

## **Methodological Outlaw: My Life as a Dishwasher**

Foreword to the Paperback Edition of *A Sociable God*

*A Sociable God* is still one of my favorite books. Its central points, I am happy to report, are as valid today as they were when the book was first published. In fact, I am even happier to report, I believe its essential message is even more important, more valid, than ever. For what has happened in the two decades since its first release—when it was attacked from virtually all sides, including both the dominant academic culture (of deconstructive postmodernism) and the dominant counterculture (of Romantic ecoprimitivism)—is that both of those dominant modes of discourse have run their dominating course, and the way is now open to a more integral, balanced, and comprehensive approach to sociology, including the sociology of spiritual engagement. *A Sociable God*, I believe, will stand as a clarion call for *a sociology of depth*, as well as a radically new way to look at religion itself.

The book makes three essential points. One, there are at least *a dozen different meanings of “religious” or “spiritual,”* and we need to take these different meanings into account if our discussions of those topics are to make any sense at all. Most conversations about religion and spirituality proceed as if those words were transparent, whereas they are anything but. At the very least, there is a profound difference between a spirituality that helps one translate and a spirituality that helps one transform. Some

types of religion obfuscate, some oppress, some liberate. At any given moment, which function of religion are we discussing?

Two, there are of degrees of authenticity in various religious and spiritual engagements, and further, *a way to adjudicate or judge those degrees of depth*. There are, for example, important differences between pre-rational spirituality and post-rational spirituality. Likewise, there are important differences between *legitimacy* (or how well a spiritual movement facilitates *translation*) and *authenticity* (or how well it facilitates *transformation*). Further—and this is a crucial point of the book—there are valid ways that a religious movement can judge its own degree of depth according to standards that would be acceptable to those within the movement itself. These ways involve developmental unfolding of the religion’s own values, according to reports from within the hermeneutic circle of the religion itself. Thus, the idea that “better” or “worse” cannot be applied to religious or spiritual engagements is simply not true. This is a radically new approach to adjudicating or judging the degree of depth of any spiritual movement, an approach that involves developmental holism (as carefully outlined in the following pages).<sup>1</sup>

Three, a more balanced and comprehensive approach to religion and spirituality would take all of those factors into account, thus allowing us to situate spirituality more adequately in the modern and postmodern world. *A Sociable God* was the first book to call for a vertical dimension of depth to be added to our study of interior realities in general, and particularly our sociology of religious and spiritual engagements. I personally believe that this point alone renders this book as important as any on the subject.

A few years ago, Shambhala/Random House brought out my *Collected Works*. Going through that material, I was particularly struck by one item. Allow me to share this personal reflection, even if it somewhat self-serving (although I suppose if one is doing one's CW, one is allowed a certain self wallowing). Namely, I found that, with only a few early exceptions, the essential points in the 25 or so books I had written were still valid; research continued to support their major conclusions and often supported them even more. I was curious about why, other than dumb good luck, that was so. It finally dawned on me: it was the methodology that I had adopted in even the earliest books, a methodology I would come to call *integral methodological pluralism* and summarize in the phrase, "Everybody is right."

"Everybody is right" means that, when it comes to the quest for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, no human mind is capable of producing 100% error. Thus, *everybody* has some important, if partial, truths to offer, and the knowledge quest is therefore not about "who is right and who is wrong," but rather finding a way that all of the various truths can fit together.

When it comes to a method for doing so, the result is integral methodological pluralism, which means that we allow (and rely on) every major mode of acquiring experience—every major methodology, paradigm, injunction, exemplar, technique, and so on, because each of them, without exception, is delivering some important piece of the overall puzzle. Where so many other scholars spent their time picking one or two methodologies and condemning all the others, I was busy weaving them all together.

As I look at the main points I just outlined that are found in *A Sociable God*, I am struck again by how those points depend upon an integral methodological pluralism, a

holistic inclusion of all of the major different approaches to the topic of spirituality. And I am equally struck by how radical that approach still is. Academia, as elsewhere, is a still a battleground of competing paradigms, turf wars, us-versus-them mentality, first-tier partialities and civil-war casualties strewn on the landscape like so many corpses at an academic Gettysburg. Somehow this is supposed to advance our self-understanding.

It also dawned on me why I had preferred to be a dishwasher for a decade instead of teach in academia. I was a methodological outlaw in the very inclusiveness of the methodology itself. My approach was outlawed in both cultural and countercultural academies, not because it was partial, but because it was radically holistic. I included those things that shouldn't be included, I embraced those methodologies that were pox-ridden for the orthodox, I loved those injunctions despised by those in power, I reached out to those experiences on the margin and beyond. In including all sides of the argument, I was disowned by all sides.

The integral truth and I went our lonely way. And yet, today, all of that has begun to change, at least a little bit, as the smoking ruins over the battlefields of partiality have left academia more than a little shell-shocked. Integral methodological pluralism, because it includes the most amount of truth from the most number of sources based on the most amount of evidence in the most holistic fashion possible, is here to stay in its broad outlines, and for the simple reason that it honors and includes more truth than any of the alternatives. This is why the essential points in *A Sociable God* are still relevant today. They were originally advanced by including truths that were marginalized at the time—such as developmental holarchy—but which constitute a crucial piece of the

overall puzzle. By including those truths then, as now, a much more accurate—and certainly enduring—picture of religion and spirituality emerges.

At the end of this foreword I will return to my life as a methodological outlaw and make a few closing remarks on integral methodological pluralism. First, allow me to elaborate a little bit on the three main points of *A Sociable God*.

### **Whose God Is This, Anyway?**

The first is that what we call “religion” or “spirituality” is not a single entity or function or view, but rather, *there are at least a dozen considerably different meanings of the word*, pointing to a dozen different functions of this enormously complex thing we call religion, and, needless to say, none of those functions can be equated (although they almost always are). But all talk of “religion and science” or “religion and spirituality” or “religion and the modern world” is virtually useless until we can specify more precisely just what we mean by the term “religion” or “spirituality.” *A Sociable God* discusses nine of these different meanings (e.g., the claim that religious realities are nonrational; that they involve ultimate concern; that they are regressive and infantile; mechanisms of social cohesion; immortality projects; the result of evolutionary factors; defense mechanisms; personal realities that must be approached nonreductionistically—and so on). Which of those definitions is right? All of them, surely, in complex ways, and all of them must be taken into account in the incredibly important discussion of the nature and meaning of religion and spirituality in the modern and postmodern world.

It has recently become commonplace to differentiate “religion” and “spirituality,” which is yet another interesting definition. According to this view, “religion” is institutional, rigid, dogmatic, and authoritarian; whereas “spirituality” is alive, vital, experiential, and personal. This judgment, common among Baby Boomer writers, may contain a degree of truth, which I’ll return to, but it often tends to obscure more than illumine, because it soon becomes apparent that “spiritual” here simply means a religious truth or experience that is true for me, but if that spiritual truth gets passed on to another person, and certainly if it gets passed on to another generation, then it must by definition become institutionalized. It soon becomes apparent that individuals who use the distinction between “religion” and “spirituality” are pointing to a spiritual truth for themselves, but they haven’t given much thought to what happens if they wanted to pass this spiritual experience or truth on to another human being, because as soon as they do so, their “spirituality” starts to look a lot like “religion.” In other words, in most cases of how these words are used, “spirituality” is simply religion for me; once my spirituality is shared with another, or passed on to another generation, then I am faced with all the same problems of “religion” that I temporarily avoided by introducing the distinction.

Still, the distinction is indeed widespread, where “spiritual” is usually taken to mean “experiential” and “true for me,” and “religion,” when opposed to “spirituality,” means dogmatic and institutional *beliefs* as opposed to *direct experiences*. Notice, in that regard, that because “religious” is often equated with “mere belief” as opposed to “direct experience,” then the hybrid phrase “religious experience” tends to come close to how the word “spiritual” is now often used. When William James wrote about “the varieties of religious experience,” he was writing about spiritual experience as the term is used today.

He coupled the word “religious” with “experience,” which is what “spiritual” usually now means.

Because those definitions are widely used, let me say that this is a book that deals with both religious beliefs and spiritual experiences. In fact, it outlines a spectrum from “belief” to “faith” to “direct experiences” to “permanent realization.” This is an important continuum, I feel, and its implications are explored in the following pages. If I occasionally use “religion” and “spirituality” interchangeably, context will determine which is meant.

Point number one is simply that the word “religious” has at least a dozen different meanings hiding out in it, meanings that need to be unpacked and explicitly included in our discussions. This analysis is an endeavor that I have continued right up to today. For example, in *Integral Psychology*, I focus specifically on spiritual experience (or “spirituality”) and point out that there are at least five very different meanings involved when people speak of spiritual experiences. All five of those meanings are valid, I believe, but we simply must specify which is meant whenever we make statements about spiritual experience.

For example, for some people, a spiritual experience means having an *altered state*—perhaps a *peak experience* of being one with nature. For others, having a spiritual experience means to possess a certain *attitude* (such as love or compassion). For others, a spiritual experience might involve reaching some of the *higher stages* of meditation practice. For still others, spirituality might involve its own line of development, a particular path or *spiritual intelligence* that one can develop like any other capacity or intelligence. Thus, the way “spirituality” has actually been used by people, it can mean

having an altered state of consciousness, or possessing a particular attitude, or reaching a particular stage of development, or being a specific developmental line itself. So: state of consciousness, stage of consciousness, attitude, line, and trait: each has in fact been used by people when they speak of spirituality. Which of those five is correct? Once again, I believe all of them have important moments of truth that should be included in any comprehensive or integral approach to spirituality (and hence also institutional spirituality or religion in general).

Yet, odd as it sounds, I have seen virtually no discussion of spirituality or religion that does so. Just yesterday I saw an essay entitled “The Spiral Dynamics Approach to Religion,” and religion was again treated as if it were a single thing, instead of at least a dozen wildly different things. Don’t get me wrong, I’m a fan of Spiral Dynamics (a psychosocial developmental model based on the research of Clare Graves), but using it for yet another monolithic description of what “religion” means is much less than helpful. This particular paper had taken one of the dozen or so meanings, functions, dimensions, or aspects of “religion” and equated all religion with that one narrow function, to produce an equally narrow result.

Likewise, it is still quite common to get into endless arguments about whether there are any forms of valid or authentic childhood spirituality. I have seen scholars red-faced and screaming over this issue, hurling epithets at each other in a display barely one notch above a food fight. So polarized is this discussion that simply asking, “Which of a dozen meanings of spirituality are you referring to?” is taken to be dim-witted at best, demonic at worst (although one critic did accuse me of being a dim-witted demon, apparently combining the worst of both hells. Well, I’m integral if nothing else.)

But the simple fact is, human beings can have a peak experience or altered state at virtually any stage of development, and thus if by “spirituality” you mean an altered state, of course children can have authentic peak experiences, but if by “spirituality” you mean postconventional stages of development, then of course they cannot. This might be the end of discussion, except apparently nobody wants it ended that quickly, since academic food fights are the stuff of manly scholars, one supposes. In any event, demons and dim-wits are still at it, wonderfully, each of them pitting their one-twelfth of religion against the other guy’s one-twelfth, with each calling that the whole.

### **Three-Dimensional Feminism**

The second major point of this book is that, when focusing on that aspect of religion or spirituality that involves authenticity (or the degree of depth of a spiritual engagement), there is actually a way to discern “better” and “worse” or “higher” and “lower” engagements. This claim, needless to say, evoked criticisms that made “demonic” and “dim-witted” sound appealing.

Here we stumble onto perhaps the most misunderstood concept in developmental psychology, that of “hierarchy.” Not only is the concept misunderstood, it is willfully misunderstood. As but one example, take Carol Gilligan’s wonderful book, *In a Different Voice*. Gilligan’s book is probably the most-often quoted book by feminists of any persuasion, and its profoundly distorted conclusions—much like those of Thomas’s Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*—are a cautionary tale in the culture wars. Both books were similarly distorted, for similar reasons, by apparently similar motives.<sup>2</sup>

Gilligan's book is usually summarized (misleadingly) as follows: according to Gilligan, men and women think differently. Men think using hierarchies, which involve judgmental ranking; women think non-hierarchically or relationally. Men use **ranking**, women use **linking**. Men reason using a logic of rights, justice, and autonomy; but women reason "in a different voice," using a logic of care, relationship, and responsibility. Since oppression and social inequalities involve ranking and brutal hierarchies, then we need more female linking values in order to establish peace, relational care, partnership societies, and ecological harmony. "Away from all hierarchies!" became the battle cry.

Gilligan did indeed suggest that men tend to think hierarchically and women non-hierarchically. But she went on to point out that both men and women develop through three or four hierarchical stages (which is her phrase). That is, women think relationally or non-hierarchically, *but that non-hierarchical thinking itself develops through four hierarchical stages*.

These four female hierarchical stages Gilligan called: **selfish**, **care**, **universal care**, and **integrated**. Her point is that both men and women develop through those four hierarchical stages of moral reasoning, but each of them does so in a different voice: men develop through the moral hierarchy using a logic of rights and justice, women develop through the same moral hierarchy using a logic of care and relationship.

Thus, at stage 1 (**selfish** or **egocentric**), men are selfish in agentic ways, women are selfish in communal ways (using social ostracism to punish others). At stage 2 (**care** or **ethnocentric**), men extend rights to those of their group, tribe, or nation—but demonize those in other ethnic groups—and women extend love and care to their own

group or tribe, but gladly offer up sons to the battlefield to slay the enemy. At stage 3 (**universal care** or **worldcentric**), the masculine principle extends rights and justice to all human beings, regardless of race, color, sex, or creed; and the feminine principle extends care and compassion to all humans. Of course, actual men and women are a mixture of masculine and feminine modes, with individuals containing various combinations of both. At stage 4 (**integrated**), the masculine and feminine principles in each person can be integrated in that person, according to Gilligan, resulting in a union of the contrasexual attitude in each.

In each stage of a developmental hierarchy, the succeeding stage is indeed part of a “higher-archy,” because each succeeding stage has more love, more compassion, more care, more justice, more consciousness, more rights, and so on. Far from being a bad thing, nested hierarchies are the means of reducing prejudice, reducing oppression, reducing “isms” of one sort or another (racism, sexism, speciesism, etc.). The higher one is in a growth higher-archy, the *more care* and the *less oppression* one is inclined to possess, by definition and by factual research.

Most feminists took the first half of what Gilligan said (“women don’t think hierarchically”) but ignored the second half (“women’s non-hierarchical thinking develops through four hierarchical stages”). When the battlecry became “Away from all hierarchies!,” it actually meant “Away from all growth!”—and thus away from the means of reducing oppression, reducing sexism, reducing racism. In championing non-hierarchy only, these social critics devastated the one means of truly overcoming prejudice, racism, and sexism; they inadvertently championed exactly the attitudes and

approaches that fostered and supported ongoing racism, sexism, and ethnocentric prejudice.

Hence the furor surrounding Barbara Ehrenreich's recent *L.A. Times* editorial, "Feminism's Assumptions Upended," which was subtitled "A Uterus Is Not a Substitute for a Conscience." Feminism, in promoting non-hierarchy as the feminine mode of being, had actually fallen into a flatland feminism that merely equated "female" with "moral," overlooking the fact that female values at stages 1 and 2 are a malevolent force in today's world. What we need in today's world are less female values from stages 1 and 2 (egocentric and ethnocentric) and more male and female values from stages 3 and 4 (worldcentric and integral). Female values from stages 1 and 2 contribute to Auschwitz and Wounded Knee just as much as do male values from stages 1 and 2 (which, in so many words, is Barbara Ehrenreich's main point).

But this is not "feminism's assumptions upended" as much as it is "flatland feminism's assumptions upended," which indeed they are. The reason that "a uterus is not a substitute for a conscience" is that there are, so to speak, four levels of uterine thinking. The sad fact is that, in championing merely "female values" instead of hierarchical female values, depth was erased from the feminist equation. By focusing merely on any type of "relational linking" as "the" female value, the net result was often a regressive feminine value system, which inadvertently took women from worldcentric care to ethnocentric care to egocentric selfish, a move which was meant to heal the nation, heal the world, heal the planet.

Alas, the cure offered was part of the disease. In denouncing all hierarchies, feminists effectively aborted the means of their own growth and development, a

miscarriage revealed in their own misanthropy. Instead of realizing that there are at least four levels of “uterine thinking” (or four levels of relational thinking), they simply championed “the feminine mode of being,” or claimed that linking plus ranking equaled partnership societies. But ethnocentric females supported Nazism just as stridently as their husbands and sons did. Ethnocentric females in the South today support the KKK just as much as their white male cousins do. Those ethnocentric females are indeed involved in linking and relationship, but it is a linking that extends only to the edge of their tribe, their kin, their clan—the Ku Klux Klan, in this case.

In short, flatland feminism focused only on the linking and relating, and forgot to notice that there are at least four levels of relating, four levels of linking, from the most brutal and barbaric to the most inclusive and sublime. Simply championing the “feminine mode of being” could in fact be contributing to the worst barbarisms imaginable, if those female values are stage-1 or stage-2 in Carol Gilligan’s model. This world does not need more female or relational or linking values; it needs more stage-3 and stage-4 female values, and a lot less female values from stage-1 and stage-2, which will be the death of us all if left to their own devices. That is exactly why “a uterus is not a substitute for a conscience.” The fact that such a simple, obvious statement could cause such an uproar shows how deeply embedded the flatland mentality still is.

On the other hand, the introduction of deep feminism—along with deep spirituality—at least gives us a chance to add a dimension of depth, growth, development, evolutionary unfolding, and genuinely vertical transformation—from selfish to care to universal care to integrated. *Which level will our female, linking, relational values stem from?* Shall I relate only to myself (and not care for others), only to my tribe (and hate

all other tribes), only to all humans (and hence stop at speciesism), or to all sentient beings (and hence stop at God)?

Such a “three-dimensional feminism” is exactly what *A Sociable God* attempted to offer.<sup>3</sup> And now, some two decades into the wasteland created by flatland social criticism, flatland feminism, and flatland spirituality, the world is in a place where I believe it can begin to hear this message and start to introduce a dimension of vertical depth into our social agendas. Such an *integral feminism*—a three-dimensional feminism, as well as three-dimensional sociology, ecology, spirituality, psychology, etc.—is being pursued at Integral Institute, and if this more inclusive and comprehensive approach appeals to you, please see the last few paragraphs in this Foreword for ways you can join us in this enriching endeavor.

### **My God Is Better than Your God**

But, indeed, how can we be sure that in making judgments like “Worldcentric is better than ethnocentric,” we are morally justified? However high-minded it sounds, how can we be sure?

This is one of the profoundly useful aspects of developmental studies. The entire point of developmental research is that, when done correctly, the researchers themselves are not imposing their own value systems on their subjects but are simply drawing out, in a non-invasive and hermeneutic fashion, the unfolding of a group’s own values.

Typical developmentalists work as follows. They might pose a particular question or dilemma to a group of people. Gilligan, for example, asked a group of

women if a woman has a right to an abortion. The researchers note the responses and see if they fall into any patterns. Gilligan, for example, found that the women's responses tended to fall into three (and later, four) categories (selfish, care, universal care, integrated). Developmentalists then follow these responses over time, often long periods of time (years or even decades), and see if individuals change their responses.

Researchers might find, for example, that if a woman gives the "care" response, a few years later she might give the "universal care" response, but not the "selfish" response. That is, the developmentalists might find that these responses have a *directionality*, that there is a *sequence* involved—in other words, these responses are *stages* in a *developmental* sequence, which is what Gilligan found. Her four responses were actually four stages in a hierarchical developmental unfolding.

We saw that in such a hierarchy of increasing care and consciousness, each higher stage is indeed higher, meaning that it has a greater capacity for care, concern, relationship, and consciousness. But "higher" according to whom? *According to those giving the responses themselves*. In other words, any genuine developmental sequence is not a meta-narrative imposed on the subjects by an outsider, but is pronounced on the sequence from within, by the subjects themselves, as they reflect on their own responses. Those who give the universal-care response claim that it is wider, deeper, truer than the care response that they once offered. Thus, the judgment that this sequence is a value sequence—that higher stages are better—comes from those going through the stages themselves, from those who have experienced the different responses themselves, and not from some outside "authority" or "hegemonic imperialist" or "patriarchal" researcher. A

concerned, hermeneutic, judgment from within: this is the essence of developmentalism done well.

### **Genealogy: What It Means to Grow**

Such a concerned genealogy (or hermeneutic developmentalism) is one of the great contributions of constructive postmodernism. As explained in “Who Ate Captain Cook?” (“Sidebar A” to *Boomeritis*, posted at [www.kenwilber.com](http://www.kenwilber.com)), there are two major paths through postmodern pluralism. One is *pluralistic relativism* and one is *genealogy* (or developmentalism). The integral approach takes the important insights of both of those and weaves them together, with other essential methodologies, to give us a multiplex of perspectives, each important, none of which can be ignored.

But, alas, the developmental approach has indeed been ignored, marginalized, repressed, and outlawed from the dominant discourse of academic postmodernity. The result, as we were saying, has been a flatland sociology, flatland feminism, flatland ecology, flatland spirituality, flatland humanities, all parading under the guise of social equality and freedom, all in fact sadly oppressing depth and care and consciousness, and doing so inadvertently because the only demonstrable way of increasing freedom, care, and social concern—namely, by developing through the nested hierarchy of increasing compassion—has been pronounced anathema and scrubbed from the postmodernist agenda.

That has, perhaps, been the saddest irony of the past two or three decades—that those who wanted most to end social oppression actually ended the one means of

achieving their goals, namely, hierarchical growth through the nested spheres of increasing care and consciousness.

A dimension of depth is what allows one to move from pluralism to genealogy. Both attempt to navigate the plethora of interpretations that postmodernity has irrevocably handed us. Both agree that there is no single pregiven world, no single interpretation of reality that can compel rational consensus, no single value system that argument can convincingly support. The postmodern world is a pluralistic world, a world of ineradicable diversity, multiculturalism, multiple value systems, unavoidably.

But genealogy goes one step further to transcend and include pluralism. It takes any particular response a person might give in this pluralistic world and follows that response over time. Genealogy is pluralism plus history. It traces any response from its birth across an arc of time. This is why “gen”—from the Greek, “born,” as in genesis, genealogy, genetic epistemology—is often a prefix found in developmental studies. Genealogy in its most sophisticated and careful form is developmentalism, quite like what Carol Gilligan did—or Clare Graves, Jane Loevinger, Susanne Cook-Greuter, Robert Kegan, and so on.

Some changes in responses seem to be abrupt ruptures, with no obvious cause or relation to their predecessors. But most changes are clearly related to their predecessors in at least a few discernible ways. In Gilligan’s nested hierarchy, for example, each succeeding response takes more perspectives into account (selfish is merely a first-person perspective; care involves adding a second-person perspective; universal care involves adding a third-person perspective, and so on). Within those genealogical streams, we saw that there is a value current or *directionality* clearly discernible and clearly announced by

those who themselves are traversing those currents: worldcentric care is *better* than ethnocentric care, which is *better* than egocentric selfish.

To the extent that spiritual engagements involve care and consideration for others—and a capacity to take into account perspectives other than one’s own egoic perspective—then to that extent as well, some spiritual engagements are better, truer, deeper, more authentic than others. This vertical dimension of depth means that there are degrees of authenticity in spiritual engagements (as judged by those making that particular journey and who have experienced it from within, and not merely as an exterior judgment according to some privileged metanarrative). The God of my maturity is better than the God of my immaturity.

*And that “better” turns out to have stunning similarities across belief systems and across social groups.*<sup>4</sup> For example, in any group (East or West, North or South), those who have experienced *both* a worldcentric perspective *and* an ethnocentric perspective *within their own group* claim that the former response is better, higher, deeper. At no point does genealogy claim that, for example, a stage in my culture is better than a stage in some other culture, but only that a stage in any culture can be judged better or worse by those in that culture themselves, and is only valid as a stage-conception if it springs from within. It is simply that, in any culture where we find a sequence such as egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric, those going through that sequence as it appears in that culture assert that worldcentric is better than ethnocentric, and to that extent is similar to other cultures (and hence is a crosscultural similarity).

*A Sociable God* was the first book to explore this dimension of depth as it applies to crosscultural spiritual engagements. In doing so it introduced a sociology of depth,

including a three-dimensional feminism and an approach to religion and spirituality that recognizes a vertical dimension of increasing care and consciousness.

### **The Pre/Post Fallacy**

The second major point of *A Sociable God* is that there is a vertical dimension of depth, of developmental depth, in religious and spiritual unfolding, quite similar to Gilligan's four stages of selfish, care, universal care, and integrated. *A Sociable God* uses a more sophisticated genealogy of archaic, magic, mythic, rational, psychic, subtle, and causal—but those are all variations on the same general theme—degrees of depth—and scales such as Gilligan's are included in comprehensive overviews such as that offered in *Integral Psychology*. (The third major point, which I will particularly return to toward the end of the foreword, is that this depth dimension needs to be included and integrated—along with other legitimate methodologies—into any approach in order to make it more adequate, more comprehensive, more integral, so that “integral” itself begins to emerge as a criteria of competence.)

Another version of the notion of degrees of depth is found in the idea of the **pre/post fallacy**, which I introduced right around the time that *A Sociable God* was written. Perhaps no other of my ideas has caused so much turmoil, so perhaps I should say a few words about it.

The general idea is simple enough: there are important differences between spiritual experiences that are *pre*-rational and those that are *post*-rational, and yet people are always confusing them. Starting with me; I discovered the pre/post fallacy by

looking at my own mistakes. By looking, that is, at why the Romantic viewpoint seems at first to make so much sense—and why almost everybody seems to start their study of spirituality with a Romantic viewpoint—and yet it cannot handle the actual data and evidence of phylogenetic and ontogenetic development.

The general Romantic view is fairly straightforward: infants, and dawn humans, start out immersed in an unconscious union with the world at large (and with the pure Self or pure Spirit)—peacefully embedded in a type of primal Paradise (either a literal earthly Eden, a foraging ecological wisdom, or an infant fusion “with the mother and the world in bliss”). Through subsequent development, this primal paradise is lost as the rational-ego emerges from this primal Ground, breaks and fragments this “nondissociated” state, and creates thereby a world of sin, suffering, ecological catastrophe, patriarchal brutality, and general malevolence. But the self (and humanity) can drop its overly analytic, divisive, and fragmented stance by returning to, *and recapturing*, the wholeness of the original embeddedness (but now in a mature and conscious form). The original wholeness, now combined with analytic capacities, will result in a renewed heaven-on-earth, ecologically sound and balanced, and usher in a liberated nondissociated consciousness, which is enlightened and spiritual in the deepest and truest sense.

As I explained in the introduction to volume 2 of the *Collected Works*, I started writing both *The Atman Project* and *Up from Eden* in order to prove that Romantic conception. If nothing else, it cannot be said that I do not understand that view or that I have never had any sympathy for it. I was in my earlier years its most ardent fan. But the more I tried to make the Romantic orientation explain the actual evidence, the more

dismally it failed. During a long period of intellectual anguish, I slowly abandoned a strictly Romantic stance (while keeping some of its more durable truths), and moved to adopt the only view that seemed to me to be able to genuinely handle the great preponderance of evidence—and that was the developmental or evolutionary model.

In tracing out my early, fervent embrace of Romanticism, I was able to reconstruct what I believe are the intellectual errors that lead to that embrace—and they are all summarized by “the pre/post fallacy” or “the pre/trans fallacy.” The pre/post fallacy simply says: in any recognized developmental sequence, where development proceeds from pre-X to X to post-X, the pre states and the post states, because they are both non-X states, tend to be confused and equated, simply because they appear, at first glance, to be so similar. Prerational and postrational are both nonrational; preconventional and postconventional are both nonconventional; prepersonal and transpersonal are both nonpersonal; preverbal and transverbal are both nonverbal, and so on.

Once we confuse pre and post, then one of two unfortunate things tends to happen: we either reduce postconventional, transrational, superconscious states to prerational, infantile, oceanic fusion (as did Freud); or we elevate infantile, childish, prerational states to transcendental, transrational, transpersonal glory (as the Romantics often did). We reduce post to pre, or we elevate pre to post. *Reductionism* is well-understood; *elevationism* was the great province of the Romantics.

Despite what seems to be the emotional appeal of Romanticism, the overwhelming preponderance of evidence points to the fact that infants (and early hominids) did not exist in a postrational heaven but in a prerational slumber. The

awakening of the rational, self-conscious ego out of this prerational, prereflexive slumber did indeed involve a painful awakening to the horrors of the manifest world, but that awakening was not a fall from a previous superconscious state, but the growth up and out of a subconscious immersion. The subconscious immersion is *already* fallen—it *already* exists in the manifest world of hunger, pain, finitude, and mortality—it just hasn't the awareness to fully register those painful facts. Likewise, the rational ego, far from being the height of ontological alienation, is actually half-way through the growth to superconscious awakening. The ego isn't actually in the lowest hell, it just feels like it.

But the Romantics, *correctly* realizing that Spirit is beyond mere rationality, and *correctly* realizing that the rational-ego stands outside of, and even resists, nondual spiritual consciousness, then made the classic *elevationist* fallacy: they assumed the prehistorical slumber in Paradise was the primal whole out of which humanity fell, and back to which humanity must return, in order to usher in a transrational heaven. And that deeply *regressive* view of human potentials would set the stage for all of the well-known downsides, even horrors, of Romanticism: an obsession with self and self-feelings (regressing from worldcentric to ethnocentric to egocentric), hedonistic amorality (regressing from postconventional/universal care to ethnocentric/conventional care to preconventional/selfish)—all of which claimed to be “beyond reason,” whereas most of it was simply beneath it.

All of that became obvious as I reconstructed my own mistakes, and all of that I worked out in the concept of the pre/post fallacy. The idea itself was initially presented in *The Atman Project* (1978) and was worked out in detail in the essay “The Pre/Trans Fallacy,” which was included in the book *Eye to Eye*, which is in volume 3 of the

*Collected Works* along with *A Sociable God*, which shows that this idea was still very clearly etched in my mind as I was writing *A Sociable God*; and a good thing, too, in my opinion, because it was one of the crucial concepts that allowed the reintroduction of a vertical depth dimension into an intellectual landscape that was rapidly going flatland in both the conventional academic culture and, more sadly, in the counterculture as well (represented by institutions from Naropa to CIIS), which should have known better but did not, proudly.

In the twenty years since its publication, two types of criticism have been leveled at the pre/post fallacy. The reductionists attack it for allowing the existence of *any* postconventional, transrational, transpersonal states (they are still ever so busy reducing all trans states to sneaky insurrections of infantile, prerational silliness). And elevationists indignantly attack it, often vitriolically, for supposedly claiming that infants and children (and dawn humans) are only prerational, without access to any sort of spiritual or transpersonal states. Both of these attacks are what one would expect if the pre/post fallacy were true; still, both sides have presented my view as much more rigid than it ever was.

First, with the reductionists, I do not think that all, or even most, of those states that claim to be transpersonal, postrational, or spiritual are actually that. The human capacity for self-delusion is too enormous to take all such claims at face value. A highly critical, occasionally skeptical, and sometimes even polemical attitude must be our constant companion on the road to any sort of truth. The commodity most lacking in spiritual circles seems to be, indeed, a healthy skepticism, possibly because skepticism is confused with lack of faith, a stance which, if understandable, is deeply misguided.

Nonetheless, against the reductionists, I—and a colossal amount of crosscultural evidence—refuse to dismiss all transpersonal, transrational, mystical states as if they were only irritating irruptions from an infantile primordial slime.

With the elevationists, I can agree, to a point, that various types of spiritual or transpersonal states are available to infants and dawn humans, nor have I ever denied that. I will first address infants, then the earlier stages of human evolution.

### **Not in Entire Forgetfulness Do We Come....**

Let us assume, for the moment, that there actually is, or are, some sort of spiritual realities, actual spiritual realities to which we can have genuine access. If we make that assumption, then the available evidence suggests that there are at least two major types of spiritual access in infants and young children. The first is quite controversial, so I will mention it in passing. It involves what I have called “trailing clouds of glory,” which refers to all the deeper psychic (or soul) awareness that the individual might bring to this life and which would therefore be present in some sense from conception forward. You might wish to interpret this as actual reincarnation; but it can also be interpreted simply as one’s own deepest potentials that are present from the start. I’ll pursue this possibility in an endnote.<sup>5</sup>

The second possible type of spiritual experience or awareness to which infants and young children might have access is less controversial, at least if one believes in authentic spiritual experience in the first place. This involves the idea of *states* of consciousness, which are different from *stages* of consciousness. Stages, like those

investigated by Carol Gilligan, do indeed emerge in a sequential unfolding and flowering; and, just as you do not find flowers appearing before buds, you do not find postconventional responses occurring before conventional responses and preconventional responses. The evidence is overwhelmingly clear on that particular issue. If we are looking at stages of development, then infancy and childhood rarely if ever contain postconventional responses.

But developmental stages and streams, such as Gilligan's, important as they are, do not exhaust the psyche's inventory. As we were saying, in addition to **stages of consciousness**, there are **states of consciousness**. The most common states of consciousness are waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. For various complicated reasons, the great wisdom traditions often equate those states respectively with body, soul, and spirit. That is: the waking, gross realm of matter (and the body); the dreaming, subtle realm of archetypal images and luminosity (of mind and soul); and the formless, deep causal realm of vast emptiness and pure infinite openness (of spirit). Hence, waking, dream, and deep sleep states are often correlated with body, soul, and spirit.

Whatever one may think of those correlations, one thing is undeniable: even an infant wakes, dreams, and sleeps. Accordingly, if I maintain that the waking state has access to the material body, and the dreaming state has a type of access to soul, and deep imageless sleep has a type of access to formless spirit, then I should maintain that the infant has some sort of access to body, soul, and spirit, and can experience those spiritual dimensions in some fashion.

I believe there is merit to that argument; it is also a subset of what developmentalists often see in any event, namely, that the self at virtually any *stage* of

consciousness or development (e.g., selfish, care, universal care, integrated), can have an altered state or peak experience of some of the major *states* of consciousness (e.g., gross, subtle, causal). Hence, you can actually map states against stages.

For example, using those two simple scales (of four stages and three states), we would have twelve major types of religious or spiritual experiences. The actual content of these experiences would be extremely fluid (and intimately depend upon social and cultural factors as well—what I would later call the quadrants), but the types themselves would be easily recognizable. *A Sociable God* was the first book to introduce such a grid or matrix of spiritual experience, focusing on both the origin of the experience (what realm, dimension, or state is being experienced?) as well as the structure or stage that receives or interprets the experience (is the person's experience of the subtle dream state interpreted through the selfish, care, universal care, or integrated stage?).<sup>6</sup> Thus, a person might indeed have a gross, subtle, causal, or nondual experience, but it will be interpreted—and can only be interpreted—with the mental apparatus that one has available (i.e., that is present at the particular stage of their own development, whether that is selfish, care, universal care, or integrated).

A few years later, Allan Combs, coming at the problem from a different angle, would hit upon an essentially similar formulation regarding states and stages and the fact that they can be mapped onto each other, and when we both discovered the basic similarity of our models, we agreed to call this the Wilber-Combs matrix. We have since joined hands as colleagues and considerably refined and sophisticated this matrix, but it remains what I believe is an incredibly useful interpretive analytic for religious and spiritual experiences.

So, does the infant have access to spiritual realities? (And further, does the infant have access to spiritual realities that are *necessarily lost* by ALL adults and regained by ALL enlightened people?—which is the actual core of the Romantic claim.) Well, the answer depends on what you mean by “spiritual,” as we were saying. If we go through the list of, say, the five major meanings of the word “spiritual” given in *Integral Psychology*, we can ask that question of each of those five definitions, which gives us a much more precise and focused set of answers. I have done exactly that in several articles and essays. See, for example, chapter 6, “The Recaptured God,” in *The Eye of Spirit*; chapter 11, “Is There a Childhood Spirituality?,” in *Integral Psychology*; and “Childhood Spirituality,” Excerpt D, [www.kenwilber.com](http://www.kenwilber.com).

The latter gives a series of examples of authentic childhood spiritual experiences, rooted in peak experiences of the waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and nondual flow states that are ever-present in humans to some degree from about four months forward after conception. If there are any similarities in the subtle-dream state of, say, a three-year old and an adult, then the three-year old can have authentic subtle-realm experiences, obviously. But the evidence continues to show that those experiences in the infant and young child are all interpreted through preconventional structures and stages.

The bottom line is that in no sense is the strictly Romantic view correct, because that view gives a very partial slice of the overall picture of the infantile psyche. It seems to contain a series of partial truths, as well as a series of what appear to be serious confusions. What we are faced with, for example, is a four-month old infant. It spends most of its time crying and screaming, red-faced, agitated, a bundle of impulses and discharges, lacking muscular coordination. Is that a state of *perfect oneness with*

*Ground?*, and further, the same state that will be *recaptured* upon enlightenment? (Do you really want to recapture that state?) Yet according to the Romantic view, the infant is completely one with the Ground of Being, in a blissful, nondual, supremely peaceful state of “oneness with the world in bliss and love.” Is that true?

In not a single way that I can find is that strictly true. The Romantic conception focuses on something happening in a small slice of the psyche, and equates a type of very limited fusion state with the Ground of All Being, which seems a considerable distortion of a much more complete picture.

Incidentally, every time I mention this idea of an infant being in a state of blissful oneness with the world (and the dynamic ground) to a woman, and especially to a mother, they always look at me like I’m nuts. “Have you ever actually seen a four-month-old infant?” they always ask. The fact is, the only theorists who have ever seriously proposed the idea that the infantile self is perfectly one with the Ground are male, academic theorists. It fits a certain abstract, male, categorizing intellectual scheme about being one with Ground, splitting from Ground, reuniting with Ground, etc. Boy gets girls, boy loses girl, boy regains girl.

In any event, if we do indeed focus our attention individually on the five or so common meanings of spiritual, then we get a different answer to the question each time, and this much more complete (and complicated) response is surely closer to the real situation than simple abstract schemes of oneness, alienation, return to oneness. For example, if we focus on two of the most important meanings of spiritual that we have been discussing—states and stages—then it can be said with a fair amount of confidence that the infantile self does *not* have access to conventional or postconventional or nondual

stages, but it *does* have various types of access to many states of consciousness, including the broad states of gross/waking, subtle/dreaming, and causal/sleeping. There is a sense in which, during infancy, poorly differentiated boundaries allow a type of flooding and fusion of gross, subtle, and causal *states*—but again, this is a dreamlike immersion in realms that, when interpreted, are interpreted through childhood narcissism, through Gilligan’s egocentric selfish stage, which, in its total contours, few would picture as spiritual in any deep sense.<sup>7</sup>

But in no sense is there a single Ground that is present in the infantile self, broken in the adult self, and then fully regained in the enlightened state—that’s just too much of an abstraction (which is only the beginning of the problems with that view, because any careful reading of the properties of “the Ground” that are supposed to be present in the infantile self are not actually present in the enlightened state. For example, the infant is not one with nirvikalpa samadhi, the infant does not possess the union of nirvikalpa and form known as sahaj, the infant does not possess constant unity consciousness, and so on; not a single actual property of the enlightened state can be found in the infantile self and not found in the adult self. Again, the idea of a complete oneness, necessarily broken, then completely recaptured, is an abstract academic scheme that has little relation to the fluid richness and complexity of the first years of life).

So we cannot claim that the infantile self, in its totality, is one with the Ground of Being in any authentic sense, because parts of its psyche are already limited, fragmented, undeveloped, chaotic, discordant, and much less than unified (as mothers are always reminding us). But because the young self does have genuine access to various gross, subtle, and casual states and experiences (even if they will be interpreted in less than

worldcentric ways), means that claiming that infants and young children lack all spiritual access is also much too extreme. The truth, as always, lies in the middle way.

### **The Two Falls of Humankind**

The basic confusion that I believe the Romantic disposition makes is this: it correctly intuits that there is indeed a Ground of Being (or a nondual Spirit of some sort); it correctly intuits that we (and all things) have all issued forth from this Ground and are ultimately one with this Ground; and it correctly intuits that we have been cut off from an awareness of our oneness with Ground (which the traditions indicate by saying that the ordinary person from birth is living in a fallen state, living in sin, or living in a world of illusion and samsara). But Romanticism then mislocates and misidentifies the nature of the Fall. It gets everything else very close to right, but due to that one big confusion, it necessarily creates a series of numerous secondary confusions in an attempt to account for the mess created by the first and major misunderstanding: when the Fall?

I have dealt extensively with this problem going all the way back to *Up from Eden*. The essential solution, I believe, is contained in the idea that there are two basic Falls, if you will: a metaphysical fall and a psychological fall.

The *metaphysical fall* represents *the loss of a conscious oneness with Spirit* and a consequent immersion in a world of sin and separation, duality and finitude, maya and mortality. The *psychological fall* represents a *self-reflexive awareness* of that mess, or an awareness that we are living in a fragmented, torn, alienated world that appears to be separate from Spirit.

My dog, for example, is living in a finite and dualistic world, a world of time and suffering and thirst and desire, but he is not painfully or self-reflexively aware of that fact. He lives a world that the traditions would characterize as fallen; he is living in samsara, in a world of maya, a world of finitude, hunger, pain, and mortality. Now, according to the traditions, my dog is not actually separated from Spirit; he is in fact unconsciously one with Spirit, for the simple reason that Spirit is the Ground of All Being, and so course my dog is one with Spirit in an unconscious fashion (if he weren't, he would instantly cease to exist). But because he has not awakened to a conscious oneness with Spirit, he is living in a metaphysically fallen world of duality, maya, samsara, finitude, and mortality.

My dog has not, however, suffered the psychological fall, because he does not have enough self-reflexive awareness to worry about it. Of course he is living in samsara; of course he is not living in nirvana (he cannot get into nirvikalpa samadhi, he cannot consciously have a metanoia or conscious redemption and rebirth). No offense to my dog, but he has suffered the metaphysical fall but not yet the psychological fall. He's fallen, but doesn't know it. Nor worry about it, nor anguish over it. He's metaphysically fallen, but not psychologically fallen.

So when do those two falls occur in humans? The traditions are absolutely unanimous that the metaphysical fall occurs *prior* to biological birth (so that the infant is *already* born in sin, or is *already* living in samsara: the infant is *not* living in nirvana or nirvikalpa samadhi by any stretch of the imagination, and there is not a single tradition that claims it is). There might be trailing clouds of glory, it is true, and several traditions emphasize that, but those clouds are trails of a dimension *that exists prior to biological*

*birth* (such as the bardo realm), and *not* a definition of the infantile self per se. I have found not a single wisdom tradition that believes otherwise.

So unless you are a Buddha, every infant at birth is already living in samsara, is already living in sin, is already finite, mortal, and caressed by the three marks of all existence: suffering, impermanent, insubstantial.<sup>8</sup> In other words, and by whatever name, the infant from conception has already suffered *the metaphysical fall* (i.e., it is *already living in samsara* and not any sort of conscious or unconscious nirvana).<sup>9</sup>

But then there is the second Fall, which is a psychological awakening to our metaphysically fallen state. That Fall occurs, I believe, beginning in infancy and early childhood. Enlightenment, liberation, release, metanoia, or salvation occurs when both falls are overcome by the resurrection or regaining of a conscious oneness with Spirit.

The Romantics simply confuse these two Falls.

They accordingly think that when the psychological fall occurs in early childhood, which indeed it does, then somehow that is actually the metaphysical fall, and worse, they often interpret that to mean that in early infancy or childhood we are somehow actually falling away from (or being separated from a union with) the Ground of Being itself, which, if true, would kill us all immediately.<sup>10</sup>

Based on that confusion, the errors multiply rapidly. Precisely because there is indeed a period in early infancy when the psychological fall has not yet occurred, then if you confuse these two Falls, you will think that during that very early period, the infant is innocent of the metaphysical fall as well. But the relative innocence of infancy is not that the infant is immersed in nirvana (or that it has not yet suffered the metaphysical fall), but

that it has not yet suffered the psychological fall. It is not living in conscious nirvana, but it has not yet self-reflexively awakened to the horrors of samsara, even though it is drenched in those horrors constantly (it cries, it screams, it suffers, it has hunger, it has rage, it has fear). In confusing these two Falls, a Romantic theorist will be forced to read deeply spiritual and nondual oneness into infantile states that are often marked by utter chaos, fusion and confusion (as if that is something you'd want to recapture in enlightenment). Welcome to the pre/post fallacy, elevationist style.

### **The Ever-Present Ground**

So when did the metaphysical fall occur? I have discussed this at length in *Up from Eden*, *Eye to Eye*, and *The Eye of Spirit* (see especially the latter). In essence, we can say that it occurred prior to the Big Bang; or prior to birth through the bardo; or prior to this and every moment in our contracting away from infinity, contracting away from the ever-present and timeless Ground that is the nature and condition of this and every moment. My point (elaborated in those books) is that all three of those are the same metaphysical (or involutory) fall, which has nothing to do with infancy, and everything to do with our present relation with the Ever-Present Ground.

This is obviously a large and challenging issue, and if you are interested, I suggest you consult *The Eye of Spirit* for an ongoing discussion. In the meantime, I think we can say that the Romantics intuited a deeply enduring truth about being one with Spirit, falling away from that Oneness, and returning to that Oneness. But, being caught in the classic elevationist wing of the pre/trans fallacy, they were forced to attribute enlightened qualities to an infantile self that are, to put it mildly, hard for even a mother to see.

## **Dawn Humans, Dawn Spirit**

Notice that the pre/post fallacy says that *in any recognized developmental sequence*, pre and post are often confused. It does not say, childhood is nothing but pre. As we just saw, there are types of *transient access to spiritual states* (gross, subtle, and causal) even in the infantile self (because even the infant wakes, dreams, and sleeps). Rather, the pre/trans fallacy is meant to call attention to the extensive types of confusion that occur even in fully recognized developmental sequences. For example, we have been discussing the fact that researchers from Graves to Gilligan agree that moral judgment moves from preconventional to conventional to postconventional modes. The pre/post fallacy simply says that, given this recognized sequence, preconventional and postconventional are often confused, simply because both are nonconventional. And we have to look no further than the general New-Age movement to find abundant evidence of preconventional impulse being confused with postconventional liberation; prerational self-absorption being confused with transrational freedom; preverbal hedonism confused with transverbal wisdom. Alas, it is almost always the Romantic orientation, with its sincere but deeply confused elevationism, that drives the entire display, with self-obsession elevated to Self-realization, divine egoism exalted as divine liberation, rampant narcissism paraded as transcendental freedom. But the important nugget of truth contained in the Romantic intuition is that, indeed, we have fallen from a union with Spirit (a union found, not in the dregs of an infantile past, but in the depths of the timeless present), and we can indeed *regain* that spiritual union—but *only* if we grow in a transcendence of ego, and not simply recapture an infantile self.

What, then, of the earlier stages of human development? And not just the dawn state of perhaps a million years ago, but the stages of tribal foraging and village horticulture? Are we arrogantly to pronounce indigenous tribes “inferior”? And are we really to claim they had no access to transrational, transpersonal spirituality? Romantic theorists bristle at the thought that anyone would so callously pronounce whole epochs to be “inferior” or “lacking in genuine spirituality.” And rightly so. But then, I have never even remotely claimed such.

To begin with, however, let us note that the Romantics who get so indignant about those two claims (some cultures being “inferior” and “lacking true spirituality”) make exactly those claims themselves—not about foraging tribes, but about you and me. The general anthropological Romantic claim is that original tribal consciousness (during the period Gebser calls “magical”) was “nondissociated,” a type of harmony and wholeness of self, culture, and nature. The Romantic theorists agree that this magical structure was prereflexive and prerational (in the sense of pre-formal-operational thinking as a central organizing principle of society; the society was instead organized around prereflexive nondissociated consciousness). But, they claim, far from being a “lower” development, this prereflexive consciousness was balanced, holistic, ecologically sound, and deeply spiritual. But, they continue, with the eventual rise of egoic-rationality, this early nondissociated state was brutally repressed, fragmented, and destroyed, and in its place was a nightmare called modernity, which is marked, first and foremost, by *dissociated consciousness*, which carries alienation, fragmentation, and shallow (if any) spirituality. In other words, in its place are you and I: we moderns are all, with few exceptions,

judged to be living in dissociated consciousness, an inferior, fragmented state, lacking a genuine spirituality.

This Romantic view thus condemns literally *millions* of modern people as having inferior consciousness and lacking a deep spirituality. So the first thing we should note is that charges of “inferiority” and “lacking spirituality” drop from the lips of these Romantics with an alarming ease and frequency. It is a very harsh system of ranking and value judgments that these Romantics have embraced, and it would do well for all of us to soften such brutal blows.

My view of the early tribal magical structure is, I believe, more nuanced. But let me first emphasize that I am talking about the original, prehistorical, tribal, foraging mode going back perhaps 1-2 million years ago. Indigenous peoples living today are people *living today*; they have continued to undergo their own development for hundreds of thousands of years, and their exact relationship to prehistoric tribes is far from clear; moreover, they are usually inextricably intermixed with other cultures and modes. No, I am referring to the structure of the original, prehistorical, magical-foraging mode, circa 50,000 BCE, to the extent we can reconstruct it.

To begin with, any society is a collection of individuals who themselves are at very different levels or stages of development. Just as today, where the average stage in industrial societies is something like egoic-rational, there are many individuals who are at higher and lower stages, and so also with earlier epochs. To say that a particular epoch was magical, or mythical, or mental, as Gebser does, is not to say that all individuals were at that level or stage. It's just an average.

This is why, as I pointed out in *Up from Eden*, any given culture has something like a “center of gravity,” or an *average mode* of consciousness, around which conventional, everyday realities are organized (Foucault, for example, would call this “the dominant mode of discourse”). The Romantics agree that the average mode of early tribes was “magical” (in the nonpejorative sense of prereflexive and nondissociated) and the average mode of modernity is egoic-rational (which is usually meant pejoratively, but doesn’t affect our main point about the average mode). I further suggested that in addition to the average mode, there is the *most advanced* mode, the mode displayed by those souls who appeared to be the most developed at that time (using any number of hermeneutically generated, non-metanarrative vertical scales). During the magical foraging times, the most advanced mode definitely appears to have included the shamans, who, I argued in *Up from Eden*, were the first great explorers of the genuinely transpersonal, spiritual domains. At the very least, these souls directly experienced the deeper psychic dimension of the human potential, evidenced in a sophisticated nature mysticism, journeys to upper- and under-world domains, what appear to be actual psychic capacities, and—again at the very least—a union consciousness with the entire realm of nature (or the gross/waking state). In *Up from Eden* I spent an entire chapter extolling these remarkable, authentic, and deeply spiritual feats.

At the same time, scholars of the shamanic state, such as Roger Walsh (*The Spirit of Shamanism*), have pointed out that, although there might have been exceptions, the typical shamanic voyage did not include, for example, extended periods of absorption in the purely formless realm (causal cessation). In other words, by criteria that are acceptable even to shamanic advocates, the shamanic voyage did not consciously include

the causal domain. And therefore, at the very least, typical shamanic spirituality was not a path that traversed the entire transpersonal realm.

If, on the other hand, one performs (as *Up from Eden* did) a historical analysis on the succession or emergence of spiritual states accessed by the typical forms of the most advanced consciousness in each general epoch (magic to mythic to mental), one generally finds a succession of transpersonal states that move from shamanic (psychic) to saintly (subtle) to sagely (causal), with each of the succeeding states having access to their predecessors, but not vice versa—a true mark of a holarchy of development. States themselves do not generally show development, but increasing consciousness does, and that increase brought with it a more constant access of wakefulness to deeper and deeper domains, judging by standards of those epochs themselves. (With the demise of transpersonal psychology, these criteria become even more pressing.)<sup>11</sup>

This leads to what I believe is the only model that so far has been able to adequately deal with evolution and enlightenment, and further, does so in a way that allows the most advanced mode of each epoch to be as enlightened as enlightened can be, and yet succeeding epochs could be more enlightened. It's a bit technical, so I will reserve it for an endnote, but I honestly can't think of a more important issue, certainly when it comes to spirituality and, hence, the human condition in general. If this topic interests you, I urge you to check the endnote and see if you agree or disagree with the suggested solution. <sup>12</sup>

To return to the *average mode* of the dawn state: What of the actual nature of the prereflexive, nondissociated consciousness, or the “magical structure” of the average

mode of foraging consciousness? Was it truly an integrated, holistic, harmonious whole, as claimed by Romantics?

The magical structure, no doubt, was an extraordinary mode of consciousness; if nothing else, it inhabited the first men and women who evolved beyond the great apes and hominids, and although some people will insist on seeing this as an insult to apes, it was a colossal evolutionary advance by almost any scale of judgment. Still, the question is whether tribal consciousness actually *integrated* self, culture, and nature, or whether it had not yet fully differentiated them in the first place. By calling this magical structure “nondissociated,” the Romantics beg the question, avoid the issue. The great, glorious, catch-all prefix “non” always stands as a warning of a pre/post fallacy begging to be made. For the real question is not whether this structure was “nondifferentiated,” but was this structure pre-differentiated or was it truly post-differentiated? “Nondissociated” can easily apply to both (which is how it hides its pre/post fallacy).

Approaching the question in this more careful fashion, the answer is more obvious. The magical structure was largely predifferentiated. On this, scholars from across a wide spectrum of approaches are in general agreement. Jean Houston, following Gerald Heard, calls this the pre-individual and proto-individual period (that is, archaic to magic). Duane Elgin refers to them as constricted consciousness and awakening/proto consciousness. (This early state was one of “*constricted* consciousness?” Yes, and Elgin can spot this by not confusing the psychological fall with the metaphysical fall. Both early humans and early infants, who have suffered the metaphysical fall but not yet the psychological fall, are actually living in a very constricted, proto state of consciousness, not a nondual state of union). Habermas and his colleagues, who conducted extensive

research reviews, calls them preconventional and predifferentiated. Robert Bellah, tracing religious evolution, calls them primitive and archaic (predifferentiated action systems). Neumann called them pleromatic, uroboric, and pre-individuated. This does not mean stupid, confused, or imbecilic; it means that various subjective, objective, and intersubjective domains were not approached in fully differentiated terms. Some see this as a good thing; others as a problem; but there is general agreement on the actual nature of the structure itself.

The broad conclusion: with the magical structure, the self, culture, and nature still lay interfused with each other. They were not integrated, for they had not yet separated, differentiated, and crystallized out from each other. This predifferentiation is what gives the magical structure its, well, magical charm, and makes it a misunderstood magnet for those who actually desire a postdifferentiated integration for the modern world. But the actual situation of the foraging mode was, apart from its occasional wonders, something less than an integrated paradise. Because the “I,” the “we,” and the “it” were as yet poorly differentiated, advances in each domain were hindered. Average life span was less than three decades; political systems were focused on body-bound kinship lineages; slavery was sporadic but already occurring (showing that it is intrinsic in the nondissociated mode); warfare had already begun; and sexual exploitation was often rampant. It is, *in its complete contours*, a consciousness that no Romantic I know would actually want to inhabit.

### **A Clearer Picture Has Recently Emerged**

Although the somewhat dismal picture I have painted of the average magical, foraging, nondissociated consciousness could be discerned at least two decades ago, to do so would have subverted what had already become the dominant mode of academic discourse, and hence books like *Up from Eden* and *A Sociable God* were aggressively attacked. Today, as the boomeritis hangover is slowly wearing off, this more accurate picture is now becoming more commonly acknowledged.

A good example is Michael Crichton, Harvard-graduated M.D. known for the careful scholarship he brings to books such as *Jurassic Park* and *Timeline*. Crichton gives a superb summary of the evidence as it now exists, delivered through his own slightly exasperated tone at how long this evidence has been distorted due to what he calls a religious denial of facts (the “religion” in this case being the religious dogma of ecoprimitivism, using definition #8 of the word “religion” as outlined in *A Sociable God*). Here are excerpts from Crichton’s summary; although Crichton is not a scholar of these issues, he does a superb job of summarizing the scholarly consensus that has emerged in this area:

There is no Eden. There never was. What was that Eden of the wonderful mythic past? Is it the time when infant mortality was 80%, when four children in five died of disease before the age of five? When one woman in six died in childbirth? When the average lifespan was 40, as it was in America a century ago? When plagues swept across the planet, killing millions in a stroke. Was it when millions starved to death? Is that when it was Eden?

And what about indigenous peoples, living in a state of harmony with the Eden-like environment? Well, they never did. On this continent, the newly arrived people who crossed the land bridge almost immediately set about wiping out hundreds of species of large animals, and they did this several thousand years before the white man showed up, to accelerate the process. And what was the condition of life? Loving, peaceful, harmonious? Hardly: the early peoples of the New World lived in a state of constant warfare. Generations of hatred, tribal hatreds, constant battles. The warlike tribes of this continent are famous: the Comanche, Sioux, Apache, Mohawk, Aztecs, Toltec, Incas. Some of them practiced infanticide, and human sacrifice. And those tribes that were not fiercely

warlike were exterminated, or learned to build their villages high in the cliffs to attain some measure of safety.

How about the human condition in the rest of the world? The Maori of New Zealand committed massacres regularly. The dyaks of Borneo were headhunters. The Polynesians, living in an environment as close to paradise as one can imagine, fought constantly, and created a society so hideously restrictive that you could lose your life if you stepped in the footprint of a chief. It was the Polynesians who gave us the very concept of taboo, as well as the word itself. The noble savage is a fantasy, and it was never true. That anyone still believes it, 200 years after Rousseau, shows the tenacity of religious myths, their ability to hang on in the face of centuries of factual contradiction.

There was even an academic movement, during the latter 20th century, that claimed that cannibalism was a white man's invention to demonize the indigenous peoples. (Only academics could fight such a battle.) It was some thirty years before professors finally agreed that yes, cannibalism does indeed occur among human beings. Meanwhile, all during this time New Guinea highlanders in the 20th century continued to eat the brains of their enemies until they were finally made to understand that they risked kuru, a fatal neurological disease, when they did so.

More recently still the gentle Tasaday of the Philippines turned out to be a publicity stunt, a nonexistent tribe. And African pygmies have one of the highest murder rates on the planet.

In short, the romantic view of the natural world as a blissful Eden is only held by people who have no actual experience of nature. People who live in nature are not romantic about it at all. They may hold spiritual beliefs about the world around them, they may have a sense of the unity of nature or the aliveness of all things, but they still kill the animals and uproot the plants in order to eat, to live. If they don't, they will die.

Crichton goes on to comment pointedly on the romantic disposition behind the myths:

And if you, even now, put yourself in nature even for a matter of days, you will quickly be disabused of all your romantic fantasies. Take a trek through the jungles of Borneo, and in short order you will have festering sores on your skin, you'll have bugs all over your body, biting in your hair, crawling up your nose and into your ears, you'll have infections and sickness and if you're not with somebody who knows what they're doing, you'll quickly starve to death. But chances are that even in the jungles of Borneo you won't experience nature so directly, because you will have covered your entire body with DEET and you will be doing everything you can to keep those bugs off you.

The truth is, almost nobody wants to experience real nature. What people want is to spend a week or two in a cabin in the woods, with screens on the windows. They want a simplified life for a while, without all their stuff. Or a nice river rafting trip for a few days, with somebody else doing the cooking. Nobody wants to go back to nature in any real way, and nobody does. It's all talk—and as the years go on, and the world population grows increasingly urban,

it's uninformed talk. Farmers know what they're talking about. City people don't. It's all fantasy.

Eden is a fantasy that never existed, and mankind wasn't ever noble and kind and loving, [and] we didn't fall from grace [because we were never historically in paradise to begin with]....

In that regard, I wonder if anybody has ever pointed out that the early foraging tribes, supposedly living in paradisaical nondissociated consciousness, were themselves the ones who abandoned that state and moved into horticultural and agrarian (and “fallen”) modes? If the original state was so paradisaical, why did the tribes themselves abandon paradise? How smart could they actually have been if that were so? If the Romantics are right and the early tribes were living in a total paradise that they intentionally abandoned, then those tribes were without doubt the stupidest human beings who ever lived. But of course they weren't stupid; far from it, they abandoned paradise for a reason, which is that “paradise” it most certainly was not....

### **The Basic Inadequacy of Foraging Consciousness**

The fact that magic could be taken up and into mythic, and mythic could be taken up and into mental, is a development that—ideally—would carry the extraordinary accomplishments of each mode forward, building on their strengths, curtailing their partialness, and building together a more embracing, inclusive, encompassing future. Ideally, evolution occurs through a process of “transcend and include”—transcend the previous stage's limitations but include its accomplishments.

But no development or evolution is without its possible pathologies. Cultural evolution is no exception; it has as often been the history of brutalities, repressions, oppressions, and worse, as human evolution sometimes progressed, sometimes brutalized, its way toward tomorrow. *Up from Eden* was a chronicle of the undeniable advances, and the even more undeniable brutalities.

But the general point of phylogenetic evolution, as of ontogenetic, is that *whenever the wisdom of a previous stage is forgotten, a pathology results*. In *A Brief History of Everything* I outlined the major “lessons” that each age of humanity managed to learn, and the point here is that the great foraging lesson was: *Spirit is interwoven with earthbody*, which is our blood, our bones, our foundation, our support. We of the modern West have forgotten that lesson, and we are therefore in the grips of a global pathology that very well might kill us all.

But what the magical, preconventional structure could not do—and still cannot do—is integrate other magical structures. That is, magic is cognitively not complex enough to build intersubjective structures that would allow mutual understanding between hundreds of different tribes. And therefore, the magical structure, even if it did know how to honor gross-realm nature (a claim itself disputed),<sup>13</sup> could not build the types of consensus necessary for human beings to live in harmony with nature. Thus, the magical structure, even if it honored nature, could never protect nature. This protection would require centauric, not typhonic, awareness—that is, postconventional intersubjective consensus across thousands, even millions, of kinship lines, and not merely subjective, preconventional, tribal feelings in the present moment.

Likewise, it is quite beyond the capacity of the magical-foraging structure to actually honor Gaia, since Gaia is a systemic conception. As Clare Graves pointed out, with the magical-animistic structure, “There is a name for every bend in the river, but no name for the river.” And thus Gaia is likewise a nonentity for tribal awareness. There is a name for every nook and cranny in Gaia, but no Gaia itself. Magical nondissociated consciousness is indeed constricted consciousness; it is the particularistic, immediate, present, and naive moment in front of its face. Hence Habermas is certainly correct to conclude that the foraging structure is essentially egocentric and preconventional in its nature.

That the Romantics want us to remember the positive contributions of that early structure is very much to their credit, and in that specific regard, I am a staunch Romantic. But when they go quite beyond that and dubiously inject characteristics into the magical nondissociated structure—when they claim postdifferentiated integration for what most scholars would see as predifferentiated structures; when they claim the shamanic voyage was a complete path across the transpersonal; when they claim that the mental-rational structure itself is intrinsically pathological; when they confuse immediate vital impulses for Gaia systemic networks; and when they toxically condemn millions of people to living in an inferior state compared with magical indissociation—perhaps we might not wish to follow them.<sup>14</sup>

### **Falling, Falling, Falling.... Fallen**

We have been using Carol Gilligan’s scale (egocentric/selfish, ethnocentric/care, worldcentric/universal care, integrated) as a simple example of a vertical dimension of

developmental depth (constructed as a conscious hermeneutic and not as an exterior metanarrative). *A Sociable God* uses a slightly more sophisticated (but still relatively simple) outline of the general spectrum of consciousness, focusing primarily on worldviews (archaic, magic, mythic, mental, psychic, subtle, causal, nondual). In addition to giving at least a dozen or so different ways that the word “religion” is commonly used, it then points out that, at the very least, we need to distinguish between horizontal *legitimacy* (or how well a given spirituality provides meaning, integration, and value at a particular level) and vertical *authenticity* (or how well a given spirituality promotes transformation to higher levels altogether).<sup>15</sup> Most religious scholars, in confusing these two scales, have seen the loss or disruption of a lower-level engagement that happened to be highly legitimate, and mistaken that for a loss of spiritual sensibilities altogether, when in fact it was merely part of a larger movement to a more authentic stance.

We just saw that those scholars who are fond of the magical, foraging, nondissociated fusion state tend to see every succeeding stage—starting with mythic—as a catastrophic fall from an original paradise. Likewise, scholars who believe that the mythic structure was actually the original paradise tend to see the rise of the next major structure, the rational-egoic, as the eating of the tree of knowledge and the real fall of man. And it doesn’t stop there. Those who see the modern world of science as the closest thing we have to paradise tend to see the rise of the next major structure—which might be called the planetsoul—as being a throwback to magical superstition (i.e., their version of the Fall).

What's going on here? In various books, starting with *Up from Eden* and *A Sociable God*, I have tried to suggest three major items that have contributed to this incredibly widespread tendency to see every stage past your favorite as the Fall of humankind. These factors are: (1) a confusion of the metaphysical fall and the psychological fall; <sup>16</sup> (2) a confusion of differentiation and dissociation; (3) a tendency to see Spirit as being present in one epoch and not in others, instead of seeing Spirit present as the entire evolutionary unfolding.

A confusion of differentiation and dissociation can be particularly pernicious. Growth and development generally occur through a process of differentiation-and-integration. But if you believe that the early dawn state is a state of spiritual oneness (albeit unconscious), then you will see every differentiation as a fragmentation, a breaking, an alienation. You will thoroughly confuse necessary differentiation with pathological dissociation, with a fall of some sort. And thus, if your favorite period is magical-foraging, you will see the mythic-agrarian as the great Fall of humankind, the beginning of the rape of nature via planting and harvesting. If you see mythical Eden as paradise, you will see the rise of modernity as the great Fall. If you are a rational scientist, you will see a coming postformal, postrational state as a horrifying Fall, and so on. Differentiation-and-integration—which is part of the means of growth and evolution to higher, wider, deeper, more unified states—appears to be a continuous fragmentation and moving away from the simple fusion state, which indeed it is, but that cannot be appreciated if that simple fusion state has been identified with nirvana. Once that confusion occurs, the means of growth appears to be part of the illness. You then view

every new stage of deeper evolution with horror and disgust: the Fall!, the Fall!, the Fall of humankind!

Having confused differentiation and dissociation, we will once again imagine that the earlier stages of evolution represent a spiritual oneness that is subsequently lost, that Spirit was available at one stage or epoch and not at others, instead of seeing that Spirit is the entire sweep of the evolutionary unfolding. Spirit is the Ground of the entire evolutionary sequence, it does not pop into existence at one epoch, say hello, then disappear at another.

Those three confusions contribute, I believe, to so many intense misunderstandings about Spirit and history, that only an integral approach can even begin to unravel them. *A Sociable God* is a step in that direction, and this is one of its substantial merits, I believe.

### **The Rationalization of Secular Society**

Where religious scholars are busy seeing a series of falls of humankind as it rushes into the modern world, secular scholars are busy seeing a progressive enlightenment and overcoming of superstition with the rise of modernity, science, and liberalization. Who is right?

In a sense, both of them, of course. Or, as we say, both of them are half right, half wrong. Religious scholars are correct in that almost every stage of development past their favorite era is a fall... at least from that favorite era. If, for example, you equate religion with mythic legitimacy (or dogmatic mythic beliefs, such as the virgin birth and

the parting of the Red Sea), then the rise of modernity must indeed appear to be anti-spiritual. If, on the other hand, you see evolution as Spirit-in-action, then the rise of modernity in its healthy form is simply an increase in differentiation-and-integration, an increase in Spirit's presence. Spirit has simply moved from magic to mythic to rational, on its way to even further, postrational unfoldments.... The irony here is that the rise of modernity is actually an increase in spiritual unfolding, but Spirit resides now not in myths but in reason. There is more Spirit in reason's denial of God than there is in myth's affirmation of God, because there is *more depth*.

On the other hand, what both myth and reason have misunderstood is that, wherever one might wish to locate Spirit, everybody is born at square one. The great secularization of society, predicted by rational scholars for two centuries, has simply not occurred, not, anyway, in a fashion resembling anything that was predicted. It was thought that modern society would become less and less religious (and here, "religious" specifically means magic and mythic). The idea was that scientific, enlightened, rational progress would *entirely* erase magic and mythic silliness, leaving a rational-secular society top to bottom.

In some ways, there has indeed been an increase in the percentage of the population that is rational-secular; many governing institutions embrace a separation of church and state (where church usually means magic and mythic and state means rational); educational systems likewise are often liberal-rational (the more educated a person becomes, the less magic and mythic they embrace). Thus, large stretches of industrial developed countries are indeed rational-secular, and long gone are the times that an explicit Holy (Mythic) Roman Empire could count on a consensus.

But magic and mythic have not simply evaporated. The reason they have not is that everybody is born at archaic, then hits magic, then mythic, then rational.... And hence, for every person who moves into rational, there are often one or more who enter mythic. Accordingly, even in rational-secular societies, large pockets of culture remain at pre-rational stages of unfolding (and always will to some degree, because everybody is born at square one. People are free to stop growing whenever they want, as long as they do not harm others. There will always be pockets of culture in this society that are archaic, magic, and mythic).

Not to mention the vast majority of second- and third-world cultures, at this time anyway, where magic and mythic often dominate. Further, given that magical-tribal and mythic-ethnocentric stages of development appear in their true colors as terrorists, warloads, feudalistic empires, and ethnic cleansing, among others, those difficulties will continue to plague the planet. Even if the center of gravity of the world's population were rational or higher, pockets of pre-rational culture will continue to exist and must be handled with specific legal, political, and occasionally military means. (See "The Deconstruction of the World Trade Center," on [www.kenwilber.com](http://www.kenwilber.com), for further discussion of this pressing issue.)

*A Sociable God* points out that, even if we focus on the average mode of industrial-informational societies—that of egoic-rational—then the further evolution of that mode will bring surprises to even those who see modernity as an anti-spiritual movement, namely: beyond the rational are the postrational stages of development (which are *not* anti-rational but indeed post-rational, or transcending-and-including

rationality). Hence, even the rise of rationality is a movement of Spirit-in-action leading to even more obviously spiritual modes. If, of course, we survive to tell the tale....

Thus, *A Sociable God* suggests that the loss of the hegemony of a mythic-membership religion with the rise of modernity, a loss so audibly lamented by mythic religion, was not actually the loss of a transrational spirituality and its replacement by the devil of rationality, but was mostly the growth beyond prerational modes to rational modes *on the way to* the transrational. As we were saying, in this larger evolutionary view, the rational denial of God contained more Spirit than the mythic affirmation of God, for the simple reason that it contained more developmental depth (and thus, in fact, more Spirit). It was more authentic, even if it was occasionally less legitimate—it was a sick version of a higher level, compared to the previous healthy version of a lower level, so as we attempt to redress the ills of modernity, let us not forget the higher potential contained therein.

### **Depth and Divinity**

The criteria for depth—and the *scale of adjudication* used in *A Sociable God* (as in all of my works)—is *holistic embrace*: how much of the Kosmos can a given structure internally contain? Put objectively, how many types of holons does a particular self-organizing system contain in its own makeup? Put subjectively, how much love (Agape) is built into a structure?

A holon is a whole that is a part of other wholes. A quark is enfolded in an atom; an atom is enfolded in a molecule; a molecule into a cell; a cell into an organism. In each

case, the holon gains more *depth*, because it lovingly embraces more of the Kosmos in its own makeup. Likewise with human holons: when my identity and sympathy expand from me to my family; from my family to tribes, communities, even nations; from nations to all of humanity; and from humanity to all sentient beings without exception: what have I done?, except take more and more souls into my own, and increased thereby my own depth, by moving increasingly out of me and into the Kosmos at large, until what I call my “self” and what I call the “Kosmos” are one and the same undeniable Fact, and the Love that moves the sun and other stars now moves me just as well; and we are all embraced in a gentle compassion that knows no others nor outsiders, that refuses fragmentation and cannot remember sorrow’s many names.

That scale—from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric to Kosmic—is a scale of holistic embrace, and that scale is the one used in *A Sociable God* to adjudicate the authenticity of various cultural and religious engagements. Each higher embrace does not mean that individuality is increasingly obliterated, but that it is increasingly enlarged. A person who extends sympathy and caring from his own ego to his family, and from his family to his community, has not impoverished his self, but enriched it. Just so, to expand one’s identity and sympathy from tribe to multi-tribe nation, and from nation to all humanity, and from humanity to all sentient beings—is simply to find a deeper Self in the midst of wider embraces. Kosmic consciousness is not the obliteration of individuality, but its consummate fulfillment, at which point we can speak of big Self or no-self, it matters not which: your Self is the Self of the entire Kosmos, timeless and therefore eternal, spaceless and therefore infinite, moved only by a radiant Love that defies date or duration.

That holarchy, or nest of increasingly holistic judgments, has been central to every work I have ever done, starting with my first book, *The Spectrum of Consciousness*; and of course it was as well the backbone of *A Sociable God*, which was written right at the beginning of the eighties—right at the beginning, we have been pointing out, of the colonization of cultural studies by flatland postmodernists. As we have also been pointing out, it would be almost two decades before anybody could breathe the word “hierarchy” and not be lynched in academia; before anybody could murmur the phrase “is better than” and not be brought before the postmodern tribunal and publicly branded a heretic. For the core of extreme postmodernism was the notion that all values are culturally relative; all realities are socially constructed; all truth is a subjective preference or taste. Unfortunately, all of those statements are said to be true *for all people and for all cultures*, without exception. In other words, the extreme postmodernists were guilty of exactly the horrible sins they accused everybody else of: they pronounced a long list of *universal truths*, but with the further embarrassment that their universal truths were all self-contradictory. They claimed it was universally true that there are no universal truths, that it is a cultural invariant that there are no cultural invariants, that it is objectively true that there is no objective truth. They claimed, in short, that their position was superior in a world where nothing was supposed to be superior. Critics would eventually spot this duplicity and give it a technical moniker—“the performative contradiction”—but others would simply call it by its simpler name, hypocrisy.

And now, as cultural studies itself begins to shake off its dogmatism—an entire generation of scholarship largely lost in performative contradictions, in narcissism and

nihilism as a postmodern tag team from hell—we are in a position to pick up exactly where holistic and nested hierarchies and value judgments left off: with ways of determining how to make sane, compassionate, and caring judgments based on degrees of depth, on degrees of love, on degrees of inclusion and holistic embrace. Pick up, that is, where numerous treatises, including *A Sociable God*, left off.

### **The Integral Approach**

*A Sociable God* and *Up from Eden* are books that particularly explored cultural worldviews. I would later come to call this the Lower-Left quadrant (the spectrum of collective or cultural consciousness, morals, worldviews, etc.). *The Atman Project* had already attempted to outline the Upper-Left quadrant (or the individual spectrum of consciousness). What both *Up from Eden* and *A Sociable God* further accomplished, I believe, was to *tie these two quadrants together*, and to believably show that individual and cultural *are inextricably bound by patterns of relational exchange*. That is, the human being is a compound individual, compounded of matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit (to use a simple five levels). Each level of the compound individual is actually *a system of mutual exchange* with elements *at the same level of development* (i.e., *the same degree of depth*) in the exterior world: matter with matter (physical food consumption), body with body (sexual procreation), mind with mind (symbolic communication), and so on. At every level, in other words, the subjective world is embedded in vast networks of intersubjective or cultural relationships, and vice versa, not as an afterthought or a voluntary choice, but as an inescapable pre-given fact. As I would later put it, agency is always agency-in-communion.

It is common to look at social evolution in terms of the various modes of techno-economic production, moving from foraging to horticultural to agrarian to industrial to informational (what I would call the Lower-Right quadrant, or social systems). By supplementing that analysis with a focus on *worldviews* (which move correlatively from archaic to magic to mythic to mental to global),<sup>17</sup> *A Sociable God* was able to make a series of predictions that have held up quite well. One was that the breakdown of the civil religion (as discussed by Robert Bellah) would leave American culture open to several trends, including a retrenchment and even resurgence of fundamentalist religion, as well as a regression to narcissistic New-Age agendas and intense self-absorption (a resurgence of Romanticism in its unhealthy forms). It's not hard to find corroborative evidence for both of those in today's culture. But another, riskier prediction involved the fact that beyond the rational-egoic (and centauric) level is the first stage of postrationality, referred to in *A Sociable God* (somewhat unhappily) as the psychic level, which supports a panenhenic nature mysticism. The prediction was that the most widespread, popular themes of a newly emerging spiritual orientation would therefore involve panenhenic nature mysticism and Gaia worship, along with a considerably reinterpreted shamanism, focused on ecological consciousness and gross realm unity. More than I imagined, this has become the case.

On the one hand, this is altogether salutary, coming just in time, one hopes, to help stem a certain ecological catastrophe wrought, not by modernity per se, but by typical human greed, a greed which—most definitely present from the time of archaic foraging, but which at that time had not the means to express itself globally—finally found a way, by hijacking the fruits of modernity, to make itself suicidal on a global scale.

Alas, with this resurgence of nature mysticism has also come the standard, correlative distrust of all higher mystical states, including deity mysticism and formless mysticism. These are, as always, misinterpreted by panentheic enthusiasts to be “other-worldly” and therefore supposedly anti-earth, anti-Gaia, and anti-ecological, whereas they actually transcend and include all of those concerns. But the nature mystics have often come armed with venomous words for souls who seek yet deeper and higher occasions, and I believe it will be decades before this particular fury runs its unpleasant course.<sup>18</sup>

It was by focusing on a developmental and evolutionary view of consciousness that these books (especially *Up from Eden* and *A Sociable God*) were able, I believe, to contribute to an understanding of these various movements. Toward the end of this period I began, not so much to question the evolutionary model, as to appreciate both its strengths and its weaknesses. In particular, studies in developmental psychology were already starting to suggest that development does not proceed in a linear fashion through a series of discrete ladder-like stages. Rather, overall development seems to consist of numerous different developmental lines or streams (such as cognitive, moral, affective, psychological, and spiritual) that progress in a relatively independent fashion through the basic spectrum of consciousness. If we simplify the spectrum of consciousness as going from pre-conventional to conventional to post-conventional to post-post-conventional waves, and if we use affects or feelings as an example of a particular stream, then we have *pre-conventional affects* (e.g., narcissistic rage, impulse gratification), *conventional affects* (belongingness, care, concern), *post-conventional affects* (universal love, global altruism), and *post-post-conventional affects* (transpersonal compassion, love-bliss,

Kosmic care). Likewise with cognition, morals, needs, psychological (or self) development, and spiritual development (considered as a separate line), among many others.

Each of these developmental lines or streams traverses the same basic levels or waves, but each does so in a relatively independent fashion, so that, for example, a person can be at a very high level of cognitive development, a medium level of interpersonal development, and a low level of moral development, all at the same time. This shows how truly uneven and non-linear overall development can be. 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, 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).

Although I abandoned the strictly linear or “ladder-like” view of development by 1981, I am criticized to this day for presenting a rigidly linear view of development, where, it is alleged, psychological development must be fully complete before spiritual development can even begin. I never held that rigid a view even in phase-1, and I certainly abandoned anything remotely like that almost two decades ago.<sup>19</sup> So I never know quite how to respond to these charges, other than to point out that they are untrue.

With the publication of *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* in 1995, I believe that the integral approach came to a full fruition. The follow-up books to SES included *A Brief History of Everything*, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, *Integral Psychology*, *One Taste*, *A Theory of Everything*, and *Boomeritis*. Those books present an integral model that includes quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types, and which, taken together, cover some of the most important crosscultural elements that any approach aspiring to be comprehensive or integral ought to take into account. If you would like to see how the worldviews investigated by *Up from Eden* and *A Sociable God* are an important part of the integral model, I would suggest you start by reading the short introduction, *A Theory of Everything*.

In the meantime, here are a few quadrant diagrams summarizing the essential points.

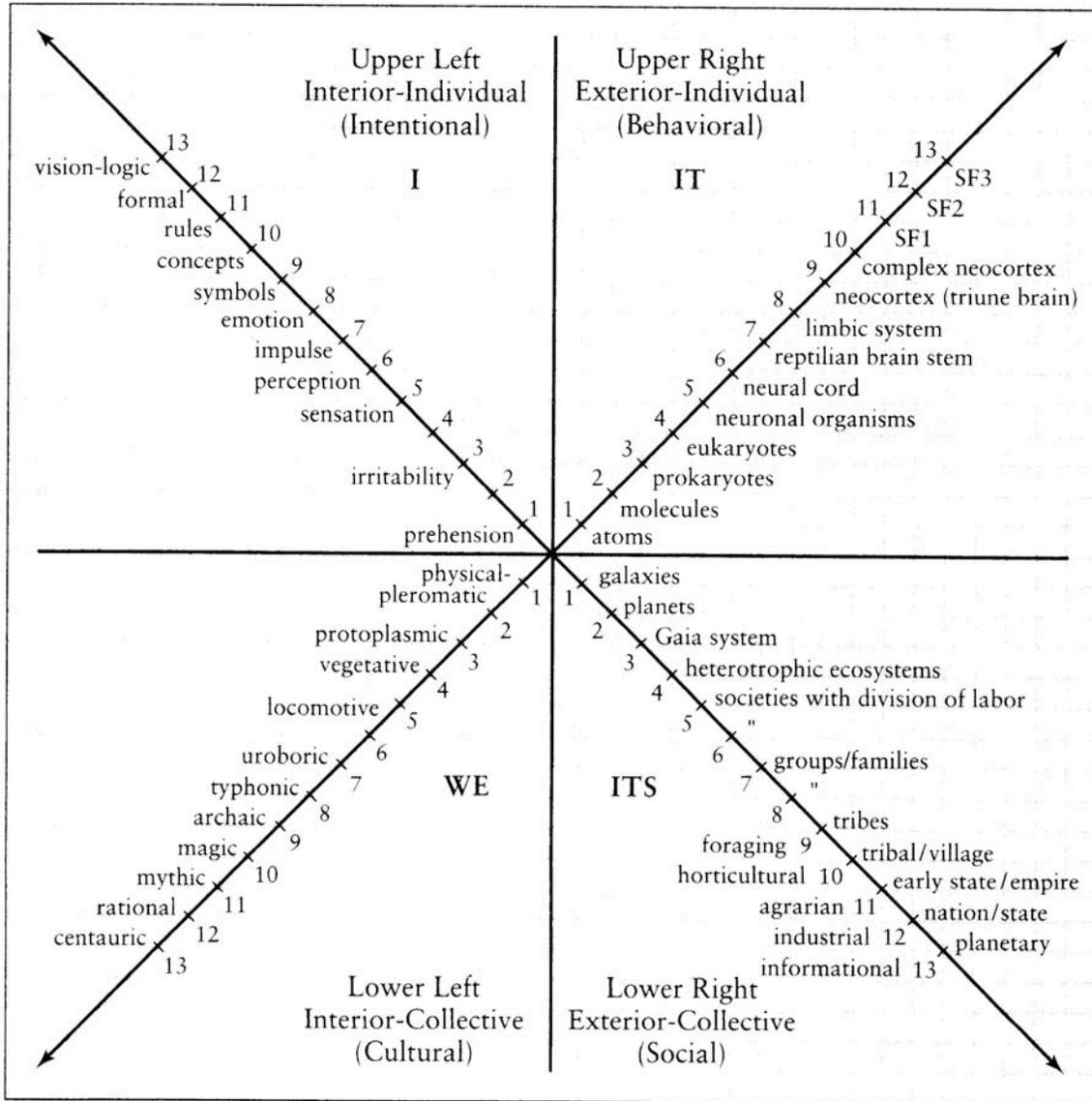


Diagram 1. Typical Quadrants

“Quadrants” are simply four perspectives that are especially important in viewing any occasion: *any event can be looked at from the inside and from the outside, and in the singular and the plural*. That simple statement, were it accepted, would put an end to 90% of academic food-fights. Zero chance that will happen, but it’s still nice to know that methodological peace might actually be available for those so inclined....

In any event, these four basic perspectives show us quite different phenomena, all of which are part of the integral picture. On the following diagrams, the **interior of the individual** is represented in the *Upper-Left quadrant*, including the perspectives of first person singular (“I”). The **interior of the plural (or the collective)** is the *Lower-Left quadrant*, including second person (“you/thou”) and first-person plural (“we”). The **exterior of the individual** is the *Upper-Right quadrant*, including third-person singular (“it”). And the **exterior of the collective** is the *Lower-Right quadrant*, including third-person plural (“its”). We sometimes shorten these to three major ones: I, we, and it: or the Beautiful, the Good, and the True; or art, morals, and science.

Diagram 1 is a typical quadrant figure representing some of the more common elements (or holons) that are disclosed by these four perspectives to a human being at a vision-logic (integrated or higher) level of development. It is fairly self-explanatory. The UL quadrant shows thirteen major waves of development instead of the four simple ones we have been using; and the LL shows a similar enhancement of the worldviews of archaic, magic, mythic, rational, integral (centauric and higher), but all of them should be recognizable as variations on a theme.

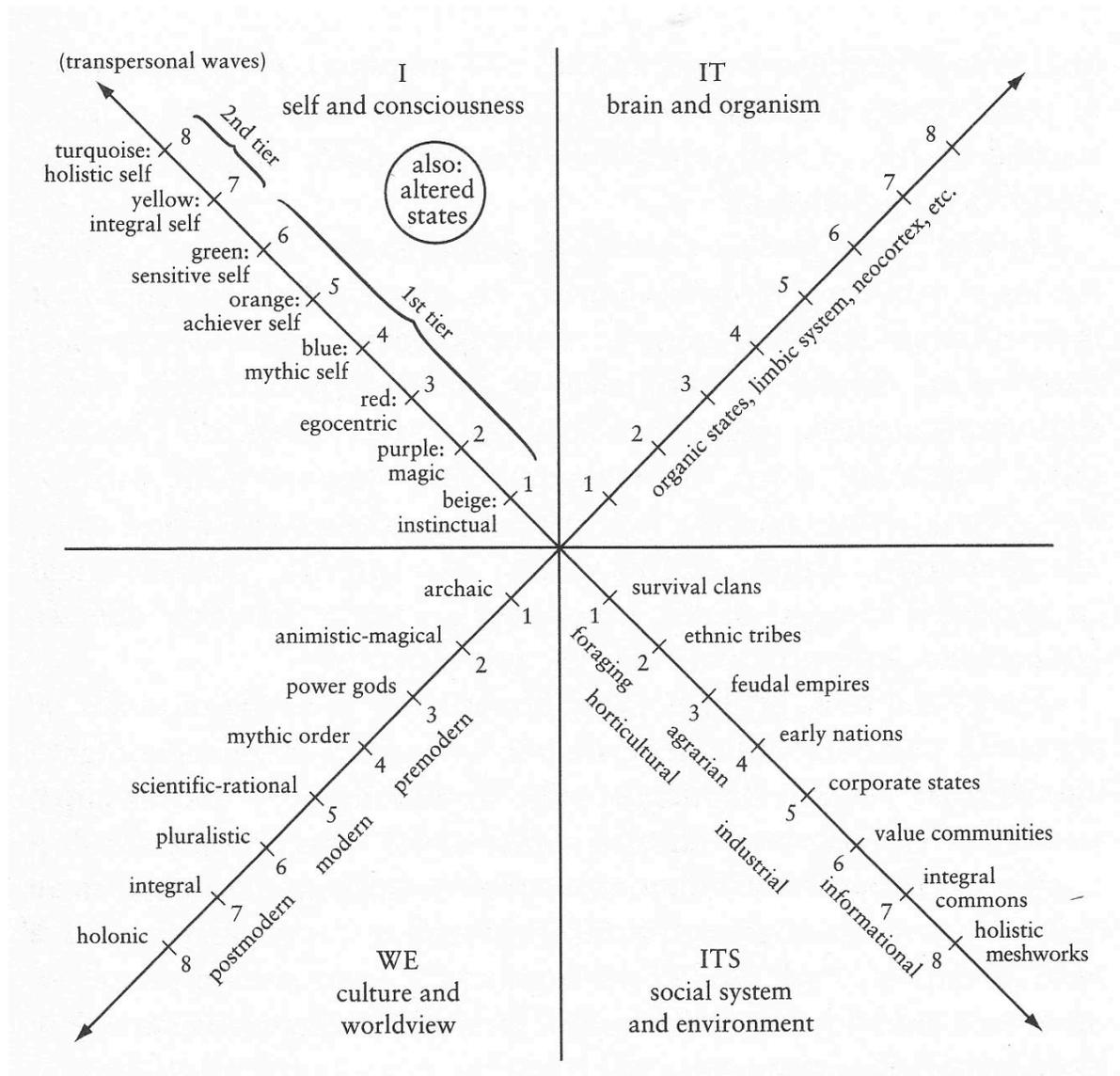


Diagram 2. Quadrants Focusing Specifically on Human Beings

Diagram 2 is a quadrant diagram focusing specifically on human beings, using the research of Clare Graves as a simple example of some of the levels or stages of

development in the UL. We have been using Carol Gilligan's four stages of selfish (beige, purple, red), care (blue), universal care (orange, green), and integrated (yellow, turquoise), which are generally correlated with the more specific Graves stages as indicated in parenthesis. If you are interested in these types of stage correlations and the substantial amount of research that developmentalists have done over the years, please consult *Integral Psychology*, which gives tables showing over one hundred developmental models and their general correlations.

Notice in diagram 2 that the UL contains the words "also altered states." The point here is that we can indeed map those altered *states* of consciousness (gross, subtle, causal, nondual) against the *stages* of consciousness represented in this diagram by the Graves stages, to result in a Wilber-Combs matrix of possible religious/spiritual experiences. This is the type of interpretive analytic pioneered by *A Sociable God*.

Notice also that, when it comes to the orthodox versions of today's sociology of religion, there are two major camps: the hermeneuticists and the functionalists. *A Sociable God* gives several reasons that both of them must be included in any integral picture, and using a quadrant diagram we can easily see why: those two major approaches often focus, respectively, on the *Lower-Left quadrant* and the *Lower-Right quadrant*. It goes without saying that both are crucial components of any integral approach.

### **Eight Primordial Perspectives of Sentient Beings**

Allow me to conclude this Foreword by schematically summarizing *integral methodological pluralism*, which diagrams 3 and 4 do.

Diagram 3 simply names the inside and outside of an event in each of the four quadrants. That is, we can take any of the occasions that are disclosed by the perspectives of the quadrants, and we can add yet another perspective, namely, are we attempting to look at it from its own inside or from its own outside? This gives us eight major perspectives instead of the simpler four.

I believe these **eight major perspectives** are the fewest that we need in order to get a fairly well-rounded view of any occasion. Of course we can use more; and we certainly can use less (and not merely reductionistically, but perhaps for introductory purposes, where the four quadrants serve wonderfully). But fewer than eight and some very important variables get left out....

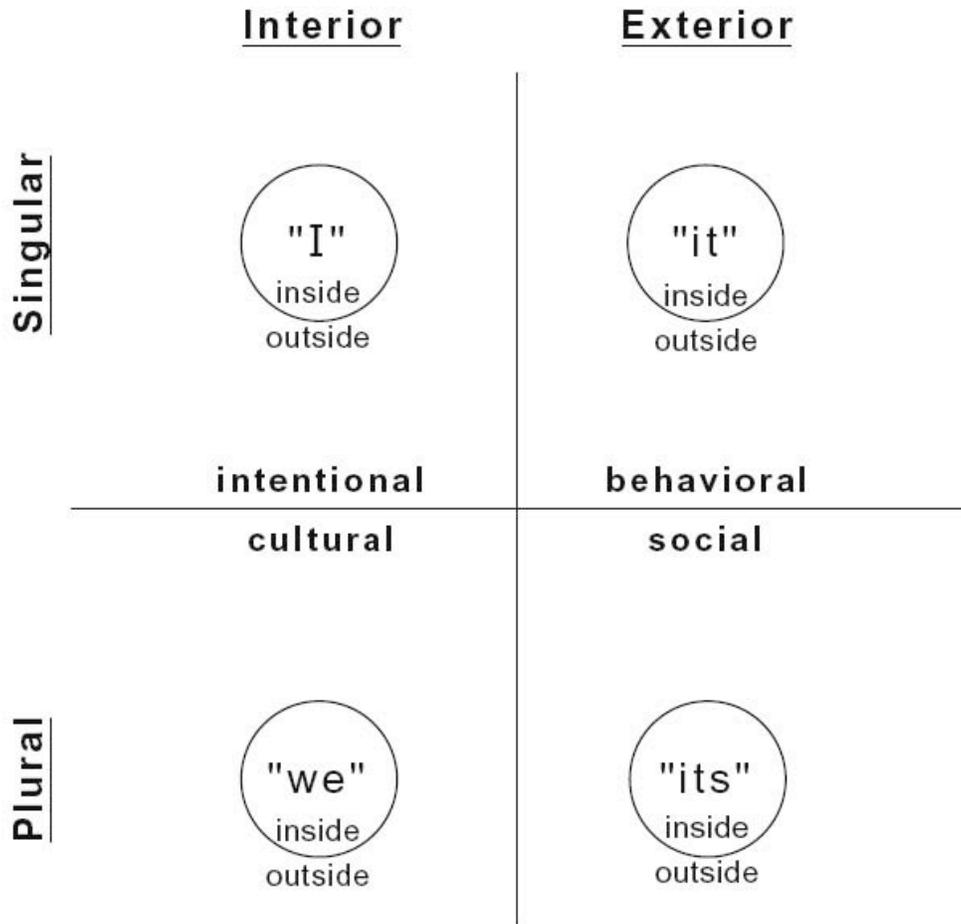


Diagram 3. Eight Primordial Perspectives of Sentient Beings

My work in the last few years has been to develop a Kosmology that replaces things, events, perceivers, systems, and processes with two simple variables: sentient beings and their perspectives. Assuming that the universe contains sentient beings and their perspectives, we can easily generate things, systems, processes, perceivers, knowers, thinkers, events, dynamic processes and so on, simply by specifying which perspective is being inhabited when the entity in question is being asserted. The entire metaphysical approach to reality—including not only the overt and obvious metaphysics of the great

wisdom traditions but the *hidden metaphysics* of everything from systems theory to postmodernism—is supplanted by a radically post-metaphysical approach that no longer assumes the fundamentalness of systems or processes or events or perceivers or knowers or dharmas or anything... except sentient beings and their perspectives on other sentient beings.

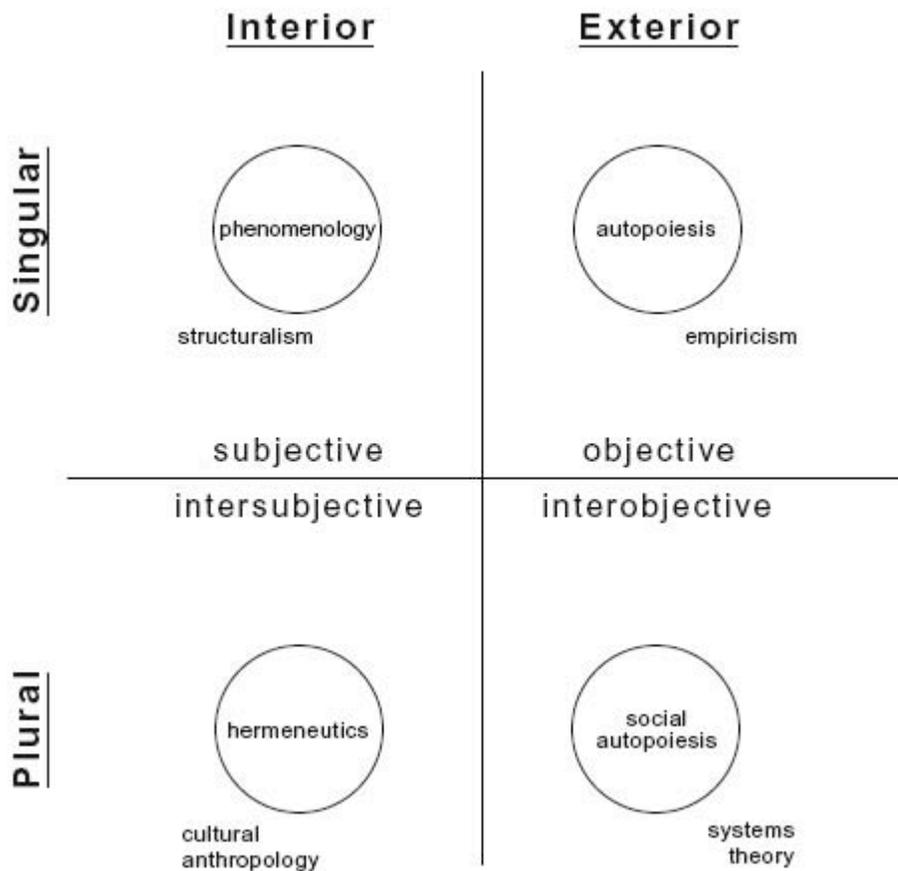


Diagram 4. Eight Fundamental Methodologies

These primordial perspectives (which spring into being whenever there is a plural of any sort of sentience or prehension) turn out to be the underpinnings of the Integral

Methodological Pluralism that drove me into dishwashing. If you look at diagram 4, you can see that these eight primordial perspectives drive eight of the most widely used, most time-tested of all human methodologies, from empiricism to phenomenology to hermeneutics to systems theory to developmentalism.

For example, if we look at the interior of an “I” from its own inside, we get introspection, phenomenology, meditation, and so on—we are looking at an “I” from within. But we can study that “I” from without as well (or in an “objective” or third-person fashion), and one of the results of doing that would be seeing the various stages of development that this “I” might go through (which is exactly what Carol Gilligan and Clare Graves did, for example, using the techniques of structuralism—in this case, developmental structuralism).

Likewise, we can look at any “we” from its own inside—hermeneutics, participant observer, sympathetic resonance—or we can study it from without, in an anthropological disposition (which is still nevertheless focused on meaning, genealogy, and semantics; still, that is, focused on the LL quadrant). But we can also look at that cultural “we” from an “objective” or third-person perspective, as a social system of dynamically interwoven “its”—the LR quadrant of systems theory (systems which themselves can be viewed from their own within as autopoietic or self-making systems, or more traditionally from their own without as structural-functional systems). The simple point is that the (at least) eight major perspectives available to sentient beings underpin the (at least) eight major methodologies that any truly integral approach would want to include.

And the wholesale disaster, the jarring nightmare, is that, academically, these are the eight major perspectives and methodologies, one or more of which are always getting outlawed, marginalized, repressed, oppressed, and tossed in the garbage can of no-no, nasty, don't-touch-this injunctions.

Which is what drove me into dishwashing as a preferable job. Looking back on the thirty years of my life as a methodological outlaw—where “outlaw,” by the way, is defined exactly as *A Sociable God* does—it seems that with virtually every one of the two dozen scholarly books I have written, academia has often recoiled in horror, and has done so, when it has done so, for the same basic reason, which has never varied very much: I was befriending some methodology or another that was deemed unrespectable. Their motto was never, “Everybody is right,” because both the culture and more sadly the counterculture had their narrow lists of right thinkers and their longer lists of thought criminals (to use George Orwell’s wonderful wording). Dishwashing wasn’t so bad, compared to all of that.

Diagram 4 is a summary of the methodologies I was befriending and using all the way back to my first book; it just took me thirty years to explicate what was involved. That first book, by the way, written at age 23 and called *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, might as well have been titled *The Spectrum of Methodologies*, *The Spectrum of Paradigms*, *The Spectrum of Injunctions*, since that is what was actually involved. But most authorities in the culture and counterculture, I found, do not want to look through new telescopes because they already know that Jupiter has no moons.

Like I said, dishwashing. I was, incidentally, still washing dishes at the Red Rooster Restaurant when I wrote *A Sociable God*. Its major point was simply that *a*

*sociology of depth* would have to include *vertical interiors*, both individual and collective—in other words, would have to include the results of such methodologies as developmental structuralism and phenomenology in addition to systems theory and hermeneutics (see diagram 4). I stand behind that conclusion 100%. For the succinct and elegant way that it argues for such a vertical dimension, *A Sociable God* remains a clarion call for a greater sociology.

### **Integral Today**

The success of the integral model has itself been inspiring: [www.integralnaked.org](http://www.integralnaked.org), [www.integraluniversity.com](http://www.integraluniversity.com), and [www.integralinstitute.org](http://www.integralinstitute.org) are all flourishing. If you would like to be involved in the application of a more inclusive, comprehensive, integral approach to any human endeavor—including integral medicine, integral art, integral law, integral psychotherapy, integral business, integral politics, integral education—please start at [www.integralinstitute.org](http://www.integralinstitute.org) and join us in this exciting adventure of expanding care and consciousness.

Ken Wilber  
Denver, Colorado  
Summer 2004

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> For the reasons that developmental holism (or structural developmentalism) is not a meta-narrative imposed on a group from without, but is rather a genealogical hermeneutic generated from within the consensus circle of those being questioned, see [www.kenwilber.com](http://www.kenwilber.com), **Sidebar A**, “Who Ate Captain Cook—Historiography in a Postmodern World.”

Developmental holism is a variety of “zone 2” methodology, or the third-person study of first-person plural realities (see [www.kenwilber.com](http://www.kenwilber.com), Excerpts A through G, from *Sex, Karma, and Creativity*, the follow-up volume to *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*).

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<sup>2</sup> The reasons for the distortions of Thomas Kuhn’s work, particularly *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, as well as Gilligan’s, are explored at length in *Boomeritis*.

<sup>3</sup> For a fully developed notion of three-dimensional feminism, please see chapter 8, “Integral Feminism,” in *The Eye of Spirit*, which is, to my knowledge, the first essay ever written on integral feminism.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Eye of Spirit* and *Integral Psychology*.

<sup>5</sup> Hazrat Inayat Khan represents the former version, that of reincarnation, as follows: “The crying of an infant is very often the expression of its longing for the angelic heavens [through which it has just passed on its way to earthly birth—what the Tibetans call the rebirth bardo]; the smiles of an infant are a narrative of its memories of heaven and of the spheres above.” That is what I call “the trailing clouds of glory,” from a Wordsworth poem (see *The Eye of Spirit* for an extensive discussion of this idea). But notice that these potentials are not something that are part of the infantile stage or structure itself—they are lingering impressions from other, *higher* spheres. And therefore, what is *recaptured* in enlightenment is *not* the infantile structure itself, but the actual higher spheres! The Romantic notion that the infantile self *is itself* a primordial paradise remains therefore deeply mistaken.

See the Introduction to volume 3 of the *Collected Works* and *The Eye of Spirit* for further discussion.

<sup>6</sup> Caution: *A Sociable God* still tends to speak of a type of peak experience or glimpse experience of higher structures/stages, although it is careful to always speak of higher realms or higher dimensions, thus never being technically incorrect (i.e., “higher realms” and “higher dimensions” can and often do refer to higher states and their bodies, the major ones of which—such as waking/gross, dreaming/subtle, and sleep/causal—are ever-present in many respects and therefore can be peak experienced). But let us be clear: although some higher states can be peak experienced, higher stages cannot.

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Still, what *A Sociable God* does is present the first form of what is now called the Wilber-Combs matrix, where dimensions/states/realms that are being experienced are mapped against the stages/structures that are interpreting the experiences. This is a genuinely novel and important breakthrough, I believe.

<sup>7</sup> The infant certainly has access to what I refer to as the three major states of consciousness: gross (waking), subtle (dreaming and deeper psychic), and causal (deep sleep, pure Witness, primordial Self). The early self (prenatal, perinatal, neonatal, infancy, and early childhood) has various types of access to all of those spiritual states. But so does the adult. In other words, the infantile state, in this regard, does not have access to something spiritual that is then *necessarily lost* or denied to the adult. (The strictly Romantic view is, again, significantly off the mark.)

So does the infantile self have access to any sort of “spiritual awareness” that is actually *lost* in subsequent development but can be *regained* in higher states of spiritual awakening? In a limited sense, yes: the trailing clouds of glory (whether in their prenatal, perinatal, neonatal or later forms). But, to repeat, those traditions that acknowledge the “trailing clouds” insist that those are primarily a lingering contact or impression of higher, transpersonal, transrational levels; they are *not* potentials that are structurally part of the infantile self, so that in recontacting these higher levels in subsequent development, it is not a *regression* to infancy that is occurring, but a *progression* to, and rediscovery of, the higher levels themselves. The fetal and infantile self does not live in any sort of structure that *itself* is being recaptured.

Elevationists often use, as a counterexample to disprove this statement, the existence of tulkus or reincarnated buddhas: fully enlightened beings who remain conscious through all the stages of bardo, infancy, and childhood. Well of course a fully enlightened being is an exception to the rule, but that is a trivial example, because fully enlightened beings are an exception to every rule.

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The point is that the infantile self is not immersed in any sort of nirvikalpa or nirvana beyond all suffering and pain and decay; it lives immersed in samsara, with all its hunger, pain, passing pleasure, intense screams and occasional smiles—but it carries with it, buried in its bosom, the higher levels of its own potential evolution (and the higher states of subtle and causal consciousness), which it can *permanently* contact and bring into full consciousness *only* when its own development moves from prerational to rational to transrational. But the same is true of the adult, so again, nothing has been lost in that regard.

Of course, any of the lower, *prerational* potentials (e.g., various protoemotions, prana, emotional-sexual impulses) can *themselves* be repressed during early childhood development, and if that occurs, then, as I have strongly maintained all along, successful therapy usually involves regression in service of the ego (what *One Taste* called “the healing spiral”). Moreover, if this repression is severe, it can slow or even completely cripple higher development into transpersonal and superconscious states. In that case, there needs to occur a spiraling return to early structures: a regression in service of ego (to recontact and repair the early, prerational trauma), and then a progression in transcendence of ego (having repaired the prerational damage, the self can more easily move from rational to transrational adaptation). Even in this spiral of return-and-transcend, what is being contacted is not itself a higher state, but a lower state badly damaged and in need of repair. The Romantic view is again considerably off the mark.

<sup>8</sup> In short, the metaphysical fall is the loss of nirvana, which lands us in a world of samsara (a world of sin and separation and duality as if it were actually apart from Spirit); the psychological fall is a painful awareness of that fact, a painful awareness of sin and separation, a painful awareness that we are living in samsara (but have not yet awakened to nirvana). The metaphysical fall lands us in a world of samsara (or a loss of conscious union with Spirit, a loss of nirvana as our realized condition); the psychological fall is an awakening to how painful the world of samsara is (yet before we have rediscovered nirvana or our conscious union with Spirit).

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Both fall are reversed by spiritual awakening, or a conscious realization of oneness with Spirit, a conscious realization of nirvana. The Romantics confuse not being aware of the pain of samsara with nirvana.

<sup>9</sup> According to Christianity, for example, all humans are born in original sin; according to Buddhism, if you are born, it is because you are still karmically slave to the cycle of birth-and-death (samsara), so the very fact you are conceived and born shows that you are not enlightened (unless, again, you are a realized bodhisattva). You are born unenlightened: no part of infancy is an enlightened state, conscious or unconscious, that is then is lost. The Romantics, again, have confused the two Falls.

<sup>10</sup> Rather, as we saw, and as the wisdom traditions unanimously agree, the real metaphysical fall represents a falling away from awareness of oneness with Spirit, not an actual falling away from Spirit itself (for nothing can exist if divorced from the Ground of All Being). According to the Romantic view, the infant is one with Ground but in an *unconscious* fashion, which is, in fact, quite true, but which actually means that the metaphysical fall has *already* happened with the infant (because it is already NOT conscious of its ever-present union with Ground, as the Romantics themselves agree). The infantile self cannot then *also* break its actual union with the Ground or it would evaporate, and yet that is what the Romantics mistakenly claim is supposed to happen when the infant moves away from its early state—whereas what is actually happening is that, as the infant wakes up to its painful, finite, separate existence, the infant is simply moving into the psychological fall, which the Romantics then perfectly confuse with the metaphysical fall.

<sup>11</sup> See Sidebar G, “States and Stages,” [www.kenwilber.com](http://www.kenwilber.com), on ways that higher states can be ranked in terms of depth of access. With the demise of transpersonal psychology (represented by, e.g., Cortright, Tarnas, Ferrer, Puhakka), these types of judgments become important in terms of how to implement them fairly and impartially. For the passing of transpersonal psychology, see

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Excerpt F, “Participatory Samsara,” as well as Appendix C (“The Death of Psychology and the Birth of the Integral”) in “A Summary of My Psychological Model,” both posted on [www.kenwilber.com](http://www.kenwilber.com). A summary of the demise of transpersonal psychology is also given by Frances Vaughan on [www.IntegralNaked.org](http://www.IntegralNaked.org) and is highly recommended.

<sup>12</sup> Here is the integral theory of evolution and enlightenment (i.e., a theory of enlightenment that still acknowledges evolution). Let’s use, for the sake of argument, somebody who was fully enlightened around, let’s say, 20,000 years ago. At that time, the average cultural center of gravity was magical-foraging (preconventional, purple and red meme, egocentric-to-early-ethnocentric, etc.); a few highly evolved souls had pushed into mythic-membership (blue meme). Now, according to this integral theory, in order to be “fully enlightened” at that time, a person’s consciousness had to be one with the entire manifest realm or manifest universe. The manifest universe *at that time* included all the nonhuman structures, plus beige, purple, red, and blue. Therefore, if in one’s own spiritual development, one had pushed into conscious access of waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and nondual *states*, AND one’s structural development was at the blue stage/structure, there was literally nothing else in the manifest realm that one could identify with. A person who had done that was literally one with everything that was arising (or could arise at the time). Therefore, that person did indeed possess full unity consciousness, or was as “enlightened” as enlightened could be. On the other hand, somebody who had consciousness access to all four major states (waking, dreaming, sleeping, and nondual), but whose center of gravity was purple, would NOT be one with the entire manifest world, because “above his head” would be red and blue structures of consciousness that this person had not transcended-and-included, and had not therefore fully identified with and let go (transcended-and-included). Therefore, such individuals, although they would have access to a variety of states of consciousness, would not be fully enlightened.

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Jump forward to today's world, where the average mode is around blue-to-orange, and the leading edge of structural development is, say, right around mature vision-logic (turquoise, meta-paradigmatic). In order to be one with the entire manifest universe, one would again have to have access to the four major states, but one's structural development would now have to be at turquoise, because anything less than that and there would be structures in the universe that were "over one's head." Even if somebody at, say, green, had full access to all major states, there would still be parts of the manifest universe that they had not yet become one with (namely, yellow and turquoise), and therefore they would not be as enlightened as they could be in today's world.

The great advantage of this integral theory is that it lets shamans, saints, and sages living 50,000 years ago, or 10,000 years ago, or 2000 years ago, be fully enlightened by the criterion of being *one with the entire manifest universe as it existed at that time*. But as evolution moved on, and as more structures and stages emerged (blue, then orange, then green, then yellow, then turquoise), then in order to be one with the entire manifest universe, you must be one with those newly emerged structures as well, which means that in today's world you must be at turquoise (give or take), in order to be in full unity consciousness (sahaj, nondual, permanent one taste). Somebody in today's world could be at, say, mythic-membership (blue), and have full access to meditative or shamanic states, but they would be much less than enlightened.

As I said, there is no other theory that can account for the seemingly paradoxical facts that a person could be fully enlightened yesterday and yet, with the same accomplishment, not fully enlightened today. That doesn't mean this theory is correct, only that at this time it has no competitors that can explain the data. I have run this theory past several dozen other spiritual teachers, and so far, all have agreed with its general contours.

This theory itself depends on the post-metaphysical nature of the structures of consciousness as described in volume 2 of the Kosmos trilogy (see excerpts from this at

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[www.kenwilber.com](http://www.kenwilber.com)), or the so-called “wilber-5” model. The metaphysical approach to structures/levels of consciousness—found in everything from the Great Chain to Rudolph Steiner to Theosophy to Aurobindo—cannot handle the data, because if there are independently pre-existing ontological structures or levels of being/consciousness/bliss, then a person would have to be one with all of those structures or not be enlightened. Since those pre-existing structures would be the same a thousand years ago as today, then the requirements for enlightenment would be identical 20,000 years ago—which is exactly the approach that does NOT work.

Even if you try to prop up the old metaphysical approach by having the structures unfold in an evolutionary fashion, as Aurobindo does, you still have not solved the problem of how somebody with the same consciousness could be enlightened yesterday but not today; and further, you are faced with a new (and intractable) problem of: because you maintain that the levels of being/consciousness/bliss are pre-given and pre-existing, then how do you know that there aren't even higher pre-existing structures beyond your own enlightenment (in which case you cannot be said to be fully enlightened, either?).

All of those problems are inextricably embedded in the old metaphysical approach to enlightenment. Because earlier shamans, saints, and sages were not accessing some of the structures of consciousness that are available today, then by the old metaphysical approach, they couldn't have been deeply enlightened in any meaningful sense. But with a post-metaphysical approach, somebody like Gautama Buddha or Christ could be fully enlightened at their own time, because they were fully one with everything that existed at their time, but in today's world, other structures have evolved that one must now also be one with. But in the metaphysical approach, all the structures are eternally given; to be enlightened, then one must, even 50,000 years ago, be one with all of those eternal, archetypally pre-given structures, which no shaman, saint, or sage was—a theory that would consign them all to ignorance. This is unacceptable.

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All of those problems are (dis)solved with the post-metaphysical approach of an integral methodological pluralism, which supports an Integral Post-Metaphysics. Keep in mind that a great metaphysician (in the old sense), such as Plotinus or Aurobindo, was still doing nothing but interpreting his or her experiences, including especially his or her spiritual experiences. The metaphysical approach was a natural way to interpret spiritual experiences for those great philosopher-sages. Plotinus, for example, would maintain that there are around a dozen major levels of being/consciousness/bliss. But that is simply an interpretation that he gave to his experiences. He was not out walking around one day and stumbled onto an archetypal building with twelve eternally fixed floors in it. Rather, he had a series of experiences that he interpreted as containing twelve levels or stages—but those are still merely INTERPRETATIONS of his direct experiences. But the mythic-membership (blue meme) cultural background in which Plotinus was writing would readily offer metaphysical schemes (with eternally fixed archetypes, unchanging structures, and fixed levels of being and consciousness) as the best way to interpret such experiences, and one cannot fault Plotinus for using the only culture he had. But that does not mean that the only way we can honor Plotinus is by buying into that cultural scheme. Plotinus can be fully respected with a post-metaphysical approach that honors the spirit of Plotinus but finds a different letter.

Similarly with Aurobindo, who is the last, and probably the greatest, of all the great metaphysicians. Aurobindo, too, was simply giving a series of interpretations to his spiritual experiences, but drawing this time on a cultural background that including the German Idealists along with the Vedic traditions. The result was an essentially similar (and still deeply metaphysical) Great Chain of Being/Consciousness/Bliss, but this time the Great Chain unfolded in evolutionary time. But it otherwise has all the problems associated with the metaphysical approach that Aurobindo still inhabits, including pre-existing ontological structures, pre-given realities untouched by cultural intersubjectivity, realms inhabited by beings essentially context-

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transcending in all modes of knowing, and so on. In other words, all the old metaphysical assumptions that cannot survive the valid moments of criticism offered by Kantian and postmodern epistemologies. Aurobindo was perhaps the last and the greatest of the metaphysicians, standing on the brink of the post-metaphysical age but unable to enter.

(There are still many times that I continue to use the word “metaphysics,” since it conveys a certain set of ideas, and I cannot always be explaining why my approach is post-metaphysical. Context will have to determine, in each case, what sense is being conveyed.)

Were, then, any of the original shamans enlightened by these post-metaphysical standards? If they were, they would have to: (1) have conscious access to (at least) the four major states of consciousness present (waking/gross, dreaming/subtle, formless/causal, and everpresent/nondual), and (2) have a frontal structure at blue. I believe that there were at least some shamans who did so, and thus, stretching back to perhaps 50,000 BCE or more, there were enlightened human beings (as enlightened as enlightened could be at those times, inasmuch as they were one with the entire manifest universe as it existed at that point in evolution).

But as we saying in the main text, those shamans appear to be the exception, because the typical shamanic voyage did not master the causal (nor therefore, the true nondual). Further, even if it did, (and to focus on the frontal structure), in today’s world, those who were one with no higher than blue would be ethnocentric in the worst sense. For all those reasons, although we can clearly recognize enlightened exceptions, the typical shamanic path was not fully enlightened, even by our very generous (least demanding) definition of enlightenment or awakening.

<sup>13</sup> There is a difference between be able to inflict damage on nature using technologically sophisticated but damaging modes (such as coal-burning steam engines) and yet consciously choosing not to inflict that damage (which would indeed be ecological wisdom) versus not being able to inflict any damage in the first place because one hasn’t those sophisticated means to do so. Much of the ecological wisdom ascribed to early tribes was of the latter variety—that is, lack of

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means should not be confused with presence of wisdom. Worse, even with limited means they managed to inflict a relatively huge amount of ecological damage, as Crichton points out.

<sup>14</sup> What about the final claim of certain sophisticated Romantics? Namely, that even if the magical structure is a less developed structure of consciousness (predifferentiated and not transdifferentiated), nonetheless a truly integral structure would result if the naturic wholeness of the magical structure was combined with the rational structure of modernity. I agree that would be a welcome integration, but it would simply be an integration of prerational and rational; it would *not* be transrational. Moreover, the magical structure itself is not the only structure other than rationality that is supposed to be included in the integration: there are the entire realms of mythic-horticultural and mythic-rational-agrarian, all of which Romantic-tribalists generally despise. Finally, even if we toss in the most advanced mode (shamanism), this is, as we saw, a partial and limited approach to the overall transpersonal. From almost any angle, the foraging structure simply cannot perform the Herculean feats the Romantics demand of it, but rather remains a very important but very limited mode.

<sup>15</sup> In addition to translation and transformation, *A Sociable God* discusses transcription. Transcription not a term I often use anymore, but its general point is still valid. Relativists rather despised the concept, because they felt that it meant that the basic structures were given, and thus all cultures were consigned to merely reading (transcribing) a fixed set of pre-given options. Transcription was never meant in anything like that rigid a conception, but never mind; in the post-metaphysical approach of phase-5, it is even less confining. Transcription simply means that a specific occasion will tend to arise within a particular probability space (this probability space is what is crudely meant by “structure” in the metaphysical traditions). Still, as I said, I don’t use that term very much because critics have an especially hard time understanding it adequately.

<sup>16</sup> We saw that if the metaphysical fall means anything, it means, not a loss of being one with the Ground, since by definition all things are one with Ground or they would cease to exist; but

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rather, it means a *loss of our awareness of our oneness with Spirit or Ground*. But according to even the Romantics, the early infant and the early dawn humans were “one with Ground but in an unconscious fashion,” which means the metaphysical fall had *already* occurred, which indeed it had, which is why dawn humans and infants are *already* “born in sin” or born into a world of samsara, separation, finitude, and death. The infant does not escape finitude, hunger, or pain, only its awareness of its finitude! Hence, the infant—and dawn human—are already existing in a metaphysically fallen state—a state of samsara, sin, finitude, and death—but they are not yet fully and painfully aware of it—that is, the metaphysical fall has occurred but not yet the psychological fall.

The Romantics, as we saw, simply confused these two falls, and thus were forced to depict the infantile dawn state as a state that existed in a historical time (ontogenetically, right around birth, and phylogenetically, around a million years ago) that was before both the metaphysical fall and the psychological fall, and thus were forced to read into the historical infantile state some sort of spiritual purity on earth, some sort of actual presence of nirvana (instead of a simple lack of awareness of samsara). The actual or real metaphysical fall occurs *prior* to manifestation and prior to evolution (and is often called involution); the psychological fall occurs *during* manifestation or during evolution, at the point that humans *become conscious* of their fallen nature, or *become aware* that they are not consciously one with Spirit or Ground. The metaphysical fall is the creation of a world that apparently (or illusorily) exists apart from Spirit; the psychological fall is becoming aware of the metaphysical fall. Both are healed by a conscious realization of nondual Spirit.

The real disaster of this approach is then that the steps out of this immersion in samsara are condemned as a metaphysical fall, whereas they are the first necessary steps in reversing that fall. Hence, the regressive nature of so much of Romanticism, and its inadvertent slide into the disease that it calls the cure.

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<sup>17</sup> It was *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* that first specifically laid out the correlations of the Lower-Left quadrant (archaic, magic, mythic, rational, vision-logic) and the Lower-Right quadrant (foraging, horticultural, agrarian, industrial, informational) and further correlated those quadrants with the others. *A Sociable God* did not specifically discuss the Lower-Right quadrant, and *Up from Eden* tended to treat Lower-Left and Lower-Right as one dimension. It would be in phase-4 that these various distinctions and correlations were made. But *A Sociable God* and *Up from Eden* laid a foundation by correlating Upper Left and Lower Left in terms of a specific analysis of levels of structural organization and relational exchange.

<sup>18</sup> For an elucidation of the new Person-Centered Civil Religion, with its panenhenic outlook, see *One Taste*, Sept. 23 entry.

<sup>19</sup> I first presented that phase-3 model in “Ontogenetic Development: Two Fundamental Patterns” (*Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 1981), which appeared in *Eye to Eye* as “Structure, Stage, and Self” (included in CW3). The “two patterns” in the original title referred to the difference between the enduring basic structures (the major levels or waves in the spectrum of consciousness), and the transitional lines or streams that make their way through the basic levels. This understanding was implicit even in *The Atman Project*, where on several occasions I stated that “Although I have placed side-by-side such items as cognitive development, moral development, and ego development, I do not at all mean to equate them.... Loevinger, for one, thinks ego development is independent of psychosexual development. Kohlberg has shown that intellectual [cognitive] development is necessary but not sufficient for moral development. And so it goes, with all sorts of various developmental threads [developmental lines] running parallel, independent, and/or correlative with all sorts of other developmental threads.” That was written in 1978, during phase-2; but by 1981, with phase-3, I made all of those distinctions very explicit, and began to carefully present these different threads as the relatively independent streams that

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they are, while also continuing to emphasize the universal nature of the general waves in the overall spectrum of consciousness itself.

This move to phase-3 invalidated very few of the actual propositions of phase-2; it simply set them in a larger context. The pre/trans fallacy, for example, still applied to any developmental sequence, but it was now understood that there are many such sequences, so that a person could be preconventional in one line, conventional in another, and postconventional in yet another. The PTF was still valid, but one had to be sure one had a single developmental line each time one applied it. This changed none of the conclusions of phase-2, but opened them up to even richer elaborations.