

Response to “Integral 2.0” and “There is No ‘You’ in AQAL”

Ken Wilber

There has been, for quite some time, a considerable misunderstanding about how the AQAL Integral Framework views 2nd person (e.g., “you,” “thou”). I haven’t helped this, because although I’ve explained it, it is somewhat technical, and I myself have occasionally slipped into an easier, simpler introductory—but technically not quite right—way of describing it. But there was yet another presentation at this year’s Integral Theory Conference that gave the same bad misunderstanding (accompanied with some other serious inaccuracies), at least as I see it, so I thought it was time to address this fully.

The confusion stems around just exactly what “2nd person” means—because there are two very different meanings, and these are constantly confused. There is also a major confusion about just what has to happen for a “you” to actually become a real “you.” AQAL fully allows all of these meanings to be clearly differentiated—but it is exactly this lack of differentiation that causes the misunderstandings (and misunderstandings that virtually all of AQAL’s critics in this area perpetuate themselves).

Begin with the first meaning of the pronouns for “1st,” “2nd,” and “3rd” person. An occasional criticism of AQAL is that, in emphasizing the “we” perspective (which is 1st-person plural, and the Lower-Left quadrant), that AQAL actually leaves out the 2nd-person “you” or “thou” perspective. This is categorically not true, but in ways that are rarely realized. To begin with, we have the first meaning of those pronouns (“1st,” “2nd,” and “3rd” person perspectives). This first meaning has a technically correct

one, and that is: 1st person is the *person speaking* (subjective: “I”; objective: “me”; possessive: “mine”; plural: “we,” “us”; plural possessive: “ours”); 2nd person is the person being *spoken to* (singular: “you” or “thou,” plural: “youse” [“you guys” or “you all”], possessive: “yours” or “thy”); and 3rd person is the person or thing being *spoken about* (singular subjective: “he,” “she,” “it”; singular objective: “him,” “her,” “it”; plural subjective: “they,” “its”; plural objective: “them,” “its”; singular possessive: “his,” “hers,” “its”; plural possessive: “theirs,” “its”). A shortened version of this, as we will see, is simply I, we/you, it, and its.

Now the important—and almost always overlooked—fact about those definitions of these pronouns is that those say absolutely nothing about the actual interior development of any of them. And interior development is often described in similar pronouns, but then they have very different meanings. Loevinger and Cook-Greuter (and myself), for example, describe levels of development in terms of their capacity to take more and more complex perspectives. So red altitude can take a 1st-person perspective; amber can take a 2nd-person perspective; orange can take a 3rd-person perspective; green can take a 4th-person perspective; teal can take a 5th-person perspective; turquoise can take a 6th-person perspective, and so on. Here, “1st person,” “2nd person,” and “3rd person” have quite different meanings from the first definition (and here, “4th,” “5th,” “6th,” etc. don’t even fit in the first definition). In this usage, for example, “3rd person” means, not the person spoken about, but the capacity to take the viewpoint of one person’s viewpoint of another person’s viewpoint—three people’s viewpoints can be simultaneously held in mind. In the first definition of “3rd person,” it simply means the person being spoken about—and that person could themselves be at a 1st-person level of

development, or a 2nd-person level of development, or a 3rd-person level of development, or a 4th-person level of development, or a 5th-person, 6th-person, and so on. (When people speak merely of, for example, a “3rd-person” methodology, they completely overlook the actual level of that 3rd person—do we mean the methodology of somebody at red, who can’t even take the role of other [in fact, it can only take a 1st-person perspective, and thus is a “3rd-person” methodology that can actually only take a “1st-person” view]? Clearly not, but all of this is missed by not realizing the realities of both definitions—which AQAL fully does.)

The first definition is just a type of “topographic” definition, so to speak—it simply describes the “location” of people speaking—whether they are the person doing the speaking, or the person being spoken to, or the person (or thing) being spoken about. This says nothing about those people’s interiors or their levels of development at all. When somebody just cavalierly says, “We’ll use a 2nd-person methodology,” we generally suppose that they mean the individuals using that methodology are actually at the higher or highest levels of interior development (they would certainly not discover good results if their “2nd persons” were all actually at merely a 2nd-person amber level of development—no, we mean a 2nd-person methodology where the individuals are at a 5th- or 6th- or higher level of development, all of which is lost if we don’t keep both of these definitions in mind).

Moreover, many people using the terms “1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-person methodologies” aren’t aware of developmental studies at all, and thus don’t even realize that each of those methodologies could be used by people at a 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, etc. level of development—with drastically different results. AQAL fully covers this by having

individuals using various methodologies report their own developmental altitude—e.g., “I’m using a 3rd-person methodology from a 6th-person level” (thus covering both meanings). In these cases, AQAL is handling many more of the crucial issues here than its critics are.

Similarly, the second definition says nothing about the “location” of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, etc. person perspective in terms of whether that person is speaking, spoken to, or spoken about. And it is the constant confusion of these two meanings that contributes to many of the problems. AQAL, again, fully covers both.

So, in AQAL Meta-Theory, if you want to indicate an actual, existing 2nd person in the sense of the person being presently spoken to, how do you represent that with the AQAL Integral Framework? Is it as the Lower-Left quadrant? No, not exactly. The Lower-Left quadrant is how the single sentient being (whose AQAL Framework this is) is generally interacting other sentient beings—but there is (in this particular Framework) no separate, actual, other sentient being entered directly in any quadrant, there is only how the one sentient being represents, interprets, enacts, or interacts with other beings (that is, how the 1st person of this particular Framework is interacting with 2nd persons and 3rd persons in their surroundings—such as families and tribes and nations and global humanity, as well as 3rd persons as “things,” such as the techno-economic modes, various artifacts, and so forth). *If you want to represent an actual 2nd person in the AQAL Framework*, it’s very simple: next to the AQAL Framework representing the 1st person, you draw a second AQAL Framework, and that Framework represents the actual 2nd person as they actually are in their own right (with all of their own 4 quadrants, their own various levels, lines, states, etc.). The second AQAL Framework will have how that 2nd

person represents or interprets or interacts with all other varieties, groups, and types of sentient beings—how that 2nd person sees and enacts the world, just as the first AQAL Framework represents how the 1st person sees and enacts the world.

And if these two sentient beings interact and mutually resonate—if they actually form a “we”—then that “we,” *as the 1st person sees it*, is entered in the Lower-Left quadrant of that first person’s Framework; and, *as the 2nd person sees it*, that “we” is entered in the Lower-Left quadrant of the second person’s Framework. Both “you’s” are included, but only as real partners in a real communication or resonance (or “we”).

That’s the crucial point—and here’s where we have to pay attention: How does the second AQAL Framework appear in the first AQAL Framework? In other words, with reference to the 1st person, how does this 2nd person appear? This is where the confusion often comes in, because there are at least these two different definitions of the “2nd person”—plus the extra factor of what has to happen for a “you” to become a real “you” (in the first meaning). AQAL handles all three of these areas. By drawing a second quadrant, we are specifically working with the “topographical” definition—that is, this 2nd AQAL Framework is representing a real person that the 1st AQAL-Framework person is talking to (and, of course, if they talk back and forth, each would switch from 1st to 2nd person). But that’s the point: in order for either of them to be a real 2nd person for the other—or “the person being spoken to”—there *must* be some sort of real mutual exchange and understanding between them (even if it’s just body language or other signals). If there is not the slightest actual communication between them, then they in effect actually remain 3rd persons to each other. If I am talking to a rock, I might be a 1st person, but the rock is definitely not a 2nd person for me. That’s not the definition, which

clearly implies that these two beings are in mutual communication, and at any given time, the person speaking is referred to as the “1st person” and the person being spoken to is the “2nd person”—a rock is 3rd person, come what may, since there is no mutual communication or resonance (except at the level of quarks, atoms, and molecules—and at those levels, there is a mutual resonance, mutual prehension, and thus at these levels these two entities are 1st and 2nd persons for each other). Or likewise, if two humans are involved, but one of them is in a coma, there is no person actually being spoken to anywhere; the person in the coma can only be *spoken about*—that is, they are a 3rd person, just like the rock.

The crucial point, then, is that for an actual “you” or “2nd person” to exist, there must be some sort of mutual exchange and communication—there must be, in other words, a “we”—*there must be a first-person plural*. And when that happens, then each of the two communicating subjects appears *in each other’s* Lower-Left quadrant—they appear as a partner in the “we” that has formed—and thus they are “ingredients” of each other’s Lower-Left quadrant, which is, of course, technically the “we” quadrant (which is how technically the Lower-Left quadrant is *always* defined). The quadrants are NOT defined as 1st, 2nd, 3rd persons—not directly—they are directly the subjective (inside) and objective (outside) of the individual and the collective—so the Lower-Left quadrant is the interior or inside of the collective—it’s a “we” (or a whole series of them. These “we’s” have, as ingredients, “I’s” and “you’s” and—as those items being spoken about—a series of “him’s” and “her’s” and “they’s” and “its,” etc.—as seen and interpreted by the sentient being whose AQAL Framework this is). The Lower-Left quadrant is NOT technically or basically just a “you” quadrant—because “you” in that case simply means

the person who is being spoken to, and if—and only if—there is some sort of mutual exchange or understanding, does that “you” enter the awareness and being of the first person, who then interprets that “you” as part of their “we,” and that “we” becomes an *actual part of the first person’s being*—that “we” becomes an indelible, intrinsic, for-real part of their Lower-Left quadrant. If there is absolutely no understanding of that “you”—if the person is in, say, a coma—then that “you” is NOT a second person that is in any way understood or that in any way actually “enters” the Lower-Left quadrant of the first person—rather, that “you” is for all intent and purposes a 3rd person (they can only be spoken about, they cannot actually be spoken to), and thus that person is, at that time, only something that enters the first person’s Right-Hand quadrants—it enters as an Upper-Right quadrivium or object, or as a 3rd-person artifactual entity in the Lower Right. But that “you” does not enter the first person’s Left-Hand quadrants in any substantial or mutual way, and certainly not the Lower Left.

This points out a crucial fact: as far as interior exchanges go, there is simply the spectrum across interior and exterior. “1st, 2nd, and 3rd” persons don’t indicate 3 separate areas in a being where another being is stored. Rather, “1st person” simply indicates subjectivity or interiority or the capacity to be the speaker; and “3rd person” indicates the person or thing that *at present* is not part of any Left-Hand interior awareness (or dialogue or communication or mutual understanding) but is rather just an objective or exterior or non-interior occasion (person or thing; at some future point, if this is a person, this 3rd-person person might enter into a conversation and thus become a 1st or 2nd person; but right now, only being spoken about, they are not a participating member in any mutual exchange or communication—they are merely 3rd person). And 2nd-person “you”

simply represents an entity that is present and that has the possibility of going either way (1st or 3rd), either communicating and becoming some sort of 1st person plural “we” (as well as occasionally being a 2nd-person partner—*because* they are part of some actual “we”) or remaining like a rock as a 3rd person (if this were a person from Mars, and there were absolutely no forms of communication whatsoever possible between the person and the Martian, they would remain 3rd persons to each other. So even if the human is “speaking” to the Martian, the Martian is not a real 2nd person, but an actual 3rd person).

If a conversation starts, the person who starts speaking is presumed 1st person; the person being spoken to is, at the start, only a *potential* “you”—it will become a real you if there follows the slightest bit of real communication (since this person is *actually* being spoken to); but if there is no mutual communication whatsoever (e.g., the person in a coma, or the Martian), then this person is not a real 2nd person but an actual 3rd person (as is the original 1st person, who is now a 3rd person as well).

Now if there is an actual exchange with that second entity (and on any level), then some sort of “we” forms, and the “you” then moves into the Lower-Left quadrant of the first person as part of that “we” (which means, the “we” as this particular “I” interprets it and understands it). The “you”—the other person—will likewise enter that “we” in *their* Lower-Left quadrant, which means, how *they* interpret and understand this “we.” These two “we’s” may or may not match up very well—which is simply another reason that each of them is represented with their own AQAL Framework. (And the fact that these two “we’s” might not match up very well is the fundamental foundation of all sorts of complex misunderstandings and conflicts, which wouldn’t happen if there were only one “we.”)

So in terms of actual understanding (and location in the AQAL Framework), there isn't a totally separate quadrant for "you's." A "you" is either understood (and thus is truly being spoken to), and if so, it becomes a partner in a "we" which becomes an actual aspect of each of their *Lower-Left quadrants* (that is, the "we" as understood or experienced respectively by each of them). Or the "you" is totally not understood (there is no mutual exchange at all), in which case there is no communication or exchange or resonance or understanding whatsoever, only a blank stare, and that "you" by default therefore becomes a 3rd person—it can only be spoken about, not spoken to or with—and thus both party's "you" becomes part of each other's Right-Hand, 3rd-person quadrants, perceived much as a rock would be.

But there is no specific location for just a "you," as I said. When one sentient being is facing another sentient being (before they know there is any possibility of mutual exchange), then each is a potential "you" for the other—which simply means that, until it is known whether there can be any mutual resonance at all, they are each a 3rd person that happens to be present to each other—so until to any exchange, that "you" is just an "it"—a 3rd person (like a rock)—and is at this point therefore just a Right-Hand quadrivium to each other (not a Lower-Left partner). When they start interacting in one way or another, they will find out if there is the slightest type of mutual exchange or resonance, and if so, those aspects will become part of each of their Lower-Left quadrants (a mutual "we"—with each of them understanding that "we" from their own "I"; and that "we-as-interpreted-by-that-I" is the "we" for each of their Lower-Left quadrants); and if there is no resonance or understanding or mutuality of any sort at all, then those "you's" will remain "its"—will remain 3rd persons.

So in terms of actual “locations” in the AQAL Matrix, there are particularly inside 1st-persons (singular and collective) and outside 3rd-persons (singular and collective)—giving the interior and exterior of the individual and the collective (with each of those quadrants also able to take up an inside and outside view, for the 8 zones—and in some cases, each of those zones can do the same thing—but there are *no real isolated “you’s” in any of that*; there is simply the inside and outside of the individual and the collective, which can be fractally repeated an almost infinite number of times, like a hall of infinitely reflecting mirrors). But the “2nd person” you is just a place holder (the sentient being that is spoken to or approached), waiting to see whether it will become part of a mutual exchange of any sort (in which case it becomes a partner in a “we”); at that point, and only at that point—that is, as part of a “we”—does “2nd person” mean anything in terms of actual location. “You” is either a potential you, waiting to see if any sort of communication will occur at all (in which case, it is neither 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person—but if you have to choose one, it’s just a 3rd person and is entered in the Right-Hand “exterior” or “outside” quadrants—so there’s a place for that in an “outside” dimension); or, when communication is engaged and is up and running, if there is the slightest mutual understanding or simple resonance, then that “you” becomes a *real* “you” (where if both parties talk, it will alternate between 1st and 2nd persons)—and in either case, it has become a partner in a REAL “we”—something that actually exists—and it exists in the Lower-Left quadrant of each sentient being involved (as interpreted *by that* sentient being; of course, it has its own 1st person, and each has 3rd-person items, in addition to being 2nd persons for each other).

Now sometimes the AQAL Framework is used as an “overview” summary of an individual or collective holon. So one Framework might represent, say, the city of Portland. If so, then the various quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types are entered in an AQAL Framework, and these simply represent the averages of each of those items in the city of Portland. The Framework is being used as a quadrivium of the mean or median of each of those basic elements (quadrants, levels, lines, states, types) in the social holon known as Portland. This is a perfectly fine representation for a social holon. And, of course, if we want to represent another town or city or social holon, we simply draw another AQAL Framework and use that.

Sometimes the Lower-Left quadrant is represented as “we/you,” simply to acknowledge that yes, there is a you—but only as brought forth in a real we, say, in a conversation between me and you. Further, this “you” is not just the you as you actually and truly exist, it is your you as I interpret it, engage it, partially co-create and enact it. In other words, it is your you *as part of a we* (that is, a part of our we [yours and mine] as interpreted by my I, just as your we is our we as interpreted by you in your Lower-Left quadrant). This is why I also often indicate the “we” as an equation: “I” + “you” = “we” (with all of those being, in part, my interpretation in my Lower Left and your interpretation in your Lower Left).

And that is what happens with every communication with any “you”—I want to understand whatever I can about “you” so that it becomes as if you are speaking to me directly. The less of “I” in the “we” then the more I can understand the actual being who is represented by that second AQAL Framework I am speaking to, or addressing, or attempting to understand in any way. Of course, I will never fully succeed, simply

because anything that enters my awareness is, in some ways, a co-creation or enaction of my being. The “you” that your wife sees is definitely different from the “you” that I see. If there were a supposed “you” component—isolated and existing all on its own (and referred to as a “2nd-person methodology”)—this would imply that that “you” could simply and absolutely be approached by itself and known in a one and only one correct way (as if there were one and only one true meaning of *Hamlet*)—this is a remnant of the “representational philosophy” and “mirror of nature” that riddled modernism but has been severely criticized—and rejected—by subsequent theorists. We are each, to some degree, the co-creation and mutual enaction of each other. We have manifest together, and depend upon each other for our own existence, in innumerable different and multiple ways. Our individual agencies enact and co-create the space in which we appear to, and exist for, each other.

“The less of I” simply means that, in my attempts to understand a second person, the more I learn of that person (co-created as they might be), and the more I subtract what I have learned about myself from that equation, then the closer I will get to whatever the reality of the second person is. If, via something like the AQAL Framework, I know myself to be, for instance, at turquoise or indigo (as a center of gravity), I’ll know to subtract as much of that from this second person as I can (unless it appears that they, too, are at that altitude). This does mean that in any understanding or even simple resonance, the frameworks possessed by both parties will enter into any understanding of the other that arises. This is categorically unavoidable—all individuals have various conceptions, presumptions, biases, and frameworks that they use to interpret, enact, bring forth, and perceive their world and the beings in it. The more self-understanding that I have, then

the better my understanding of others will be. So by all means, attempt to adopt the very best framework that you can—which, I believe of course, is AQAL.

To criticize AQAL for not having a place for the “you” is to completely misunderstand these fundamental realities. Once you have a “we” up and running, then it’s fine to refer to the speaker as “1st person” and the spoken to as “2nd person” and the spoken about as “3rd person.” But “2nd person,” in this meaningful sense, only has meaning as part of that “we” (which is the technical definition of the Lower-Left quadrant).

This is yet another reason that the 4 quadrants are technically defined as the interior and the exterior of the individual and the collective. Many theorists will say, of humans, that they have, for example, a psychological dimension, a behavioral dimension, an environmental dimension, and a societal dimension—or something similar. And then they see the 4 quadrants, and say, “Oh, I’ve already covered that with my 4 dimensions.” But their 4 dimensions don’t really cover all of the areas, aspects, and dimensions that are going in all of those quadrants. The “psychological” dimension, for example, doesn’t cover the Upper-Left quadrant (the interior of the individual), because there is also the emotional dimension, the mental, the spiritual, the living biological (elan vital), and so forth. Only the “interior of the individual” is broadly defined enough to cover ALL of those areas—the “psychological” doesn’t nearly begin to cover it. Likewise with the Lower-Right quadrant—calling it merely the “environment” gets one dimension of the exterior of the collective, but there are many more. It’s common, for example, to speak of “PESTLE”—political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental—as covering this broad dimension. That’s closer, and we certainly use that as a way to

remind us of some of the ingredients of the Lower Right; but not only are there others (e.g., education institutions), this formulation overlooks that each of those areas itself actually has 4 quadrants. Law, for example, definitely has a Right-Hand quadrant aspect, and legal positivists reduce all law to this dimension (e.g., Hart); but other legalists (e.g., Dworkin) point out there is an inescapable interpretive component to law—an intrinsic Left-Hand component. And so it is with each of those PESTLE components. And as for “environment” covering the Lower-Right quadrant, that element is only the collective/exterior of the biological/systemic components of reality—it doesn’t nearly cover the many other levels of the collective/exterior. So, once again, the quadrants (and zones) give the best and most accurate “ontology” of overall reality in these broad areas. Moreover, the quadrants go “all the way up” and “all the way down”—something that, say, politics doesn’t. As the quadrants are “layered” on top of each other, then new disciplines slowly emerge over the course of evolution, and items like politics slowly come into existence; but defining the LR quadrant as “politics” means the AQAL Framework will not work all the way down to, say, right after the Big Bang, whereas the quadrants do in fact do so.

This is also why I gave the quote from Dreyfuss and Rabinow, pointing out how similar Heidegger and Foucault were, with one major exception: Heidegger approached cultural understanding from within, from the inside (with a heavy hermeneutic intent), whereas Foucault approached the same thing from without, from the outside (in a perfectly monological stare). Dreyfuss and Rabinow did not distinguish 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person, and categorize these theorists that way (because that’s not a real or truly meaningful division)—they stuck to the one real categorical division—1st person

(singular and plural) and 3rd person (singular and plural)—and found that Heidegger and Foucault were operating within those dimensions as well.

And all of those realities is what the AQAL Frame FULLY takes into account; whereas its critics, I believe, simply haven't looked carefully enough at what is actually involved in this whole process.

Now, as I said, I have occasionally contributed to this misunderstanding of AQAL by sometimes referring to the quadrants as “1st, 2nd, and 3rd person.” But most people note that even when I do that, I still refer to the Lower-Left quadrant as “we,” not “you” (or at most, “we/you”). And I always list “1st, 2nd, and 3rd persons” as “I, we, and it.” Or I will use the simple equation “I” + “you” = “we” (which is true); but again, this actually just points to the “you” as being a partner in a “we” if it is to be a real 2nd person; otherwise, it stays a monological 3rd person. So “inside/outside” (subjective/objective) still remains one of the most fundamental and primary boundaries in existence (the other being individual/collective or singular/plural). And if you want an actual 2nd person, then, as I said, simply draw another framework next to the first, and there is a FULL representation of a whole 2nd person and its entire world. But don't try to cram that 2nd person into the 1st person's AQAL Framework, because what belongs in that Framework is only what is indeed within *that* sentient being—and that means mostly its interpretations, enactions, and co-creations.

If you look at individuals who recommend using “1st, 2nd, and 3rd person” methodologies (without these qualifications), you will almost without exception find that they are committing these fallacies. What they mean by “1st-person methodology” is almost always simply 1st person singular. What they mean by “3rd-person methodology”

is 3rd person singular or plural. And what they invariably mean when they say “2nd person methodology” is really 1st person plural, focused on the “you” partner in that overall equation. But they don’t mean just 2nd person methodology as focusing on just the 2nd person—that’s a totally meaningless notion in any of these senses. So there are 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person methodologies—and I will still use those terms, and they point to real realities—but they really mean, respectively, 1st person approaches singular, 2nd person approaches as actually 1st-person plural approaches, and then 3rd person singular and plural approaches—and there is FULL room for all of those on the AQAL quadrant (and the 8 zones actually further refine them, but not by adding any “you”).

This is why, from the start, the quadrants were defined as the interior and the exterior of the individual and the collective. Those are the “ontologically” active and real boundaries needed to get a world running in the first place—and that is why the AQAL Framework makes room for the whole world. 2nd person isn’t a real ontological space (unless part of an actual “we”)—it’s just, as we’ve seen, a potential place holder until we know whether it’s going to be a 1st person or a 3rd person—so of course this mere potential would have no role in actual evolution—evolution doesn’t operate on hypotheticals—and so it doesn’t operate on “you”—only I’s and we’s (and 3rd persons). And because the actual number of perspectives within those pronouns are not just limited to “1st, 2nd, and 3rd” person—as many people imagine who use those 3 distinctions—then, in reality, major levels of development in each of the quadrants can be represented as 1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person, 4th person, 5th person, 6th person, and so on—and that is exactly what Integral Meta-Theory does. Critics who claim AQAL doesn’t “include the 2nd person or you” rarely have anything to say about 4th person, 5th person, 6th person,

and so on—where are those located in their “criticisms”? AQAL addresses these perspectives in both of their meanings. As “speaker, spoken to, and spoken about,” it addresses their actual “locations” (in the quadrants, as “I,” “we,” “it,” and “its” [or he and she and they and theirs, etc., for 3rd persons]—which are insides and outsides of individuals and collectives)—which are the only boundaries that really establish mutual exchange, as we saw. And since quadrants are not technically defined in “1st, 2nd, and 3rd” person terms, those perspectives (in their entirety—from 1st to 7th and higher) are also fully accounted for in AQAL and its zones (something critics rarely do).

Notice it’s most common to just peak of 1st and 3rd person—inside/subjective and outside/objective. The reason is that there is a vaguely understood intuition that “2nd person” is really meaningless when it comes to any real methodology (what is actually meant by a “2nd-person methodology” is, we’ve seen, a “1st-person plural methodology”). So pick up the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* and you’ll find endless arguments over whether 1st-person or 3rd-person is the real approach to consciousness—and virtually not a single article promoting 2nd-person methodology (and if there is, it’s almost always describing 1st-person plural). David Chalmers and I had a long conversation about just this topic. I had carried an article in the journal arguing for an “all quadrant” approach—meaning technically 1st-person singular and plural and 3rd person singular and plural—and that is exactly the quadrants as they are defined. I was trying to convey to him the importance of a background “we” (as well as systems “its”) in the formation of individual consciousness—but what I was simplistically calling “2nd person” in that conversation was really “1st-person plural,” or the Lower-Left quadrant. The 4 quadrants are what is real in the creation and manifestation of the universe. As language evolved, “you”

became a useful potential or hypothetical (or, when real, a real partner in an actual communicative “we”), and so it was introduced worldwide. When the you becomes real, it does indeed become part of a 1st-person plural—which is definitely real. And blocks of cultural we’s actually evolve according to social evolution theory. But you’s don’t evolve—there’s nothing real to evolve. And AQAL doesn’t technically refer to “2nd-person methodology” because there is no such thing (although there is definitely a 1st-person singular [such as individual meditation—zone #1], 1st-person plural [such as ethnomethodology—zone #4], 3rd-person singular [such as a single animal’s enactive cognition—zone #5], and 3rd-person plural [such as systems theory; inside zone #7 and outside zone #8]—in other words, the methodologies outlined by the 8 zones of the AQAL Framework—and those zones definitely include all “you’s” insofar as they are real and engaged in any interaction.

If you look at Martin Buber’s beautiful notion of an “I-Thou” relationship, you see that he meant very much the same thing. The idea is that one can treat another person as a mere “it,” a 3rd person, without communicating with them or meaningfully speaking with them or in any way truly getting to know them—they might as well be a rock. And that’s where all cruelty comes from, he maintained—from treating people like objects, like its, like nonsentient beings, like 3rd persons, like rocks. Only by entering into their communicative orbit—by making them a “thou” in a true “we” relationship (I-Thou)—do we treat them with respect, care, and concern. Just “talking at” somebody (and not “talking with” somebody), in effect makes their 2nd person a mere 3rd person “it,” not a “thou” in a real “we” exchange. And he maintained, of course, that the same is true of our relationship with God (which, to be real, needs to be “I-Thou”). So the whole point

of any genuine communication with a being is to move them out of merely being those aspects of them that are in the Right-Hand quadrants (their 3rd-person components or “its”), and move them into one’s own Left-Hand quadrants (as a “thou” in a genuine “we”). And this “thou,” again, will be a thou that is your interpretation, or your enaction, or your cognition, and thus is IN your own being (the Lower-Left quadrant of your being)—it will not exist in a pure “thou” quadrant that you have direct and unmediated contact with, because there is no such entity anywhere in the Kosmos. And that is why AQAL does not have a “2nd-person” or “you” methodology or “you” quadrant—because one doesn’t exist.

(And yes, because this is a common misunderstanding, it is still the case that I will, on occasion, refer to “1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-person” methodologies—I simply don’t want to go through this lengthy explanation; but let there be no mistake about what is meant here. And let the misguided criticisms of this approach look to their own house for any real misunderstandings.)

I’m afraid that approaches with these kinds of errors and confusions—as well as several others—make them far from being an “Integral 2.0.” I always appreciate criticisms and almost always incorporate the good ones; but I simply cannot incorporate flat-out misunderstandings.

So, I hope this has clarified this somewhat complex situation. I will truly try and be more strict in my own presentations of these (although in short summaries, it really is hard to include a half-dozen explanatory pages on one item like this, so the temptation is always there). But introductory simplicities are one thing; actual theory and real meta-theory (and critique) are quite another.

At the same time, the number of people who have attempted to understand AQAL fully and fairly is growing rapidly and widely, and I am deeply appreciative to all of those are doing so. It's truly wonderful to be able to share such understanding with others, and have many of them resonate so positively and gracefully with it. This is creating a worldwide community—an "Integral we"—that is incredibly alive and compelling. I'm truly grateful to all of you who have joined me in this extraordinary adventure of the Integral we.