presentation that is both elegant and simple.

The Atman Project, published in 1980, is still further proof of Wilber's genius. It is a tour de force through the major Eastern and Western psychologies and spiritual traditions. But whereas **The Spectrum of Consciousness** dealt with the structure of consciousness--the nature of the major stages of consciousness--**The Atman Project** focuses on the developmental processes through which different structures or levels of consciousness unfold in the human psyche. The result is a transpersonal [integral] view of human development that stunningly reveals the intuition of Spirit as the dynamic force behind the growth of an individual through all stages of life, no matter how immature or advanced the stage may be. (This is why the notion that Wilber places Spirit only in the highest stages has always been hackneyed.) The chapters on higher states of consciousness and the psychology of enlightenment are nothing short of breathtaking.

Wilber's most recent work, **Up from Eden**, extends his all-important insight--the intuition of absolute Spirit as the dynamic of growth and development--to the entire sweep of human history. **Up from Eden** offers a view of human evolution that accommodates the scientific definition within a spiritual or transcendental perspective. The creationist vs. evolutionist debate is resolved through a vision which transcends and integrates both.

Wilber's formulation of "spectrum psychology" is a creative achievement that cannot be overstated. Quite simply, he is the long-sought Einstein of consciousness research. [For those who ask where that oft-repeated phrase came from, that's it.] His theoretical approach to human knowledge and experience is fully equal in importance and insight to Einstein's famous equation of mass and energy. Like Einstein, Wilber presents a "unified field theory" that is utterly brilliant and compelling. But unlike Einstein's, confined to physics, Wilber's theoretical work unifies fields of knowledge, extending from psychology into sociology, anthropology, philosophy, biology, physics, economics, and theology.

I predict that Wilber will soon be recognized as the originator of a new world view affecting our academic, social, medical, religious, and scientific institutions as profoundly as did those of Freud, Marx, and Einstein.

--John White is the author of numerous books and articles (e.g., *What is Enlightenment?; Kundalini, Evolution, and Enlightenment?*), past director of education at the Inst. of Noetic Sciences (IONS), and editor at *Science of Mind Journal*

The following is by Roger Walsh (author *Staying Alive, Essential Spirituality*, etc.); his description of the demands of integrative thinking--and why we had virtually none of it in this postmodern era until Wilber--is still very telling, and prophetic, and continues to hold for today, 25 years later....

The World View of Ken Wilber by Dr. Roger Walsh (published in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology, c. 1985)

I have thought long and hard about how to begin this review and have been concerned about appearing hyperbolic. However, I have decided to risk that and to simply say that I suspect Ken Wilber's writings are works of genius and that we are privileged to witness the emergence of one of the great thinkers of our time. I say this because Wilber's books and papers provide syntheses and integrations of unprecedented scope among diverse schools and disciplines of psychology, philosophy, religion, and sociology and display a combination of breadth and depth of knowledge that I have seen evidenced nowhere else.

I suspect that most of us believed, and all of us hoped, that some type of broad-ranging integration among the different schools of psychology was possible. For we have been suffering an embarrassment of riches. Every year there seems to be another school, another novel therapy or approach, and as if all this were not enough, we have recently seen the introduction of a variety of non-Western systems. In general, most people have favored one or a very few approaches, and much heat has been generated arguing that this or that approach was the only true way. For though many of us may have believed that integrations were possible, there has until recently--until Wilber, in fact--been very little evidence of them.

This lack is hardly surprising, since the demands of a good synthetic and integrative psychology are awesome. To begin with, anyone attempting such a task would have to have a good knowledge of not one, but multiple psychologies, be relatively unattached to any one viewpoint, be able to resist the pulls of reductionism and oversimplification, and be able to step back far enough to see the ways in which not just lines, but whole networks of concepts could be linked. This latter requirement demands not just a linear logic, but so-called "vision-logic" or network logic. Small wonder, then, that almost no truly integrative systems have been proposed. Many, in fact, began wondering aloud if it could even be done at all.

Enter Ken Wilber. He is familiar with all the major schools of Western psychology, being equally at home with psychoanalysis, existential, humanistic, transpersonal, gestalt, and transactional approaches, and is just as knowledgeable of the major nonwestern schools of Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism, and Taoism.

How then does he see these systems fitting together? In his books **The Spectrum of Consciousness** and a more simplified version, **No Boundary**, he suggests that human consciousness can display a spectrum of states, that these can be related to corresponding structures of the unconscious, and that different psychologies address different levels of this spectrum. The different schools are therefore seen, not as necessarily contradictory and antagonistic, but as partially true and complementary.

He divides psychologies and their corresponding therapies into three major (and several minor, for at least 7 overall) levels: neurotic, existential, and transpersonal (or spiritual), and sees optimal therapeutic gains occurring when the choice of therapy is matched appropriately to the level of conflict which the client is confronting. **The Spectrum of Consciousness** contains such a wealth of information and integrations spanning most of the major personality theories and therapies of East and West that I cannot hope to do full justice to it, or actually to any of his books, in the small space available here. Rather, I must content myself with sketching general outlines.

In his next book **The Atman Project**, he turned his attention to developing an integrative developmental psychology. Here he traces development from infancy through adolescence, comparing and integrating among the major Western schools and thinkers such as Freud, Jung, Piaget, Loevinger, Rank, and Becker among many others. This in itself would be a major feat. But what is quite unprecedented is that he then suggests that there are further levels of development which traditional Western psychology does not tap, and then proceeds to employ the major non-Western schools to trace development through these levels up to and including several levels of enlightenment.

One might expect that the result of collating so many apparently diverse and conflicting systems would be a vast jumble of largely unrelated data. But one of Wilber's crucial contributions here is to suggest a developmental schema in which similar processes can be identified at each developmental stage all the way from the pre-egoic through the egoic and ultimately on to the trans-egoic stages (with Spirit the ever-present, equal, groundless Ground of all of them).

Having developed schemas for comparative and developmental psychologies and religions, he next turned his attention to anthropology, and sought to bring that field into this unified framework. In **Up from Eden**, he traces the evolution of human consciousness, identity, culture, and religion, and their dynamic interplay, from the period of the first appearance of hominoids (around 6 million years ago) up until the current time. Different stages of evolution, he suggests, have been marked by different predominant states of consciousness and identity. These major stages he called the archaic, the magical, the mythical, and the rational (and the transpersonal, possibly to come). And further, he was able to show that these stages fitted very precisely with the stages he had described in **The Atman Project**--which allowed him, in effect, to unite psychology and anthropology.

Wilber's next excursion was into sociology, and in **A Sociable God**, he provides what he calls "a brief introduction to an integral sociology." In effect, he brought sociology into this unified framework. Small wonder that Dr. David Lane, professor at Univ. of California, stated that "**A Sociable God** is not only destined to become a classic, but also adds further testimony to the fact that Wilber may single-handedly alter the course of future research in consciousness." (Wilber subsequently co-authored a book with sociologist Dick Anthony and Bruce Ecker exploring the implications of these initial insights: *Spiritual Choices*.)

One of the aims of **A Sociable God** was to provide for the first time a sociological framework which is capable of avoiding the traps of reductionistic and pathologizing misinterpretations of transpersonal experiences and practices. To do this, Wilber takes the model of psychological maturation that he first postulated in **The Atman Project** and uses it as a developmental framework against which the various levels of social interaction can be assessed. He therefore provides a corrective addition to current methods of sociological analysis such as phenomenological hermeneutics which have lacked criteria for differentiating between levels of social interaction. It also provides a means for avoiding the trap of taking one level of social interaction and pathology and making it paradigmatic for all, e.g., the physical-economic level for Marx and the emotional-sexual for Freud.

Our willingness and ability to correct the vast amounts of worldwide suffering from preventable causes such as malnutrition, poverty, overpopulation, sociogenic psychopathology, and oppression, as well as to avoid massive if not total self-destruction, may depend upon exactly such broad-minded schema. The importance of Ken Wilber's contribution of a testable, critical, comprehensive and sociological model capable of examining these evolutionary shifts without pathologizing the higher levels is likewise not to be underestimated.

Although Wilber had by this time already written major books on psychology, religion, physical science, anthropology, and sociology--tying them all together in a unified framework of exquisite scope--he still considered himself to be, basically, a philosopher, and so in his next book, **Eye to Eye**, he explicitly turned to the field of philosophy and carefully outlined the ontology and epistemology of his unified framework. Dr. James Fadiman, past president of ATP, called it "A brilliant collection by the most important thinker in psychology today."

One of the key issues Wilber grapples with in this book is the problem of proof: how, if at all, does one provide proof of a transcendental experience, especially proof which is acceptable to a culture fixated on science to such a degree that it often slips into scientism and believes that what cannot be determined via sensory/physical data lies beyond the boundaries of true knowledge.

Wilber argues that there are three distinct "eyes of knowledge" or epistemological modes: the eye of flesh, the eye of mind, and the eye of contemplation. Each of

these modes, he suggests, has its own unique data and facts, and each realm of knowledge only partially overlaps others. To confuse these realms is to commit what Wilber terms a "category error" and to lose the unique qualities of each domain. However, what is crucial, he points out, is that each domain does possess valid and appropriate means of assessing the validity of knowledge in its own realm, and thus a comprehensive framework would include all these modes of knowing. He then goes on, in this book, to show that these philosophic modes of knowing (and their corresponding ontologies) emerge at *corresponding* levels of psychological development--thus uniting philosophy and psychology in this overall framework.

And so, now we know what we hoped for can in fact be done: it is possible to create broad-ranging syntheses across diverse and apparently even contradictory schools and disciplines. In addition, Wilber has helped make the major nonwestern psychologies, which many of us had formerly regarded as esoteric at best or pathological at worst, more comprehensible. The same goes for the perennial philosophical and religious teachings which accompany them, and we can now recognize that at their core, the world's great religions are no less than roadmaps to higher states of consciousness, a fact which has often been forgotten at tragic and incalculable cost to humanity.

Another of Wilber's contributions is that he provides a comprehensive psychological and philosophical framework supporting a generous and uplifting view of human nature. Gordon Allport remarked that "by their own theories of human nature, psychologists have the power of elevating or degrading that same nature. Debasing assumptions debase human beings; generous assumptions exalt them." And Wilber's view of humanity journeying to the universal consciousness or Spirit which it actually never ceased to be, is elevating indeed.

Lewis Mumford pointed out that the great human and social transformations of the past stemmed at least in part from far-reaching transformations of human self image. These shifts, such as those provided by Plato, Aristotle, and St. Thomas Aquinas, involved three things according to Mumford: a broad-ranging synthesis of knowledge, a perspective of evolution which was teleological and purposive and viewed humanity as moving toward "the good," and a recognition of a nested hierarchy of existence from matter to human beings to the whole or "Spirit," and the first order of business for humanity, said these great thinkers, is to align ourselves with this evolution and hierarchy. Wilber's vision is equally consistent with these criteria.

Wilber's contributions are prolific, and someone seeking an introduction to his thinking might want to begin with his autobiographical paper "Odyssey" (which was published in *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*)--a personal account of the development of his work. His simplest book is **No Boundary**, and the others might best be read in chronological order.

One logical question is, "How does he do it?" His own answer to this is, "I do my homework." He certainly does, devouring literally hundreds of books and many, many papers each year, reading and writing for long stretches each day, and very importantly, being deeply involved in his own meditative practice.

Another logical question is, "Who can he be compared with?" He has already been compared with Plato, Einstein, William James, Freud, and Hegel-to name a few. For me, Carl Jung comes to mind by virtue of breadth of scholarship and open-minded interest in the major psychologies of both East and West, and Wilber readily acknowledges his indebtedness to Jung.

But whatever comparisons are made, my own sense is that we are privileged to be witnessing the emergence of one of the great thinkers of our time and one of the greatest theoretical psychologists of all time.

And he is only thirty-three.

--Roger Walsh, M.D., Ph.D.

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