

# **Ken Wilber's Integral Vision: A Review Of Applications In Education Toward A "Wisdom Culture"**

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## **ABSTRACT**

For over 30 years, contemporary American integral philosopher, Ken Wilber, has challenged all of us to critically examine how biased, if not distorted, our current forms of thinking and knowledge are, and what kind of education ought to be developed in order to build, what he refers to as, a future "Wisdom Culture." To date, no critical synthesis of Wilber's work and its relationship to the field of Education has been attempted. This paper offers three real classroom vignettes demonstrating the application of Wilber's integral approach, set within an opening fictional narrative. The remainder of the paper synthesizes an extensive search of Educational documents, and provides a critical review of 16 professional educators, from both schooling and adult education, who have published writing on applications and potential of Wilber's philosophy, toward laying the groundwork for future educational engagement with the integral approach..

## **INTRODUCTION: IF ONLY...**

I had a dream. Thousands of diverse adults from nations around the world were gathering for a common cause in Geneva. The loudspeakers were blaring throughout the lecture hall, where everyone sat politely and attentive. A small brown-skinned figure, a "Director-General," someone said, stood at the podium speaking:

As the world's problems grow in complexity, from genocides to ecosides and growing world poverty, from the HIV/AIDS epidemic to a life polluted by fear in a post-9/11 "War on Terrorism," our United Nations are facing a very challenging 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have been up to the challenge before. I welcome you today to the opening of the International World Congress On Education For Everyone's Better Future, proudly sponsored by UNESCO. What a marvelous theme we have chosen for our session this morning— *Constructing A Wisdom Culture*. It is during this next week of dialogues that world leaders, educators, psychologists, sociologists, artists, philosophers, and other concerned professionals, from many sectors of our communities, will tackle the global problematique; incorporating the newest innovations in computer technology with the ground-breaking research coming from the Human Genome Project, the micro-neurology of the brain's emotional evolutionary self-regulating dynamics, to the macro-astronomy of the cosmos itself. There ought to be no knowledge that is left out of this

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to the many people who read this and provided comments, especially Ron Miller and Jack Miller. This was originally written and accepted in a book on Integral Education which never got off the ground. Although, now out of date as I submit it in 2010, it has many worthwhile foundations still applicable to communicating the potential and impact of Wilber's work in the professional field of Education.

problem-solving venture, life-long learning, and pursuit of a universal Wisdom Culture that will benefit all. Our education systems must be redesigned so that learning *to do* is balanced with learning *to be* and the result is a learning *to live together non-violently, sustainably, with all our cultural differences*. Our education systems are in deep crisis. “Students sense that schools are becoming less and less useful in preparing them for the future. Education will never live up to its promise unless there is a quiet but fundamental revolution in the way teaching takes place.”<sup>2</sup>

Beneath the speaker’s broadcast and right behind me, someone whispered to another attendee that “Ken Wilber is supposed to show up for this plenary session.” The response was a gasp of air, as if someone was going to faint. “No kidding! Wilber doesn’t do public appearances, I’ve heard.” “Well, he is this time.” “Shhh!,” said another participant beside them, with anger. The speaker continued,

Following the basic belief in sharing knowledge and infrastructures for changing the human condition, UNESCO lays its reputation on the table as a facilitator of global inter-agency cooperation. A Wisdom Culture is a culture that excludes no one who has the Good, the Beautiful, and the True of the world’s affairs in mind. A Wisdom Culture ensures a balance of compassion, technical knowledge and skills. A Wisdom Culture must put priority on an integral view of life and a holistic education for All-- body, mind, soul, and spirit, a valuing of both the ‘worldly’ and ‘other-worldly’ aspects of life— a marriage of Religion and Science, counseled by the Arts.

All I could think were negative thoughts. I was hearing this directive of positive ideals but an inner (dystopian-postmodern?) voice kept gnawing at me like a dull ironic-fisted headache: “Get Real, guys! What if everyone doesn’t have the Good, the Beautiful and the True as their primary desires-- are you going to exclude them from this integral movement? Do you think they will just disappear and lay back and let some crazed-utopian people run the planet under the banner of a “Wisdom Culture”? I think not!” I wanted to hope but it felt like despair, so I listened to the speaker continue,

A basic education for all is a beginning but UNESCO and the conference organizers of this event know well that world development must reach beyond the *status quo*, unfortunately too often a corrupt *status quo*, and must reach beyond minimal requirements for survival, if health and sustainable systems are to flourish and free humans to explore their full potentials. “We need to harness the potential of culture to ensure that globalization” and the tendency toward Western industrial homogenization of reality, knowledge and values, is counterbalanced by the preservation of cultural diversity and a sacred reverence for individual identities and histories. Most importantly, “each society and each citizen needs the values and skills to counter intolerance & conflict at the root.”<sup>3</sup> A Wisdom Culture, not a monolithic One Culture, must encourage a new level of consciousness and wise leadership in every nation. Leaders of a Wisdom Culture must have, what the world’s leading cultural philosopher,<sup>4</sup> Ken Wilber, calls a “worldcentric vision,”<sup>5</sup> that includes but

<sup>2</sup> Quotes only, are taken from a presentation by UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura, Paris, February 15, 2000. Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/bpi/eng/unescopress/00-11e.htm>

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, UNESCO presentation by K. Matsuura.

transcends impenetrable boundaries and narrow thinking, with their concomitant fear-based ethnocentric and egocentric chauvinism. A worldcentric vision is our only hope in constructing a peace-loving global community. So how are we going to improve our ability to listen to difference, to make sense of the diverse knowledges, organize them, and interpret their findings? How will we make democratic decisions when we cannot all agree on everything? We have found a model to help us do this. Ken Wilber's "integral psychology," "theory of everything," and "world philosophy" of "universal integralism"<sup>6</sup> offers us a balanced approach; which unites the truths of more diverse types of knowledge than any other theory today or in the past<sup>7</sup>. UNESCO and the conference organizers are excited to utilize his integral theory and ideas to bring a unifying integrity to the design of the next week of presentations and synthesis, from which our action plans will emerge. No other international conference, to date, has utilized such a comprehensive model as the overarching framework to bring us all together, to overcome the fragmentation of our efforts, and to...

The crowd shuffled anxiously. Some people moved toward the exits while the speaker's voice trailed off. Suddenly, I was in a room full of exuberant conversations everywhere. They were mostly high school teachers. The lights dimmed and the overhead projector flashed on a front screen, the title: "The Spiral Game."<sup>8</sup>

The session presenter walked into the spotlight. She was an erudite teacher speaking briskly about the psychology of Clare Graves and his "levels of human existence,"<sup>9</sup> which he documented as evolving in a natural spiral form-- universally

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<sup>4</sup> Wilber is best known, and academically respected, in the field of transpersonal psychology but as Visser (2003) wrote: "Wilber's work as a whole is motivated by the effort to arrive at a world philosophy. Inclusivity is the dominant hallmark of his vision. Wilber's influence has since extended far beyond the realm of psychology. While his early works focused primarily on psychology, in his more recent work Wilber has emerged as a cultural philosopher who strives to place contemporary developments in the spheres of religion and politics within the context of the wisdom of the ages (pp. 1-2).

<sup>5</sup> "... we need to help consciousness evolve from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric.... only people at the worldcentric level even care about worldcentric problems, about global problems and how to fix them. Egocentric and ethnocentric couldn't give a rat's ass about global anything! But less than 20% of the world's population is at worldcentric!" (Wilber, 2002, p. 53).

<sup>6</sup> See Wilber (2000, 2000a, 1995) respectively. *Integral Psychology* is likely the most useful textbook for those interested in an overview of Wilber's model of human development. Wilber's version of an integral theory of everything ought not to be taken as the only one of its kind. Dr. Ervin Laszlo, the founding father of systems philosophy, has currently been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize and is speaking around the world on his version of "The Informed Universe: On the Track of an Integral Theory of Everything;" of which Wilber acknowledged: "Ervin Laszlo has, probably more than any person alive, intricately spelled out a staggering but often neglected fact: we live in a hopelessly interconnected universe, with each and every single thing connected in almost miraculous ways to each and every other." Retrieved from <http://www.emediawire.com/releases/2005/3/emw222270.htm>. That said, Wilber is also a critic of systems theory and Laszlo's view, with its over-dependence on science as the chosen way of knowing the cosmos—a science less capable, alone, in knowing the Kosmos from the inside out—a science with a "Flatland" ontology (see Wilber 1995).

<sup>7</sup> See Crittenden (1997, 1997a).

<sup>8</sup> Taken from Lynne Feldman's senior's sociology classroom activity. Feldman teaches at the Northern Highlands Regional High School, Allendale, Bergen County, NJ.

<sup>9</sup> See Graves (1974).

from culture to culture, and individual to individual. There were nine levels (or “memes”<sup>10</sup>) in the model, corresponding very closely with Ken Wilber’s psycho-spiritual theory of nine levels of consciousness, that he had largely articulated, independently from Graves, in the mid-to-late 1970’s.<sup>11</sup>

She mentioned Don Beck, a psychologist, and co-founder of Spiral Dynamics Technologies,<sup>12</sup> and student of Graves, who partially joined his work with Wilber’s in the year 2000 under the title SDi (Spiral Dynamics Integral). Beck was hired as a consultant to assist Nelson Mandela and other leaders in South Africa at the end of apartheid, so they could better understand that their nation’s gravest problems were beyond racism, and rather, were primarily developmental and educational. She wrote down several websites<sup>13</sup> that people could check out to see how Wilber’s and Beck’s SDi model was being applied in many fields today with encouraging success.

For most of us, her enthusiasm was catching. From the darkened back seats, a rather stiff man with a doubting voice, asked her to define “integral.” She smiled and quickly put up an overhead defining Wilber’s use of “integral,”<sup>14</sup> which we read as she continued to talk:

I want to focus this session on how Wilber’s integral psychology in the past few years has captured my attention, and has included but improved upon the cognitive-behavioral, psychoanalytic, humanistic, existential and transpersonal psychology, the latter which used to be my foundation for teaching holistically. I have found integralism far more effective than holism and theories of transformational approaches to learning overall. I wish I had time to explain all the differences but I don’t. You will just have to read Wilber for yourself. Although integralism,<sup>15</sup> as a philosophy, is ancient in the East and

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<sup>10</sup> There is a large body of diverse literature on “memes” and “meme theory” which is beyond the scope of this paper. For our purposes, a v-meme (values meme) is a cultural ‘gene’ of sorts, by which various values are coded and reproduced within individual and collective development. Graves found in general, that these clusters or “habits” of memes tend to evolve in a developmental logical sequence from simple to more complex. These v-memes (which Beck and Cowan have given colors to) have evolved by natural and cultural selection processes as diverse and multiple “intelligences” that have helped humanity survive and adapt to various dynamic conditions.

<sup>11</sup> See Wilber (1977/82, 1980/82, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> See Beck & Cowan (1996).

<sup>13</sup> Wilber (2000a), and to a lesser extent Wilber (2002), provide good overviews of many fields where Wilber’s work is being utilized by various researchers and practitioners. A few examples not included in Wilber (2000) are: Gibbs, Giever & Pober (2000) in criminology; Rinehart (n.d.) in peace studies; Slaughter (1998, 2001) in future studies; Schwartz & Russek (1997) in medicine/psychiatry; Beittel (1985) in arts; Wilpert (2001) in politics; Esbjörn-Hargens (2005) in ecology; Ingersoll & Bauer (2004) in counseling; Nielsen (n.d.) in feminist theory; Bonde (2001) in music therapy; Bauwens (2003) in religious studies; Moyer (2002) in social activist training. See the following for more on applications of Wilber and Beck’s SDi model: [www.worldofkenwilber.com](http://www.worldofkenwilber.com); [www.integralinstitute.org](http://www.integralinstitute.org); [www.shambhala.com](http://www.shambhala.com); [www.gircorp.org/scripts/catheader.asp?catid=61](http://www.gircorp.org/scripts/catheader.asp?catid=61); [www.spiraldynamics.net](http://www.spiraldynamics.net)

<sup>14</sup> Which I won’t layout here, as it can be found elsewhere in this book, or at Wilber (2002, p.15).

<sup>15</sup> Integralism is a philosophy that brings good relations between the One and the Many. It was not used as a term until modern times, but Plato (later, Plotinus), arguably, is one of the forerunners of this philosophy. Wilber takes this stream of thought from integralism and incorporates Jean Gebser’s work and definition of “universal-integralism” as a structure of human consciousness, which evolves after

West, it has recently been making a come back with Wilber's particularly complex version, which I won't have time to explain it. The definition Wilber gives (see the overhead) is only one, and there is no one definition that is final on the subject and ever likely will be, which makes this whole Integral Education endeavor, rather interesting.

A scholarly sounding man from the back of the room stood up, his booming voice cut through the air, as if attempting to dampen the presenter's enthusiasm. He said, "Integral, doesn't seem very radical, nor very different than any good humanistic orientation toward an open-minded holistic approach to knowledge and education itself. Why all this fuss about Wilber? I've tried to read his books and they are so elitist...". She quickly interrupted and spoke of Wilber's notion of the integral approach as being fully humanistic in its agenda but offering a means toward a true "Wisdom Culture," based on embracing all forms of knowledge from everywhere and about everything. It is not mere holism or eclecticism either. Some knowledge is more 'true' than others and Wilber encourages a critical integral understanding using 'maps' which are developmentally vertical and hierarchical, and avoid a reductionist "flatland" interpretation, that so often underpins most humanistic and holistic "alternative education" approaches from the 60s and the "new age."

She put up another overhead, and we followed her finger pointing to the Kosmic map Wilber created in the mid-1990's to locate disciplines, authors, knowledges, and ways of knowing into four quadrants and many levels. Integral, she noted, guides her teaching and curriculum toward what Wilber has labeled the AQAL (all quadrants all levels) approach,<sup>16</sup> that demands we integrate in our practices the knowledge from the Upper Right Quadrant of the more objective 'hard' sciences and technologies and Lower Right Quadrant of the objective 'softer' sciences like sociology, and system-environmental sciences; and the Upper Left Quadrant of subjective consciousness studies of individuals and mind, and the Lower Left Quadrant of subjective values, worldviews, beliefs and culture. She said it sounds complex at first until you get the hang of it, but at the very least, this integral model forces us to not get caught in favoring just one ideology (e.g., even holism<sup>17</sup>), or favoring one quadrant or level of

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rational-perspectivism (cf. Jurgen Habermas). It is also called "vision-logic" and is associated with the development of "post-rational" and "post-conventional" cognitive thought and a "worldcentric view," or what Georg Feurstein called "Global or Planetary Culture" (Wilber, 1995, pp. 190-191). See Wilber (2000a, 2001) for his critique of what sociologist Paul Ray has called "Integral Culture" (p. 30). Beck and Wilber associate integral thought with the yellow v-meme (post-pluralism), which evolves after the green v-meme (multicultural pluralism, and Ray's "cultural creatives").

<sup>16</sup> Sociologist, Scheff (1997), has developed, independently from Wilber, a very similar quadrant methodology for human sciences research based on a part/Whole unit-of-study emphasis (*a la* Spinoza), which Wilber (1995) termed the "holon." Scheff argues that inner (subjective) and outer (objective), along with "smallest" (individual) and "largest" (communal) aspects of human relationships are essential to study if we are to gather in the complexity of human beings with any integrity. Like Wilber, Scheff called for a reintegration of psychology and sociology and a much larger interdisciplinary imagination.

<sup>17</sup> See Wilber (1995) for an extensive argument on why holism (and systems thinking) became a "subtle reductionism" instead of a "gross reductionism" (as did scientific positivism) of the Kosmos. Mainly, Wilber argues that these forms of reductionism tend to a "flatland" horizontal conception and reject the vertical dimension of reality, the latter of which is primary in a view of the evolution of consciousness.

consciousness as the best, while denying or rejecting what we can learn from the others. Wilber's AQAL provides leaders, teachers and others, with a kind of fearless epistemologically-based ethic<sup>18</sup> and transdisciplinary attitude.<sup>19</sup>

Suddenly a young man jumps up. "Can I share an example of how I use Wilber's integral theory in my integral ecology classroom<sup>20</sup> at John F. Kennedy University, California?" She nods approvingly, and he continues:

I have an exercise I call "Voicing The Quadrants." In order to bring students into a somatic understanding of Wilber's four quadrants I have them get into a group of four and then I pass out a picture (e.g., of Gandhi) or an object (e.g., a plant) and ask each of them to pick one of the quadrants: Behavior [Upper Right], Systems [Lower Right], Experience [Upper Left], Culture [Lower Left]. Once they have decided on who will represent each quadrant, I explain to them that they will describe the object/picture/item from their perspective using the language [and methods] associated with each quadrant.... I explain to them that they need to pay attention to how each language points to a different part of reality and to perceive how each language feels in the bodymind. Thus when they are speaking from one language or listening to another speak they need to track how their bodymind responds differently to the four perspectives. You can also have students do all four quadrants on their own at home or outside using a journal to speak in each language.

A matured women rose and asked if she could share a brief example of her teaching experience using Wilber's model.<sup>21</sup> She told us how she had taught business and organizational leaders for years and many of her students would struggle in understanding Wilber's integral concept. She found that she often was more successful when she taught some of the basics of systems and complexity theory parallel to teaching integral ideas. She concluded that the "*integral model* helps learners: (a) recognize their mental models, (b) shift their paradigms from a mechanistic-reductionist model to a dynamic developmental model, (c) notice the relationships of developmental patterns in all four quadrants, (d) improve their analytical skills by learning about scale [micro-to-macro], (e) discover the dynamic and emergent aspects of the model by combining the integral learning with learning about complexity theory, (f) appreciate the value of a meta-model for integrating practice and theory, (g) examine their implicit and explicit boundaries in all four quadrants and levels, (h) notice their own and other's critical lenses." She sat down, thanking us for listening.

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<sup>18</sup> See Fisher (2003), where this notion of the need for a "dialectical fearlessness" in postmodern pluralistic inquiry, was adapted from adult educators, Schön (1983) and Paulston (1990, p. 398).

<sup>19</sup> See Nicolescu (2003), who has developed this conception as part of "integral education" without a Wilberian influence. He argues we need to go beyond the Human Sciences, toward a trans-disciplinarity in solving complex human problems "... because it is able to describe the relationship between fields, or levels, or disciplines, as a whole.... and indeed of reality itself" (p. 2).

<sup>20</sup> This comes from Dr. Sean Esbjörn-Hargens, Prof. of Integral Studies, John F. Kennedy University and Co-Director of Integral Ecology Branch of the Integral Institute.

<sup>21</sup> This comes from Dr. Marilyn Hamilton, a co-leader of Spiral Dynamics training and teaches at Royal Roads University, BC, Canada.

The young male teacher went on to tell us that he will also assign students a case study of a politically-charged environmental problem that is current, like forestry practices in old growth forests-- and then, ask groups of students to approach the entire problem from the four quadrants. The most spectacular results from these exercises came as students see that many realities and knowledges exist simultaneously and different languages and worldviews (v-memes) are associated with different approaches and different levels of development of consciousness. The students see their own biased prejudices to favor one or two quadrants or v-memes-- and they find it often hard to listen to other quadrants or v-meme perceptions. There was a silence in the room. We sensed that world conflicts are to some degree based on this intolerance to diverse knowledges and worldviews, which arise with different levels of development under different life conditions.

This young man said he was dedicated to the integral model and felt that the ecological movement had become “split” as a force into various radical groups who are competing for their own favorite one-quadrant view of problems and making enemies out of those who favor other quadrant views. The integral perspective, he believed, could bring these diverse groups and interests together and unite their energies and resources in new ways for better results. Environmental education likewise, he noted, requires a view beyond most holistic approaches—and integral education is essential to managing our future complex world. He sat down, literally shaking with excitement.

The session presenter moved to the front of the classroom. We watched her every subtle move. She placed “The Spiral Game”<sup>22</sup> title up on the overhead again and spoke:

Imagine taking a group of seniors in high school, a sociology lesson on international relations, and teaching them the four quadrants and v-memes in spiral dynamics theory as a basic way to analyze various situations. In the next class I divided the students into ‘clans’ of 5-6 students. They took on different roles, a single mother with child, best hunter, strongest athletic type, thinker type, a new couple and so on. I provided them with a number of colored poker chips with labels entitled “food,” “water,” and “shelter.” Each chip represented so many energy units the clan had and would spend in a day. They had to work together to figure out how to throw the chips into a small bowl on the ground. They had to stay behind a line that was six feet away from the bowl-- a difficult throw to get a chip into the bowl. If they succeeded in getting the chip into the bowl they were rewarded by getting that chip back plus another new chip of the same value. Now, imagine that this group of students played this all out in a winter snow storm. They did. They loved the game. Strategies emerged. Some groups planned together. Some leaders in some clans threw all the chips and missed. End of clan. Some collaborated, huddle together to keep warm, and waited for the wind to go down—then, they worked together to hold the coat of the tallest designated chip thrower with long arms, so he could lean over the line without his feet crossing the line, and bingo, they put many chips in.

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<sup>22</sup> This lesson plan was created and taught by Lynne Feldman and offered to me. I revised and edited it here, with some creative license, for brevity.

We listened with intrigue as she described the way beige v-meme value systems (based on individual survival) and purple v-meme value systems (based on group survival and kinship) had emerged in the ‘clans’ that day. She mentioned the red v-meme value system (based on individual ‘might is right’) that emerged when groups fought and stole chips from each other and failed to negotiate. Back in the classroom she distributed sheets of paper with empty space in each quadrant and asked questions (derived from the quadrants) about how their simulation ‘game’ was like what was happening in Iraq today and among jungle tribes that are confronting shrinking rainforests in Brazil because of agricultural practices being exported by Western industrialized nations. As the speaker’s voice trailed off, I was jolted on the shoulder by a hand that gripped like death itself. I turned around, and saw it was Ken Wilber—the real person right there in my face. I awoke in a sweat with my ‘heart in my mouth’ and sense that everything I thought about education and being a “teacher” was about to change.

### “WISDOM CULTURE”: EDUCATORS UTILIZING WILBER’S IDEAS

In short, a true Wisdom Culture... (1) uses the body appropriately in diet... in sex... both free of repression/oppression on the one hand, and obsessive/compulsive overindulgence on the other; (2) uses the membership mind appropriately in unrestrained communication, free of domination and propaganda; (3) uses the ego appropriately in free exchanges of mutual self-esteem; and (4) uses the psychic level appropriately in a bonding-consciousness that shows every person to be an ultimately equal member of the mystical body of Christ/Krishna/Buddha.... But that, of course, is so far off I needn’t even speculate. – Wilber (1981, p. 326)

Yet, 24 years later, speculate we must. In this passage, from his controversial book *Up From Eden*, Wilber elucidates the developmental levels of consciousness integration required for a true “Wisdom Culture.”<sup>23</sup> Since that time, his integral philosophy and model have self-corrected<sup>24</sup> and expanded significantly to include the four quadrants, levels/waves, lines, types, and states, as well as v-memes (Spiral Dynamics). However, his overall project and teaching has not changed—that is, to bring about “... psychological growth as evolutionary transcendence... [and] education as a discipline in transcendence, body to mind to soul... [and] regear educational theory and institutions accordingly, with special emphasis on hierarchic development...” (1981, pp. 325-326).

In 1982 I awoke, as if from a dream, to discover Wilberland. In Fisher (1997), I published the first systematic overview of his work and his critics. In 2002-03, I

<sup>23</sup> This would be founded upon a “worldcentric vision” (integral consciousness level) as stated earlier in the paper. Richard Slaughter, a futurist, has picked up on this idea of Wilber’s “Wisdom Culture” and listed several characteristics consistent with Wilber’s version. See <http://www.globalideasbank.org/BOV/BV-555.html>

<sup>24</sup> The changes in Wilber’s work are significant and not to be ignored by those trying to interpret and utilize his ideas. See notions of Wilber-I, Wilber-II, Wilber-III, and Wilber-IV (possibly there are notions of a Wilber-V still being articulated) in Wilber (1997).

created a support group for graduate Education students to study Wilber's ideas and I edited and published *Ken Wilber Integral Education Bulletin*.<sup>25</sup>

As an educator intrigued by Wilber's challenge of developing a "Wisdom Culture," I am in constant search for philosophies, theories and models that take in the greatest span and depth of the universe of reality. I have found Wilber's integral approach to be *the most* useful to fulfilling my search and find it *the most* promising in potential to help solve our world's complex educational and political problems (see Fisher, 2003a). In searching for what other educators had been publishing on Wilber's work, I found that I was not alone in my judgment.

### **Wilber In Professional And Academic Education Settings**

Today, there are no operative schools or universities wholly designed upon an integral Wilberian model.<sup>26</sup> Wilber's work is taught, in part, in a few progressive and alternative universities but rarely might it be even mentioned in Education Faculties. A search through all of the American Education Research Association's (AERA) list-serve archives (1995-2002) shows that no one there is discussing Ken Wilber. The reasons for this are multiple and will be summarized near the end of the paper.

There is however, a rapid growing interest among a diverse group of educators to create an *integral education* that includes but transcends the limitations of the various types of alternatives like radical, holistic, humanistic, existential, transformative, new age, spiritual and transpersonal education. There is not space for a full comparative analysis in this paper. Rather, I have chosen, below, to briefly summarize the educators that have used Wilber's work in the past, and who may be currently utilizing it. Such a review provides educational leaders, teachers and others who are interested, with some foundational published literature and contacts in regard to the applications of Wilber's integral model.

A search through the ERIC database revealed few documents are available dealing with Wilber's philosophy and theories in any depth. Two papers were presented at AERA Annual Meetings, where Wilber's work was cited as important to rethinking the domain of Education regarding the highest developmental states of being and knowing (Clarcken, 1988), and regarding the spiritual dimension of the new science movement and implications for science education (Walz-Michaels, 1996).

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<sup>25</sup> Available issues on-line at [www.feareducation.com](http://www.feareducation.com)

<sup>26</sup> There are several universities attempting an integral design, not necessarily Wilberian (e.g., California Institute of Integral Studies), and Holma College in Sweden has utilized a strong Wilberian component. Recently, a school in Arizona for children is looking at designing itself upon a Wilberian-Beck model (see the integral education yahoo.com forum that began in September of 2003, see also [www.integral-ed.org](http://www.integral-ed.org)). Wilber *et al.* have just started the Integral University on-line in 2005, which will be the first model of its kind.

Eight unpublished Education dissertations<sup>27</sup> recently, coming from relatively conservative Western Canadian and American universities, have utilized Wilber's writings. Blekhman (2004) used Wilber's "hierarchical approach to consciousness," along with other theorists, to develop a "holistic-ecological worldview" to inform future education that ought to have a role in fostering a "new transcendent type of consciousness."<sup>28</sup> Javed (2004) used a literary approach to infusing education with higher consciousness, while citing Wilber's mystical writing and ideas for inspiration. In Fisher (2003a), I focused on Wilber's critical integral theory and its potential role in conflict pedagogy and fearless pedagogy, within a post- 9/11 "culture of fear." I included an extensive fictional narrative between Wilber and a historical French revolutionary character, as a means to performatively teach integral concepts to educators. Bryant (2002), utilizing a "hermeneutic genealogy," includes an extensive discussion of Wilber's integral philosophy for a 21<sup>st</sup> century "planetary civilization," that includes but transcends earlier evolutionary worldviews, and thus, honors cultural diversity (i.e., "worldcentric). Promoting an "integral intelligence" (in a Gardnerian fashion), this is the most extensive, and impressive, study of Wilber's work by an educational philosopher in academia.<sup>29</sup> Laroche (2000) cited Wilber's work, among many other authors, in support of a reconstructive postmodern science education curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Jerry (2001) draws heavily on Wilber's work to propose an integral research method that draws on a spectrum of qualitative and quantitative methods to understand transpersonal experiences. Greenman (1990) devoted their research to the use of Wilber's integral model in pedagogical art criticism. His work applies more to the field of art than education *per se*. Hamlin (1990) pursued a search for a "new learning perspective" that was inspired by Huxley's (1959)<sup>30</sup> ideal design for a future "integrated education." He focused his philosophical analysis on the implications of the transpersonal claims made by Wilber and other transpersonalists, with a special emphasis on Wilber's earlier ideas and the challenge of Wilber's theory of spiritual development, in contrast to "the Jungian monopoly on spiritual psychology" (p. 207).

### **Wilber in Transpersonal, Spiritual, Integral, Transformative, Futures, and Holistic Education**

Through research on the Internet in the late 1990s, I found a handful of learning and knowledge-system consultants using Wilber's integral model in their own

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<sup>27</sup> Although dissertations are considered "published" by the sponsoring university, they are not typical published books that are easily picked up and read by educators, especially practicing teachers—therefore, they were left out of this literature synthesis, and only mentioned here. I did not do an extensive international search and this list is likely somewhat incomplete.

<sup>28</sup> Taken from ProQuest document Abstract number 765817531.

<sup>29</sup> Taken from ProQuest document Abstract number 765236301. Advisor: Dr. Veronika Bohac Clarke, University of Calgary, AB, Canada.

<sup>30</sup> See this dramatized in Huxley's (1962/78) novel.

models.<sup>31</sup> To my knowledge, these consultants have not published anything specifically that would be specifically considered a Wilberian *integral pedagogy*.

There has been a small following of non-mainstream educators in the holistic, new age, spiritual, and transpersonal community (mainly along the West Coast of the USA), who have read Wilber and have attempted to integrate some of his ideas into their alternative pedagogies. In particular, the applications of transpersonal psychology to education (e.g., Roberts, 1974; Roberts & Clark, 1975), in more recent years, would be an important area of future research *re: Wilber and Education*. A thorough search of transpersonal educators' writing has not been done for this overview. To this author's knowledge, there are no major publications dedicated to Education and Wilber's integral model from this "alternative" group. An inspiring emphasis on futures and transformative education and applications of Wilber's work can be found in Gidley & Hampson (in press), who reside in Australia. Integral Institute and Integral University (Educational Divisions) will be important future players in creating curriculum and pedagogy materials and training, using a Wilberian version of *Integral Education*.<sup>32</sup>

The most significant group of schooling educators attracted to (and sometimes critical of) Wilber's work, are those involved in promoting the tradition of a holistic curriculum. For example, John P. Miller, author of *Education and the Soul* and founder of The Holistic Learning and Spirituality in Education Network, noted:

Ken Wilber has written very little about education.<sup>33</sup> In one case what he has said does not make much sense in relation to his own theories. In *One Taste* [1999] he supports the standards and testing movement (p. 259), which in my view is not in any way congruent with an integral approach. He also refers to "liberal education" as "idiot compassion." I do not find these kinds of generalizations very helpful.<sup>34</sup> (personal communication, September 26, 2002)

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<sup>31</sup> Ian Dakers and myself in the mid-1990s had created an Integral Knowledge-Creation system for organizing and planning large scale global conferences on critical topics (unpublished).

<sup>32</sup> Because Wilber has distanced himself and his work from the transpersonal psychology movement (especially as it is developed in California), he will likely encourage works in "integral education" (Wilber, 1997, 2000a) as the improved alternative to transpersonal/spiritual/new age education. If so, this would be a troublesome term because educators, especially in the 1970-80s used "integral education" in diverse ways (e.g., Hall & Reck, 1987; and more recently, Nicolescu, 2003), unlike how Wilber defines integral. Educators also use "integrative education" (or "confluent" or "affective" education—see Miller, 1991, p. 57); and "integrated" is used (generally) in diverse non-Wilberian ways. Less problematic, but still unclear, is the use of "integral pedagogy" (Wilber's, 2001, term), which is also used by various educators on the Internet, who appear to have no connections with Wilber's work at all (or indirectly, through common roots of "integral" used by Yogic traditions).

<sup>33</sup> In a general sense, Wilber's writing has always been about development and education, albeit, Education as a field or discipline, has not been his focus.

<sup>34</sup> To understand Wilber's critique of the green v-meme (Boomeritis) problem in (liberal, holistic, new age) education and the general post-modern temperament pervading higher education today, see Wilber (2002).

Beyond Wilber's (1981) definition of education for a "Wisdom Culture," what else has he published about education? Personally, he has said in an interview in Visser (2003), that dishwashing (as a part-time job) for three years, before he wrote his first book, was an "extraordinary education," an "education first and foremost in humility.... an education in *grounding*, in engaging the world in an intimate, concrete, tangible fashion, not through words or concepts or books or courses" (p. 24). This was the balancing complement of practice to his Zen meditation. To this day, he lifts weights daily, works hard and long on intellectual tasks, teaches, talks with lots of people building a network and community of change-makers, and meditates. As a teacher of integral philosophy,<sup>35</sup> he has been a long advocate of what he calls "Integral Transformative Practice."<sup>36</sup> In a kind of Deweyian pragmatism, Wilber prescribes, metaphorically and literally, a balanced education grounded in the everyday and mundane, in humility: "Forget the degrees, forget the books and articles, forget the titles, forget everything really, and wash dishes for two years."<sup>37</sup> For Wilber, basic education is basic service, and an essential part of a healthy holistic human development.

Wilber is, generally, not supportive of only an "inner" self-reflective learning and growth that takes no action in the larger sociopolitical spheres of life. He asks, "How will the higher stages [levels] of growth affect our democratic institutions, our educational policies, and our economics?" (Wilber, 1998, p. 209). Education about vertical levels of development (as opposed to flatland education) is pivotal to Wilber's overall project, as he expresses this through a teacher-character in his first novel:

We can't even talk about helping people grow and develop through the levels of consciousness if they don't even know that there are levels of consciousness in the first place. So one of our main problems is simple education, getting these ideas circulated. If you only believe in flatland, there's no way out.<sup>38</sup>

Wilber's prophetic pedagogic voice is always near and dear to his knowing:

And therefore, if you have seen [truth], you must simply speak out. Speak out with compassion, or speak out with angry wisdom, or speak out with skillful means, but speak out you must. And this is a terrible burden, ... because in any case there is no room for timidity.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "... the heart of integral philosophy ["intellectual awareness"], as I conceive it, is primarily a *mental activity* of coordinating, elucidating, and conceptually integrating all of the various modes of knowing and being, so that, even if integral philosophy itself does not *deliver* the higher modes [of consciousness], it fully *acknowledges* them, and then allows and invites philosophia to open itself to the practices and modes of contemplatio. Integral philosophy is also, by virtue of its comprehensiveness, a powerful *critical theory*, critical of all less encompassing approaches—in philosophy, psychology, religion, social theory, and politics" (Wilber, 1997, p. 309).

<sup>36</sup> Wilber supports the initiative of George Leonard & Michael Murphy, where a lot of emphasis is put on the body as part of learning and development (of bodymind). See [www.itp-life.com](http://www.itp-life.com).

<sup>37</sup> From an interview with Visser (2003), p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> Wilber (2002), pp. 53-54.

Holistic and spiritual educators, J. P. Miller, like R. Miller,<sup>40</sup> are quite right to have suggested that Wilber has said precious little about Education,<sup>41</sup> as we are using it here. Wilber wishes to see developed all kinds of integral new disciplines, like Integral Business, Integral Art, Integral Feminism, Integral Psychology, Integral Ecology and so on, but he typically publishes significantly less on Integral Education than other disciplines in his books. In Wilber (2000a, pp. 95-96), he devotes one page to the topic, saying nothing different than what he said in 1981 on education for a “Wisdom Culture,” except that he adds his critique of the unhealthy green v-meme worldview (pluralism<sup>42</sup>) and a critique of the flatland holistic notion (holism), which both tend to dominate the field of progressive and/or liberal education, especially in the highly industrialized Western nations.

### Schooling Educator’s (K-12)<sup>43</sup> Common Attractions To Wilber

At least eight Western professional schooling educators have published works (1985 to the present) that take Wilber’s ideas seriously: Beittel (1985), Clarke (2002), Gidley & Hampson (in press), J. Miller (1988, 1996), R. Miller (1991, 1999, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2001, 2001a), R. Miller & Snauwaert (1999), Nava (2000), Snauwaert (1999). Most of the documents appear in the late 90s onward. All these authors, educational leaders in their own right (albeit, hardly mainstream), have written

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<sup>39</sup> op. cit., Visser, p. 38. If integral consciousness is a second-tier “quantum leap,” as Graves, Beck and Wilber have argued, then the leap is one where fear is no longer a key motivator for human thinking and action (as empirical research behind Spiral Dynamics shows)—thus, a “fearless pedagogy” (Fisher, 2003a) is an appropriate conception to further contemplate with a Wilberian integral pedagogy. Spiritual educators, Glazer (1999, 1999a), Fisher (2003b) and Palmer (1998), have discussed how “fear,” is embedded in educational systems (and society) and a crucial factor to be addressed and overcome, if we are ever going to develop a healthy whole education (world of non-violence) in the future. Clarke (2002) notes that “spirituality in education” serves humanity best when it is not a “mindset driven by fear” (p. 4) (e.g., as we see in so much religious fundamentalism).

<sup>40</sup> “Surprisingly Wilber has little or nothing to say about education anywhere in his voluminous work” (R. Miller, 1999, p. 26).

<sup>41</sup> I have researched this more since writing this. In 2007 I wrote a paper “Postmodern Developmental Philosopher *Par Excellence*: Ken Wilber’s Role in Education, Part I (Introducing Ken Wilber), which makes a more subtle argument that he has indeed written lots about Education but not in an obvious sense. This paper is currently unpublished as several academic educational journals have rejected it.

<sup>42</sup> “Many ‘holistic’ approaches are, in my opinion, either sadly flatland (based on systems theory, or merely the Lower Right quadrant), or they stem ponderously and rather exclusively from the green meme, which means a type of pluralistic approach that nobly attempts not to marginalize other approaches, but in fact marginalizes hierarchical development and thus often ends up sabotaging actual growth and evolution. In any event, most of these typical holistic approaches overlook the prime directive [of integral], which is that it is the health of the overall spiral, and not any one level, that is the central ethical imperative. A truly integral education does not simply impose the green meme on everybody from day one, but rather understands that development unfolds in phase-specific waves of increasing inclusiveness” (Wilber, 2000a, pp. 95-96). Using an integral Spiral Dynamics framework, an integral education (approach) would not impose Western development (and higher consciousness, or v-memes) onto developing countries, when international educational policies are designed.

<sup>43</sup> Although the educators listed here focus on K-12, this does not mean they do not teach adults, and in fact, most of them do, especially as part of teaching teachers in universities and other settings.

predominantly analytical, abstract and theoretical works about the value of Wilber's vision, philosophy, theories and models.

This small handful of authors have a passion for holistic, spiritual and future education, in which a drastic transformation of society is expected and encouraged. None has been more upfront than Ron Miller<sup>44</sup> in offering admiring expletives for Wilber's brilliance<sup>45</sup> and importance as a visionary,<sup>46</sup> whose philosophy and theories contain a "fertile seed"<sup>47</sup> for reconstructing a "new postmodern holistic theory"<sup>48</sup> and substantive respectful critique of holism,<sup>49</sup> the latter, which has provided a primary foundation for holistic education<sup>50</sup> and its many derivatives—and according to R. Miller,<sup>51</sup> no holistic educator ought to go unfamiliar with Wilber's achievements. I couldn't agree more.

All eight authors, more or less explicitly, embrace the common interest Wilber has in the modernist ("more scientific") philosophy of holism but a holism revised and re-rooted in an older system of thought ("more religious") called the "perennial philosophy"<sup>52</sup> and ("more spiritual") non-dual traditions<sup>53</sup> that focus on

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<sup>44</sup> He has published the most on Wilber's thought in Education. He is founding editor of *Holistic Education Review* (currently titled *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*) and teaches at Goddard College, VT.

<sup>45</sup> R. Miller (1999b), p. 192. He has located Wilber with the likes of the great (spiritual-centered) educational philosophers-- Steiner, Montessori, Whitehead and Krishnamurti, the latter having written volumes on applications to the field of education and have private schools and support communities following their basic philosophies and pedagogies.

<sup>46</sup> "A few visionary authors, such as Rudolf Steiner and Ken Wilber, have attempted to trace the evolution of consciousness through human history, and have explained that persons' awareness of themselves as distinct individuals is a fairly recent development [of the modern age]" (R. Miller, 2000, p. 87).

<sup>47</sup> R. Miller (1999), p. 26.

<sup>48</sup> R. Miller (2001a) and R. Miller & Snauwert (1999), p. 3. Note, that Wilber prefers to call himself a "post-postmodern thinker."

<sup>49</sup> For simplicity here, this is the philosophy that arose in reaction against the 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy of mechanism, the latter with its tendency to reduce and fragment reality (and human subjects) into meaningless parts, without a sense of the 'spirit' that makes them all connected in one great whole. "Holism (a largely 20<sup>th</sup> century newcomer) offers a goal, a direction for cultural change [to counteract overly technological industrialized "inauthentic human cultures" and the current "consumer (corporate) culture"]" (R. Miller, 2000, pp. 2-3).

<sup>50</sup> Although "holistic education," which includes but transcends traditional "humanistic education," is not easily defined and conceptually debated among diverse practitioners, it is commonly accepted that it is an education which includes the whole child, whole human being, and a means of nurturing intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions; acknowledging the complex nature of a person in relation to its community and/or environment (see R. Miller 2000 for a detailed analysis). J. Miller (1988, 1996) has clearly explained why holistic education is a progressive movement beyond modernist approaches to education, generally, and beyond being necessarily liberal or conservative, politically speaking. "Holistic education has the potential to become a force for good, but only when its romantic vision is joined with a commitment to courageous action" (R. Miller, 2000, p. 87).

<sup>51</sup> R. Miller (2001, 2001a).

<sup>52</sup> Often referred to as the oldest universal philosophy (of being and ethics), derived from the "Highest Common Factor" of all major religions of the world (Huxley, 1944/70, p. vii). Note, Wilber himself has recently distanced his work from the classical perennial philosophy ("more neo-

consciousness itself. Integral educators, searching for an inclusive depth (verticality) *and* span (horizontality), radical *and* conservative view, to Reality and their developmental (evolutionary) theories and pedagogical models, are thus, attracted to Wilber's rather unique ontological and epistemological sweeping synthesis— of hierarchy (holarchy)<sup>54</sup>-- leading one to an ethical directive, avoiding the common educational fallacy of retro-Romanticism,<sup>55</sup> that R. Miller (1999) summarized, when he wrote, “An education that serves the evolution of the cosmos...” (p. 26).<sup>56</sup>

All eight schooling educators, who often draw on other philosophers as well as Wilber, are more or less inspired by Wilber's basically optimistic vision of an ongoing progression of the evolution of consciousness and life on this planet (albeit, with its “dialectic of progress:” new dangers and new fears at each new level<sup>57</sup>). Snauwaert (1999), the only professional education philosopher in this group, argued that Wilber's epistemology overcomes the tendency toward nihilism and ideological rationalism, the latter, which, according to Snauwaert, permeates the “representational paradigm” and “cognitive scientism” of our current flatland

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perennialist”), as his thinking evolves, moving theoretically to what he calls a “post-metaphysical spirituality” (Wilber, 2003).

<sup>53</sup> Often associated with true mysticism (e.g. most Buddhist philosophy). Beittel (1985), earliest of the eight educators to use Wilber's early writing, initiates a 21st century vision (argument) for an art curriculum; based on nondualism and evolution of consciousness of levels of “maturation” and, an identity and knowledge that is “tranhistorical,” “transcultural,” and “transpersonal.”

<sup>54</sup> This is the term Wilber prefers, in order to represent the “nested” Whole/part (holonic) nature of the universe, while still clarifying a distinction between “pathological hierarchy” and “natural hierarchy” (for definitions and in depth discussion see Wilber, 1995).

<sup>55</sup> Some of the eight educators (Beittel, 1985; Clarke, 2002; R. Miller, 1991) explicitly appreciated Wilber's critique of Romanticism generally (cf. Wilber, 1998), often called the “pre/trans fallacy” by Wilber; where the child-centered models of education (e.g., in the humanistic, holistic, transpersonal and new age movements) can become distortive, if not pathological. Reflecting on the future, Clarke (2002) wrote that there is no return to a conservative nostalgic “kinder” past (p. 22), or as Beittel (1985) wrote, there is no “U-turn” to Paradise in our future evolution. In Wilberian fashion, R. Miller (2000) tries to correct the human potential movement towards freedom with a holistic education philosophy that “seeks a balance between freedom and structure [limits and discipline]... [and it] *depends on the situation*” (pp. 3-4). See also Miller (1991) for a Wilberian critique using the “pre/trans fallacy” to critique much of the education that uses holism and anti-hierarchical approaches. Wilber has argued continually that children are not all as “spiritual,” “free” and “loving” as most Romantic thinking assumes because they are cognitively (and morally) not capable until they grow and mature through to the higher levels of development. See Armstrong (1985) who has challenged Wilber's ‘pre-trans fallacy’ as applied to childhood development. “Wilber agrees with Maslow, who believed that ‘the child is innocent because [s]he is ignorant’ (Heinberg, n.d.). Nava (2000), a leading advocate of holistic education in Latin America (according to R. Miller), has utilized Wilber's work in developing a systematic model of a “genuine integral education” which puts Wilber's work on the “cognitive dimension” as pivotal to any healthy “spiritual education” at the “Kosmic Level.”

<sup>56</sup> In SDi language, the second-tier level of consciousness (or integral yellow v-meme and beyond) ethically move one to work for the good of the Spiral, as the “prime directive.”

<sup>57</sup> “Wilber recognizes the fierce resistance that holons engender in their partness. He is very clear about the imbalanced and pathological ways that entities change or react to change, and he explicitly states that evolution is not smooth or painless. Although he believes that at this point of history we are on the verge of ‘an entirely new structure of consciousness’ [the integral], we will first have to endure what he calls ‘torturous birth throes’ and ‘paradigm wars’; there could be false starts that may potentially wipe out humanity (1995, 188, 191).... (Miller, 1999, p. 26).

postmodern societies in the West. None of these authors would likely disagree with this valuable role of Wilber's work for the future of Education; but none is overly confident that Wilber's work has had much overall impact in Education to date.

Although most of the authors acknowledge their attraction to Wilber's "spectrum" model<sup>58</sup> of levels of consciousness and multiple ways of knowing, the most impressive analytic applications of Wilber's "all quadrant all level" (AQAL) mapping of the Kosmos, comes from the analytical work of Clarke (2002) and Gidley & Hampson (in press). For Clarke, "holistic education" is "all quadrants" (p. 12). Perhaps indicating a major value of Wilber's macro-scale maps for educators in the future, these authors use Wilber's AQAL to assess 'gaps' and biases in schools' value systems (referents of accountability) and curriculum (Clarke) and in research directions (for e.g, in futures education; Gidley & Hampson). John P. Miller's (1988, 1996) work follows a similar vein, as he has attempted to adopt Wilber's level-appropriate "treatment" model in therapy<sup>59</sup> towards well-rounded, yet laser-effective, educational interventions and strategies. All authors above have sought out Wilber's conceptual mapping as a means to, what Clarke (2002) called an "integrated balance" (p. 22), if not a systems "harmony,"<sup>60</sup> in schools and human development.

### **Common Omissions Among Schooling Educators**

Although it would be virtually impossible for any educator to interpret Wilber's work without omissions, due to its complexity and richness, it is important to identify common patterns of omission that may be significant in how educators read Wilber. I am concerned that there was virtually no acknowledgement of the distinct four phases of Wilber's theorizing (e.g, Wilber-I, Wilber-II, etc.). The other most obvious common omission in these eight author's works, as I see it, is the scarcity of their mentioning that Wilber's work is "hierarchical," or more accurately, founded on a universal development platform or hierarchical (holarchical) ontology. It is astounding how the word "hierarchy" is avoided, but even worse, is the common omission of not discussing the backlash against hierarchical ontology, in general--especially in flatland, politically correct, postmodern, educational circles of today. Wilber's evolutionary model of spiritual development, and its rejection by religious fundamentalist and secular anti-evolutionist elements in diverse societies, was also ignored as an important discussion in the future of integral education. In other words, all the authors, more or less, downplay the massive resistance there is (and will be) to promotion of Wilber's philosophy, theories, and models in (especially, mainstream) Education. This leads to an unbalanced (un-integral) presentation, along with a few other omissions that are addressed in the Conclusion of the paper.

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<sup>58</sup> See Wilber (1977/82).

<sup>59</sup> See Wilber (1984, 1984a).

<sup>60</sup> op. cit., Gidley & Hampson, p. 9.

### Adult and Post-Secondary Educator's Common Attractions To Wilber

At least eight Western professional adult and post-secondary educators have published works (1994 to present) that take Wilber's ideas, more or less, seriously: Astin (2000), Glazer (1999), Karpiak (1996, 1997), Lauzon (1998), O'Sullivan (1999, O'Sullivan, n.d.), Scott & Schmitt-Boshnick (1994), Tisdell (2000, 2001, 2003). Overall, compared to schooling educators, most of the authors here have barely begun to tap into Wilber's work and have not consistently published on it (with the exception of Tisdell and O'Sullivan). They all draw on many other theorists for their work. Also unlike schooling educators, a few of these authors are more critical (if not rejecting) of Wilber's hierarchical theory of development and spiritual growth (i.e., Scott & Schmitt-Boshnick, 1994; Tisdell, 2000, 2001, 2003)<sup>61</sup> and, two authors barely mention Wilber (Glazer, 1999<sup>62</sup>; Scott & Schmitt-Boshnick, 1994).

Most all of these eight authors, with a holistic global perspective on change, are interested in Wilber's contribution to the field of transformative learning and human development at the post-formal (trans-rational) levels of cognitive development, what Lauzon (1998) and Karpiak (1996, 1997) referred to as "vision logic" [integral], and O'Sullivan (1999, p. 2) as "ecozoic vision." They most all like the notion of *includes and transcends*, which Wilber has written lots about, as foundational to an evolutionary developmental theory that includes complexity, all diversity and an awareness of the struggles and difficulty of "vertical expansion."<sup>63</sup>

Generally tending to a slightly more political edge than the eight schooling educators, Scott and Schmitt-Boshnick (1994) argued that "transformative theory" (1999) and transformative education<sup>64</sup> ought to include both critical social theory and transpersonal psychology, similar to Lauzon (1998) and O'Sullivan (1999). Wilber's work, in a truly unique combination, implicitly and explicitly, is based in critical theory, with a transpersonal (and integral) vision.

<sup>61</sup> All of these women authors, with a feminist-orientation, acknowledged Wilber's work as relevant to transpersonal growth and spirituality in education, but they quickly argued (minimally) against the hierarchical directionality that Wilber emphasizes, and preferred to downplay it by saying stages and life cycles are important (Tisdell) and, Washburn's Jungian U-turn theory is better (Scott and Schmitt-Boshnick).

<sup>62</sup> Glazer's (1999) anthology of spiritual teachers (mostly not in the field of Education *per se*) interested in spirituality in education, is rife with important thoughts about higher levels of consciousness and ethics and their role in education but Wilber is barely mentioned (cf. Schachter-Shalomi & Smith, 1999). Glazer suggests to the reader that the entire third section of the book "Relationship & Community" is "... rooted, to some degree, in Ken Wilber's articulation of 'holon': the idea being that the world isn't made up of separate things, but rather wholes, which are in turn part of other wholes—all the way up and down" (p. 4). This was not evident to me, and seems a very weak engagement with Wilber's work and its resistances in the wide world.

<sup>63</sup> Karpiak (1997), p. 91. Lauzon agrees with Wilber that "... development is not a nice easy comforting warm and fuzzy.... it is as I tell my students downright painful... agonic..." (pers. comm., May, 12, 1999). O'Sullivan (1999) likes Wilber's sober realism and critique of the overly idealistic wild utopian new age thinkers, who have not understood the liberation process and the difficulty of structural evolution, across all dimensions (p. 6).

<sup>64</sup> In adult and post-secondary education, see transformative learning theory, for example, Mezirow & Associates, 2000; O'Sullivan, 1999).

The otherwise theoretical discussions by all authors, were complemented by direct analytic applications of Wilber's four-quadrant model. Karpiak (1997) demonstrated how such an integral analysis assesses 'gaps' in the way in which events are understood. For example, Karpiak wrote of how "corporate downsizing" requires an "inner" quadrant(s) analysis as well as "outer." Astin (2000) similarly, and almost totally, devoted his paper to critically applying, what he called "Wilber's four-fold scheme" (p. 103), to the assessment of outcome studies and designs of service-learning research. He thought Wilber's "powerful framework" (p. 99) was particularly valuable in that it "... reminds us that change [and learning] necessarily occurs in all four-quadrants, and that we should avoid focusing our attention exclusively [on only one or two quadrants]..." (p. 102).

### **Common Omissions Among Adult & Post-Secondary Educators**

Overall these authors did not engage very much with the tradition of holism (with the exception of O'Sullivan) and most were equally avoidant of the use of the term "hierarchy." They all downplayed the critiques that have been thrown at Wilber and his work-- as well, they ignored discussing the potential resistances to having Wilber's vision and theories accepted in the mainstream of adult and post-secondary education (with the exception of O'Sullivan and Astin). None of the authors took up the problematics of Wilber's ever advancing theorizing (e.g., Wilber-I, Wilber-II, and so on), and how this may affect how readers interpret Wilber's integral ideas related to the future of education and human development. From a scholarly view, it seems negligent when some of them critique Wilber's model and choose other transpersonal theorists (e.g., Washburn) without letting the reader know that there is a large debate between these theorists, and Wilber has offered lots of critique as well.

### **A FEW CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The enormous complexity of the task of reviewing Wilber's philosophy, theories and models is bound to end in a failure, in terms of completeness. This paper rather aims for building the foundations of a pedagogical sensibility to the integral approach, and a taste of what integral education may entail—perhaps even, what a "Wisdom Culture" may emerge from. Wilber's rare comments on the field of Education leave us with little choice but to represent and interpret his writing and work in a spirit of naive curiosity. After 24 years of studying Wilber's ideas, I feel humbled continually to the challenges before us as emerging new integral leaders and educators.

Unlike all the 16 educators surveyed here, I have attempted stylistically to perform an integral approach in writing about integral (*a la* Wilber's approach). To do this I included fictional non-fiction, dream time and space, imagination, imagery, first and third person narrative, the latter to offer empirical analysis with technical

results. There is some Religion, some Science, and some Art to weave it all together. For that is the only way to touch the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

Integral educators of the future will have to model what “integral” means by how it performs on the page, and in front of our eyes and other senses. Integral is an intelligence system and way of knowing-- ever-rich and evolving, by definition. I have chosen to critically review 16 very diverse educators’ documents and offer three classroom stories. None of these authors would likely identify or qualify themselves as pedagogical or curriculum specialists in “integral education” (*a la* Wilber). Few would see themselves as part of the “integral movement” *per se*. I believe their voice is important in the advance of Wilber’s educational and political project. I trust that their efforts, perhaps naive at times, as I have pointed out in my critiques, will be regarded with respect by the zealous amongst us in promoting integral education.

Wilber’s work is generally seen by all these integrally-interested and/or informed educators, as a “solution” to biases, conflicts over diverse values, and growing complexity, that accompanies a postmodern post-9/11 world. The notion of development, evolution and progress, as one of “include and transcend,” seems to emerge as a major guiding (ethical and epistemological) principle by which to lead, teach and learn in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Integral leadership, at its best, cannot be motivated by fear-based exclusion of the ‘Other.’ However, all of the authors surveyed here have written about more abstract and theoretical dimensions of attraction to Wilber’s vision. The applications, in only a few of these publications, indicate that there is still a lot of empirical research and critical analysis to be done to evaluate the substantive positive impacts of a Wilberian educational philosophy toward a “Wisdom Culture.”

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