Foundations, Principles and Inspirational Resources of **Integral Politics**

LiFT | Leadership for Transition

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4. Ken Wilber:
Integral Theory and the Integral Model

Chapter 4
Ken Wilber: Integral Theory and the Integral Model

The term „integral" is probably associated most of all with Ken Wilber, nicknamed the "Einstein of consciousness studies" right after his first book had been published in 1977. His groundbreaking work, pulling together knowledge and wisdom from a huge number of disciplines and fields into what he has himself called a "Theory of Everything" has been the door opener to the universe of integral thinking for many, including in the LiFT team, and for the author of this book. It was Wilber's bridging Eastern wisdom traditions and Western psychology that had us discover all of the previously discussed authors (Aurobindo, Gebser and Graves) and that shaped our reading of the ones still to cover (Scharmer, Laloux, Metamodernism and so forth).

Due to his unique genius in synthesizing knowledge and wisdom, Wilber not only draws our attention to the deeper structures of reality, but has developed a whole new narrative which has us perceive, understand and experience the world in a qualitatively different way than we did before.

At the same time, Wilber's work, as that of most of the inspirators presented so far, has not focused primarily on politics very explicitly – until recently, with Donald Trump's election as president of the United States in 2016 as a particular driver. Nevertheless, as an overarching meta-framework, his integral model plays a key role in this collection of resources that we consider crucial for building a new, integral paradigm of politics and political culture.

Biographical notes

Let's start by saying that any attempt to summarize Wilber's life and work in just a few pages is bound to fail. Luckily, there are plenty of valuable sources available which do more justice to this exceptional thinker, writer and pandit (as he came to call himself) than this chapter will be able to.

Ken Wilber was born in Oklahoma City on January 31, 1949. His childhood and adolescence was marked by an unsteady setting, due to his farther working for the US air force, which caused the family to move – and Ken to change schools – many times, a somewhat traumatic experience for him. Besides having to change friends every several years, his intellectual brightness (earning him the nickname "the brain" among classmates) was another early experience of tension between his exceptional intellect and his need to socialize and to be accepted as a peer.

Wilber's initial interest was primarily in exact science: "I fashioned a self that was built on logic, structured by physics and moved by chemistry – my mental youth was an idyll of precision and accuracy, a fortress of the clear and the evident" (quoted after Visser, 2003: 20). However, after a bachelor in chemistry and biology and a few years of graduate studies in biophysics, biochemistry and medicine at Duke University, he understood that what science had to offer was not what he really wanted to know. "I didn't want to study any more of that conventional knowledge" (ibid.). Wilber was so unhappy with

his situation that in his early 20s, he completely dropped out of the academic system, to the dismay of his parents, and started to spent his days studying anything he could find about wisdom and psychology, meditating a lot and doing dishwashing for earning his living. "I had to read everything", he recalls, "because I was trying to mentally and emotionally put together in a comprehensive framework that which I felt was necessary for my own salvation" (Visser, 2003: 23). Eventually, at age 23, he wrote down his insights in his first book, "The Spectrum of Consciousness", which came out in 1977, after having been turned down by two dozen publishers. Shortly after, enchanted reviewers across different domains of psychology awarded Wilber the title "Einstein of consciousness research". From then on, he took on the habit of publishing one new book per year and soon became one of the most published and most translated authors (and university dropouts) in the US.

Again, to give a more detailed overview of Wilber's work would by far exceed what is possible to cover in this chapter. To all who want to dive in deeper, we recommend Frank Visser's narrative (2003), based on numerous interviews and an intimate familiarity with Wilber's work.

In a nutshell, Wilber's first very productive phase as a hermit, thinker and writer was all about **integrating ancient wisdom with modern knowledge**, mainly in the area of psychology (The Atman Project, 1980). This endeavor gradually extended and evolved into other areas and disciplines, from personal to socio-cultural development, and started to combine the two (Up from Eden, 1981; A Sociable God, 1982; Eye to Eye, 1983).
He moved from Cambridge/MA to California where he met his second wife, Terry (Treya) Killiam. Just before their marriage in 1983, she was diagnosed with breast cancer which was a hard cut in his life. Wilber spent the next five years caring for his wife until her early death in 1989, an experience he later documented and reflected in the very personal book "Grace and Grit" (1991).

In 1987, when the couple spent time at lake Tahoe, recovering from one of Treya's rounds of chemotherapy, Ken became a victim of the local outbreak of the REDD disease, a rare auto-immune illness which gradually weakens the body and from which he has been suffering ever since ([see his own account here](#)).

However, he has taken up and continued his intensive writing and publishing work in the mid 1990s, which, according to Wikipedia, has lead to a total of 40 books to date, among them e-books and short versions of some of his larger books. And by the way, as one of few authors, Wilber has seen his collected works getting published relatively early in his lifetime (Shambhala, 2001-2).

At some point, his work came to be subdivided into **five phases** (called Wilber I-V), each of which extended the focus towards integrating more and more areas of what he calls "the spectrum of knowing" into the model that came to be his "**integral theory"**. The latter was introduced most explicitly in "Sex, Ecology, Spirituality" (SES, 1995), the first volume of his Kosmos Triology, and was further developed in subsequent publications.

In 1997 Ken Wilber founded **Integral Institute** together with a number of like-minded colleagues and friends, with the aim of promoting *Integral Theory* and applying it to real life problems in many different areas, such as business, politics, science, medicine and spirituality. Judging from II's website however, not much application has actually happened with regard to a societal, let alone political level. Instead, the focus of activities moved more towards community building around Wilber's conception of "integral" and to offering related training courses and education events.

Summary Box: Key concepts, claims and elements

* **Founder of "Integral Theory",** Integral Institute and author of over 40 books on the many dimensions of consciousness (Wilber came to be know as the "Einstein of consciousness studies")

* **Methodology**: Synopsis of a large number of Eastern and Western approaches to exploring scientific and spiritual knowledge about the development of consciousness in individuals, as well as its implications for socio-cultural evolution, which are condensed into a **"Theory of Everything"**

* **Holons, holarchies and holonic development**

Reality is composed of **holons** (entities which are wholes in themselves and at the same time parts of even larger wholes, Koestler). Everything must therefore be considered in its embedding (holonic) context. Healthy development is holonic development, i.e. expanding/growing in complexity while respecting the health of all constitutive parts (holons). Vertical complexity development occurs through processes of transcending and including the original holon(s) and their respective qualities.

* **Wilber's integral AQAL (all quadrants, all levels) model** consists of five dimensions:

- four quadrants of looking at reality (consciousness, behavior, culture and systems)
- vertical complexity development in all four quadrants (drawing on adult development research)
- differentiating multiple lines of development in each person (dito)
- states of being and existence in all quadrants and their influence on perception and behavior
- types and typologies in all quadrants, helping to understand differences on a horizontal level

* A **truly integral approach needs to take into account all five dimensions** for understanding whatever phenomenon. How a specific perspective does this determines its "kosmic address" (its location in the AQAL matrix).

* Every perspective (everyone) has a part of the truth (the big picture). Nobody is smart enough to be wrong all the time. Yet, **higher levels contain more truth** than lower levels.

* Each stage of development is adequate, but each higher stage is more adequate (Wilber, 2017: 90).

* In 3 books, Wilber offers more explicit **applications of his Integral Theory to politics**:

- *"Integral Politics"* (2018) shows how to "classify, index and track (…) any political theory (and) all of the major political movements to date (…) using the AQAL matrix".

- *"Wicked & Wise"* (with Alan Watkins, 2015) offers a process for addressing wicked complex challenges with the help of the AQAL matrix and an Integral Coherence model.

- *"Trump and the Post-Truth World"* (2016) proposes an integral, developmentally informed interpretation of the deeper reasons of Donald Trump's election as a US president. According to Wilber, the "Green" socio-political and cultural code, the leading-edge in the US and in most western countries, has itself considerably contributed to the rise of "populist" movements, including that of Trump, through its culture of nihilism and narcissism, its lack of a developmental understanding of political dynamics, and its own performative contradictions resulting from both.

Overview, essentials and relevance of Wilber's work about integral politics

"The study of psychology inevitably leads to sociology which inevitably leads to anthropology, which leads back to philosophy. And then, strangely, bizarrely, that leads to politics" (Ken Wilber, quoted after Visser, 2003: 34).

As mentioned in the biographical section above, Ken Wilber's core concern has always been to integrate and "tie together an enormous number of disciplines with the aim of not only explaining the world, but to build a fairly complete, coherent, plausible, believable vison" (Visser, 2003: 35f.) for transforming it towards more wholeness. Already in his earlier work, he had touched, for instance upon sociocultural evolution and cultural history. From 2000 on, he has taken a stronger interest in **politics and society.** His more recent work illustrates this shift of interest towards socio-political topics and implications of his theory:

- In A **Theory of Everything** (a short, more comprehensible version of SES), Wilber aims to bridge business, politics, science and spirituality, in an attempt to show how they integrate with theories of developmental psychology.
- In his novel [Boomeritis](#) (2002), he paints a panorama of the thinking and perceived egotism of his own generation, the baby boomers, in the US.
- In 2012, Wilber joined the [advisory board](#) of SIMPOL, the [International Simultaneous Policy Organization](#) founded by John Bunzl in 2002 to work against destructive global competition, based on an integral understanding of world politics.
- In 2014, he began developing the "Integral Society initiative" in view of developing human societies in a more comprehensive manner (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 296).

Finally, three of Wilber's most recent books are dedicated directly to either global or domestic (US) socio-political challenges, each trying to apply his theory to real life problems and to show its practical relevance:

- "**Wicked & wise**. How to solve the world's toughest problems" (together with Alan Watkins, 2015), is a short manual discussing integral theory's relevance for addressing complex issues.
- **"Trump and the post-truth world"** (2016) offers an integrally informed explanation of Trump's victory in the presidential election, and
- "**Integral Politics**" (2018) is an e-book using his integral model (the "AQAL code", see below) to classify political theories and movements of thought.

At the same time, these books also point at two major **limitations** of Wilber's thinking on (integral) politics: on the one hand, their strong focus on theory and the model as such, at the expense of anchoring them in empirical realities and, on the other hand, their use of practical examples and illustrations from the US two party system only.

Before looking at Wilber's more specifically political work in some more detail below, let us first acknowledge and dive into his integral model itself. For to our knowledge, the latter is the most comprehensive meta-model available to date that is of enormous value for mapping the multiple elements and dimensions that a more holistic, integral paradigm of doing politics should take into account.

The five core dimensions of Wilber's integral model

1. The four quadrants

The first and likely most popular dimension of Wilber's model is his distinction of **four quadrants** of looking at the world. This quadrant model describes, on the one hand, inner and outer phenomena or realities, and on the other, individual and collective dimensions of these phenomena or realities. The distinction came about as a result of Wilber's "studying hundreds of different theories from pre-modern, modern, and postmodern times", as well as from a large number of different knowledge traditions and academic disciplines.

While trying to put order into this vast landscape and spectrum of theories from a larger meta-perspective, Wilber found that, first, all of them could be classified into one (or several) of those four quadrants. Second, he claims "that **every phenomenon can be looked at through at least four major vantage points** – the interior and the exterior of the individual and the group. This gives us four major perspectives or dimensions, (…) the 'four quadrants' – the interior individual, exterior individual, interior collective and exterior collective" (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 67).

Later, Wilber has further differentiated his model into **eight "zones",** distinguishing an inner and outer perspective in each quadrant (Fein, 2018: 109). But we will not deepen this distinction here, since it is of theoretical interest, rather than of immediate practical relevance for our purpose.
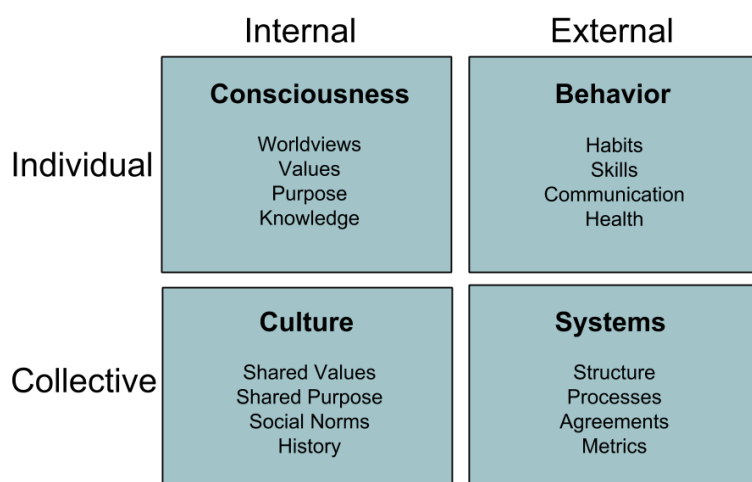
Figure 1:
Wilber's four quadrants

(Source: https://medium.com/-@ssegatori/what-is-integral-philos-ophy-integral-theory-5c6b0ccc7724)

From its claim that everything can be looked at through at least those four perspectives, the model infers that hence, **an integral perspective on things should include all four quadrant perspectives** – and that a more narrow view tends to be reductionist and misses the full picture of reality.

On this basis, it becomes easy – and exciting – to explore in which quadrant perspective both theoretical/academic and political truth claims have their focus and which ones, in turn, they neglect or ignore. As to the most common social (and political) science theories, they tend to look at their objects of research either from a more "objectivist" stance (as in quantitative research) or from a more "subjectivist" one (as in qualitative research), thereby covering important parts of the picture, but rarely the "big picture" as a whole.

In my own work on the post-Soviet transition process in Russia (Fein, 2007), I have found this model very helpful for mapping the contemporary landscape of political science approaches to explaining the transition. It made clear, on the one hand, that most of the mainstream approaches to system change were almost exclusively looking at the systemic, lower right quadrant dimension of things, while fading out all the others. On the other hand, the model was a great tool for framing my own work, a discourse analysis, in the lower left quadrant of implicitly shared values and meaning-making.

The same is true for the perspectives of most social and political actors: They usually have a particular "favorite" focus in just one or two of these quadrants, while ignoring the others. For instance, political conservatives tend to focus on culture, morals and values as the source of human (mis)behavior, while politically left voices tend to see social structures as the root cause of problems such as socio-economic injustice etc.

To sum up, Wilber's quadrant model is a simple and extremely helpful tool for exploring any blind spots in one's own and others' thinking and problem solving – and thus, for coming up with a more comprehensive, inclusive, more whole, in other words: a more integral understanding of things. The concept of the four quadrants can be said to be Wilber's most important original contribution to an "integral" understanding of the world.[1]

For a more detailed discussion of the four quadrants for integral leadership, see chapter 4 in my (LiFT 2) book on the foundations of integral leadership (Fein, 2018).

2. Levels of development

The second, equally important core dimension of Wilber's model is **complexity development**. Among the many approaches he has studied over the years are also "over 100 different schools of developmental studies from around the world", both in the area of psychology and sociology, which he has put together most comprehensively in his book "Integral Psychology" (Wilber, 2000).

Note that Ken Wilber has not conducted developmental research of his own in any specific area. Rather, his most valuable contribution here is to have established the dimension of complexity development as such as a **basic element of an integral understanding of the cosmos**, together with the observation that evolution is (potentially) happening according to similar principles in all of his four quadrants.

Starting from his very early writings, Wilber has shown a fascination for the workings of evolutionary unfolding, expanding his interest and focus to ever more areas and theorists of development. As a result of comparing all of them, he was able to identify a couple of overarching patterns, concepts and principles describing the nature of development which hold true across different quadrants and domains (see also the dimension of "lines" below). Wilber has summarized them in his so-called **20 basic tenants** outlining the basic elements of his integral, complexity-based notion of evolution (Wilber, 1995). Among them are:

- the concept of **holons** (drawing on Arthur Koestler's work) as the fundamental units of reality

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[1] Note that US sociologist Talcott Parsons had proposed something similar a few years earlier with his AGIL scheme (Parsons, 1977 and Fein, 2018: 67f.). This, however, is nowhere near as well-known as Wilber's quadrants.

- the basic characteristics and **capabilities of these holons**
- the principle of **transcend and include** as the key characteristic distinguishing vertical from horizontal development.

Let's now look at each of these briefly. First, according to Wilber, "[r]eality as a whole is not composed of things or processes, but of **holons**", defined by Koestler as units which are wholes in themselves and at the same time part of even larger wholes. Holonic theory thus suggests to view both material and immaterial, abstract entities as being always already embedded in larger contexts with which they are deeply interrelated. This means that while we can point at certain "things", thoughts or concepts "out there", the width of our own lens, focus and ability to hold complexity determines how much of the nested hierarchy of holons being part of larger holons (i.e. of the holarchy) we are going to consciously identify and perceive.

Second, in his "20 tenants", Wilber has spelled out the basic characteristics of those holons in more detail. Among their **fundamental capacities** are their potentials

- to self-preserve (as wholes in themselves),
- to adapt to (i.e. enter into communion with) their embedding environment,
- to self-transcend (transform themselves into something new, more complex as a result of interacting or merging with other holons) and
- to self-dissolve (disintegrate into their constitutive parts).

Interestingly, the political implications of these features have to some degree been illustrated by Aurobindo (see chapter 1) in his vision of "human unity" where he argues that social units first and foremost need to be healthy in themselves (self-preservation), before they can adapt to or self-transcend by joining a larger, more complex unit. If the latter fails to self-preserve as a new holon, it will self-dissolve into its constitutive sub-holons. We are typically seeing this process when humans build groups in order to better serve their joint interests, or when states engage in cooperation with each other or build larger entities such as the European Union. The way in which this is done, i.e. in which the health of the sub-holons is ensured in the process, determines the long-term success of the endeavor.

While the processes of self-preservation and self-adaptation can be conceived as changes on a "horizontal" level, those of self-transcendence and self-dissolution are processes of increasing or decreasing **vertical structural complexity** respectively.

Regarding the latter, third, Wilber points at fundamental features of evolution that are also described by complexity theory and Bertalanffy's general systems theory, namely the **principle of transcend and include**. Consequently, they apply to processes of unfolding in all four quadrants (see figure 1, source: http://www.wisdompage.com/toerevw.html).

In the area of adult development, this principle has been described with mathematical clarity by Michael L. Commons and Francis A. Richards (1989) in their "general stage theory" that Wilber refers to in his model. Commons & Richards have thereby defined stages of vertical development as wholes that possess new, qualitatively different and more complex capabilities than the sum of their preceding, less complex parts. This core principle applies to any domain of development and is essentially content-free (see also Commons' Model of Hierarchical Complexity, Commons 2008).

Wilber nicely describes the structural quality of vertical development (and hence, the difference between structure and content) by comparing structure to the rules of grammar in a language. While most native speakers of a given language are fully able to observe the respective rules effortlessly and without thinking about them, almost no-one can describe them without having studied them in detail. These structures govern mental, verbal and, ultimately, also physical behavior without being visible to the speakers and actors themselves (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 89).
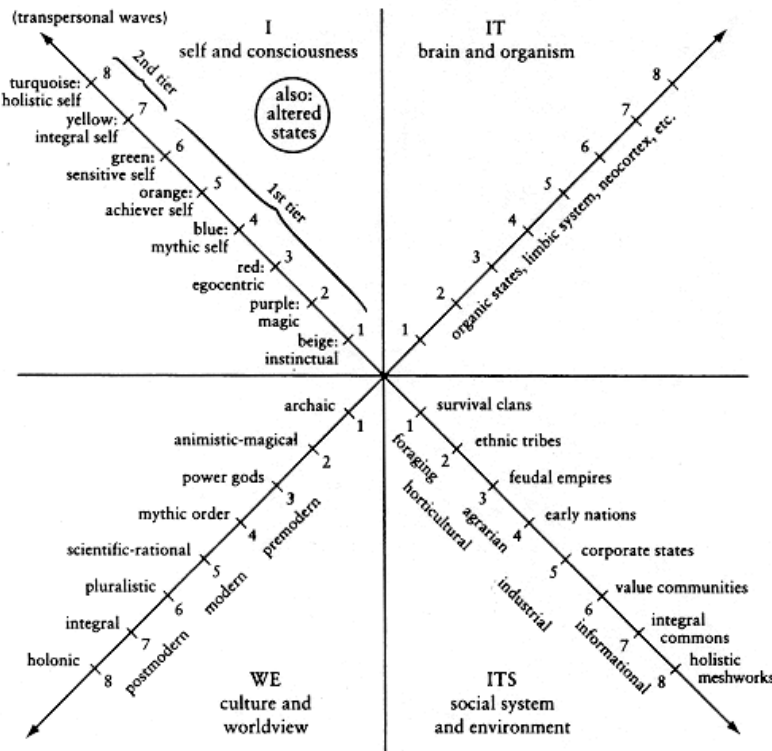

Figure 2:
Vertical (complexity) development in all four quadrants (some examples);
source: https://www.wisdompage.com/toerevw.html

While most of the researchers that Wilber has studied have come up with quite detailed descriptions of the process of complexity development in their respective areas, including the characteristics of each individual stage (as we have seen in the previous chapters on Gebser and Graves), Wilber himself has focused mainly on synthesis work. Besides this, his own writings and talk about actual substantial development in individuals and societies mainly uses a mixture of Piagetian and Gravesian stage descriptions (for the latter mostly with their more popular "Spiral Dynamics" colors as labels, see chapter 3).
As a result, from a more scientific perspective, Wilber's claims sometimes come across as rather broad generalizations. At the same time, his comparative overviews and catchy terms such as "ego-, ethno- and worldcentric levels" help to make the dimension of vertical structural development accessible to much wider audiences.

For politics, this dimension is of utmost importance. As the example of society as a holon (made up of numerous sub-holons) indicates, there can be smaller and larger, more complex social unities in the Lower Right quadrant. In order to be fully functional, these unites should be governed by behaviors, cultures and ways of sense-making that match their complexity. If structures are not entertained by people at the appropriate stage, they will regress to less developed forms (Chilton, 1988).

3. Lines of development

From his work on studying and comparing the above developmental theories, carving out the overarching principles that are common to all and pulling them together into one overarching meta-framework emerged the third dimension of Wilber's integral model which he calls "lines of development".

The overview below shows how he has tried to put the major models of structural adult development into a synopsis. Wilber also points to Howard Gardner's notion of "multiple intelligences" (2011) for illustrating that and how a person can develop at different paces in different areas: "In addition to a cognitive intelligence, there is an emotional intelligence, moral intelligence, aesthetic intelligence, a values intelligence, an introspective intelligence, (…) a musical intelligence, a self intelligence, and a spiritual intelligence, among several others. And although these multiple intelligences, or lines of development, are each quite different from each other, they all develop through (…) 8 or so major levels (…). Different lines, same levels" (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 90).
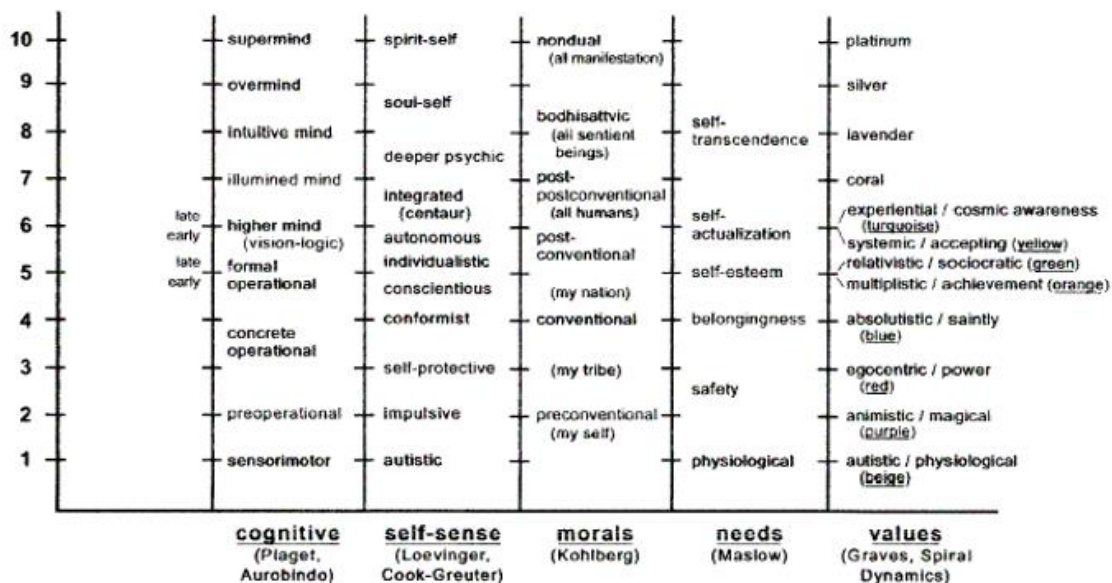

Figure 3: Lines of development
Source: https://danielsantosdiebate.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/levels_and_lines.gif

Developmental research has pointed out that these lines of development are to some degree interrelated. For instance, a certain level of cognitive development is a precondition for certain levels of social cognition and perspective-taking, which precedes higher levels of moral development, which precedes the respective levels of ego development etc. (Fein, 2018, chapter 5) However, Wilber's synopsis helps to understand how some of them are also relatively independent of some of the others. For example, you can be a good mathematician (cognitive intelligence) and a bad father (interpersonal intelligence) or vice versa.

Note that, as mentioned above, Wilber himself rarely goes into the details of specific developmental models, even though he does make numerous high-level claims with regard to their value for explaining and/or addressing social or political challenges. However, his synopsis is a good starting point and invitation to explore and differentiate – and to find the most suitable model with the best explanatory potential for understanding any given challenge. For instance,

- Piaget's work on **cognitive development** can help to understand why anyone who has not developed post-formal thinking will likely have difficulties to grasp complex global systemic interrelations beyond linear causation (i.e. why does eating meat cause a rise in global temperature?).
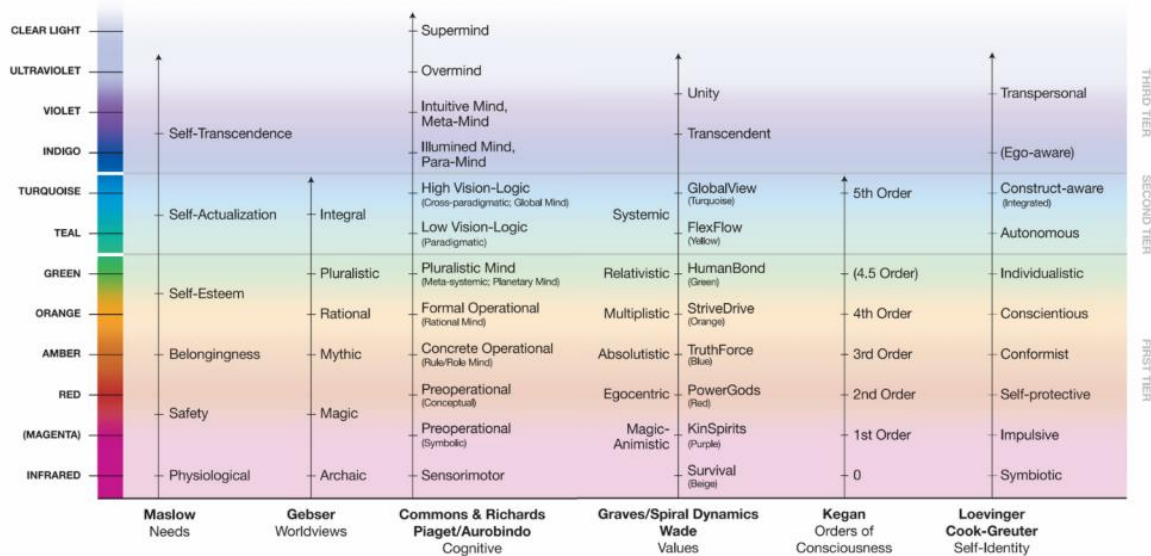
Level	Maslow — Needs	Gebser — Worldviews	Commons & Richards Piaget/Aurobindo — Cognitive	Graves/Spiral Dynamics Wade — Values	Kegan — Orders of Consciousness	Loevinger Cook-Greuter — Self-Identity	Tier
CLEAR LIGHT			Supermind				THIRD TIER
ULTRAVIOLET			Overmind				THIRD TIER
VIOLET	Self-Transcendence		Intuitive Mind, Meta-Mind	Unity		Transpersonal	THIRD TIER
INDIGO			Illumined Mind, Para-Mind	Transcendent		(Ego-aware)	THIRD TIER
TURQUOISE	Self-Actualization	Integral	High Vision-Logic (Cross-paradigmatic; Global Mind)	GlobalView (Turquoise)	5th Order	Construct-aware (Integrated)	SECOND TIER
TEAL			Low Vision-Logic (Paradigmatic)	FlexFlow (Yellow) [Systemic]		Autonomous	SECOND TIER
GREEN	Self-Esteem	Pluralistic	Pluralistic Mind (Meta-systemic; Planetary Mind)	Relativistic / HumanBond (Green)	(4.5 Order)	Individualistic	FIRST TIER
ORANGE		Rational	Formal Operational (Rational Mind)	Multiplistic / StriveDrive (Orange)	4th Order	Conscientious	FIRST TIER
AMBER	Belongingness	Mythic	Concrete Operational (Rule/Role Mind)	Absolutistic / TruthForce (Blue)	3rd Order	Conformist	FIRST TIER
RED	Safety	Magic	Preoperational (Conceptual)	Egocentric / PowerGods (Red)	2nd Order	Self-protective	FIRST TIER
(MAGENTA)			Preoperational (Symbolic)	Magic-Animistic / KinSpirits (Purple)	1st Order	Impulsive	FIRST TIER
INFRARED	Physiological	Archaic	Sensorimotor	Survival (Beige)	0	Symbiotic	FIRST TIER

Figure 4: Comparison of Lines of development as proposed by different models
Source: https://www.sloww.co/integral-vision-ken-wilber/

- Kohlberg's work on **moral development**, in combination with the Model of Hierarchical Complexity help to understand why corruption is widespread in some societies and less in others (Fein, 2017; Fein & Weibler, 2014). They show that morality only ever appears when people have transcended the egocentric levels of development, and that certain behaviors appear as immoral and can be effectively counteracted only if society as a whole has moved beyond the ethno- or sociocentric level of development.
- Loevinger's/Cook-Greuter's and Kegan's models of self or **ego development** are good tools to analyze leadership styles in organizations and politics, because leadership is always about a more or less complex sense of self (identity) and of one's interrelation with others and the external world. I have explored this in more depth at the example of Vladimir Putin's leadership behavior (Wagner & Fein, 2016).

In this sense, Wilber's integral theory and meta-perspective can function as an eye-opener for the various dimensions and sources of insight that an integral politics can draw on and that it needs to explore in more depth in view of addressing the more specific challenges in question.

4. States

Next, Ken Wilber introduces the dimension of states. It too has a developmental potential, yet not in a "vertical growth" direction, but rather a direction of "inner depth". Based on his long and thorough practice of meditation and introspection, it is safe to say that Wilber's focus on states is closely connected to his own, personal experience and his study of Buddhist and other Eastern contemplative traditions. Consequently, he especially focuses on the Upper-Left quadrant, i.e. states of inner awareness, for illustrating the relevance of states, even though again, states play a role in all four quadrants (see below).

As to the domain of inner awareness described by the great wisdom traditions (Upper Left quadrant), Wilber distinguishes the following states:

1. the waking state
2. the dream state
3. the deep dreamless sleep state
4. the pure witnessing or awareness state
5. the non-dual unity state (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 96)

In each of these states, the **brain** produces different kinds of waves (Upper Right quadrant), which imply that the individual has a different (increasing) **range of perception** of inside and outside phenomena. And as one moves from the first to the fifth state, the focus moves from a stronger outside focus to an increasing degree of inner perception.

While for most of us, the fourth and fifth states are accessible only during so-called peak experiences that occur very rarely in a normal lifetime, they can also be created and navigated consciously through consistent focus and meditation practice. Alternatively, these "higher states" can also be accessed with the help of certain technologies (i.e. binaural beats technology) or substances (plants or drugs).[2]

We will take a more detailed look at the implications of states for politics and political leadership in the next chapter. Otto Scharmer shows that state awareness and the capability to consequently move between different states of awareness is a crucial tool for deepening political conversations, i.e. to take them from rather superficial to much more engaged levels, and hence, to substantially increase their impact.

Wilber dedicates considerable effort to highlighting the **difference between states and stages**. While stages of development (see sections 2 and 3 above) are *structures* that need years to build up and to emerge in an individual's thinking and behavior, state experiences are independent of developmental stage. Not only can "states be experienced by anyone who traverses them" (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 97) as becomes clear by our daily transition between waking, dream and dreamless sleep states. They can also be purposefully (co)created both on the individual and collective level (see chapter 5 below).

The distinction between states and stages has also received a visualization in the so-called **Wilber-Combs lattice** by which Wilber and Alan Combs illustrate their claim that any state can be accessed at any state of development. Yet, the individual will interpret and make sense of what they experience while in the respective *state* according to their current *stage* of development. For example, a state experience of light and love can be interpreted as an angel, an encounter with Jesus Christ or as ultimate reality.

Likewise, a political or other event can be experienced and made sense of in different ways, depending on the degree of identification with and affectedness by it. For example, president Trump's loss in the elections of 2020 can either be viewed as the result of a normal democratic process (rational) or as a personal disaster (egocentric) which can only be explained by evil forces at work, justifying riots of all kinds.

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[2] In his autobiographical work "One Taste" (2000a), a one year diary providing extensive insights into his own meditation practice, Wilber provides more detailed, phenomenological descriptions of those higher states and explains in some depth how they can be brought about. To readers who are not (yet) familiar with meditation, his diary can be a very impressive and inciting stimulus to go beyond ordinary waking state consciousness. (For myself, they have been the final spur to start and engage in a meditation practice of my own!) More detail about the above states is also unpacked in Wilber 1985 and 2017.

Figure 5: The Wilber/Combs Lattice
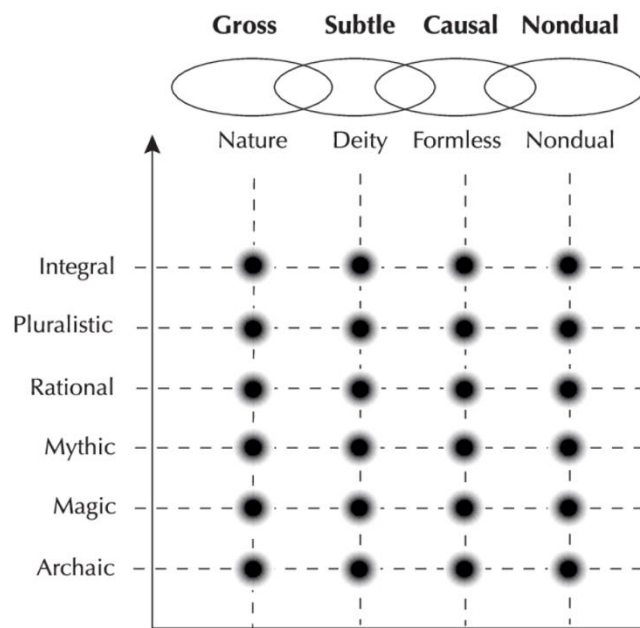
Wilber-Combs lattice. © Ken Wilber 2006.

Source: Researchgate, https://www.re-searchgate.net/figure/Wilber-Combs-lattice-C-Ken-Wilber-2006_fig1_285866537

These are crucial insights for an integral conception of politics for several reasons. First, on an analytic level, the distinction offers a two-dimensional lens for explaining human meaning-making, including its limitations in specific cases.

Next, on a more practical level, research has shown that both a repeated experience of deeper or altered states, as well as peak experiences of them have a considerable trans-formative potential. Cultivating deeper states as it is done in mindfulness trainings or through the binaural beats technology has been proven to increase, deepen and broaden a person's awareness and thereby, their ability to access deeper, previously unconscious realms of knowledge. This practice therefore helps the individual to hold tensions and be still in the presence of overwhelmingly complex challenges. This not only enhances leadership qualities that are important in politics and beyond. Leaders who can actively tune into and hold different states of depth and qualities of presence are much more flexible when having to deal with difficult situations (Bristow, 2021). A regular practice of entering deeper states is therefore assumed to also enhance vertical development and structural personal growth in the realm of the structures of consciousness (see chapters 2 and 3 on Gebser and Graves and the work of Hanzi Freinacht, chapter 7).

Furthermore, on this basis, **Otto Scharmer's work** focusing on the level of **collective states** (see chapter 5 below) points out how modulating collective fields of awareness towards deeper qualities of communication and connection is a key leadership skill for facilitating cross-sector cooperation and co-creative processes in general.

This shows that states can be identified and are relevant also in the other three quadrants of Wilber's model (see figure 6 below). Besides the inner states of individual awareness (ULq) described by Wilber himself (**Upper Left** quadrant) and the qualities of being together in a group, community or state (**Lower Left** quadrant) and their impact on how smoothly people are able to be and cooperate with each other, we also find states in the right hand quadrants.

In the **Upper Right** quadrant, brain states or heart rates can be measured as objective indicators of different subjective states, including emotional states such as anger or fear. There is no doubt that emotions have a strong influence on politics, starting with their impact on "an individual's ability to be effectively present" in a debate.

Finally, in the **Lower Right** quadrant, systemic states (from weather conditions, to economic cycles, aspects of social stability to the state of political equilibrium inside and between systems) are a factor to be considered by any political actor.

Figure 6: States in the four quadrants

	Inner dimensions (mental, emotional & cultural realms)	Outer dimensions (physical & social realms)
Individual	Inner states of consciousness *subjective perspective*	Brain states/brain waves Heart rate variability *objective perspective*
Collective	*Fields of awareness, qualities of listening (Scharmer)* *intersubjective perspective*	Weather states, political states of (dis)equilibrium *Inter-objective perspective*

To sum up, an awareness of and ability to identify different states both within oneself and others, as well as the competence to work with them in a conscious way allows for a more context-sensitive and emphatic behavior. Thus, it is an important skill and goal of an integral politics.

Note that Ken Wilber does not explore states in any of the other quadrants in more detail himself. His undisputed merit is to have brought states into the focus as one **core dimension of an integral approach to** anything, including **integral politics**. It is our task to further elaborate this dimension in subsequent chapters, as well as in real life integral political practice. As to the dimension of states in the two left quadrants, we will do so when looking at two other inspirational thinkers, namely Otto Scharmer (chapter 5) and Hanzi Freinacht's Nordic School of Metamodernism (chapter 7). While Scharmer's Theory U offers a thorough exploration of different fields of awareness, along with a proven method for working with them, Hanzi's Metamodern Politics dedicates substantial space to the dimension of depth and its political relevance. In both areas**,** we will take an even closer look at how states can be important tools – and, if not dealt with properly, obstacles – to productive and co-creative collaboration in politics and beyond.

5. Types

The fifth and last core dimension of Wilber's integral model is that of types as they are proposed by numerous typologies in different realms. Typologies are conceptual tools that people come up with to bring more order into (their perception of) the world. This happens through clustering people, "things, events, processes, phenomena, societies, cultures, organisms, and on and on" (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 98) into groups that share certain characteristics which essentially helps to understand their differences on a horizontal level, starting with that of men and women.

While referring to a number of typologies himself (see below), Wilber does not promote or even discuss specific types in a lot of detail in his work, but rather stresses the importance of being aware of their existence as such. Again, types exist in every quadrant, from psychological types, leadership types, personality types to biological and species types, to cultural and systems types. Some examples are provided in figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Types in the four quadrants

	Inner dimensions (consciousness, perception)	**Outer dimensions (surface structures, systems, behavior)**
Individual	Personality types: Myers-Briggs, Enneagram, 64 keys/Human Design	Biological/species types Sex (male vs female, divers) Behavioral/leadership types
Collective	Cultural types Collectivist vs individualist, liberal vs conservative, northern vs central vs southern European	Social/systems types Authoritarian vs democratic, Parliamentarian vs presidential, federal vs centralized, proportional vs majority vote

Note that since typologies are abstract constructions of the human mind, their explanatory power and practical value depend on the quality of their empirical or scientific grounding. Moreover, typologies are a good illustration of Wilber's distinction between "the map" (a theory or model) and "the territory" (actual reality). While capturing key characteristics of certain phenomena in the territory, the map is always a selective simplification of the latter. Scientific typologies are therefore generally subject to change as new knowledge emerges.

In view of the relevance of types for integral politics, Wilber's claim is simply that in order to get a full picture of whatever landscape of phenomena one is dealing with, we need to integrate all of its possible variations into the map. More practically speaking, we need to actively integrate different types and polarities into our approach, since specific types (of people, citizens, employees and so forth) have their specific perspectives, strengths and weaknesses. An integrally informed leadership will therefore strive to

- listen to their specific perceptions and perspectives on things
- put them into positions where they can fully offer their specific gifts
- provide them with learning opportunities that match their specific weaknesses or blind spots.

As an example, when a group of integrally inspired people in Switzerland launched their movement and party called "Integral Politics" in 2006, they deliberately put together a core group consisting of ten men and ten women from all walks of life. By this, they wanted to make sure that male and female perspectives, as well as different social strata got an equal voice in the definition of the party program. In recent years, the method of sortition-based citizens assemblies has used typological criteria (such as gender, age, place of residence, social and educational background) for their selection of participants to make sure that the assembly would be a good enough representation of the respective population in question. In view of an integral global politics (as in Aurobindo's vision, see chapter 1), nations could to some degree also be considered as (cultural) types which all have something to contribute to the whole of humanity.

So again, while we can see that innovative politics is already moving into the direction of making political participation and decision-making more inclusive, it is up to us, readers and users of integral theory to translate the postulation of integrating types into more concrete actions.

Wilber's integral AQAL model in a nutshell

"We do not see things as they are; we see things as we are"
(Talmud, quoted after Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 120).

To sum up, Wilber holds that **a truly integral approach needs to take into account all of the** above described **five dimensions** for understanding whatever phenomenon. One of his catch phrases in this regard is that "everyone is right" and that everyone has a piece of the truth. As Ken Wilber points out, there are partial truths everywhere, including in prehistoric times, i.e. in the perspectives of earlier levels of development: "I don't believe that any human mind is capable of 100 percent error... **Nobody is smart enough to be wrong all the time**".[3]

As an abbreviation for this principle of integrating all perspectives from all five dimensions, Wilber's integral model has become known as the "**AQAL" model**, short for "all quadrants all levels", which also includes the dimensions of lines, states and types.
As a tool for helping integral practitioners to go through all of those five dimensions when looking at specific problems, Wilber has come up with the metaphor of the "**kosmic address**" of a phenomenon or perspective. It is defined as the sum of all the AQAL dimensions of any given phenomenon or, more specifically, "the location of a referent (or a 'real object') in the AQAL matrix, including its altitude (i.e. degree of development) and its perspective (i.e. the quadrant in which it resides)".[4] With this, Wilber aspires to offer "a universal 'indexing system' that uses the integral framework to situate and constellate all known phenomena (physical, mental, and spiritual), as well as our capacity to discern that phenomena" (ibid.).

Inspirations from Wilber's latest books on politics – acknowledgements and critique

As mentioned earlier, Ken Wilber has taken an increasing interest in politics over the years. So what other insights and inspiration can we gain from his work on politics beyond the tools of the integral model itself?

First, let us start by observing that Wilber has essentially remained a **thinker and visionary** (even more than a political analyst) throughout his life. Due to his commitment to spend his time writing instead of teaching and discussing it with peers, and later also due to his damaged health, he has been criticized for almost never showing up at academic or other conferences. He largely remained true to this principle, even with regard to events dedicated to his own work, with the exception of occasional keynotes or virtual speeches, mostly in friendly environments.

Along these lines, while actively commenting on past and present events through the lens of the integral model, he has, to our knowledge, never been more practically involved in politics more strictly speaking. Even though some well-known US democrats (in particular the Clintons) have explicitly given Wilber praise for his work, he is not known to have served as a consultant to political leaders in a more regular way. In some sense, therefore, some of his claims and positions about politics might come across in a rather lecturing way when applying his model to real life phenomena. Indeed, in his preface

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[3] https://integrallife.com/kosmic-address-everything-right-place/

[4] https://integrallife.com/kosmic-address-everything-right-place/

to Wicked & Wise (see below), Wilber stressed that he considers his "Integral Meta-Theory-Framework" as a **kosher system** that "has to be followed 'correctly'" (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: XiV).

In this regard, second, Wilber also remains true to his professional identity as a **"methodological outlaw"**, as he puts it himself in a 2005 preface. While he does deserve every praise for having received, processed and integrated a huge body of humanities and social science literature, he is not a social (or political) scientist. Moreover, his way of using his own model often reminds the deductive habitus of the exact sciences that he has been socialized in, putting reality into the boxes of the given theory. (While making rather broad claims, there is almost no empirical research of his own – beyond extensive literature studies – and no systematic analysis of specific social phenomena beyond quoting selected single examples for illustrating aspects or elements of the model.) This is arguably the main reason why his work is not acknowledged and hardly known in the social sciences at all.

This approach largely characterizes Wilber's Ebook on "Integral Politics" (2018), as well as, to a lesser degree, his co-authored booklet "Wicked & Wise" (Wilber & Watkins, 2015).

Integral Politics

"Integral Politics" (2018) is a revised version of a manuscript that Wilber has been working on since the mid-00's and that was originally titled "The Many Faces of Terrorism" or later "The Terrorism Triology". As he states himself in the preface, it is „an extremely crude, rough outline (…) although its basics are still, I believe, quite accurate". The text was originally written as a follow-up to Wilber's book *Boomeritis*, dating back to the time *"*before the culture wars became the extremely polarized situation that they are today" (Wilber, 2018: 2-3). He also states right away in his preface that the text is "extremely repetitive", apparently because different pieces that had actually been conceived for different purposes have been put together into one Ebook here.

With the ambition to provide "the first Integral map of politics ever devised" (ibid.: 2), "Integral Politics" (2018) essentially tries to do two things. First, it aims to "classify, index and track (…) any political theory", as well as "all of the major political movements to date (…) using the AQAL matrix" (Wilber, 2018: 29, 79), consisting of quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types. In particular, it looks at "seven or eight **major schools of political theory** that have been advanced around the world —East and West, premodern and modern and postmodern – from Anarchism to Monarchy to Democracy to Republicanism to Aristocracy to Conservatism to Liberalism to Socialism to Communism" and identifies their integral or "cosmic address". Following Wilber's integral mapping principle, he shows how all of these theories "have a piece of the puzzle", yet without being integral in themselves (ibid.: 29).

As mentioned above, his ambition is fulfilled in a **mostly deductive, rather than analytic** way, essentially focusing on the distinctions between "internalist/externalist" (right-wing and left-wing) approaches from Wilber's earlier writings. Beyond this categorization exercise, claims about politics remain rather theoretical, without any deeper discussion of the respective concepts, political ideas or approaches. The same is true for developmental statements and ones about the actual role of some of Wilber's concepts in real life. Broad jargon formulations such as "when green attacks orange, amber wins" (ibid.: 73) arguably speak mainly to the community of (Wilberian) integralists, rather than to a larger audience and leave much room for concretion.

The second ambition of the book is to "identify and outline an Integral Politics for any group, society, or planet in need of it" (44) and to "begin to think about **what a truly Integral Politics would mean**" (ibid.: 79). Given Wilber's love for theory, the promise of sketching the vision of an "Integralocracy" (ibid.: 42) unfortunately remains largely unfulfilled and up to the reader to fill with life more practically. However, Wilber does become more specific in the two other books presented below. And luckily, other thinkers and pioneers have meanwhile also made some more progress on this (for the US, one of them is Steve McIntosh in his recent book, 2020), as we will show in subsequent chapters and in LiFT's other products.

Wicked & Wise

Next, in **"Wicked & Wise" (2015)**, Wilber and his co-author, the British medical scientist and business consultant Alan Watkins, offer some ideas about "how to solve the world's toughest problems" (so the subtitle of the booklet) with the help of Wilber's integral model. Based on Watkins' work, the former gets expanded here into an **"Integral Coherence" model**.

The two authors rightly start by explaining what "wicked problems" are (multi-dimensional, multiple stakeholders, multiple causes, multiple symptoms, multiple solutions and constantly evolving) and why the usual "PESTLE approach (political, economic, sociological, technological, legal, environmental) fails to get to the root causes of the typical wicked problem: Both have a huge blind spot when it comes to the inner dimensions of (inter)subjective consciousness. Moreover, the fact that **PESTLE approaches** typically don't address the quality of awareness out of which all involved stakeholders are acting precisely **co-produces the problem** in the first place (as Scharmer would frame it). For wicked problems are "inherently wicked because they deal with societal problems, that is, problems created and exacerbated by people" (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 6).

They then go on to summarize the five dimensions of Wilber's model (se above) to which Watkins has added a chapter spelling out his notion of coherence. In a nutshell, the latter revolves around the idea that while the integral meta-theory accounts for the "cosmic address", i.e. specific stage, type and state in time of a given phenomenon, **what makes a healthy system is its *dynamic* ability to constantly navigate changes in all dimensions all the time**.
Starting with physiological coherence (heart rate variability and other biological functions), Watkins also discusses emotional coherence and cognitive coherence (balanced development between different lines). "Ultimately, integral coherence is the right amount and pattern of stable, yet dynamic change across all the lines of development, all quadrants, and all levels, and enables us to access more of our potential as human beings. (…) Essentially Integral Coherence means there is a fluid balance in all of the elements of any particular 'Integral Address' (i.e.) the sum total of Integral elements present in any individual or collective" (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 118f.).

Figure 8: Coherence in the four quadrants

	Inner dimensions (consciousness, perception)	**Outer dimensions (surface structures, systems, behavior)**
Individual	Coherence/mesh in truthfulness Emotional, psychological and spiritual integration	Bio-physiological coherence (heart & other systems entrainment)
Collective	Coherence in justness/ rightness Genuine mutual understanding within the interpersonal space and the many "We's" that the individual is part of	Functional fit the individual's coherent mesh with the many systems to which it belongs

Wilber & Watkins rightly claim that "we can either engage (those elements) consciously and coherently, or be blindsided by them in ignorance – thus ensuring our wicked problems remain wicked problems" (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 119). In other words, they call for a constant individual and collective (self)reflection upon our own states of (individual and interpersonal) coherence. Looking at **coherence in all quadrants and dimensions of the AQAL model** is seen as a precondition for being able to uncover the blind spots that turn phenomena into wicked problems. On this basis, they reformulate Margaret Mead's famous quote into "never doubt that a small group of integrally coherent individuals can positively change the world – indeed it is the only thing that ever has'" (ibid.: 120).

In the second, more practical and applied part of the book, Wilber & Watkins then use the example of Climate Change to (very briefly) illustrate how each aspect of its "wicked" quality can be looked at with the help of the elements of the integral meta-model (I-We-It-perspectives). Ironically, however, most space in this section is again dedicated to the It-dimension, in other words, the PESTLE lens that dominates much of public discourse, including appendixes for each of the PESTLE dimensions. For instance, they claim that "tougher climate change legislation (…) may be the only thing that really changes behavior" (Wilber & Watkins, 2015: 203).

Only in the last chapter, they finally unpack some ideas as to the "**wicked solution**" of converting "the theory into practice" (ibid.: 207). Hence, this last chapter, presumably written by Alan Watkins, contains the most interesting ideas of this book. Based on the assumption that "wicked problems are wicked because they involve people" (ibid.: 210), the chapter offers a new way of how "we address the people dimension", more precisely of "how we bring people together; who we have in the room; the reason *why* each person is really attending; what exactly they are debating; the timing (…) of the meeting", as well as its environment (ibid.: 210f.).

They then suggest a five step process of mapping the (people) problem through a thorough **stakeholder mapping process**, using the method of "**Deep Network Analysis (DNA)**" which would include aspects from all quadrants and dimensions of the integral model. At the same time, they seem to imply that the optimal participant profile would be "individuals who are aware of both climate change issues and 'Waking Up' processes", insisting "that only 'Waking Up' processes will give human beings the type

of ('kosmocentric') awareness required to deliver a breakthrough in our deep-rooted ecological divisions" (ibid.: 250).

After this is done, they essentially propose to engage professional, integral(ly informed) facilitators to work with the key stakeholders, i.e. "those with the highest, widest, greatest overall Integral Address" (ibid.: 234). Their assumption behind this selection is that those stakeholders will have the most relevant position in the map of their networks and thus be able to reach out to and impact the largest number of overall people beyond the selected group itself.

So essentially, Wilber & Watkins are suggesting to work with a selected elite, hoping that their position in their respective networks will provide the necessary leverage to extend and transfer results of a facilitated process (in)to the larger population. Since they acknowledge that "unfortunately the number of (awakened, EF) individuals (…) is incredibly small" (ibid.: 251), the question remains how the larger society could also be included more directly...

To sum up, while the book outlines a beautiful vision, there continue to remain a lot of "woulds" and "coulds" with regard to its implementation. And as in most of Wilber's other works, we are left without practical examples of how things look like in the context of an actual implementation of the proposed vision and process. Nevertheless, there is a main take-away from Wilber & Watkins' booklet for integral politics: "Solving wicked problems requires that we adopt an equally wicked solution; we must (…) be cognizant of the multi-dimensional nature of the solution. The solution must involve multiple stakeholders, address the multiple causes, symptoms and potential solution. The solution itself must constantly evolve as we solve and re-solve the issues as they evolve (ibid.: 211).

Trump and the Post-Truth World

Finally, in view of applying Wilber's integral model to politics, a third book is worthwhile consulting for inspiration, namely Wilber's essay on **"Trump and the Post-Truth World" (2017).** It was published in response to the election of Donald Trump as US president that Wilber calls a "historically unprecedented regression" (Wilber, 2017: 137). He then goes on to give his interpretation of what, from a developmentally informed perspective, he perceives as the root causes of the polarization of American society that accompanied Trump's election.

Note that Wilber does not focus on Trump himself, but rather on the socio-cultural field which made his election possible, i.e. on the mindset, value systems and social basis of both his followers and opponents. In fact, the main thesis of the booklet is that the **"Green" socio-political and cultural code**, being the leading-edge in the US as in most western countries, **has itself considerably contributed to the rise of "populist" movements**, including the advent of Trump, for several reasons.

More precisely, his claim is that the inbuilt limitations of what Clare Graves called the "FS level of existence", or the "green value meme" in Spiral Dynamics' terms, are causing it to respond to the Trump supporters' "amber" (or Graves' "DQ") approach in a less than integral, judgmental, and therefore polarizing way. Green's being "largely ignorant of interior stages" (ibid.: 105) leads to its lack of awareness for the fact that other people might not be "wrong" or "stupid", but simply at earlier stages of development and hence, unable to see, value and support what FS/Green itself does. Instead, it reacts in a hyper-sensitive, hostile, and down-looking way in relation to anyone who does not share green, pluralistic, postmodern values.

At the same time, the green leading edge of US (and other western) societie(s) **lacks self-reflexivity** in view of its own **performative self-contradictions**. On the one hand, it questions all grand meta-narratives and truth claims and instead believes "that all knowledge is equal, and should be totally free and totally uncensored" (consider Google's algorithms which simply favor the popularity of the most responded-to sites instead of using quality criteria of truth, 30). This has gradually generated "a relativistic no-truth **culture of nihilism**" (ibid.: 26) in which, ultimately, Trump's bold claims and statements appeared as more truthful to many people.

On the other hand, while claiming that everyone and every position is equally valuable, Green's own hyper-sensitive political correctness condemns anything that is not green "of being 'racist' or 'sexist' or some other horrible crime against humanity" (ibid.: 70). In other words, it implicitly supposes (but never openly states) that its own values and perception of the world are more developed, more moral, and thus, more "true" than those of more traditional voices (he calls this a "**culture of narcissism**"). Since green does not admit that its own perspective is higher and better than the previous levels, "it cannot coherently argue for its own beliefs" (ibid.: 71) and is therefore lost in the face of red aggression (as Valeri Pekkar has put it with regard to some western reactions to Putin's war against Ukraine).

Wilber is very clear in stating that the green/FS system "has a correct (and very high) goal of all-inclusiveness, but it doesn't have a single path that actually works to get us there" (ibid.: 82). Because due to its belief that a lack of green values must be due to some kind of malicious oppression, instead of a lack of development (ibid.: 60), it simply condemns "anything amber and orange (anything not green)" in a "suicidal insanity of green hating amber and orange" (ibid.: 86). From this, Wilber concludes that "it is broken green, not just amber that drove Trump into office. (…) All too often it was green's reviling, ridiculing, despising and vengeful attitude that directly contributed to turning typical amber into a seething, deeply resentful, angry, and even hateful cauldron of truly vicious amber" (ibid.: 140).

Furthermore, Wilber criticizes green for being largely unaware of a fundamental **mismatch** and **incoherence** between the Lower-Left, or cultural quadrant of beliefs and the Lower-Right quadrant of systems, or actual background realities (ibid.: 29). While everybody is created equal, actually, there is a huge social divide and growing **inequality** (ibid.: 49) which created a powerful anti-green field that Trump tapped into in a very ethnocentric fashion. Through ""riding the anti-green wave" of "anti-political-correctness" (ibid.: 54), he set out to re-entrench the boundaries that a leading-edge green had actively deconstructed. Wilber even goes as far as to say: "As Green had collapsed, **evolution had no choice** but to take up a broadly 'anti-green' atmosphere as it tried to self-correct the damage" (ibid.: 44)".

Yet, according to Wilber, both nihilism and narcissism "have no place in the leading-edge if it is to function" (ibid.: 43). Consequently, his critique of mainstream politics is that it has failed to "bridge our divides and bind our wounds" – which is "what real leadership is about" (ibid.: 87). So what is the **antidote to the current polarization** and **how would integral respond** to the given situation?

"Whenever we deny growth hierarchies, then automatically, unavoidably, and by default, we strengthen dominator hierarchies" (Wilber, 2017: 126).

Put simply, "**the cure is to move development forward, not to criminalize earlier stages**" (ibid.: 69). For "if our own classism prevents us from caring about the emotional needs of those we deride as deplorable (an allusion to Hillary Clinton's fauxpas in one of her speeches), we are not really progressives". And bluntly, "we are not stronger together if half of us are deplorable" (Jeremy Flood, quoted

after Wilber, 2017: 124f.). Judging from what we see however, this seems to be an insight that lies beyond what mainstream green is able to implement...

Hence, this is where **integral comes in** with its wider, more self-reflexive, more decentered, developmentally informed, systemic view. Considering the dynamic interrelations of the whole spiral, it would introduce "a deliberately more friendly embrace" and "a genuine inclusion, not green's version of 'inclusion' which is to aggressively exclude everything not green" (ibid.: 86f). It would rather invite to "pause, realize that (green's) own hatred and ridicule of amber has profoundly contributed to amber's angry, virulent, hateful resentment of elites everywhere". It would soften strong beliefs, including "the widespread view that amber is deplorable" (ibid.: 110, 118) and propose "a more fundamentally compassionate outreach, (…) outrageous amounts of loving kindness" and invite healing transformation by example.

Moreover, Wilber holds that "**compassion** is the only judgmental attitude we're allowed, the *only* one" (ibid.: 119), when it comes to developmental differences and bridging our divides. And he stresses that "the example for this must come from the leading-edge" (ibid.: 110). As a simple answer to the heated question "which group first should stop the hating and start the loving? Why should I go first?" … Wilber responds with a question: "**Who is more evolved?**" (ibid.: 140f).

In other words, there is a **lesson to learn for green**: "to genuinely and truly understand and include (their fellow citizens) in the dialog instead of making fun of them or looking down on them" (ibid.: 113). And in order to facilitate this, there is a need for **truly integral** transformative wisdom, creating "an enormously powerful downward-acting morphic field that would exert a strong pressure on green to heal its fragmented and broken ways" (ibid.: 133). This equally requires a safe space of compassion enabling current progressive elites to do the necessary shadow work. For Green "must begin doing the one thing they previously despised: they have to try to reach out, to understand, include in the dialog, and to extend the courtesy of a rudimentary amount of compassion, care, even love, to the whole basket of deplorables". This "embodies an understanding on green's part that green itself might indeed have directly contributed to the anger, resentment, sometimes hatred, that the core of Trump's supporters expressed and that directly drove Trump into office" (ibid.: 140).

To conclude, while Wilber's booklet is not a thorough academic analysis of political discourse and conflict dynamics, it is a beautiful example of how an integral, developmentally informed perspective can shed light on **shadow aspects, blind spots and hidden dimensions of *politics as usual***. It also shows how integral politics, as it is already being practiced by numerous initiatives across the US and elsewhere (see examples in IO 4, Muff, 2022) has a profoundly **healing and transformative potential**.

To some degree, Wilber's diagnosis of the causes of polarization equally holds true in other contexts, for example the German one (Fein, forthcoming), even though a number of specific differences need to be considered in each case. It also provides valuable insights as to the degree to which an integral perspective can challenge mainstream beliefs, "truths" and interpretations about morality, as well as the identities of all involved stakeholders, especially political parties. Wilber's book is therefore a good illustration for Clare Graves' observation that you have to be an independent thinker, free of fear and indifferent to what people think about you in order to perform – and even more so to do politics at this level of existence.

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